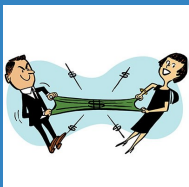


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- How Your Small Business Can Benefit from the Internet of Things
- Understanding the Vulnerabilities and Exploits You'll Face
- Getting the Most Out of Your Cybersecurity Budget
- 5 Reasons Why You Need Managed IT
- Remote Work May Have Caused a Major Uptick in IoT Attacks
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**Getting the Most Out of Your Cybersecurity Budget**



Despite hearing about a constant stream of cyberattacks over the past few years—most

of which cause millions of dollars of damage to businesses—it might still be difficult for you to justify spending a lot of money on your business' cybersecurity plans. There is a finite amount of capital to go around and many times CIOs and network administrators will...



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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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**How Your Small Business Can Benefit from the Internet of Things**

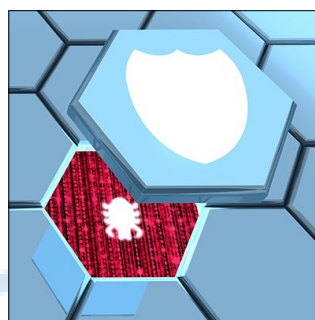


The Internet of Things (IoT) is one of the most interesting technology markets emerging for small and mid-sized businesses for some time. It can cut down on a lot of time and effort in several different functions of your business. We'd like to spend some time this month taking a look at some of the ways small and mid-sized businesses are utilizing the IoT.

Before we get into individual use cases, we should admit that the concept of IoT devices over the years has been connected to a wide range of cybersecurity issues. Obviously, this should bring up some concerns, but when implemented properly and safely, they can bring a lot of value and automation to your business. We can't stress enough how important it is to have an IT professional who knows how to integrate new tools into an environment that has extremely important data flowing in and out of it regularly.

*(Continued on page 3)*

**Understanding the Vulnerabilities and Exploits You'll Face**



We understand that cybersecurity can be difficult to think about at times because of the terminology thrown around by industry professionals, but we want to do our part to help clear up some of the confusion. Today, we're going to discuss the difference between vulnerabilities and exploits, as well as how your organization can do everything it can to ensure that both are minimized on your company network.

**What Are Vulnerabilities?**

Vulnerabilities are cracks in the code of the various solutions your business uses throughout its day-to-day operations. Hackers can use these cracks to gain access to a system. Unfortunately, vulnerabilities are something that the development and cybersecurity communities have had to, and will continue to, deal with, and there is no way to really stop it. Let us explain.

Sometimes vulnerabilities go undiscovered for a long period of time, only surfacing after they are either no longer relevant or when they are actively being exploited by hackers. This is because of the nature of software development; no developer, no matter how skilled, can take into account the development of new and unpredictable threats, hence the ongoing battle between security researchers and developers versus hackers. Vulnerabilities are the

*(Continued on page 2)*

## 5 Reasons Why You Need Managed IT



When it comes to your technology, you can never be too careful. It's critical that you look at your IT infrastructure as an investment, and one that will save you countless hours and considerable sums of money if you take proper care of it. Here are five reasons your business should prioritize proactive IT maintenance over reactive, or break-fix, IT maintenance.

### Less Downtime

Proactive maintenance and management means that you are identifying issues and addressing them before they become major problems. This naturally leads to less downtime, as you are addressing the issues that lead to downtime before they have a chance to develop any further.

### More Productivity

While you might have once been focused on reacting to problems, you can instead reclaim this time and spend it on

more productive initiatives. For example, maybe you spend half an hour every morning wrestling with your computer to work properly. If you take care of it and nip these issues in the bud, you can use that time to instead outline your plans for the day, leading to more focused work throughout the workday. All of this compounds over time, too.

### More Predictability

Technology can be unpredictable at times, to say the least, but when you proactively maintain your technology, you are essentially planning for the future and all of the possible scenarios that could occur. All of this makes it easier to make decisions about when and how to replace technology, something which makes the budgeting process more predictable and easier to plan for.

### Less Frustration

Most everybody understands the importance of mindset, and when your technology isn't working properly, it's really, really hard to remain focused and positive. With proactive maintenance, however, you don't have to worry about your technology breaking down to the

point where it's impossible to get work done. Small issues can be resolved before they escalate, making it easier than ever to stay focused on the work you're doing.

### Fewer Expenses

Perhaps the biggest and best benefit of taking a proactive stance on your technology management is that you will spend less money in the long term because of all of the above reasons outlined. Because your technology breaks down less frequently, you won't have to replace it as often, and you'll spend less on both maintenance and downtime.

### Take Advantage of Proactive Maintenance Today

Don't let your business suffer from poor IT maintenance any longer; if you want to take a proactive approach to technology maintenance—and you should—then contact Virtual Business Solutions at (504) 840-9800 ext. 105. Our trusted technicians will ensure you are in good hands.



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## Understanding the Vulnerabilities and Exploits You'll Face

*(Continued from page 1)*

reason why you want to apply patches and updates regularly, so you can dodge any potential exploits aimed at them.

### What Are Exploits?

If vulnerabilities are the roads that hackers use to access your network, you can think of exploits as the vehicle used to drive on them. Exploits are when a hacker actively seeks to use a vulnerability to gain access to a system or spread a threat. The biggest difference between vulnerabilities and exploits is that a vulnerability is a theoretical weakness, whereas the exploit is



### What Do You Do?

We recommend that all businesses take a three-pronged approach to anything related to cybersecurity, including the following:

- Apply patches and security updates as needed to remove vulnerabilities, thereby lessening the chance of suffering from an exploit or data breach.
- Monitor your network for suspicious activity that could be indicative of a data breach.

the thing that is actively taking advantage of it. Exploits are incredibly dangerous and demand the utmost attention in order to preserve network integrity.

- Educate your staff on how they can avoid falling victim to phishing attacks which might target vulnerabilities on your infrastructure.

### Don't Get Caught Off Guard

Cybersecurity is far from a simple thing, but it doesn't have to be overly complicated, either. Virtual Business Solutions can take much of the stress and frustration out of protecting your business, freeing you up to focus on other, more important parts of management. To learn more about what we can do for your business, contact the cybersecurity professionals of Virtual Business Solutions at (504) 840-9800 ext. 105.



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## How Your Small Business Can Benefit from the Internet of Things

(Continued from page 1)

### IoT Improves Business Automation

With all the tools out there that claim to improve efficiency, it is difficult to identify which of them can actually work for your business. Really what you should be looking for are ways to automate repetitive and mundane tasks so that your employees don't have to spend a lot of their time focused on them. The Internet of Things presents an opportunity to fill



in a lot of the gaps with tools that can actually improve efficiency. One of the most notable ways it can help is in the management of your brick and mortar locations. Smart technology has

made significant strides in centralized management and security since their inception and can provide your business with the following functionality:

- **Managing temperature** - IoT sensors can control HVAC systems and adjust heating and cooling to save energy. With energy prices currently in a steady climb, this can add up to significant cost savings over time.
- **Managing lighting** - As with HVAC controls, controlling the cost of lighting in your business' location(s) can be of great benefit. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Energy adding IoT lighting controls can reduce lighting energy consumption by nearly half.
- **Managing building maintenance** - Sensors connected to a business' IT infrastructure or machinery can deliver the data needed to allow managers

to make more informed decisions about their business. This can have a positive effect on location maintenance and scheduling.

- **Energy consumption** - On top of controlling costs, IoT tools can provide managers with a lot of great information to help make decisions that not only help the bottom line, they also can improve efficiency and productivity. The more you know, the better. The IoT provides a lot of good information for decision makers to use to improve their businesses.

### IoT Isn't that Pricy

One major factor for any business is cost. As more businesses utilize IoT technology, the price for sensors and other smart devices declines rapidly...



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## Tighten Things Up With Better Collaboration



Costs are rising and companies need to do more with less. Not only that, they depend on several departments of their business

to work together to meet customer demands and complete projects. Let's take a look at some collaboration tips and the tools that can help build a better, more collaborative and productive business.

### Lines of Communication

Communication is a key component to any collaborative endeavor, but if your team doesn't have access to the robust communications tools that are now available, your team's efficiency may be less than desirable. Since most teams are made up of workers from different departments, they may have different perspectives and ideas. Having productive lines of communication can lead to better products, better services, and the production of more revenue.

improve your team's results on collaborative projects.

- **Collaboration apps** - Software that is specifically made for collaboration. These apps are available anywhere on nearly any device and give users the ability to work with a lot of integrated software titles.
- **Video conferencing** - Being able to have impromptu meetings where you can talk to your team is important with all project coordination.
- **Productivity suites** - Cloud-based productivity suites give team members the ability to collaborate on specific documents, presentations, and spreadsheets.

### Find the Right Resources

An issue many businesses run into when undertaking major collaborative tasks is expecting A-level work from someone that isn't trained or experienced in doing that type of work. This can happen because of improper project management and delegation, or it can simply be because there are heavy workloads on the more experienced resource. Regardless of what the reason is, having your best people doing their best work on what they're best at is sure to help take your business where you want it to go.

### Stay on Task

One crucial issue some multi-user projects need to establish early on is shared goals. Not just the result that they want to see, but also timelines, deadlines, and so on. Not every member of your team is going to think the same way and having shared goals will be important to fulfill the work as expected.

### What Technology Can Help?

Technology is a big part of collaboration in modern business. Here are three technologies that you can use to

At Virtual Business Solutions, our IT professionals pride themselves on helping Metairie businesses get the technology and technology management they need to be their best. Give us a call today at (504) 840-9800 ext. 105 to learn more.



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## Your Business Needs to Consider Implementing a Refresh Schedule



Businesses that depend on their technology try to stick with

it as long as they can so as to not incur large unnecessary costs. Ironically, that may be the thing that is causing a lot of those costs. Today, we thought we would take a look at a couple of variables that can let you know it's time to upgrade away from your current technology.

Deciding when to upgrade your business' technology isn't always cut and dry. You have to consider the pricing and deployment models you want, and probably most importantly, whether or not the new technology strategy will be disruptive to your team's productivity. Additionally, you need to know that when you do look to upgrade new technology that it will be compatible with your business' needs.

### Why Upgrade at All?

If you've been using the same technology for several years without many problems, you may ask, "why even upgrade at all?" Outdated technology

can cost you in several ways, let's briefly go through a few.

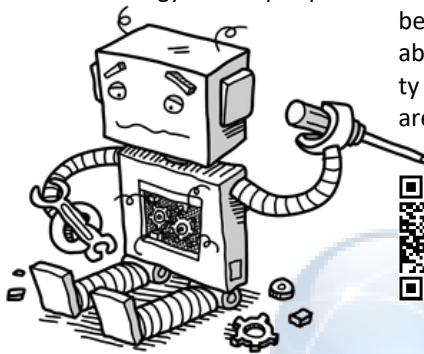
- **Downtime** - Older technology is prone to failure. Computers are extraordinarily complex machines and after some time their components can fail. Failing technology is one of the most recognized causes of downtime. Since there is so much operational capital tied up in your employees, technology failures can cause a lot of time where your staff is not actively working on revenue-generating or business-building tasks.
- **Turnover** - One situation that many businesses find themselves in over the past couple of years is a significant employee turnover. One of the main reasons cited by people leaving organizations is that their technology isn't kept up to

date. Employees, especially the younger ones just entering the workforce, demand suitable technology to work on, otherwise they will find an organization that has it.

- **Lack of Support** - If your business has been using the same technology for a while, you may run into a situation where the software is no longer supported by the developer. This can be a major problem as unsupported and unpatched software has a significantly larger chance to have vulnerabilities. More vulnerabilities mean that it has a better chance of being hacked.

### What is the Average Refresh Timeline?

For the average business, you should consider refreshing your technology every three-to-five years. This is largely because of the factors listed above as well as the propensity for new technologies that are developed that can better help your processes...



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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**  
45% of businesses worldwide are running at least one of their Big Data workloads in the cloud.

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