TECH TIPS
TECHNOLOGY INSIGHT THAT BUILDS BUSINESS

HODGSON CONSULTING & SOLUTIONS

What's New

As we've met with our clients over the past few months, we have heard more and more about skills gaps in IT departments and the difficulties in filling IT positions. Because of this, we've developed a new and innovative service designed specifically for growing companies **with** IT departments.

Announcing **ASSIST – Co-Managed IT Services**. **ASSIST** is a way for growing companies to get the helping hands, specialized expertise and the IT management/automation tools they need WITHOUT the cost of hiring more IT staff.

SEE THE INSERT INSIDE FOR MORE INFORMATION.

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This monthly publication provided courtesy of Robert Zehnder President of Hodgson Consulting & Solutions.

Our Mission:
To eliminate every technical frustration, obstacle and inefficiency for companies with multiple locations and/or a remote workforce.

Work Smarter, Not Harder — Tech Tips That Will Take You To The Next Level

Most business owners want nothing more than for their businesses to be successful. This is much easier said than done since there are so many variables involved. One of the most frequent that can be difficult to control is employee productivity. With so many businesses operating remotely, productivity has become more of a concern than ever before.

Even for employers who have employees working in a physical office, there has always been a concern over how to increase productivity. In the age of the Internet and cellphones, distractions are everywhere. Additionally, employees seem more prone to burnout these days, and working them too hard will lead to turnover or even a decrease in productivity and quality of work.

If you want to ensure that your business stays as productive as possible, you must have the right tools in your toolbox. There are many different apps and websites designed to increase productivity, and we've gathered five of the best.

Barracuda

Have you ever caught yourself or your employees scrolling through social media during work? Social media is incredibly addictive and even the most productive employees can find themselves drawn to Facebook or Instagram when they have the opportunity. Barracuda will allow you to ensure that this never happens in your workplace. If you have employees who are constantly on websites that are irrelevant to their job, you can block their access with Barracuda. Now those minutes spent scrolling through Instagram can be spent on more productive tasks.

SharePoint

Have you ever needed an important document that you didn't have access to? Did you have to e-mail someone

and ask them to send you the file or share access with you? If this is a common problem in your workplace, you need to try SharePoint.

SharePoint will serve as a database for important files that anyone in your business may need at any time. You won't have to wait for someone to share the files with you anymore. Keep in mind that SharePoint still requires a level of organization so that files are easy to find.

TimeCamp

TimeCamp is one of the most useful productivity apps available right now. With TimeCamp, you can track how much time your team is spending on any given project. It will break it down by specific apps and websites so you can see where most of their time was spent. You'll also get to see analytics and determine how they are performing. TimeCamp will help you keep your budget in check and ensure that no task or project goes over budget.

If clocking has been an issue in your business, TimeCamp can help there, too. This program can be used as an easy attendance-tracking tool as it has functions for clocking in and out, tracking overtime, automating payroll and reporting leaves. It's simple to use and comes with endless benefits.

> **"To get the most out of your business, you must ensure that productivity is maximized wherever possible."**

Slack

If your company is operating remotely, or if you have certain employees who aren't working in the office, how are you communicating with each other? E-mails can be easily missed, and unless you provide your teams with work phones, texting is iffy at best. Slack takes all of the confusion out of the mix and gives you the best group messaging option.

Employees will stay up-to-date on recent developments within the company. You can also create specific groups if you need to get a message out to a particular team or group of people. Slack has worked wonders for many organizations throughout the pandemic and is a foolproof way to increase productivity.

Asana

Asana is one of the best project management tools on the market. With this program, you can plan projects in advance and set up task lists to ensure that everything gets completed on time. You can also keep your team informed about any new developments with Asana's messaging and commenting system. If you're overseeing a team that is working on the same project, then Asana is a must-have for your company.

To get the most out of your business, you must ensure that productivity is maximized wherever possible. There are many new websites, apps and programs designed to encourage productivity in the workplace. You just have to find what works best for your business. If you're unsure of where to begin, give some of these programs a try.

Fixing Your Weakest Link: Your Employees

You can have every piece of security hardware in the books: firewall, backup disaster recovery device, and even anti-virus. However, your employees will still be the biggest vulnerability in your organization when it comes to underline phishing attacks. How do you mitigate as much risk as possible?

1. Create and Strictly Enforce a Password Policy: Passwords should be complex, randomly generated, and replaced regularly. In order to test the strength of your password go to howsecureismypassword.com. (This is a perfectly safe service sponsored by a password protection platform that tells you how long it would take a hacker to decode your password.) When creating a password policy, bear in mind that the most prevalent attacks are Dictionary attacks. Most people utilize real words for their passwords. Hackers will typically try all words before trying a brute force attack. Instead of words, use a combination of letters, numbers, and symbols. The longer the password, the stronger it is. While it's difficult to remember passwords across different platforms, try not to repeat passwords. This will protect all other accounts in the event of a breach on one of your accounts.

2. Train and Test Your Employees Regularly: Educate your employees on how they can spot a phishing attack. Then, utilize penetration testing (this is a safe phishing attack orchestrated by your IT company to see how employees respond) and how well they do. If employees fall for phishing attempts then send them through training again.

3. Perform Software Updates Regularly: Make sure that your software is up-to-date with all the latest security patches. Holding off on updates means that you're leaving yourself open to vulnerabilities that have been discovered and addressed.

4. Invest in Security: Security is not something for cost savings. Home-based hardware is not sufficient, and you, at the very least need a quality firewall and backup device. Invest in your employee's training, ongoing security updates, and maintaining a full crisis/breach plan.

There are two things that aren't going away in any business, employees and security threats. Make sure that you've taken care of everything you can to avoid falling victim to these attacks.

Are You A Good Remote Leader?

We have reached a new age in the workplace. Back in the 1980s, business books and seminars encouraged managers to meander around the office, chat with colleagues and try to gather valuable information around the water cooler. Now managers are working remotely, and it's a completely different world.

It's not always evident who the great leaders are in a remote setting, and you may have wondered at some point if you are even good at it. Truthfully, we don't have enough data yet to accurately evaluate what differentiates a great remote leader from the rest. But from my insights and experience running a fully remote company for 25 years, I've put together five questions that help determine if a remote leader is above average or not.

- Are you great at setting goals?

- Are you great at hiring?

- Are you great at delegating?

- Does your compensation system reward high performance?

- Do you always do what you say you will do?

If you can answer yes to all five of these questions, it's likely that you are a great remote leader. These are essential leadership qualities for any setting, but they become amplified with remote work. If you set unclear goals in an office, you can easily clarify when your team has questions. This becomes more difficult when working remotely.

If you aren't great at hiring, you will notice these mistakes quickly in an office environment – but it's difficult to tell if you hired the wrong person in a remote setting. Additionally, you have to be great at delegating tasks and following up to make sure the work is being completed in a remote setting, because you can't physically see the process.

In a traditional office setting, peer pressure plays an impactful role in influencing your employees' behavior. When you remove the peer pressure, compensation becomes the biggest driving force, so you need to make sure your compensation system is rewarding the right behaviors.

If you're wondering about the final question's role in an office, it's actually quite simple. You need to build and maintain trust in your workplace, and this becomes more difficult in a remote setting. That's why it's important that you always follow through on your words.

The remote workplace is here to stay, and it may take some adjustment to become the same caliber leader that you were in a traditional office setting. If you ask yourself those five questions every day and make the necessary adjustments in the categories you fall short in, before you know it, you'll become a great remote leader.

Retain Top Talent By Teaching Them To Grow

Throughout the course of 2021, Americans left their jobs in droves due to a combination of factors. In fact, an analytics firm, Visier, estimates that 1 out of 4 workers left their jobs in 2021. If you own or operate a business, this news can be worrisome. One of the best ways to try to retain your employees is to coach and encourage them to grow so they don't feel stagnant and bored with their work.

If you don't know where to begin, you should start by evaluating your employees. Decide if they're a master in their role, are still growing or are just beginning. Keep an eye on your beginners and growers to ensure they are satisfied with their work. If they're not, have an open and honest discussion with them. For employees who have mastered their jobs, encourage them to try a new role or take on different responsibilities so they can learn new skills.

Increase Your Productivity With A Voice Assistant

Even before the pandemic, people were using voice assistants like Siri or Alexa to help them keep track of their day-to-day schedules. Now that so many people are working from home, these virtual assistants are more valuable than ever before. They can help boost your productivity to new levels if you use them properly.

Utilizing a voice assistant for these five tasks will help you increase your productivity while you work from home.

- Program your digital assistant to remind you of any of your meetings at least 10 minutes before they begin.

- Ask your digital assistant for news and weather updates to keep you away from unproductive websites.

- Create a to-do list and use your digital assistant to add and remove items.

- Have your digital assistant read, listen and respond to your e-mails.

- Create a morning and evening routine for yourself, then program your digital assistant to help you follow these routines. They can be programmed to wake you up, dim your lights, turn off computer screens and so much more to keep you on track.

"Obviously, we need to readjust to in-office meetings"

ASSIST

Co-Managed IT Services - Full Support for YOUR IT Department

No more backlog, unresolved tech issues, or overwhelmed IT staff.

With Hodgson Consulting & Solutions' Assist Co-Managed IT services, we overlay our proven process onto your current IT structure. We work at your side to support your important IT and business initiatives. With our technology expertise, we will work with your technology team to build a technology plan that's aligned with your business as well as help manage your day-to-day IT operations, where you can maximize your investment.

With Assist, our goal is to work with your IT department to increase the overall capabilities of the staff.

We can help you with:

- Technology Review
- Cloud & Hosting
- Product Procurement
- Managed Security
- Managed Backup
- Managed Infrastructure
- Help Desk Support
- Remote Support
- On-Site Service & Support

Key Benefits of Hodgson Consulting & Solutions' Assist:

Increased Productivity

With a co-managed approach, IT support is available 24x7 even if your in-house staff is on vacation or taking sick leave. This increased responsiveness can reduce downtime and in turn, increase employee productivity.

Lower Cost

Our co-managed IT service is provided for a fixed fee, giving businesses greater predictability of IT expenses as well as lower overall IT costs and reduced overhead.

Increased Security

Give you company access to the latest technology and IT best practices. This reduces the burden on your in-house staff of having to stay up-to-date of emerging IT security threats and ensures that your company has the best protection possible.

Contact Us for a FREE Consultation

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