

TECHNOLOGY TIMES

"Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier And More Profitably"

What's New

The cover article in this issue is about "the Cloud". It's where the action is in technology, although artificial intelligence (AI) is a close second. Read the article to learn what the term "Cloud" means. Hint: It has a business model like an electric, gas, or water utility!

My client Chip Conlin of Chip Conlin Coaching (<http://www.chipconlincoaching.com/>) wrote the guest column in this issue, "Buyer Beware When Hiring Consultants". He describes the changing relationship between employers and candidates, where businesses are hiring consultants and contractors instead of full-time employees. He explains the reasons behind this transition.

I like gadgets. Verizon once called me a "serial upgrader" (sounds ominous) because I upgrade my smartphone so often! Check out the link below to a PC Magazine article about six amazing cool gadgets shown at CES (Consumer Electronics Show). I like the car interior covered with Corning Smart Glass! <http://tinyurl.com/zorkhmn>

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Cloud Computing: Good, Bad & Ugly

When a network of IoT gadgets like routers, DVR machines and closed-circuit TVs can take down hardened, well-provisioned Internet giants like Twitter, Spotify and Amazon – as happened last October – you've got to think twice before moving your data to the cloud.

Yes, a move to the cloud can yield big payoffs in terms of cost savings, increased efficiency, greater flexibility, collaboration for your workforce and more. Yet there is a dark side. It would be naive to think otherwise. Your choices about whether and how to use cloud technology in your network merits serious consideration.

So, just what is "the cloud"? Instead of constantly buying new equipment and software, cloud computing allows you to pay for just what you need. Just as with a utility company, you get software and storage on a monthly basis, with no long-term contracts. Chances are, most of the software you now use is

cloud-based. You simply access it on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Similarly, you can store data in the cloud, where it can be easily accessed when you need it. This reduces the need to buy and manage your own backup gear and software, thus reducing overhead. Yet, as with any major decision, it's critical to be aware of both the benefits and pitfalls of putting your company's data in the cloud.

The Pros

There are three major advantages offered by cloud computing:

1. **Flexibility.** Scaling up or down can be done without major investment or leaving excess capacity idle. It also enables your entire workforce to get more done, where and when they need to.
2. **Collaboration.** With data and software in a shared cloud environment, staff can collaborate from anywhere. Everything from HR to accounting, and from operations to sales and

continued pg.2

customer relations, can be managed from diverse and mobile environments, giving your team greater power to collaborate effectively.

3. Disaster Recovery.

Typically, data stored in the cloud can be easily retrieved in the event of a disaster. It also augments local backup and recovery systems, adding protective redundancy.

The Cons

While the cloud offers obvious benefits, it also increases your company's potential "attack surface" for cybercriminals. By spreading your communications and access to data beyond a safe "firewall," your network is far more exposed to a whole bevy of security concerns. Many of them can be addressed with these three best practices:

1. Social Engineering Awareness. Whether you go cloud or local, the weakest link in your network is not in your equipment or software; it's in the people who use them. Cybercriminals

are aware of this fact. And you can count on them to come up with an endless variety of ways to exploit it. One day it's a phone call ostensibly from your IT department requesting sensitive data, the next it's an email that looks official but contains malicious links. Make sure your employee are aware of and trained to deal with these vulnerabilities.

2.Password Security and Activity Monitoring. Maintaining login security is absolutely critical any time you're in a cloud

environment. Train your staff in how to create secure passwords and implement two-factor authentication whenever possible. Take advantage of monitoring tools that can alert you to suspicious log-

ins, unauthorized file transfers and other potentially damaging activity.

3. Anti-Malware/Antivirus Solutions. Malicious software allows criminals to obtain user data, security credentials and

sensitive information without the knowledge of the user. Not only that, some purported anti-malware software on the market is actually malware in disguise. Keep verifiable anti-malware software in place throughout your network at all times, and train your employees in how to work with it.

Free Cloud Readiness Assessment Reveals Benefits And Pitfalls For Your Company From A Move To The Cloud

During the month of February, we're offering a FREE Cloud Readiness Assessment for any New Jersey company with 10 or more computers and a network. We'll come to your office and conduct a complete review of your computer network, data, software and hardware and how you work. We'll then give you helpful answers and insights about cloud computing for your business – all at no cost or obligation to you.

Claim your free Cloud Readiness Assessment today at www.stephillassociates.com/cloudreview or give us a call at 732-792-2021.

"Keep verifiable anti-malware software in place throughout your network at all times."

Free Report Download: The Business Owner's Guide To IT Support Services And Fees

IT BUYERS GUIDE

What Every Business Owner MUST Know About IT Support Services And Fees



What You Should Expect To Pay For IT Support For Your Business And How To Get Exactly What You Need

You will learn:

- The 3 most common ways IT services companies charge for their services, and the pros and cons of each approach.
- A common billing model that puts ALL THE RISK on you, the customer, when buying IT services; you'll learn what it is and why you need to avoid agreeing to it.
- Exclusions, hidden fees and other "gotcha" clauses IT companies put in their contracts that you DON'T want to agree to.
- How to make sure you know exactly what you're getting to avoid disappointment, frustration and added costs later on that you didn't anticipate.

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Client Spotlight: Meramak: The Bankcard Center - Merchant Services

Stephill has been working with Terence Ward, President of Meramak, for many years. Meramak relocated a year ago to Sarasota, FL. They no longer work out of an office building. They went virtual. Their four employees work from home and their server is now a simulated copy of the their old physical server in the Cloud. Stephill migrated their physical server contents into the virtual copy and set up Microsoft Office 365 Exchange e-mail hosting through AppRiver. The server is backed up in the Cloud and replicates to a storage system at Terence's home. Not often one sees a system backing up from the Cloud to a physical location!

Would you like your company highlighted here in our "Client Spotlight"? Then give us a call today at 732-792-2021.



Buyer Beware When Hiring Consultants

As the US economy starts to pull out of the "Great Recession" of 2008, employers (including small business owners) will be presented with some new challenges in choosing whether to staff their positions with full-time employees (W-2 tax classification) or with consultants (1099 tax classification). In meeting these challenges there are two important questions employers then need to consider:

- Can I afford the cost of hiring staff full-time, which in most cases involves providing benefits? Or, is it more cost-effective to hire people on a consulting basis with no benefits?

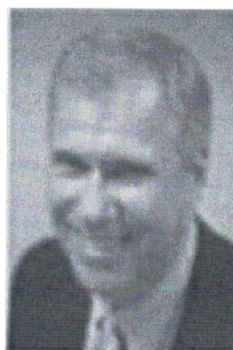
- Can I find and retain good workers to hire full-time who are committed to my company or business? Or, does hiring someone on a short-term consulting (or contract) basis make more sense?

You may recall that prior to 2008, and especially during boom periods in our economy, employers would hire consultants to work on specific projects, initiatives, training programs, and/or upgrades to their IT systems. One can recall in particular the many consulting opportunities for IT professionals during Y2K! In making a choice between full-time employee and consultant let's consider an important distinction between the two. Full-time employees are hired (whether on salary or paid hourly) to perform certain responsibilities of the job, and are instructed by the employer on "what" needs to be done, as well as "how" to perform the tasks of the job. Conversely, consultants are hired to work on specific initiatives based on their particular expertise. These initiatives, or projects, are generally of a specific duration, and the consultant is told by the employer "what" needs to be accomplished, but not on "how" to get it accomplished – the "how" resting on the consultant's expertise in getting the job done. This is an important distinction under U.S. labor laws as to how employers classify their employees. The shift I'm now seeing is that many

employers are not making this distinction in hiring consultants (i.e., addressing what needs to be done) vs. telling a consultant how to do the job, the latter often including very specific steps on the part of the employer as to how the job should be completed. In short, they're treating consultants as full-time employees, except without the benefits that go with full-time employment.

In short, it's important when hiring consultants that you recognize these distinctions. The job market will unlikely show any immediate changes in employers hiring people on a consulting (or contract)

basis since this may be a more "permanent" shift in how companies employ people. Most of all, it requires the employer to know exactly the terms and conditions outlined in any contractual agreement, and have the consultant respect your right to state "what" needs to be done, but for you to respect his/her right to show you "how" to get there.



Chip Conlin maintains an active private coaching practice in which he helps clients from a variety of professions achieve their career goals. He also brings more than 30 years' experience in Human Resources in helping organizations achieve their most pressing needs. You can view more of Chip's background by visiting his website at www.chipconlincoaching.com.

Traditional home security firms desperately hope you won't try this system.

If you want to protect your home from break-ins, you can pay monthly fees of \$45 or more and lock yourself into a long-term contract with a traditional home security firm. Or, for \$230 you can get a five-piece Simplisafe Starter System, featuring an entry sensor, motion detector and keychain remote. It takes about 30 minutes to set up and triggers a 105db alarm in the event of a break-in. Upgrades include extra sensors, "panic button" for your bedroom and surveillance video camera. You can also add a cellular connection that notifies police if and when a break-in occurs, for just \$14.99 per month – less than a third the cost of traditional systems.

-ASecureLife.com

This billion-dollar start-up is busting cybersecurity's biggest myth.

In 2011, hackers were slipping through cybersecurity company McAfee's software at an alarming rate. Their CTO at the time, Stuart McClure, had to make a lot of apologies to their clients for the

intrusions. In 2012 McClure left McAfee to start a new company, Cylance, which focuses on prevention, not just detection. Contrary to common belief, all that most anti-malware programs can do is detect a breach once it occurs. Once detected, it can take six to nine weeks or more for a patch or update to be published. Cylance, on the other hand, now valued at \$1.1 billion, uses AI and machine learning to detect and defend a network's weaknesses before hackers can exploit them.

-Inc.com

Ask these six questions before spending a dime on a promotional video for your company.

Do you want it to... 1) Attract more prospects via branded YouTube or other channel? 2) Act as a free-mium to attract prospects, or a premium to incentivize them to buy? 3) Teach customers how to get the most out of your product or service? 4) Be part of a video blog (aka "vLog") and drive traffic to your website? 5) Welcome new customers to your business, show them how to access and/or use what they just bought and give them a chance to see your smiling

face? 6) Or do you want people to pay you to view it, as with online training?

-Entrepreneur

These glasses open up a whole new way to share your world.

Snap Spectacles let you shoot video from your glasses. Which may not set off a tech revolution, but they've got us thinking... When you combine spontaneous, inconspicuous video with face recognition and AI, well, who knows what you could do? The premise is simple: wear Specs, click to shoot, share on Snapchat (or not, you choose). Specs let viewers truly see the world through your eyes. But beyond that, Spec's camera lenses could reinvent computing the way the keyboard and mouse or touchscreen already have. Computers now recognize images: type of bird, location in Yellowstone, person in your video, etc. Practical or not, these glasses make sharing your world easy and fun.

-Wired

For Sale: DDoS attacks from 400,000 IoT devices.

Got a journalist you'd like to punish? A core chunk of Internet you'd like to take down? A sovereign nation you'd like to knock offline? As of a couple of months ago, you could rent your own time on the Mirai Worm, a botnet that took down Level 3, Twitter, Dyn and other hardened, well-provisioned Internet giants, and spread to every developed nation on earth last October. Two criminals, BestBuy and Popopret, previously implicated in mass-scale corporate espionage, have run ads for this service. Typical price? Three to four thousand dollars per two-week attack. Can they deliver? Given that most IoT devices are poorly protected, and the Mirai botnet has loads of room for improvement, don't count them out.

-BoingBoing.net

