

THE TECH CHRONICLE

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

What's New

It's estimated that 1 in 5 businesses will fall victim to some sort of cyber crime, and that there are over 82,000 new pieces of malware released each DAY! What's more, hacking and cyber crime are organized. They are also well funded, sometimes by governments. If you don't believe me, then maybe you'll believe the FBI.

Recently the FBI recommended that homes and small offices reboot their routers in order to thwart a Russian-created piece of malware.

The malware, called VPNFilter, has infected about 500,000 routers worldwide, by the FBI's estimate. They have taken preventative measures to secure the domain the malware is using to control the routers. However, they are advising that people reboot and update their routers to combat the infection.

If you are covered under our Comprehensive Care service, we will roll out updates and restart routers as needed to address the malware. If you are not covered, we recommend that you give our office a call to schedule an appointment. 608-755-1524



3 IT Investments You Should Never Skimp On

There's a disturbing trend underlying the business world's increased reliance on technology. No, we're not about to decry technology itself. Nor will we downplay the endless list of ways in which tech has enhanced business owners' ability to reach more prospects, build meaningful relationships with clients and make the previously labyrinthine tasks of yesterday seem positively mundane today. There's no denying that the Internet age has empowered companies of all sizes to do incredible things and that technology is forever transforming the way we do business. Today's savvy businesses are intertwined to an unprecedented extent with the technology they use.

But there's a problem that goes along with this increased dependence. Despite the inextricable relationship today's companies have with IT, the vast majority of them - SMBs in particular - are neglecting key aspects of their tech.

They're skimping where they shouldn't, cutting corners wherever possible and, as a result, leaving themselves open to a huge variety of potential disasters.

To avoid the pitfalls of our technology-dependent world, it's important to ensure you have a firm IT foundation. Here are three IT investments where you should avoid underspending or risk shuttering your business forever.

1. CYBER SECURITY

Across the tech industry, it has practically become trendy to point out how woefully underprepared SMBs are for modern crime. But it's true: according to the 2016 State of Cyber Security in Small and Medium-Sized Businesses report, a full 50% of all U.S. small businesses succumbed to cyber-attacks in 2015, a statistic that is rising and shows no sign of slowing down. Most small business owners assume

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This monthly publication provided courtesy of James Pearson, President of The Computer Center.

Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them.

-Steve Jobs

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Understanding GDPR

On May 25th, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) went into effect.

But, what is GDPR and how does it affect you?

GDPR is a set of standardized regulations that went into effect across Europe. Specifically, the laws affect the 28 countries of the European Union (EU). So, being a citizen of the U.S., or a non-EU country, what does that mean for you? First, any company that stores data that may be from one of the EU countries may be bound by these new regulations. So, if you are based in the U.S., but your company has EU offices, your organization will be governed by the GDPR.

Secondly, since more and more of our data is being stored in the Cloud, global companies are complying with these laws, regardless of where they, or their data centers, are located. Much like regulations dealing with financial, health care, government and education sectors, most data storage companies will be GDPR compliant as well.

This means that Microsoft, Google, and other international companies have adopted the GDPR compliance since they deal with data from EU countries. Even though you may not live in, or store data from, a country covered by the GDPR, compliance trickles down to you. You'll find that most companies are not creating a separate set of services for countries covered by GDPR and those that are not. Instead they are implementing the security features and tools across the board.

For those of us here in the U.S., it means we get the benefits of the extra security provided by this new regulation.

- ◆ Some of the data protected by the GDPR include:
 - Name
 - Physical attributes
 - Location data
 - Health information
 - Economic, cultural, or social identity of a person
 - Any identification number that may be assigned to you
 - Online identifiers such as your IP address

For more info: <https://www.eugdpr.org/>

5 Practical Ways To Learn Something New In Business

Based on my experience interviewing and advising over a thousand successful business leaders, I've come to the conclusion that great leaders aren't smarter, more hardworking or luckier than the rest of us. Most of their success comes down to the fact that they simply learn better than the rest of us.

The truth is that without too much cost or hassle, we can bolster our confidence and expertise to move toward the top of our field. Here are five practical ways to learn something new in business.

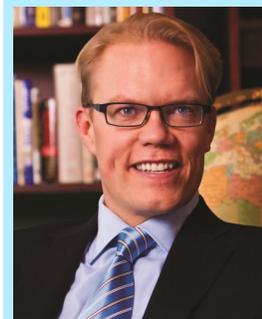
1. READ 10 BOOKS.

It's easy to start down the road toward mastering a topic. Go to Amazon, type in your chosen topic and read the 10 bestselling books that come up. Pay attention to the words and concepts that seem to matter the most. The total cost? About \$200.

2. GO TO THE BEST WORKSHOP ON THE TOPIC.

When I was learning about predictive analytics, I bought the book *Predictive Analytics* by Eric Siegel. I soon learned that the author hosted a huge conference on the topic under the same title, so I went to it as soon as I could. These meetups are an invaluable source of information no matter what you want to learn. The total cost is \$1,000 - \$15,000.

3. INTERVIEW 10-100 EXPERTS FOR ADVICE.



Geoff Smart is chairman and founder of ghSMART. Geoff is co-author, with his colleague Randy Street, of the New York Times bestselling book, Who: A Method for Hiring, and the author of the No. 1 Wall Street Journal best-seller, Leadocracy: Hiring More Great Leaders (Like You) into Government. Geoff co-created the Topgrading brand of talent management. He is the Founder of two 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations. SMARTKids Leadership Program™ provides 10 years of leadership tutoring and the Leaders Initiative™ seeks to deploy society's greatest leaders into government. Geoff earned a BA in Economics with honors from Northwestern University, an MA, and a PhD in Psychology from Claremont Graduate University.

A year ago, I decided I wanted to learn more about digital marketing. Many of our clients at the time were struggling with the increasing digitization of demand creation. Rather than interview 10 experts, I made a target list and used referrals to interview over 100 experts on the topic. People are happy to have a 30-minute discussion about their favorite subjects to help you learn and get oriented. You know you are beginning to grasp a topic when you start to hear the same buzzwords and pieces of advice. The total cost is \$0 if you interview by phone.

4. HIRE SOMEONE AS A MENTOR OR PARTNER.

You probably know a topic that an expert in another field would love to learn. Consider doing a "mentor swap" where you agree to exchange advice and pick each other's brains a couple times a year. The only thing better than having an expert mentor is hiring an expert full-time. The total cost for a mentor swap is \$0, but it costs much more to hire an expert full-time.

5. LEAD A PROJECT.

You've heard the expression, "The best way to learn something is to teach it." It's always a good idea to run a project in an area of interest. When I see clients dive into these, they're often an expert from the beginning, but running the project boosts their expertise significantly.

■ 3 Big Trends Businesses Need To Adopt Now

The fate of your business is intimately entwined with the way your organization utilizes technology. If you fail to stay abreast of the latest trends, you're letting the competition pull ahead. As we close out Q2, you need to keep an eye on the shifting digital landscape to give your business an edge.

One of the best ways to do that is to latch onto the continuous growth of your mobile market. According to Statista, more than 51% of web traffic now comes from mobile users. With this in mind, you need to start mixing up your marketing strategies to accommodate this newly mobile-centric world, no matter your industry.

But even as you do, you need to be aware of the growing prevalence of online threats to your business. According to an article published

in the Guardian, 90% of US SMBs don't use any safeguards to protect against the data breach of key customer info, and most assume they simply won't be the target of a cyberattack. It's important for you to realize that 70% of cyber-attacks are aimed at small businesses today, and you need to act accordingly.

One more way to take advantage of technological trends is to master augmented reality in the coming years. You can create virtual environments to promote and explain how to use your products and services so customers can engage with them wherever they are. *StartupNation.com*, 2/27/18.

■ How To Boost Your Productivity

Everyone wants to be more efficient at work, but few people actually know how. One way to motivate an entire team to get more done is to throw an "MVP" into the mix – the kind of person

who elevates everyone around them. Another is to avoid political discussions in the office; though engagement is critical in today's world, it only serves to derail conversations and induce conflict at work. Another option is to try standing up. Studies show that implementing standing desks throughout the office can improve productivity and health. Oddly enough, decorating your business with a few plants can have the same effect. *SmallBizTrends.com*, 3/13/18.

■ Back To Basics

Everyone worries about the newest scams and cybercrimes, but if you and your team can remember the basics, you'll have a big head start. Document your security policies, such as strong password requirements, requiring a VPN to connect remotely and Internet usage guidelines, and make them a part of every employee's training. You also should include strict penalties for violating this protocol.

A couple more basics: It's not a good habit to save files onto your computer if there is a location on the network or server where they can be saved. If you use websites or software that does not require regular password changes, set a calendar reminder to change the password yourself every other month. As with anything, a little prevention goes a long way. Remembering the essentials is the best thing you can do to protect yourself and your company.

