

TECH TIPS

TECHNOLOGY INSIGHT THAT BUILDS BUSINESS



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Our Mission:

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



3 Great IT Resolutions For The New Year

As the new year kicks off, many business owners and entrepreneurs are making their New Year's resolutions. Most of these business owners will be focused on increasing profits or expanding growth, but it would be wise to focus on some IT- or tech-related resolutions as well. Making sure that you are up-to-date on the most recent tech and security measures can go a long way toward growing and protecting your business.

While many companies make goals or resolutions that they hope to achieve in the new year, plenty of businesses fail to meet these goals because they do not take the steps necessary to achieve them. It often takes time and determination to make these resolutions a reality, and business owners should not quit when the situations become stale or difficult.

Here are our three best IT and tech resolutions for business owners to make for the new year, and how to make sure you achieve them.

Employee Security Training And Creating A Security Safe Culture

If your employees have not had any security awareness training, you should make it your focus to ensure that everyone is informed about potential information security breaches. Research suggests that human error is involved in over 90% of security breaches. By providing security awareness training to your employees, you will teach them how to avoid mistakes that could leave the business at risk. Not only will this help your employees be more aware of security, but it will make your customers feel more comfortable and confident when working with your company.

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There are other benefits to holding security awareness training for your team, and one of the best is that you will be taking your first steps in creating a culture based around tech security. You will be introducing your team to the importance of information security, which they will effectively use to fortify your defenses. When new employees are brought in, set aside some time for them to have security awareness training so they are enveloped in the culture from day one. By putting together a plan where every employee is introduced to information security awareness, your company will be less at risk for breaches and threats made possible by human error.

Utilize A Managed Services Provider

The MSP industry has seen immense growth over the past five years. The market was valued at over \$152 billion in 2017 and is expected to rise to \$257 billion by the end of 2022. MSPs allow for predictable monthly costs and better security practices, but they truly have a plethora of benefits.

If your computer breaks or shuts down, MSPs have the ability to not only fix it but also go above and beyond the usual tech support. Some MSPs will work with your business to understand your goals and find better ways to achieve them. MSPs are also raising their tech game. Yes,

“MSPs allow for predictable monthly costs and better security practices, but they truly have a plethora of benefits.”

they can help with problems related to e-mail, web and file searching, but they are also available for more advanced needs, like cloud infrastructure management. If you're still working with a basic IT service, look into using an MSP instead. They will help with your usual tech problems while also providing you with the resources needed to achieve your goals.

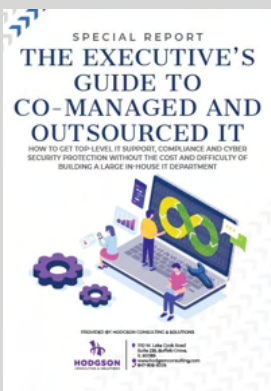
Back Up Your Data

Data is an essential part of any business, and it's imperative that every business owner makes an effort to back up their data. If important files are damaged or deleted or a disaster causes your business to lose important data, data backups can prevent business interruptions. It becomes even more important when dealing with clients' information.

Imagine that you're a customer who has been making transactions with a business for years. They may have your address, phone number, e-mail address and sometimes even your Social Security number, but one day, you call and they no longer have your information on file. You probably wouldn't feel too secure giving this company that information again if they already lost it the first time. This is how your clients will feel if they have to provide their information again after data loss that could have been prevented by backing up your data.

As you plan out your goals and resolutions to incorporate in 2022, don't forget to include IT and tech goals as well. Not only will they save you money in the long run, but they will also grant you peace of mind. Make a plan, overcome any obstacles and don't lose hope if it looks like you need more than a year to accomplish your goals.

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Reimagining Your Business for 2022

The pandemic has changed the way that many small businesses operate. They have had to pivot and adapt in order to survive in a time of immense change. Many have had to implement new strategies, while some have even had to adopt a new environment. The change has not been easy for anyone.

When the pandemic first hit, many small-business owners were faced with two choices. They could wait it out and hope that everything would return to normal before long, or they could create a better future at that moment and attempt to continue to grow. Sometimes changing your marketing isn't enough and you need to bring your business into a new light.

I have a friend named Jacob Limmer who owns Cottonwood Coffee, and he found a way to pivot his business and succeed during the pandemic. As the owner of a coffee shop business, Jacob knew that people would not be busting down his door at the beginning of the pandemic. Jacob owned two storefronts and an online store, so he knew that he would need to make some changes to survive.

He sent out a survey to his mailing list that asked what Cottonwood Coffee could offer to best support its patrons during this unprecedented time. The results came back, and it was astounding how many people requested something for "immunity." Jacob took this idea and ran with it by creating the Immune Booster Cold Brew. This allowed his customers to still get their coffee, but with an added bonus of a healthy supplement.

Even though Jacob had to close one of his storefronts, he is seeing success because he found a way to reimagine his business. He didn't wait around for things to get better. He took a risk that paid off and allowed him to stay in business.

If your business has faced difficulty and you're wondering if you should pivot and make a change to stay afloat, remember that you did not get this far only to get this far. You want to continue to grow and expand your business to its full potential. In order to get there, you may have to make some necessary changes.

5 Steps To Create A Successful Business Strategy To Achieve Any Goal



Success results from a solid strategy. Even the greatest ideas are of little value unless they are backed up by a practical and workable plan of action. The word "strategy" comes from an ancient Greek term that literally means to be a general, leading troops into battle. Setting up a good strategic plan involves 5 steps:

The first step is to translate your vision into measurable and achievable goals. You decide specifically what you want to accomplish during the next 5 to 10 years — those are your long-range goals. Next, you break those goals down into intermediate goals — things you wish to accomplish during the next 6 months or year. Then you break them down further into short-term goals covering the next month or 6 weeks.

The second step is to break your goals down into achievable objectives. Dr. Robert Schuller says, "Yard by yard, life is hard; inch by inch, it's a cinch." Working by objectives helps you concentrate on what's important, instead of spinning your wheels on those things that seem urgent but don't lead to your long-term goals. Objectives add purpose and direction to all your activities.

The third step is to set up your strategies for accomplishing your objectives. Strategies are the specific ways you will go about achieving your objectives. The more

clearly thought-out they are, the more effective they will be.

Fourth, you choose each task you must complete each day to achieve your goals. This is where most planning breaks down. We tend to leave it vague — thinking that, as long as we are working hard all the time, we are achieving our goals. Most people I talk with are extremely busy — and most of them are working hard to do things right. The problem is they are not doing enough of the right things — the things that will help them achieve their goals. It is not enough to merely list each task you need to do; you need to build the tasks into your schedule. So many hours each day should be dedicated to working on specific actions that will lead to accomplishing your definite objectives.

And, finally, build in the monitoring mechanisms that will help you keep track of your progress toward implementing your plan. It's one thing to have a "gut-level feeling" that you must be doing something right because you are always working hard. But it is far better to design simple mechanisms to let you know precisely how much progress you are making.

Look for a few key indicators that will help you stay on track, and monitor those like a doctor would monitor the vital signs of a patient. It doesn't matter how much activity is going on. What matters is how successful you are in achieving your objectives. One good example would be that you would target to contact 3 people each day to generate new business. At the end of the day, you'd know whether you have achieved that goal. Your plan is not complete until it has been communicated satisfactorily to every person in your organization who must help to implement it.

■ New Year, New Problems

More businesses are returning to on-location work, and hybrid meetings are becoming more prevalent. As meetings start to occur that host both remote and on-location employees, you may be wondering how to keep everything managed. Thankfully, there are a few things you can do to ensure that everyone feels heard and respected.

Instead of having everyone on-site use one camera, have them use their individual laptops or computers. This will reduce chaos and allow everyone an opportunity to speak without interrupting others. If this is not feasible with your company, you could assign someone to monitor the remote workers and pass along any questions or information to the employees working on-site. Having one-on-one meetings with remote workers and developing a

connected culture both go a long way toward making everyone feel comfortable and appreciated.

It will take time to perfect hybrid meetings, but with patience, understanding and a desire to improve, your meetings can run smoother than ever before.

■ Choosing A VPN This Year?

Virtual private network (VPN) technology is essential for securing the Internet safely, whether it be for work or pleasure. VPNs are one of the only ways you can have end-to-end safeguard encryption that keeps your information secure while browsing the Internet. If you don't currently use a VPN, you absolutely should. Here are a few things to consider before deciding on a specific VPN.

The VPN market is growing fast. It reached \$31 billion in 2021 and is slated to grow to \$90 billion

within the next six years. When choosing a VPN, you want to consider server locations, speed, security policy, whether the VPN has reliable encryption standards, device compatibility and so much more. Choosing a VPN should not be a half-second decision. Take your time and do your research before deciding on a service.

■ E-commerce Is The New Marketplace

If you're looking to start a new business or grow a current business that sells a particular product or service, you need to have a solid online shop. A new report from Digital Commerce 360 took a deep dive into e-commerce and the features that users think are necessary.

About 76% of respondents said that a detailed description is important if they are going to make a purchase. It was also reported that most customers want a convenient and speedy checkout procedure. The pandemic has made finding many products difficult, and 68% of respondents said that they would like websites to mark their products as out of stock when applicable.

There are many things that you can do to make online shopping a better experience for your customers. When deciding what features to include, look at it from the consumer's viewpoint and decide from there.

Good intentions last a month on average

