



THE RHODENIZER REPORT

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10 TIPS FOR REDUCING IT EXPENSES

One of the easiest ways to cut down on IT costs is to reduce the risks of having computer problems you'll need professional help with. Here are some of my best tips for how you can do that.

- 1). **Block use of the Internet for anything other than relevant business purposes.** If you don't know how, I can show you.
- 2). **Don't allow unqualified persons to tinker with your business systems.** I've seen bad situations made even worse by well-meaning employees, just trying to help, who knew just enough about computers to be dangerous.

- 3). **Prohibit downloading any software from an Internet source that can't be identified.** I test lots of new programs before recommending any to clients. But, before I download anything I'm not familiar with I always check out the website first. Who owns it? Do they provide contact information in case I need technical support? I will sometimes even google the names I find to see what else they've done and what others have to say about them.
- 4). **Keep air flow unobstructed around the openings of printers, PC's, and other electronic devices.** Most of the hardware



problems I've seen over 25 years occurred as a result of excessive heat. If your building shuts down air conditioning during off hours, shut down your computers as well.

- 5). **Backup any computer that holds data you can't afford to lose, and store those backups in a separate location.**
- 6). **Use a quality surge protector with battery backup** (Cont. P. 2)

THE TAKE-AWAY POINTS:

- **Lower IT costs by lowering risk of problems.**
- **PC prices will decline through mid-2009.**
- **There is no substitute for being prepared.**
- **BlackBerry App World tries to compete with iPhone's App Store.**

RECORD DROP IN DESKTOP PC SALES

Market research firm Gartner Inc. predicts that the world PC market will experience its sharpest decline in history this year. While mobile PC sales will grow by 9%, hitting 155.6 million, desktop **PC shipments are predicted to drop by 31.9%** to 101.4 million units.

As sales of new computers decline—pressuring suppliers to further lower prices, small businesses are still trending toward stretching the life of their exist-

ing assets instead of replacing them.

Mini laptops and netbooks represent the only bright spot for suppliers. Sales continue to be strong for mobile computers that allow people to work from almost anywhere.

High-end laptops with larger displays and longer battery life have also been in demand, and are generally the most expensive. However, recent price

reductions across the board are now making these more affordable as well.

Most small businesses do not have new computer purchases in the budget for this year. But for those that do, some great deals can be found on all kinds of computers. These values should also be taken into consideration when weighing the decision of whether to repair or replace problem equipment.

COULD THIS HAPPEN TO YOU?

What would the impact be to your business if you lost the use of your primary PC, or your server? The consequences of a temporary interruption would probably not be severe. But, take a moment to consider the impact if you were to lose all of the **information**.

All e-mails, files, passwords, pictures, everything on those computers lost forever. Does the thought bring on a “sick” feeling? It should. Insurance can only compensate you for the replacement cost of new hardware and software. Anything that comes in a box can be replaced, but not your unique records. No amount of time or money can bring back data that has been destroyed.

That’s what happened to Mike and Janet England of New Orleans (pictured right).

Their computer and all its files were destroyed during the Katrina disaster. Could something like that happen to you? Absolutely. Even if you are prepared for it, data loss happens for one reason or another every day. The question you need to ask yourself is: “What will I do **when** it happens to me?”

If you have a contingency plan in place for such an event, you will be prepared to replace or repair assets as necessary, then restore data from your most recent backups quickly. The interruption to your business will only be temporary, and you can recover.

If you don’t have a contingency plan for storm damage, theft, fire, virus attack, or some unforeseen accident, you risk losing more than just information and assets. You

could lose your business, your livelihood, and everything you’ve worked for.

Now, while everything is working as it should, is the time to prepare for disaster. Now is the time to record all the information about your business systems that would be needed in order to recreate them and restore them to their current condition.

An IT Pro can show you how to identify the information that needs to be recorded and how to back it up. He can also create a backup and recovery plan for you and be there to help implement it when you call.

From simply recovering a lost file, to restoring an entire network, if you have a procedure in place to deal with these things you will never need to panic. - C. R.



Mike and Janet England look over what’s left of their computer system. All their files were destroyed.

10 TIPS FOR REDUCING IT EXPENSES (CONT.)

(Cont. from P. 1) on any PC that’s important enough for you to back up. If you can lift it with one hand, it’s not good enough.

7). **Keep Windows updated.** Set Windows Updates to either install critical updates automatically, or notify you when updates are available. These updates are essential for several reasons including protecting you from flaws that could be exploited by viruses.

8). **Keep your antivirus software current.** It should download updates on its own, but check occasionally to be sure it’s still working, and that the subscription has not expired.

9). **Keep it clean and simple.** Don’t install anything on your PC unless you need it. If you want to try out something for fun, do it on another PC that you don’t care about first. Remember that parts are

cheap, time is expensive.

10). **Give your PC a tune-up.** If you haven’t already done so, download a free trial version of TuneUP Utilities from the “Cliff’s Pick’s” page of my website. If you aren’t impressed with the improvement it makes to your PC’s performance, you pay nothing. If you decide you want to keep it past the 30-day trial period, simply follow the links to purchase it for \$49.95.

QUESTIONS FROM THE INBOX

Q— “Whenever I accept a meeting request in Outlook, it saves it in my calendar as a recurring appointment. What could be causing this?”

A— Sounds like you have a late model Dell laptop. There is a known bug with one of the background utility programs that causes this with Outlook 2007. The procedure to fix it is here on this site: www.slipstick.com/problems/recurringmeetings.htm

Q— “Another IT company sent us an e-mail advising “extra caution” because of the same virus you wrote about last month. Is there anything we should do differently?”

A— I think doing a “fire drill” whenever someone discovers a new virus teaches people to be “reactive” and ambivalent to the dangers until they are called to action. I favor a more “proactive” approach to IT security. If you never let your guard down, such warnings are unnecessary.

Virus attacks like this are being released onto the Internet all the time, they just don’t get as much attention in the press as this one did. If you are already maintaining a vigilant defense strategy as a prescribed part of your normal operating procedures, there’s no “extra caution” possible.

Q— “Is there a way I can protect Word documents I e-mail to someone so they can’t be changed?”

A— You can only protect documents you retain control over. Once that e-mail leaves your PC with a copy of the document, it is no longer under your control.

Most people convert documents to PDF files before they release them because that converts editable text into an image, like a photo. This makes it difficult to make changes afterwards.

Q— “We need to re-install Office on one of our PC’s but we’ve lost the original disk. Is there anything we can do?”

A— If you know someone who has exactly the same version of Office, you can borrow their CD, but use your own license key. Otherwise, you’ll just have to buy another one.

The only exception would be if your organization is enrolled in the Microsoft Open Licensing program.

Q— “Just wondering why you don’t like Norton Internet Security when so many magazines say it’s so good.”

Many IT Pros (myself included) beg to differ with reviews published by PC World, PCMag.com, and Maximum PC, touting Norton

Internet Security 2009 as “the best” security suite.

In response, veterans of the IT business have been writing back in droves, pointing fingers at Norton, McAfee, and Trend Micro as the source of many performance and connectivity problems encountered while on the job.

One IT Pro wrote, “Based on the reviews, we decided to upgrade a client to NIS 2009. What a mistake! Much to my disappointment, we started having major problems with the network. Whenever someone would click a mapped drive, the system would lock. We spent hours on the phone with Norton tech support who were in complete denial of the problem. ‘It’s a Microsoft problem’ was all they could say. When I googled this problem — ‘NAV 2009 blocks access to hard disk’ — I found a 14-page user forum on this ‘unsolved’ problem. Yet Norton still contends, ‘It’s a Microsoft problem.’ To prove them wrong, we uninstalled NIS 2009 and now it all works perfectly.”

Don’t believe the magazines. I’ve had similar experiences, that I base my opinions on. To see the products I’ve had the best results with, check out the “Cliff’s Pick’s” page of my website.—C. R.

E-mail your questions to:
questions@rhodenizer.com



“I think doing a “fire drill” whenever someone discovers a new virus teaches people to be “reactive...”

THE BLACKBERRY CORNER

In an attempt to rival Apple's highly successfully iPhone App Store, Canada's RIM has announced that they will soon launch their own online store named "BlackBerry App World". The new web site promises a convenient location for BlackBerry owners to download "games, social networks, personal productivity applications and much more."

With downloads ranging from \$2.99 to \$999.00 (says Business Review), pricing will hardly be competitive with Apple's iPhone downloads starting at just 99 cents.

Payment options may also turn away some since the site will only accept PayPal. No credit cards accepted.

Software developers wishing to sell their hand-held applications to the public through the new BlackBerry site will apparently have to pay \$200 to register and submit their first 10 applications. In contrast, Apple charges only \$99 for its standard developer program.

RIM's higher rate could turn away some of the brightest young developers, such as college students, who've been enthusiastic contribu-

tors to the popular Android and iTunes markets

RIM also seems to be taking a risk that this strategy of high prices and high margins won't tip potential customers over the fence toward purchasing an iPhone instead of a BlackBerry.

Perhaps they're hoping these potential customers don't realize they can download many of the same (or similar) applications for a lot less at other websites... like www.Handango.com.



ABOUT RHODENIZER IT

We are a different kind of IT service provider. We don't resell any hardware or software. We find the best deals on what you need and pass the savings along to you.

Our mission is to show small businesses how to reduce expenses, increase productivity, and safeguard private information.

It's about more than just fixing computers. We also

provide IT consulting and services that include finding the best solutions to your business problems.

We work with clients to prepare disaster recovery plans that ensure their critical data remains safe, yet easily accessible. Additional benefits include money-saving ideas for managing your computer resources and planning for future business expansion.

We have the training, experience, and know-how to provide the right solutions for your needs, and your budget.

Just call to schedule your **free initial consultation with no risk, and no obligation.**

Tell me about your computer needs or IT issues. I'll recommend a course of action that makes sense for your situation at no cost to you. What have you got to lose?

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