TECHNOLOGY TIMES

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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

What's New

We'd like to welcome Joseph Conley to the Direct Connect team.

Joe has an extensive background in IT, and for good reason, he's been around me all of his life. He is one of my four sons and a graduate from the Cleveland Institute of Art with a BFA in video game design.

He will be serving in dual roles. Primarily as a service technician, as well as assisting me in sales and product solutions.

On the technician side, he will be working directly with Ron and Mark while concentrating on the variety of managed security services that we provide.

On the sales side, he will help me in product research and solution development. This is an area that requires a strong knowledge of hardware, a natural attribute of his.

Joe will be a welcome addition to the growing environment we've created here at Direct Connect.

January 2022

This monthly publication provided courtesy of Jim Conley, President of Direct Connect Computer Systems.

Our Mission:
To empower our customers with the best-fit technologies, tailored and managed to suit their business needs, and to enhance their growth and success.

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,

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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.

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

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

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, 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.

Cartoon Of The Month

Good intentions last a month on average

How nice, a pop-up gym!

Until the end of January, then we go back to being an ice cream parlor.

... continued from Page 4

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.

Podcasts To Boost Your Productivity For The New Year

The New Year has arrived, so people are focused on meeting their resolutions. Whether it's business-related or personal, many people hope to be more productive and successful this new year. Everyone is different, and there is no tried-and-true way to boost productivity that works for everybody. You have to find what works best for you.

If you're unsure where to get started, here are five podcasts that will help you meet your resolutions and boost your productivity in 2022.

- **The Psychology Podcast With Scott Barry Kaufman**
- **NPR's Hidden Brain**
- **Where Should We Begin**
- **All In The Mind**
- **Speaking Of Psychology**

Reimagining Your Business

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.

Mike Michalowicz has always believed that he had the formula to success and has proved it on multiple occasions. He is the creator of Profit First, which is used by hundreds of thousands of companies across the globe to drive profit. He is the author of multiple books, including Get Different and The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur. Mike is a former small business columnist for The Wall Street Journal and served as a business makeover specialist for MSNBC. Mike currently leads two new multimillion-dollar ventures as he puts his latest research to the test. He also is a highly sought-after keynote speaker on innovative entrepreneurial topics.