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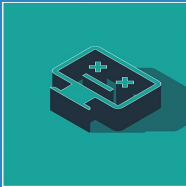
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Broken Computer? Do These Things Before Taking It to the Shop



Try as we might, we can't prevent all computer issues from occurring—for instance, there's not much that we can do if a stick of RAM dies, at least, not remotely. However, if you're stuck with a broken computer and need to bring it in for repair work, there are a few things we recommend...



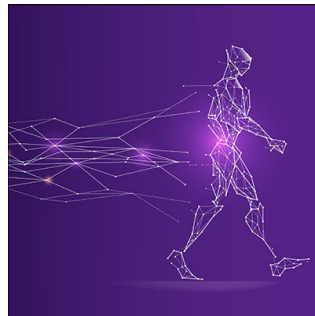
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About Virtual Business Solutions

We're in this business to help other small businesses grow and move forward. It's as simple as that. We're driven by the philosophy that if we help local businesses solve their IT issues so they can become more profitable and successful, then we will inherently grow along with them.

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Growth of Artificial Intelligence is the Next Big IT Trend



For better or worse, the way information technology is being used has come to define the way that businesses run. The most noteworthy companies are the ones using their data to their advantage and utilizing cutting-edge tools to facilitate efficient processes and productivity while managing their costs. One technology is giving more and more organizations the freedom to accomplish their goals and automate more of their mundane processes: Artificial Intelligence

AI Explained

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the incorporation of technologies that learn as they are used. Today's AI aren't sentient cyborgs ready to serve (or exterminate) human beings, but that doesn't mean the current AI isn't useful—it can do a lot for a small business, but it usually comes in the way of a feature rather than a whole platform.

For the enterprise business, AI is now a fully-fledged option for a lot of tasks, but for the small and medium-sized business (SMB) there is less to be done. Why? It's simple, AI, as useful and efficient as it is, is really expensive. Not only do you need strong hardware that runs AI, you also need support for it, meaning you need coders and other technicians that understand the ins and outs of how the technology works. There simply isn't a breadth of affordable and knowledgeable technicians available today. This is sure to change though.

How Can My Business Utilize AI?

As mentioned previously, if a small business is going to utilize AI, it will likely do so as a feature in another product. For the small business there are four places AI makes sense right now. They are:

Customer Service/Support

The development of chatbot technology using AI-integrated customer service representatives can not only save your business a lot of money on its support costs, it can build

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Important Cybersecurity Tips for Anyone



Whether you're referring to ransomware, phishing, data theft, spoofing, any of the many forms of cybercrime, it is something that all businesses need to prepare themselves for. While different business sizes will have differing scales to contend with, these kinds of preparations will involve the same basic principles. To help you best defend your company against cybercrime, here are a few tips based on those principles.

Consider What You are Clicking On

One of the most tempting things about using a computer is to click on a link to see where it goes. The trouble is, it is very simple to be fooled this way, and hackers know it.

Make it a habit to always pause a moment to reconsider a link, checking the URL that should pop up to tell you where it will take you by hovering your cursor over it.

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Technology That You Don't Need to Pay Attention To



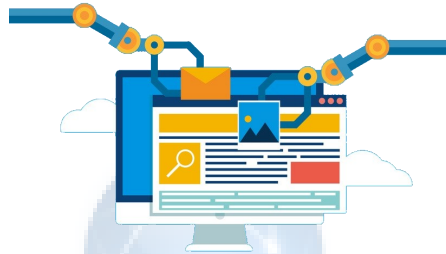
The most successful businesses are those that are always seeking to improve what they offer—

oftentimes, taking a successful element and simply making it more efficient to deliver. In the past, this basically meant that businesses needed to have their employees work more quickly. However, today's improved technology and the automation that it makes possible have delivered a much more consistent option.

Automation is the strategy that many modern solutions incorporate to assist them in being more productive. Basically, rather than relying on the user to carry out a (usually rote, but necessary) task, software kicks in to activate the process without any additional input. As

our technology has improved, the capabilities that these solutions offer have increased and allowed greater and greater processes to be automated.

As you can imagine, this helps businesses see a better return by optimizing how their time is spent, freeing up their employees to work on revenue-generating tasks.



Automation in Action

The kind of tasks that are being automated are the kind that aren't the most effective way that an employee could spend their time. Applied to save time, automation can be beneficial to your

entire company, with benefits that build consistency, efficiency, and even the job satisfaction of your workers. It really is no wonder that automation has seen the growth it has.

Here are just a couple simple ways that you can use automation to benefit your business:

Simplified Customer Support

How much time does your team spend answering the same questions or answering calls that just need to be routed to someone else? While each interaction may only take moments of their time, these moments can really add up. Chatbots equipped to handle frequently asked questions and phone system directories can help eliminate the time...



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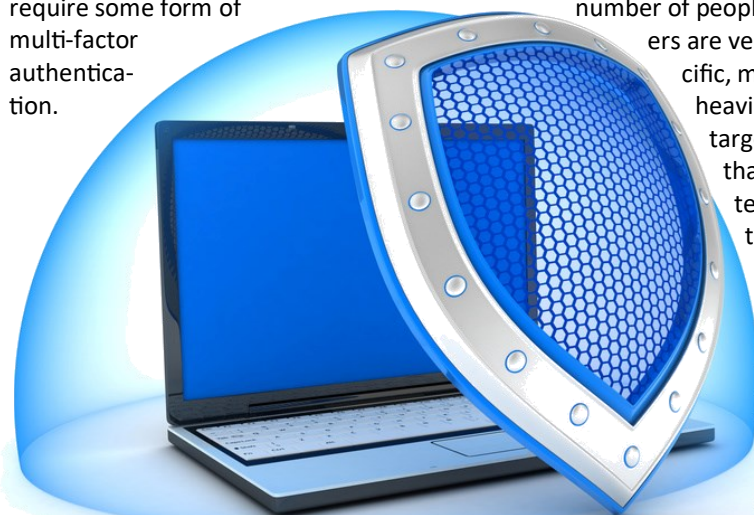
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Keep Access Under Control

All your software needs to be properly reinforced against unauthorized access, meaning that you need the protections necessary to defend your digital assets as well as your workplace's physical network infrastructure.

In addition to locking doors and requiring access codes for entry, make sure that any devices are password protected and require some form of multi-factor authentication.



Remember You Can Be Tricked

To support their use of misleading links, cybercriminals will also write emails that make these links seem to be legitimate. This practice—known as phishing—has steadily grown in popularity as a very effective way to coerce a target into trusting a link or scaring them into action.

While some phishing attacks are very vague and meant to fool the largest number of people possible, others are very direct and specific, meant for a single heavily researched target. Make sure that your entire team is aware of this possibility and knows to confirm incoming requests through another means of communication.

Double Down on Security

Naturally, all your devices need to have onboard protection against threats as well, in the form of an antivirus program that is frequently updated to add more threat definitions. Require the use of a virtual private networking program (VPN) each time that the Internet is accessed. There are many ways to make sure that all the little holes in a security strategy are at least acknowledged (if not resolved outright), you just need to be sure that you have them all actively in place.

At Virtual Business Solutions, we're able to assist you with implementing any of these safeguards and can answer any other questions you may have. To learn more, give us a call at (504) 840-9800 ext. 105.



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support availability that is difficult with human customer service representatives and can engage as well or better than many human customer service professionals. Chatbots are set up using frequently asked questions and typical answers and can learn how to interact with customers and give them the most appropriate response.

Cybersecurity

More people are utilizing digital means to make purchases today than ever before. This gives hackers and other threat actors the environment to take full advantage. AI can be used to review behavior patterns for users on all platforms of the digital construct. Identifying what the typical behavior is throughout

systems on a network and then comparing it to real time situations, the AI can recognize small deviations that could be threats, flagging them or removing them if need be.

Onboarding

One of the most useful AI tools is actually in the human resources arena of onboarding new talent. First, finding talent that matches your needs is often difficult, as the traditional strategy of holding a series of interviews can often be a giant waste of time and money. With AI, you lack the bias humans often have when it comes to looking into candidates. It will find the metrics you are looking for to fill a position and move the hiring process along fast.

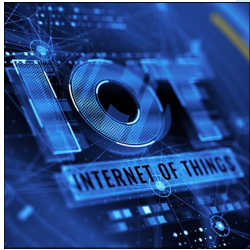
Improving Relationships

AI is getting more advanced all the time and one of the most advanced ways a small business can utilize an AI system is in its sales and marketing processes. The name of the game is to attract the right type of customer that will buy your products and services. For humans that work in these areas, they typically have different ideas on how to do this. AI-fueled software like a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform can help sales and marketing do everything from finding the right message that will result in engagement to help track leads, and even see them through the...



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IoT Strategies that Won't Put Your Business at Risk



The Internet of Things is growing at a rapid pace, and you have to take it into account if you want to maintain a safe and effective office infrastructure. Thankfully, you don't have to do this alone; we're here to help you with three key tips to help you get the most out of your Internet of Things devices without putting your organization at risk.

Consider Their Functionality

When it comes to the Internet of Things, there are countless opportunities to implement new solutions for your organization. Many appliances, for example, would now be considered Internet of Things devices,

IOT



as they can connect to the Internet to make controlling them much easier and more efficient. Certain tasks can even be automated through the use of Internet of Things devices. Whatever you decide to use the IoT for, be sure that it is contributing to your operations in a meaningful way.

Work to Optimize Security

One effective way to protect your infrastructure from IoT devices is to partition off a portion of it specifically for these types of devices. The reasoning for doing this is simple: IoT devices are typically not the most secure devices, and because of their nature, they tend to share data with each other. By setting up a network where they can thrive, you can protect the other, more important assets that your business holds. Furthermore, we recommend implementing some sort of access control for your IoT devices or protocol for bringing them to the workplace. This helps to limit the damage they can do should something happen.

Are They Necessary?

Finally, the million-dollar question; are the IoT devices

you want to implement even necessary for your business to thrive? The answer to this question is not always obvious and may take some diving to figure out, but the long and short of it is that the more connected devices are on a network, the more at-risk that network will be. It also means that the network will gradually grow and become more complicated as time wears on, and more complicated networks tend to experience greater numbers of problems. You should only be implementing IoT devices on your network if they are providing you a real return on your investment or are sufficiently streamlining operations.

Virtual Business Solutions can help your business ensure that the Internet of Things doesn't sink your business in any sense of the word. Whether you are simply trying to protect your infrastructure or streamline operations, we can help you determine the best path forward for your business. To learn more, reach out to us at (504) 840-9800 ext. 105.



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What are My Options for Connecting a Second Monitor?



Laptops are pretty great, I think we can all agree, simply

due to their portability. Having said that, the one-screen situation that laptops bring with them can certainly get in the way of productivity—particularly for those who are used to using more than one. Let’s discuss why an additional display is so helpful, and what your options may be for hooking one up to your laptop.

Why an Additional Screen is Worth It

First off, if you haven’t used a second monitor to work yet, it’s time to get on board. The average business workstation really should have two displays, simply because it has shown to provide a significant boost to productivity. Instead of rearranging tabs and windows each time you need something else in focus, double the working area gives you considerably more options. Need to check your email pretty consistently throughout the day? Have it up on one of your monitors, while your current task is up on the

other. Need to check data? Have a historical record on one side, with the new version on the other.

Honestly, once you start using multiple monitors, just having access to one feels restrictive.

Plus, adding an additional monitor doesn’t have to be a bank-breaking investment—provided the monitor you’re choosing isn’t too expensive (which, for business purposes, it usually doesn’t need to be). The other hardware you have has probably already been configured to add an additional monitor by adding at least one additional port.

How to Check That Your Laptop Supports Multiple Monitors

In terms of hardware, there are a few questions you need to ask yourself:

- **Does my device’s graphics card support multiple monitors?** Nowadays, this is simple enough to determine. All you need to do is visit the manufacturer of the graphics card’s website, find your particular model of graphics card, and check the specifications to see if multiple monitors are

supported. Of course, IT can help you with this.

- **Does your laptop have the right port available?** Naturally, you’ll need a way to plug your additional display(s) into your device. We’ll cover this in deeper detail in a moment.

Once you’ve confirmed that your laptop can support more than one monitor input, all you really need to do is plug in your additional display and—once Windows either prompts you to set it as an additional screen or just does it itself—you’re off to the races.

Otherwise, you can access your **Settings**, and from there, navigate through **System, Display**, and scrolling down to **Multiple displays**, adjust the provided drop-down menu so that **Extend these displays** is selected.

Which of These Ports Can Be Used?

When it comes to attaching an additional monitor, there are a few different ports to...



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Virtual Business Solutions has been serving the Metairie area since 1999, providing IT Support such as technical helpdesk support, computer support and consulting to small and medium-sized businesses. It’s always been our goal to provide enterprise-level IT practices and solutions to the small business sector, with small business prices. Our experience has allowed us to build and develop the infrastructure needed to keep our prices affordable and our clients up and running.

Tech Trivia

70% of companies use their desktops for over 5 years before decommissioning them.

Virtual Business Solutions

808 North Causeway
Metairie, Louisiana 70001

Voice: (504) 840-9800 ext. 105



newsletter@vbs-no.com



facebook.vbs-no.com



linkedin.vbs-no.com



blog.vbs-no.com

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