



HOLIDAY EDITION

Tech Times

Don't Let a Disaster Destroy Your Holidays

The festive season is fast approaching, and it is a well-deserved opportunity to celebrate with friends and family. However, the joy of the holidays can quickly turn tragic if you are not careful. Emergency room visits and the number of calls to first responders see a sharp increase during the final few weeks of the year. It is possible to avoid a holiday disaster by following a few simple guidelines to help safeguard you and your family.

Avoiding Decorating Disasters

Inspect your holiday decorations before putting them out. Even if you took the time to double check your decorations before storing them, look again. Check for frayed wires, loose connections, broken bulbs, and other fire hazards.

Stay away from candles. While no one can deny that real flames add a magical warmth to your home, burning candles can significantly increase the chance of a house fire. You are more at risk if you have young children or pets at home. There are many LED candle lights which offer a similar, but much safer, candlelight effect.

Don't leave your decorations on the entire night. Besides saving energy and money, using a timer switch to turn your decorations off at a reasonable time each evening can prevent a fire from breaking out while you sleep. Homeowners who have plans to go away for the holidays should completely unplug decorations until they return home.

Don't Cook Up a Disaster

Keep kids out of harm's way. Cooking with your kids during the holidays can be a great experience. Prevent little ones from being injured by ensuring they stay away from the stove and never allowing them to use sharp knives. Instead, give them simple, safe tasks like kneading dough or decorating cookies.

Watch your food temperatures. Many cooks only cook large roasts or whole turkeys during the holidays. For cooks with less experience, it is easy to undercook the meat resulting in serious illnesses. Always follow a recipe and use a meat thermometer to ensure the food thoroughly cooked.

Make sure your stove and oven are off. It is easy to become distracted and forget to turn appliances off. Do yourself a favor and double check before going to bed for the night.

Keeping Healthy and Secure During Holiday Travels

Give yourself plenty of travel time. Driving during the holidays often means huge delays, so leave early enough so you won't need to rush to get to where you are going on time. Take the time to plan out food and bathroom breaks before hitting the road. This step is particularly helpful if you are traveling with children or other passengers who may need special considerations.

Be extra careful when driving in neighborhoods. During vacations from school, expect to see more children outside at all hours of the day and night. Reduce your driving speed and stay alert for people who may dart out in front of your vehicle.

Even one drink may be too much. If you are planning to attend holiday parties where they serve alcohol, imbibe responsibly and never drive unless you are completely sober. It is always a better idea to have a designated driver or use an alternative means of getting home to avoid a life-changing accident.

Keep these tips in mind this holiday season, and we wish you a joyful time full of beautiful memories.

How to Build Your Business Forecast Using Microsoft Excel

Understanding your past financial data is essential to forecasting for the future. Without analysing the data, your emotions or your opinion of what you'd like to happen with your business in the future are likely to colour your forecast. One easy way to use your past data to predict your business future is to build a financial prediction using Microsoft Excel.

How to make an economic forecast using Microsoft Excel

1. Select your past sales data in Excel. The first step in creating your financial business forecast is to select the previous sales data that you wish to use. In most cases, you'll choose the past three to five years. However, if a singular event, like the Stanley Cup Finals or the Winter Olympics being in town, dramatically impacted your sales and is likely to repeat in the future, your forecast will be more accurate if you leave that year (or at least that period) out of the data you use for your projections.

2. Click on Forecast Sheet on the Data tab. The next step is to click on "forecast sheet" located on the tab marked "data". It's located at the top of the page on the left side.

3. Enter the required information and hit Create. Next, you'll need to enter the necessary information, such as the time period you'd like to forecast and, finally, hit create. You'll have a forecast report projecting the sales and/or income into the period you selected.

How to use your forecast report to make smart business decisions

What can your forecast report be used for? If you know what your sales and income are likely to be for the next quarter or next year, you can make sure that you have the inventory, raw materials, staff and marketing that you need to support that level of sales. You can also use this report to discuss funding with your bank or another lender.



Cybersecurity Corner:

Encryption – What You Really Need To Know

In today's digitally driven world, far too many personal and business devices are left unsecured. These devices don't leverage strong passwords and fail to have the encryption needed to protect vital data. Whether companies choose to store data in public, private, or hybrid clouds, they should always ensure that the data is encrypted before it leaves their devices or networks. Additionally, when employees think that "this data isn't important," they are creating the weak links that hackers need to successfully infiltrate a device (or network) and subsequently steal unencrypted data, upload malware attacks, and otherwise wreak havoc on unsuspecting businesses.

Why Should Businesses Encrypt Devices?

The primary reason that businesses need to encrypt all devices is due to the sensitive data that they hold. Take, for example, Amarillo, Texas which said that one of the companies in charge of a security payroll audit for the city lost a flash drive containing city employees' names, bank deposit information, birthdays, social security numbers, and addresses.

Secure Device Configuration

When devices are not correctly configured, then it doesn't matter if your company has robust security protocols. With this in mind, securing devices is made easier when your business follows these vital steps:

- Lockdown any services, including remote management systems, that you are not using.
- Disable and/or change the default settings on ports.
- Prohibit the use of outdated web technologies. In this vein, Java, NPAPI, and Plugins need to be kept up to date to avoid any potential security vulnerabilities.
- Create strong passwords.
- Leverage encryption for any and all business data and devices.

It is important to note that you must complete all of the above steps. For example, if you use a strong password, but fail to properly encrypt your device, then it could still be subject to theft or hacking attempts. Fortunately, there are three additional steps that you can take to further protect your vital business data and devices.

3 Steps To A Strong Configuration

Securing your essential business data is made easier when you complete the following three steps.

1. Strong Passwords And Encryption — Did you now that in 2017 81 percent of hacking-related breaches were due to stolen (or weak) passwords? In this vein, you must ensure that your employees are following password best practices. It is especially crucial that sensitive data sent via email or stored on the cloud is appropriately encrypted.

2. Endpoint Protection — Endpoint protection will require you to complete plug-in and browser updates, use an up to date anti-virus software, and implement a proven use Data Execution Prevention (DEP) and use Endpoint Threat Detection and Response (ETDR) that has been customized for your business needs.

3. Restrict The Number Of Login Attempts — When an employee has an infinite number of login attempts, then their "strong password," is made null-and-void. Instead, you should limit the number of login attempts to business devices or networks. As an added level of protection, you should ensure that employees can only access portions of your system from approved devices.

The Bottom Line: Take The Steps Needed To Encrypt Data And Devices

If you want to ensure that your business data, devices, and networks remain secure, then you need to use the proper encryption methods. Through endpoint protection, a restricted number of login attempts, secure passwords, and encryption best tactics, you can keep your vital business data safe from hacking attempts.

Google Medic Update Aftermath: Clear Steps to Recover Ranking

Experts estimate that as many as 42% of websites may have been impacted by Google's Medic update that dropped mid-summer. And, as with so many Google algorithm changes, it came out of nowhere, leaving a wake of destruction.

Did you see your own company website's ranking plummet as a result of the Medic Update? Here's what you need to know to determine if you were affected and how to fix damage from the medic update.

Were You Impacted By Medic Update?

Do you want to know the truth? You very likely were impacted in some way even if you didn't feel the brunt of it. It's known as the "Medic Update" because it disproportionately affected health-related websites early on. But as the waves continued to roll, other industries and sites felt the aftermath:

- Fashion
- e-Commerce
- Local businesses
- Affiliate marketing websites
- Among others

Chances are that you fall into one of these categories. If you saw your search engine rankings dip — even slightly — in August 2018 with little to no recovery, you've very likely felt the wrath of Medic. Like many updates, it's rolling out in sections so the decline may not be over.

If you take steps to adapt to the Medic Update, you have the potential to outrank the many websites that don't. You could actually come out better than you were before when you learn how to fix damage from the medic update.

Step 1: Align Content with Searcher Intent

Before websites were impacted by the medic update, searching for a product or service may have sent you straight to a sales page. But this doesn't reflect the modern buyer's journey. Google knows that. This appears to be at least one thing that this algorithm change attempted to rectify.

70% of the buying decision is made before a person reaches a sales page. The Medic updates reflect this by pulling up more informational pages that help a potential customer make that decision. If your website strategy largely revolved around the end of the buyer's journey (sales), it's time to put more focus on helpful content like blog posts, videos and interactive tools on your website.

Step 2: Utilize Google Shopping Ads

Ad clicks don't directly impact your search engine ranking. But they do help you stay top of mind and build brand awareness over time when combined with a comprehensive brand awareness strategy.

Google shopping ads have enjoyed a 47% increase in visibility year over year. Don't blame Google. It's one of the main ways they make money. Increasing your pay per click (PPC) marketing budget will help you take advantage of this increased visibility and restore organic ranking indirectly.

Step 3: Check Your Link Profile

The number and quality of inbound links is still a known ranking factor. Relevant links from high authority websites help establish with Google that your company has an authoritative website.

But Google search is getting smarter every year. It can more easily spot unnatural links that were likely purchased or otherwise unscrupulously acquired to manipulate your ranking. The aftermath for sites using questionable link-building strategies was swift and brutal.

It's time to revisit your links using Google Search Console and more advanced link analysis tools like Ahrefs, SEMrush or Moz. Look for links coming from low authority and spammy websites. Disavow them using Google Disavow Tool.

Step 4: Be Clear About Ownership

Do you have a sneaky agenda for your website? You probably don't. But some websites do. They leave it unclear who owns the website. For example, a business could create what appears to be a 3rd party review website and then review their own products. That's not full disclosure.

Learn how to fix damage from the medic update on sites where ownership is unclear. Add your contact information to every header or footer. Or create a detailed "About Us" and "Contact" page. Make sure every page on any owned site has a link to these pages.

Step 5: Build Credibility

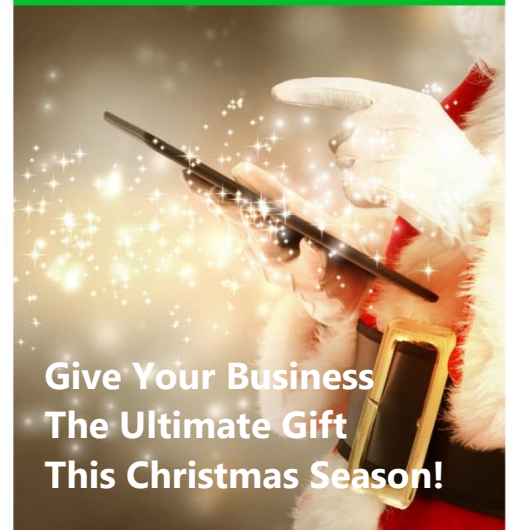
Some of those most impacted by medic update was giving health advice when it was unclear what credentials they had to do so. But this applies to any industry.

Consider adding a full, short bio on each blog post or informational page. Clearly, state the education and/or experience that qualifies the person to write and publish this content.

How to Fix Damage from the Medic Update

The Medic Update hit a lot of websites hard. But the good news is that when you adapt by applying these steps, you can come out on top. To learn more about marketing, follow our blog.

December Special



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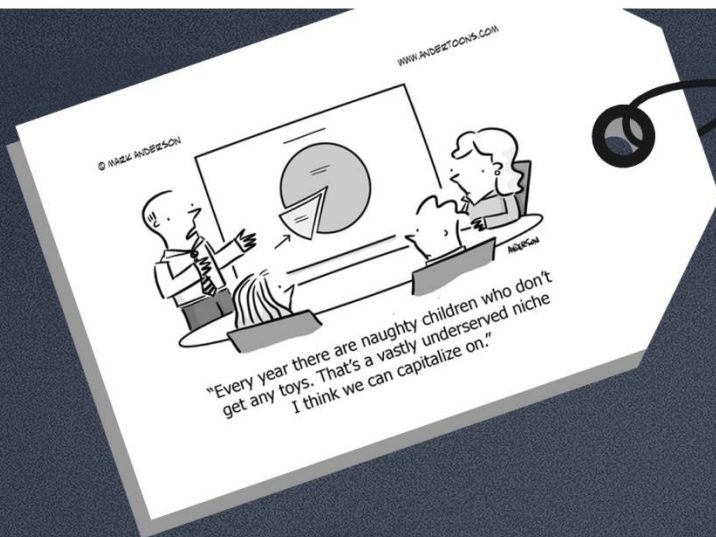
Quotes of the Month

*"The only safe ship in a storm is
leadership."*
Faye Wattleton

*"The art of leadership is saying no,
not yes. It is very easy to say yes."*
Tony Blair

*"Leaders live by choice, not by
accident."*
Mark Gorman

Funny Business



DECEMBER 2018 SPECIAL DAYS

- 7 • Pearl Harbor Day
- 11 • National App Day
- 17 • Wright Brothers Day
- 25 • Christmas Day
- 26 • Boxing Day
- 31 • New Year's Eve



CHRISTMAS LOADING...

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Aveir Technology
1400 S. Virginia St. Suite B
Reno, NV 89502
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www.aveir.com

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