Is Your Tech Firm Conducting Quarterly Technology Reviews?

No matter the line of business you're in, outsourcing your IT services to a managed service provider (MSP) provides a world of benefits. Both your internal systems and your online presence will be optimized and streamlined, tech problems will be taken care of right away, and you'll have more time to focus on what matters.

Aside from providing excellent customer care and competency in their field, great MSPs employ the best IT experts, are there for you when you need them, stay up-to-date on new technology, and … they do one other important thing. They conduct Quarterly Technology Reviews.

What are Quarterly Technology Reviews?

Quarterly Technology Reviews or QTRs are meetings your IT services company regularly conducts with you to assess the effectiveness of your current tech investments and them, your managed service provider.

A QTR occurs quarterly or four times per year, and it's up to your MSP to book the appointment; you shouldn't have to. When you see that your MSP is taking the initiative with QTRs, it's a great sign that you're working with a leading company. At a QTR meeting, you'll be able to provide feedback to your MSP about the service they've been providing and the technology you've been investing in.

What are the specific benefits of a Quarterly Technology Review?

For you, the client, the benefits of QTRs are numerous. You'll have an open platform to discuss any bugs or issues you've been having with your technology or possible problems with computer systems, email, the website, etc. Just remember that for immediate problems, you shouldn't wait for the QTR and should merely contact your MSP right away — that's what they're there for.

In the end, if your MSP conducts QTRs with you, your business will see the following benefits:

- Improved current technologies and/or the implementation of new systems where needed
- Enhanced compliance with regulations and security
- Saved money when you limit spending where it's not required
- Improved productivity & streamlined efficiency

When will your first QTR meeting be as a new client?

Naturally, as a new client, you won't have a quarterly technology review right away.

Even after a few months post-contract signing, there just won't be enough time to verify that your new systems, technologies, and other implementations are working correctly and providing you with the necessary benefits.

Therefore, your MSP will likely schedule your first QTR for at least 90 days after you go live, but keep in mind that your MSP shouldn't wait too long.

Where are most QTRs held?

In a perfect world, you'd meet one-on-one, face-to-face with your MSP for your quarterly technology review. However, this won't necessarily be possible, and that's probably okay.

Instead, it's likely your first QTR will be face-to-face, if possible. If you're a large client, your MSP should definitely make this effort. After that, however, most QTRs are held via video or phone conference.

In the end, Quarterly Technology Reviews remain one of the absolute best ways to stay in touch with your MSP about the efficacy and benefits of your current technological investments. As you search for a high-quality managed service provider in your area, be sure to ask about QTRs. Those companies who provide them are likely to take a better interest in their clients' success — and that means good things for you.

6.8M Facebook Users Hit By New Photo Bug

Facebook has just announced that a Photo API bug gave app developers access to user photos outside of the scope intended for 5.6 million users. This includes granting apps access to Facebook Stories, Marketplace photos, and photos that were uploaded but not shared. The bug was in effect from September 13th to September 25th.

As of now, Facebook is working on releasing tools to allow app developers to determine if they were impacted by this bug, and will work with them to delete unauthorized photos. Facebook will also be notifying any users they suspect may have been affected.

Top 5 Cybersecurity Predictions For 2019

Cyber threats are a genuine danger for businesses, no matter their size or industry. Companies that face data breaches are likely to fail within months after the attack, according to the National Cyber Security Alliance. Security issues can ruin your reputation and cause expensive damage to your company.

In 2019, we are already predicting increased cyber crimes to steal more data and resources. The FBI reported that over $1.4 billion in losses were experienced by companies and individuals in 2017. These expenses come from increasing security, losing information, losing physical resources, ransomware payouts, scams and more. The most significant sources of cybercrime included:

- Email compromise
- Confidence fraud
- Non-payment or non-delivery scams
- Corporate data breach
- Investment scams
- Identity theft
- Advance fee scams
- Personal data breach
- Real estate/rental fraud
- Credit card fraud

Looking forward into 2019, we are preparing to face some of the biggest and hardest attacks yet. Hackers are working to build faster and smarter tools that get around the security systems and regulations that organizations and companies have in place. Companies have to be prepared for cybercrimes that could wreak havoc on their customers or business. Most industries have strict compliance and regulations to keep data safe and can face fines or even jail time if they are not diligent in their cybersecurity efforts. Here are the five major cybersecurity trends we expect to see in 2019:

Multi-Factor Passwords

The password alone is becoming increasingly easy for hacker entry. Fingerprints, ear scans and even social security numbers are all increased measures of security to help battle cybercrime. Using multi-factor passwords is going to be a crucial part of security for 2019 for both personal data and organizational strategies. A large amount of data breach occurs due to human error or negligence so multi-factor passwords can help decrease some of those occurrences.

Data Privacy and GDPR

The EU pushed businesses everywhere when they required the adaptation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Many companies and organizations that didn't have dealings in the EU started making changes to prepare for the level of modifications expected so they wouldn't be scrambling to catch up later. The regulations that went into effect this past May are still going to have a significant impact on 2019.

The Rise of Cryptojacking

Last year, ransomware cost over $1billion in damage, but we see a shift towards crypto jacking as the more popular attack. Ransomware takes a lot of research, social engineering and development. In many cases, the payments have gotten smaller because companies, educational institutions and organizations are refusing to pay the ransom at all. Cryptojacking is stealing cryptocurrencies by leveraging the computers of an unsuspected user without their knowledge or permission.

When a cyber criminal puts the crypto mining program into effect (often in a JavaScript), the system will slow it's processing power as it also operates the mining efforts. This can cause whole systems to falter, leading to sluggishness or downtime for businesses. Best case means lost productivity, but a worst case might bean major blackouts if the attack occurs on electrical utility computers or huge issues for patients if the attack is happening to a hospital. This method of cybercrime is less time consuming to set up, more accessible for the hacker to implement, provides a higher payout and often is harder to track.

AI Attacks

We are seeing a heightened increase in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) that cybercriminals are using to focus their attacks. Hackers are using these systems to train and fine-tune their own programs with malicious intent while maintaining a strategic distance.

IoT Regulation

The Internet of Things (IoT) is a grouping of intelligently connected systems that might include vehicles, devices, appliances, electronics, software, connectivity and actuators. These primarily are unregulated and we expect 2019 to be the year when the security issues here may finally be addressed. This may require certifications or a governmental agency to step in and formulate laws. With increased connectivity, the threat of IoT security breaches are genuine public safety concerns and shouldn't be taken so lightly. Companies that produce these connective devices and software should already be carefully considering these concerns and how to best keep the users protected.

We know tech threats are a genuine issue for your business. Outsourcing tech support or tech help is one way to ensure you have all of your bases covered. If you need help implementing security, contact us today. We offer the strategies, technology and expertise to keep you protected!

10 Important Tips For Meeting Accessibility Standards With Email

When you launch an email campaign, you want your message to be read and understood by as many people as possible, and one way to do that is by making your emails accessible to people with disabilities. Those with visual, cognitive, auditory, or mobility impairments have special needs that can be addressed by adhering to some simple practices and assistive techniques to ensure that your message can reach them too. Failing to take steps to include these individuals is not only considered insensitive these days, it's legally required in many countries, and more to the point, it also costs your business.

Why Email Accessibility Is Important

There are a lot more disabled people in the U.S. and globally than those who aren't affected by it personally realize. According to the National Institutes of Health, 37.5 million American adults, or 15%, have hearing loss, 1.3 million are blind, and another 2.9 million have low vision. The Centers for Disease Control says that 25% of adults in the U.S. experience some type of disability, and the World Health Organization states that hundreds of millions of additional people around the world are disabled.

From a business perspective, it has been estimated that people with disabilities in the U.S. have $1 trillion in total income and more than $220 billion in disposable income. That makes them a demographic that most businesses can't afford to ignore, and if you're not practicing email accessibility, you're missing out on a big potential market.

So how can you start making your emails more user-friendly and understandable to those with disabilities? Here are ten methods you can start using right away.

10 Tips For Meeting Email Accessibility Standards

• Create concise and straightforward content. This is something you should be doing for the benefit of all your readers. Stay away from language that's too technical and trendy business jargon that can distract readers away from your message. It's also a good idea to use very clear subject titles to help those using assistive technologies like screen readers understand what the email is about, and to include a link to a plain text version of the email.

• Use a larger font size. This can be very helpful for those with low vision and for dyslexia sufferers too. Aim for at least 14 pixels or larger for the best results.

• Consider your use of colors. The use of color can be important for branding and capturing attention, but it can be a problem for those with vision impairment. Text and other types of content need to have a certain amount of contrast against a background color to be visible, with the accepted standard being a ratio of 4.5:1. You can check your emails for the right contrast on any page with this handy online tool.

• Break up text content with images. You probably already know that it's good form to keep your paragraphs short and to use subtitles, but placing images that represent a visual depiction of what's being conveyed in the text between longer paragraphs can help to increase engagement and message reinforcement for all your readers and also help those with disabilities to understand. Keep in mind that if you use animation or graphics that flicker or flash like a strobe that it can cause seizures in people with certain disorders.

• Use alternative text for images. Alt text is an attribute that can be added to an email to display a box with a text description of what an image is for those who can't perceive them.

• Use mobile accessibility designs. With so many people using mobile devices these days, your emails should be mobile friendly for viewing on smartphones and tablets. You can make them even more accessible to those with disabilities by including the ability to easily resize content without using third-party technology and by using large target areas for your CTA buttons.

• Use HTML5 semantic elements. Use the same heading and paragraph tags that you would use to render content on a regular web page to make your text clearer and more easily understood.

• Use "presentation" in layout tables. It's common practice to use tables for layout and formatting purposes in emails, and you can easily make them more accessible by adding the element role="presentation". This tells any assistive technology to read the content but to ignore the table properties.

• Include a text description for hyperlinks. Someone using a screen reader won't know where a hyperlink is taking them if the text just reads 'click here'. Adding text to describe the content of the landing page will let them decide if they want to click the link or not.

• Consider adding transcripts and captions to videos. This is essential for those with hearing and vision impairments and also allows for private viewing or reading in situations where having the sound up is impractical, and when someone wants to understand the video transcript for deeper comprehension and consideration.

Creating emails that are more accessible to people with disabilities is not only considerate to your current or potential customers, but it's also just good business practice. You can learn more about best practices in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). You should also make use of this helpful checklist, and take advantage of this list of evaluation tools to test your emails.

Quotables

"Times and conditions change so rapidly that we must keep our aim constantly focused on the future."
Walt Disney

"Success is not final; failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."
Winston S. Churchill

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Ring In The New Year!

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Hurry, offer good through Jan 31.

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1024 X 786?

Carl was never sure about his New Years resolutions...

FUNNY BUSINESS

Nailed I.T. by Gabe Clogston

SHOULD WE BE WORRIED THAT EVERY TIME WE ASK ALEXA TO PICK A MOVIE, SHE PICKS "TERMINATOR 2"?

JANUARY 2019
SPECIAL DAYS

1 • New Year's Day
4 • World Braille Day
14 • Clean Off Your Desk Day
21 • Martin Luther King Jr. Day
26 • Australia Day
28 • Data Privacy Day