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### Get the Operational Freedom You Seek Through Automation



We're always talking about boosting productivity and the role your technology has in that quest. What we don't always talk about is how boosting innovation can help free up your employees to produce better results. It's the same technology, and it can have multiple benefits. In this week's blog, we'll...



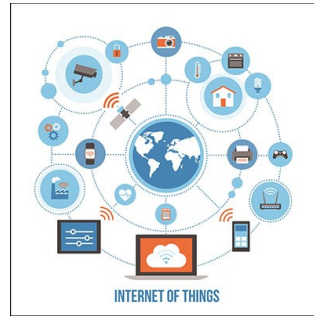
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## About Virtual Business Solutions

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 Deploying the Internet of Things Can Transform a Business



The Internet of Things is one of the largest transformations in technology over the past several years. The average business may think that it is far too expensive and complicated to actually implement these tools, but with some decent planning and consideration it can actually pay for itself pretty rapidly. This month, we will go into how organizations can utilize IoT, what solutions make the most sense, and how IoT can bring a significant ROI.

### How Organizations are Using IoT

Many businesses have started to dip their toes in the pool of IoT, deploying smart devices to not only automate certain processes, but to get the benefits that come with having consistently reported data. In fact, the more IoT devices that are manufactured, the more businesses have to be cognizant of their existence. This is because if there is a process that demands time and effort to be made in the day-to-day operations of your business, there are IoT tools that you can use.

All businesses depend on their supply chain, and over the past few years, product shortages and shipping delays have made it more crucial that businesses keep a finger on the pulse of the products they need to keep their business moving forward. For many organizations, IoT has transformed their inventory management. Utilizing RFID sensors and other tools, the IoT can enable businesses to manage inventory by granting automatic control options

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## So, What the Heck is an NFT, Really?



The blockchain and cryptocurrency have collected no small amount of attention over the past few years, with another trend arising—that of the non-fungible token, or NFT. Could this trend be one that businesses could benefit from?

Let's examine what an NFT is, in actuality.

### Non-Fungible Tokens, in a Nutshell

According to *Investopedia*, NFTs are "cryptographic assets on a blockchain with unique identification codes and metadata that distinguish them from each other."

So, whereas a cryptocurrency has a set value that each and every one of them equals—meaning they can be used for commercial transactions—an NFT is an entirely different animal. While one Bitcoin equals one Bitcoin and one Dogecoin equals one Dogecoin, NFTs are all different and cannot be replicated.

This has led to NFTs being used as receipts for real-world transactions in art or real estate, a certificate of ownership being recorded and tracked via the blockchain. However, NFTs have largely been turned into upscale collectibles. The NBA has turned big moments into NFT cards, and Twitter's founder Jack Dorsey turned his first-ever tweet ("just setting up my

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## To Maintain Your Cybersecurity, You Need to Understand Your Risks



Since it is our belief that our clients are under constant threat of being the next business hit with a cyberattack, we maintain a

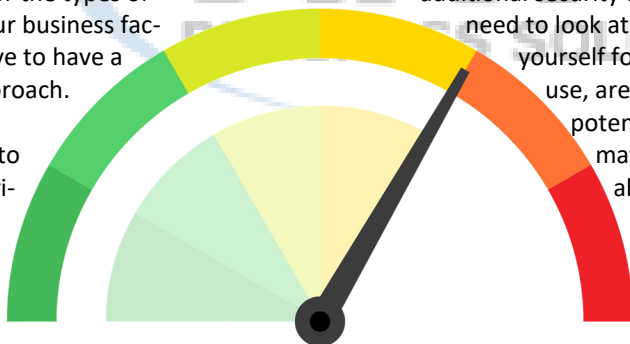
pretty aggressive security posture. That's not to say that all threats are created equal. That's why it is important to assess risk over the types of attacks and threats you have to confront and plan accordingly.

### Managing Risk is Important to Your Organization's Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity, like anything in business, demands attention. You need a careful consideration of the threats you face. If you live in an arid part of the world, you won't have to worry much about a hurricane bringing 100-mile-per-hour winds your way. That may seem simple to understand, but when planning for the types of threats your business faces, you have to have a similar approach.

In regards to cybersecurity, risk

LOW



HIGH

management is understanding how to prioritize your efforts commensurate with the risks you are likely to face. It's as simple as that. When developing your cybersecurity plans, you need to understand what threats you are likely to face and then invest your resources to protect your business from those threats.

### How to Properly Manage Cybersecurity Risk

We thought we'd outline some of the variables you need to consider when weighing action in regards to your cybersecurity:

### Recognize a Hierarchy of Potential Threats

The first thing you need to do is to consider the position your business' technology is in and what kind of software it has. Are your systems patched and up to date? Have you maintained your infrastructure regularly? Are you using any legacy systems that may have additional security concerns? You need to look at your IT and ask yourself for every tool you use, are there obvious potential issues that may affect your ability to keep the system secure?

### Consider the Risks

Once you have a list of concerns, you need to prioritize the ones that happen more frequently or present your business with the largest potential risks. This is called an impact analysis and will give you the perspective you'll need to properly prioritize your next steps.

### Consider How You Would Respond to Each Risk

Looking at your previous list, you can easily identify what risks you need to be on the lookout for. What you'll do then is determine your reaction to risks if they do happen. Here are four responses that are known as the "four Ts of risk management":

- **Tolerate** - If you determine the risk is unlikely enough or not severe enough to address, you accept that you may encounter it.
- **Treat** - If the risk is sufficiently concerning, you put security measures in place to reduce its likelihood.
- **Transfer** - If there's a risk that is beyond your capabilities to control it, you involve other parties in the risk—outsourcing your protections, and/or taking out cybersecurity insurance...



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## So, What the Heck is an NFT, Really?

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twtr") into an NFT. The unique nature of Cryptokitties and the Bored Ape Yacht Club is due to the fact that they are NFTs.

Almost all of the above, by the way, have seen transactions totaling in the millions of dollars. One Cryptokitty in particular, nicknamed "Dragon", sold for 600 ETH (Ethereum, the currency of the Ethereum blockchain), which equaled about \$1.3M at the time.

Does this all sound pretty silly? Yes, especially when you consider how volatile

blockchain operations are where power consumption and environmental impacts are concerned, along with the recent crash of the NFT market. Having said that, it would be unfair if we didn't acknowledge some of the other use cases of these NFTs.

### What Makes NFTs Relatively Worthwhile?

Like we said before, NFTs can also be used to establish ownership over physical assets—namely big-ticket items, like the aforementioned art and real estate. Using NFTs in this context not only helps to make the appropriate marketplace

more transparent and streamlined, they also make it easier for ownership to be shared. The digital tokens could also be used to track goods along the supply chain. NFTs have also been suggested as a means of identity management.

In short, NFTs are far more than bragging rights over some digital art, as you might have originally thought. Time will only tell if they find their way into other business use cases.



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to these systems. Not only can these tools be utilized to order components and products as stocks become low, they can be used to track assets throughout the supply chain to ensure that you stay on schedule.

Another way the IoT can work for a business is shifting the way businesses transmit and collect data. These tools allow for greater access to user data and can track the patterns of user connectivity. Using this information, the integrated AI

that fuels these devices learns more and offers a much better experience. They get more information that provides insight into buying cycles, customer demands, and marketing strategies that work to enhance user and customer experiences.

Finally, in a more practical manner, IoT can be outfitted to control access to physical and virtual locations, manage your utility consumption (including bandwidth), and help with cybersecurity. Overall, these systems bring a lot of

value that can be seen not only in the added efficiency, but also on the bottom line.

### What IoT Tools Should You Consider?

If you are looking to get into the IoT game, but don't know where to start, some of the best IoT devices for new users are ones that allow for the controlling of lighting, HVAC systems, and...



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## Managed IT Offers More than Just Working Technology



The break-fix IT model can be exhausting and unpredictable. When your technology unexpectedly breaks down, you

shouldn't have to grasp at straws just to keep operations running. Thanks to the proactive approach of managed IT services, the break-fix model is on borrowed time. Will your business move on from this antiquated method of managing technology, or will it remain stuck in the past, unable to move forward?

The fact remains that fully outsourced IT management is the ideal way for small and medium-sized businesses (SMB) to handle their technology solutions. Unlike large businesses that have a generous IT budget, your SMB has limited assets and resources to work with, which can restrict your freedom to implement quality new technology solutions. When you outsource IT to a managed service provider, that's work that no longer has to be performed, providing you with more time and capital to invest in other parts of your business.

Some of the most common managed IT services include remote management and maintenance, network security, data backup and disaster recovery, email and server hosting, and so much more. All of these services require some sort of

technical expertise, and outsourcing them to a qualified managed service provider is often the best choice for SMBs.

Here are three great reasons you should consider outsourcing your IT maintenance:



- **Decreased capital expenses:** Managed IT is like transforming all of your technology maintenance and management into operating expenses. Instead of large, up-front capital costs for new technology solutions, your business can benefit from the economic freedom of only spending a fraction of these costs every month, providing more flexibility with your budget.
- **Increased IT flexibility:** It's one thing to not have an internal IT team and outsource these responsibilities directly, but it's another altogether to provide assistance to your dedicated internal IT department. If you do have an internal IT department, chances are that they're up to their ears in day-to-day work and are too busy to perform maintenance or implement

new solutions. This is why it's so valuable to have managed IT services—if your team is too busy, Virtual Business Solutions can relieve some of the burden so your staff can work on company initiatives that improve the business.

- **Proactive and preventative solutions:** When your business' technology fails, it can have disastrous effects on your budget. Managed IT services are designed to detect and prevent issues with your infrastructure, rather than respond to major problems as they come up.

The best part of outsourcing your IT to professional technicians is that your business will have more time to focus on what matters most; improving operations and coming up with new and profitable initiatives. You'll be surprised by how much time and money you can save by having professional IT technicians on hand to resolve problems and consult with.

Virtual Business Solutions works with Metairie small businesses to help them stay on top of their organizational technology. For more information on how we can improve the way you utilize technology, give us a call at (504) 840-9800 ext. 105.



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## Don't Let Your IT Cause Business Failure



For modern organizations that depend highly on their

technology, nothing is quite so scary as an event that can completely marginalize its ability to operate. This doesn't need to be a fire, flood, or some other major cataclysm; it could be something as simple as some of your old IT fails and you're not ready for it. This week, we thought we'd briefly go through what a catastrophic failure looks like and some steps you can take to keep your business from experiencing one.

### What Does a Catastrophic Failure Entail?

Since all of our lives are increasingly digital, it stands to reason that our businesses and organizations are. This means that your business absolutely depends on the technology you've chosen and when it fails, your endeavors tied to it likely do too. Today's business uses digital systems for all of their productivity and storage needs, but also their communications, collaboration,

customer interaction, and even their administrative management. This is why, when situations arise that put these systems in peril, your whole organization is as well.

You do so much to combat downtime; so when a situation comes along that threatens the very integrity of the systems your business depends on, it can be really frightening. But today we aren't talking about threats, we are talking about catastrophe. Honestly, failures happen in the best-designed, expertly-implemented, and constantly-supported IT infrastructures. How your business is able to rebound after that failure, and what you do to help avoid others, are controllable.



When you have a catastrophic failure of your IT infrastructure, it means that the systems are not working and

are inaccessible to the people who use them every day to make your business run. This typically means that they have been taken offline by some event that is bigger than the risk mitigation efforts you've put in place. Some events like a housing failure only happen in the case of major weather disasters, power surges that destroy internal components, and utilities that aren't available to run the underlying infrastructure. There are steps you can take to help mitigate the long-term effects these types of failures have on your business. They include:

- Deploying two separate sources of power
- Deploying uninterruptible power supplies
- Choosing vendors with high availability systems in place
- Undertaking routine building maintenance

These are basically common sense variables that can help your business in innumerable ways. The problem becomes when you do all these and your business is presented...



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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

In 2022, the number of global smartphone users is estimated at 6.6 billion, marking a 4.9% annual increase.

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