TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

"Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier, And More Profitably"
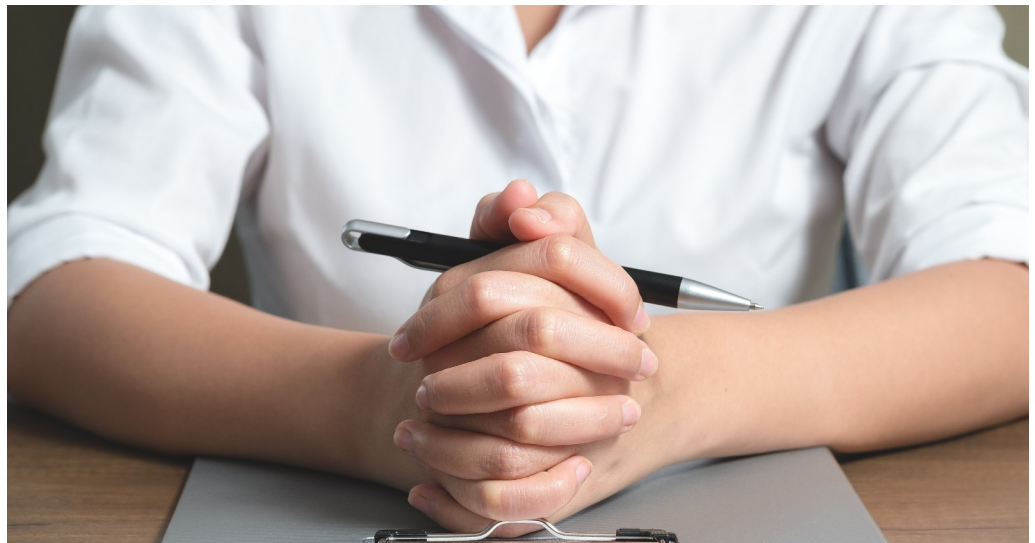
What's New

B4 Networks attends the Better Business Expo in Hamilton, ON

Happy Fall

September 2018

5.0 BEST MANAGED — IT COMPANIES

MSPmentor® 501 — 2017 WINNER

"As a business owner, I know you don't have time to waste on technical and operational issues. That's where we shine! Call us and put an end to your IT problems finally and forever!"

Bryan Lachapelle, B4 Networks Inc.

B4 networks

160 Hwy 20 W. Unit 10
Box 249
Fonthill, Ontario, L0S 1E0
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4 Questions You Should Ask Any IT "Expert" Before Letting Them Touch Your Network

As businesses have become ever more dependent on technology, IT services providers have been popping up left and right. They've all got different strengths, capabilities and price points to consider. Some charge you by the hour and, while available to address any concerns you may have, they are pretty hands-off. Others are working on your network around the clock but charge more in turn. Many may boast an impressive record when working with a broad range of companies, but lack the experience necessary to understand the ins and outs of your specific industry. Some cost way too much month-to-month, while others try the "bargain bin"

approach, but as a result, can't afford to field the staff needed to respond to issues in a timely fashion.

There's certainly a lot to consider when looking for an IT services provider for your business. And if you're not particularly knowledgeable about information technology yourself, it can sometimes feel like you're going into the process blind.

To suss out whether an IT company will mesh with your business's workflow and industry-specific requirements, it's important to vet them thoroughly. The key is to ask the right questions.

Get More Free Tips, Tools and Services At
Our Website: www.b4networks.ca

B4 networks

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Here are four that will allow you to zero in on any IT company's priorities and strengths, and help you determine whether they're a good fit for your organization.

1. DO YOU TAKE A PROACTIVE OR 'BREAK-FIX' APPROACH TO IT?

> "a network outage [will] bring your business to its knees while it's out … it'll frustrate customers and employees and result in a cascading set of problems."

When your car breaks down, you take it to the shop and you get it fixed. The mechanic charges you for the work done and for the parts, and then sends you on your way. Many business owners consider their computer network to be the same kind of deal. Why not just wait until an outage happens and then call up somebody who charges by the hour to fix it? That way, they imagine, they won't be paying for "extra" services they think they don't need.

But unfortunately, unlike your car, when your network is out, you're losing dollars every single minute. The cost of a network outage is difficult to overstate – not only will it bring your business to its knees while it's out, but it'll frustrate customers and employees and result in a cascading set of problems.

Instead of a "break-fix" technician on hand, you need a managed IT services provider. These experts work directly with your company to optimize your network and its security at every turn, and are available nearly any time to address your concerns. And they're genuinely invested in providing the best service possible, since it's in their best interest as well.

2. WHAT IS YOUR GUARANTEED RESPONSE TIME?
We've all needed something fixed before and had to wait for hours, days or even weeks before anyone bothered to come by and solve the problem. Don't let that happen to your business. If a company can't guarantee a response time, it's probably not a company you want to be working with.

3. WHAT WILL COST ME EXTRA?
This question is particularly important if you're looking at a managed services provider (which you should be). The last thing you need is for a crisis to strike, only to discover you need to shell out a bunch of surcharges to get your network back up and running. Make sure the costs and services included are crystal clear before you sign anything.

4. HOW MUCH EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE?
As scrappy as the "new kid on the block" may be, you don't want them in charge of one of the most important aspects of your business. Make sure any IT professionals you do business with have extensive experience not only in IT, but in your particular industry as well. That way they'll know exactly what to do to optimize processes and keep your data under lock and key.

If you'd like more information on the questions you should be asking, feel free to download our free report "21 Things Every Business Owners Must Know." Even if you aren't ready to make a change right now, this report will give you important questions you should ask your current IT person to make sure their policies, procedures and service standards won't leave you vulnerable to expensive problems, lost data, viruses, hacker attacks and a host of other problems.

You can download it at www.b4networks.ca/21things

How Does Your Current I.T. Provider Compare?

Our August 2018 Service Key Performance Indicators

91%
8 Business Hour Ticket Resolution

90%
Client Satisfaction

9 mins
Average Response Time

905-346-4966

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Our Website: www.b4networks.ca

B4 networks

Client Spotlight

Since 1989, Desks Plus Inc. has serviced the Canadian and International office furniture industry. Desks Plus is fully equipped to satisfy any office requirement from small entrepreneurs looking to establish a new business to large corporations expanding their office space.

Desks Plus are a people-oriented and driven company with a reputation that stands on providing products and serves that their clients need, want and demand. They have Niagara's largest selection of office furnishings on display, from Canada's best manufacturers.

Visit their 15,000 sq. ft showroom at 166 Bunting Road in St. Catharines, ON.

The Power Of Connection
by Mark Sanborn

Relationships are powerful. They help you differentiate your product or service, create brand loyalty, and set you apart from your competitors who are not willing to invest in building relationships.

Any savvy company will encourage its employees to build better relationships with customers. I myself teach the basics of relationship building in business, and have written about the process in my books, particularly *The Fred Factor*.

But you don't always have time to build a lasting relationship. Sometimes dealing with customers or clients only takes a few minutes and you have little to no contact with them later on. You don't have the time to build a "relationship," nor should you try.

But neither should you interact passively.

There is something between a transaction and a relationship that will benefit both the customer and your business. The goal is to create a connection, which I define as a moment of shared affinity.

At a hotel in Miami, a bellhop who came to pick up a dry-cleaning order noticed I was wearing a Harley-Davidson T-shirt. "Do you ride?" he asked. That started a brief conversation about our shared interest in motorcycles. I saw him several times throughout my stay and felt a connection based on that brief exchange. We weren't friends by any definition, but the connection was still a positive part of my stay.

Transactions can be straightforward, but they often feel sterile. Looking for shared interests, indulging in appropriate humor, or simply noticing and commenting on another person is all it takes to add texture to the interaction and turn it into a genuine connection.

But how do you make these connections stronger?

1. Pay attention. Notice more about the person with whom you're interacting.

2. Look for similarities and points of contact.

3. Comment on what you find interesting.

4. Compliment on what you find praiseworthy.

Connecting in this way makes you more human and makes your business less sterile. Connecting with another person, even briefly, is always superior to simply completing a transaction.

Mark Sanborn, CSP, CPAE, is the president of Sanborn & Associates, Inc., an "idea studio" that seeks to motivate and develop leaders in and outside of business. He's the best-selling author of the books Fred Factor *and* The Potential Principle *and a noted expert on leadership, team building, customer service and company change. He holds the Certified Speaking Professional designation from the National Speakers Association and is a member of the Speaker Hall of Fame. Check out any of his excellent books; his video series, "Team Building: How to Motivate and Manage People"; or his website, marksanborn.com, to learn more..*

■ Why It's So Dangerous To Use The Same Password For All Your Online Accounts

A complex password is a necessity in the age of cyberthreats, data breaches, and other security incidents. When you've landed on what you think is the perfect, complicated, yet easy-to-remember password, it's tempting to use it for every site you log in to. This is a shockingly common — and very dangerous — mistake.

When an online retailer or website gets hacked, oftentimes all you hear about in the news is how many credit card numbers were lost or the scope of the financial damage. You rarely hear about the thousands of user accounts that were compromised. But they're there!

If yours is among those compromised accounts, it's possible that your username and password are published and available to anybody who wants to look at it on the Internet. A clever crook knows that you probably use the same password on the compromised website as you do on your eBay, Amazon or other online accounts tied to your bank account. So, they try it out and, lo and behold, now they have access to your bank account.

It's possible to keep the password madness under control. Ask us for tips for having unique but memorable passwords. You might be surprised by how easy it really is.

Autumn is here

■ Secret Techniques For Dealing With Late-Paying Clients

If you have a client who's habitually paying you late, it can be incredibly frustrating. But there are a few ways to mitigate the problem and get them back on track.

First, try billing twice per month or upfront instead of monthly. The former option will get them on a firm schedule and prevent getting backed up, while the latter will eliminate the problem altogether.

Also, try getting in touch with a contact in accounts payable. That way you can cut out the middleman and streamline the process.

September
Fun Days of the Month

Sept. 5 • International Day of Charity
Sept. 12 • Video Games Day
Sept. 13 • Positive Thinking Day
Sept. 18 • Cheeseburger Day
Sept. 19 • Talk Like A Pirate Day
Sept. 20 • Pepperoni Pizza Day
Sept. 25 • World Dream Day
Sept. 28 • Ask A Stupid Question Day

Finally, make sure to send follow-up e-mails along with any invoice you send out. Pester them enough and they'll get the picture.
SmallBizTrends.com, 6/20/2018

Hello AUTUMN

Are IT Issues Ruining Your Workplace Productivity?

Studies that at least 22 minutes a day are wasted by an average worker dealing with IT-related issues. According to the poll, the leading cause of time wasted in the workplace is related to cell phone use, which ranked the highest at 50%, gossip which followed at 42%, and closely behind was internet use at 39%. This article will briefly outline how companies can work through IT issues so that they can save on time. And time is money.

How Much Time Is 22 minutes Really?

Going by the average time in a 40-hour workweek, 22 minutes a day is close to two hours of work time lost each week. Imagine what that equals for a full year or 52 weeks. It comes out to be over 95 hours per year per person. When translated into days, that is close to two weeks spent dealing with IT-related problems.

What Are These IT Issues At The Work Place?

Some of the IT-related issues are technical in nature and they include:

- Software malfunctions
- Freezing computers
- Scanner or printer issues
- Old computer systems
- Annoying pop-ups
- Internet traffic delays
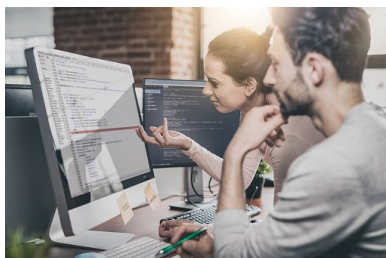
These are just a few of the issues that cause frustration for employees. If not handled well, they can lead to time wasted and low productivity, not to mention grumpy employees.

What Is The Solution To The IT-Related Problems?

Companies should have a help desk where employees can go and report IT issues as soon as they occur so that they can be resolved in the earliest instance. This is to ensure that a problem is resolved before it escalates, thus saving time for everyone.

Apart from fixing the problem, IT staff should be encouraged by the employer to share tips on preventive measures to similar problems to avoid them from recurring. Educating employees is always a good idea. It's cost-effective and just makes sense.

Companies should also invest in modern technical equipment. This way, computer systems, and networks are easier to maintain, less problematic, and also ensure efficient work delivery. Companies should confirm that the IT staff is well skilled. Hire trainers or allow employees to enroll in various training programs so they can learn all about the changing trends in technology.

Technology is meant to save time and make work more efficient, but when it decides to act up, it can actually cause headaches. Lack of knowledge is another major cause of employees wasting too much time on simple things that can be avoided in the first place. Whoever provides your IT services should have an in-house department or a third-party firm hired to conduct regular training for employees. They should be performing regular maintenance and upgrades to all systems. Training the employees regularly or after installing a new system can make a big difference when it comes to saving time-related to IT issues.

Training employees might not be the first solution a company thinks of but it's often the most cost-effective way to avoid wasting valuable time. Of course, it can help to hire savvy employees with proficient computer skills. But even if they know how to fix common IT issues, you don't want a bunch of amateurs working on your valuable software and hardware systems. When the same IT guy does all your upgrades and maintenance, he becomes familiar with your business. This is where you'll get the best return on your IT investment.

The IT department in an organization should ensure that regular updates are installed to prevent cyber-attacks. Outdated software can malfunction, thus slowing down work efficiency and delivery. This is also a major gateway for cyber thieves to enter your system and take it down.

Wrap Up

The best way to resolve IT-related issues is to treat the problem as a team effort. The stakeholders, such as heads of departments, should be well aware of the necessary steps to be taken to protect your data and keep all systems running smoothly.

The secret to avoiding costly IT errors is to detect an issue and have it attended to as soon as possible, so it doesn't grow into a bigger problem. Communication is also very important. Make sure employees are aware of how to handle IT problems. Teach them to report these issues right away. Help them do their jobs better with good cybersecurity training. At the end of it all, employee productivity is the ultimate goal. This will improve your bottom line and make sure your staff is happy and productive.

Contact us at info@b4networks.ca or 905-346-4966 to find out more about how we can help make sure your employees won't run into costly downtime.

Microsoft Ending Forum Support For Older Operating Systems

Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 users may be in for a surprise, as Microsoft plans to end forum support for these older systems. Some Microsoft users have reacted very negatively, citing Microsoft's earlier promise to support Windows 8.1 until 2023 and Windows 7 until 2020. Considering that Windows 7 remains Microsoft's most widely used operating system at this time, this type of backlash is not surprising.

If you are still using either of these operating systems (including one of the many variants of Windows 8.1), you need to be aware of what the end of forum support signifies and what will likely follow.

Operating Systems and Major Software Impacted by Latest Announcement

The latest announcement regarding an end to official Microsoft forum support for certain products came July 9, 2018, and includes a variety of Microsoft software and platforms, including the following:

- Windows 7

- Windows 8.1, and Windows 8.1 RT

- Windows Surface Pro, Surface Pro 2, and Surface RT, and
  Surface 2

- Internet Explorer 10

- Microsoft Security Essentials

- Office 2010 and 2013

Other products, such as Zune and Microsoft Band, are also affected by this announcement. The negative responses from Microsoft users have primarily involved Windows 7 and, to a much lesser degree, Windows 8.1. No doubt there are some users of the older versions of Office that are also disturbed. The distress is not so much about ending forum support, as important as that it is, but what is implied by this action.

Other Types of Support

There are different types of support provided by Microsoft, including mainstream and extended support. For the Windows 7 and 8.1 operating systems, mainstream support includes both security and non-security updates. When mainstream support ends, the non-security updates end as well. Extended support continues for a period of time even after mainstream support has ended. It still includes security updates but non-security updates are only available with Extended Hotfix Support and are not available at all for desktop products. There will be no further improvements or upgrades made to the operating system, including those that would aid incompatibility with newer hardware. Mainstream support is ending for the Windows 8.1 variants, and while users can expect security updates to continue until 2023, there will be no further improvements to the software itself.

What Ending Forum Support Means

When Microsoft states that it is ending forum support for a product, it means that when users post questions on community forums for the product in question, they will not receive an answer from a Microsoft agent. There will be no proactive reviews, answer marking, or monitoring of questions by official Microsoft employees for these forums, which include Windows 8.1 and Windows 7 as of July 2018.

The forums will not be shut down,. Users are perfectly free to communicate and help each other with product issues using the forums. In addition, they will still be moderated by Microsoft employees to make sure that users have a safe and pleasant experience, but they are no longer to be considered a timely or official source of assistance with issues for the products involved.

What Happens Next?

Every Microsoft product, including operating systems, have a well-defined lifecycle. Windows 7 and 8.1 fall under a fixed policy which prescribes the end of mainstream support followed by the end of extended support. Windows 7, Service Pack 1, mainstream support ended in 2017 and its extended support will end in 2020. For Windows 8.1, mainstream support ended in January 2018 and its extended support is scheduled to end in 2023.

What Does Sunset Mean For A Software Product?

Once a product has reached the end of its lifecycle, it is designated as being in the "sunset" stage of its life. After an operating system has reached sunset, it becomes a serious security risk because there will be no further security updates to prevent it from being exploited by malicious agents. Withdrawal of forum support, and the impending end of mainstream and extended support, signifies that a product will be facing sunset within a matter of years. In the case of Windows 7, this process has already begun.

Advice for Those Running Windows 7 or 8.1

Anyone running an operating system that is about to be sunset should seriously consider upgrading to a newer operating system. If an outdated operating system continues to be used, there will be degradation in performance. Along with that, users will experience more and more compatibility problems with newer software and hardware. Of course, the most serious issue is security. Using an older software product can lead to serious security problems. Hackers will exploit these vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

By ending forum support for some of its operating systems and products, Microsoft is signaling to users that it is time to consider upgrading. No one likes change, and yet it is inevitable for software programs. While many users do not appreciate being pressured like this, Microsoft has a vested interest in the compatibility, performance, and security of their software. But they simply can't offer support forever on all products.
Therefore, it might be time to consider transitioning to a newer version.

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month

Is This The Best Bag For Frequent Flyers?

If you're constantly travelling around the country for business, you need a piece of luggage that's essentially indestructible, and hopefully one that you can carry on any flight you need, saving on costs and precious minutes wasted at the luggage turnstile. Luckily, with the Victorinox Lexicon Hardside Frequent Flyer 8-Wheel bag, you may have a contender that checks all your boxes. With a sleek, ergonomic, compact design, it offers plenty of volume without being bulky, along with a slick eight-wheel design that makes scooting around the ticket lines easier than ever. And for those of us living in the 21st century, there's a dedicated pocket for a battery pack, enabling you to attach a USB charging cord directly to your bag for when you need a little extra juice.

Buy it on Amazon.ca!

Don't Take Our Word For It, Here's What Our Clients Are Saying About Us:

"B4 has proven to be a terrific IT partner for Frontier Utility Locating Services Inc. When we decided to outsource our IT, B4's services aligned with Frontier's perfectly. 24 hour service, attention to detail and follow through are just some of the things that make this relationship work."

Stuart Zaltz – Frontier Utility Locating Services Inc

Do You Know Someone That Needs Computer Support?

In our opinion, referrals from very happy clients and their employees are the greatest form of flattery. We love it when you're so pleased with our services, that you're willing to recommend us to other business owners you have a relationship with!

If you know someone who is looking for computer support for their company, you will receive $100 for every referral you send our way.

If your referral becomes one of our managed clients, you will receive a cheque up to the amount of one month of their signed agreement. That could be up to $5000 in your own pocket!

For full details about our referral program and to submit your referral, please visit www.b4networks.ca/referral-program today and get us in contact with your friends today!

RECEIVE UP TO
$5000
FOR EACH FRIEND YOU HAVE REFERRED TO US.

Game Time

Help him find his way out the maze

TekTip

Photo Album

Photos and Videos Taking Up *Too Much Space* On Your Phone?

Download "Google Photos" (if you have an Android, it's likely already on your phone) and use your existing Google account to get access to a new cloud-type photo gallery.

Google Photos automatically backs up your photos and allows you to access them anywhere using the app on your phone. This means you will never run out of storage again.

By automatically uploading to your Google Photos app, your photos and videos will be organized so you can find and share them faster—and eliminate the frustration of running out of space on your phone from your gigantic photo collection.