



TECH TALK

“Insider Tips to Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier and More Profitable”

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We love technology and we love helping people. Give me a call today for a quick (non-salesy) chat to find out whether my team and I can help you better secure your data and get more out of your existing Technology!

Neal Wankoff
President
Prairie IT Services

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A YEAR-END TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE REVIEW

When the year is coming to a close, it's the perfect time to plan for the future. Most businesses begin the year with the hope of growing and improving operations. Much of how a business operates depends on technology.

So, it makes sense to look to your IT for areas of optimization.

A year-end technology review provides an opportunity to look at several areas of your IT. The goal is to take time to focus on improvements you can make to boost your bottom line. As well as what tactics to take to reduce the risk of a costly cyberattack.

Small businesses that make smart use of technology are well ahead of their peers. Here are some of the ways they excel:

- Earn 2x more revenue per employee
- Experience year-over-year revenue growth nearly 4x as high
- Had an average employee growth rate over 6x as high

The bottom line is that companies that use technology well, do better. They are also more secure. According to IBM, businesses that have an incident response plan reduce the costs of a data breach by 61%. Using security AI and automation can lower costs by 70%.

This year-end, take some time to do a technology review with your IT team or managed IT provider.

This will set you up for success and security in the coming year. Considerations When Reviewing Your Technology at Year-End

The goal of a year-end technology review is to look at all areas of your IT infrastructure. Security, efficiency, and bottom-line considerations will be the key drivers for future initiatives.

Technology Policies

When technology policies get outdated, people stop following them. Review all your policies to see if any of them need updating to reflect new conditions. For example, if you now have some staff working from home, make sure your device use policy reflects this.

When you update policies, let your employees know. This gives them a refresher on important information. They may have forgotten certain things since onboarding.

Disaster Recovery Planning

When is the last time your company did an incident response drill? Is there a list of steps for employees to follow in the case of a natural disaster or cyberattack?

Take time to look at disaster recovery planning for the new year. You should also put dates in place for preparedness drills and training in the coming months.

IT Issues & Pain Points

You don't want to go through a big IT upgrade without considering employee pain points. Otherwise, you might miss some golden opportunities to improve staff productivity and wellbeing.

Survey your employees on how they use technology. Ask questions about their favorite and least favorite apps. Ask what struggles they face.

Let them tell you how they feel improved technology would make their jobs better.

This, in turn, benefits your business. It can also help you target the most impactful improvements.

Privileged Access & Orphaned Accounts

Do an audit of your privileged accounts as part of your year-end review. Over time, permissions can be misappropriated. This leaves your network at a higher risk of a major attack.

You should ensure that only those that need them have admin-level permissions. The fewer privileged accounts you have in your business tools, the lower your risk. Compromised privileged accounts password open the door to major damage.



APPLE WATCH ULTRA

Meet the most rugged and capable Apple Watch ever. With a robust titanium case, precision dual-frequency GPS, up to 36 hours of battery life, the freedom of cellular, and specialized bands made for athletes and adventurers of all kinds.

The new case design rises up to surround the flat sapphire crystal and protect it from edge impacts. The Digital Crown is larger and the side button is raised from the case, making them easier to use while you're wearing gloves.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS FOR BYOD

Mobile devices make up about 60% of the endpoints in a company network.

They also handle about 80% of the workload.

But they're often neglected when it comes to strong cybersecurity measures. This is especially true with employee-owned mobile devices.

Purchasing phones and wireless plans for staff is often out of reach financially. It can also be a pain for employees to carry around two different devices.

This has made BYOD the preferred way to go by about 83% of companies. Here are some tips to overcome the security and challenges of BYOD.

Define Your BYOD Policy

If there are no defined rules for BYOD, then you can't expect the process to be secure.

Employees may leave business data unprotected. Or they may connect to public Wi-Fi and then enter their business email password, exposing it.

If you allow employees to access business data from personal devices, you need a policy. This policy protects the company from unnecessary risk.

Keep Your Policy "Evergreen"

As soon as a policy gets outdated, it becomes less relevant to employees. Thus, they may tend to ignore it. Make sure to update your BYOD policy regularly.

Use VoIP Apps for Business Calls

Customers having employees' personal numbers is a problem for everyone. Employees may leave the company, and no longer answer those calls. The customer may not realize why.

You can avoid the issue by using a business VoIP phone system.

These services have mobile apps that employees can use.

VoIP mobile apps allow employees to make and receive calls through a business number.

Create Restrictions on Saved Company Data

No matter what the type of device, you should maintain control of business data.

It's a good idea to restrict the types of data that staff can store on personal devices.

You should also ensure that it's backed up from those devices.

Require Device Updates

When employee devices are not updated or patched, they invite a data breach. Any endpoint connected to your network can enable a breach.

This includes those owned by employees.

An endpoint device manager can push through automated updates.

It also allows you to protect business data without intruding on employee privacy.

Include BYOD in Your Offboarding Process

If an employee leaves your company, you need to clean their digital trail.

Is the employee still receiving work email on their phone?

Do they have access to company data?

Are any saved company passwords on their device?

Make sure you check all this during offboarding.

ADVANTAGES OF CONDITIONAL ACCESS

It seems that nearly as long as passwords have been around, they've been a major source of security concern.

Eighty-one percent of security incidents happen due to stolen or weak passwords. Additionally, employees continue to neglect the basics of good cyber hygiene.

Access and identity management have become a priority for many organizations.

Once a cybercriminal gets a hold of an employee's login, they can access the account and any data that it contains. Using conditional access policies can mitigate the risk of an account breach.

What Is Conditional Access?

Conditional access is also known as contextual access. It is a method of controlling user access.

You can think of it as several "if/then" statements, meaning "if" this thing is present, "then" do this.

Conditional access allows you to add many conditions to the process of user access to a system. It is typically used with MFA.

This is to improve access security without unnecessarily inconveniencing users.

Some of the most common contextual factors used include:

- IP address
- Geographic location
- Time of day
- The device used
- Role or group the user belongs to

The Benefits of Implementing Conditional Access for Identity Management

- Improves Security
 - Automates the Access Management Process
 - Allows Restriction of Certain Activities
 - Improves the User Login Experience
 - Enforces the Rule of Least Privilege
- Get Help Implementing Conditional Access Today!

TIPS TO AVOID PC BUYER'S REMORSE

Have you ever bought a new computer and then had buyer's remorse a few months later?

Maybe you didn't pay attention to the storage capacity and ran out of space.

Or you may have glossed over memory and experienced constant freeze-ups.

An investment in a new PC isn't something you want to do lightly.

Doing your research ahead of time and consulting with a trusted friend or IT shop can help.

It will keep you from making major mistakes that could come back to haunt you later.

Here are several things to consider before you put down your hard-earned money on a new computer.

1. The Amount of Memory (RAM)
2. User Reviews for Longevity
3. Whether the PC is for Personal or Business Use
4. The Processor Used
5. For Laptops: The Case Type
6. Storage Capacity
7. Hard Drive Type

APPS TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

In today's world, people can order something on their phones and see it on their doorstep the next day. Keeping up with expectations means leveraging the right technology.

As 2023 is on the horizon, it's the perfect time to improve your customer experience.

Thanks to cloud technology, you don't have to spend a fortune to do it. Just put in place some of the applications below.

These apps focus on making leads and customers happy.

1. Online Survey Application
2. Smart Chat Bot
3. Business Mobile App
4. Facebook Messenger Support
5. VoIP Phone System with Good Mobile App
6. Text Notification Apps
7. All-in-One CRM & Sales

SETUP CHECKLIST FOR MICROSOFT TEAMS

Microsoft Teams is a lot of things. It's a video conferencing tool, a team messaging channel, and a tool for in-app co-authoring, just to name a few.

During the pandemic, the popularity of Teams skyrocketed.

You can think of Teams as a virtual office in the cloud. It's a centralized hub where teams can communicate, collaborate, and manage tasks. There is also an external communication component to Teams.

You can use the app to video conference with anyone. You can also invite guests to a chat channel.

Here are some of the features of MS Teams:

- Set Up Your Teams/Departments
- Add Team Members
- Set Up Team Channels
- Set Up Team Tabs
- Schedule MS Teams Training

TECHNOLOGY TRIVIA

Each month you have a chance to win a \$50 Amazon Gift Voucher by being the first person to email us with the answer to our Technology Trivia Question of the Month!

The question this month is:

How much did the original Kindle sell for?

The first person to email me at nwankoff@prairieits.com with the correct answer gets a \$50 Amazon Gift Card!

