

DATA STORAGE: Utilizing remote data centers

CONTINUED FROM P1

with your information will have security measures that far surpass the capabilities of a small business. A quality data center has the primary focus of storing your data and keeping it safe. With 24 hour security, backup generators, state of the art fire suppression systems, and other advanced security measures, the highest levels of data security will be readily available to the small business market for the first time.

Will my data be slow to access?

For now, probably. In most regions of the globe, our internet connections are still a fraction of the speed of our internal networks. However, this is changing quickly. While data speeds are the most widespread limitation to using remote data storage, many providers and industry players, including Google, are working to increase our broadband speeds exponentially in the next few years. At the same time,

industry leaders such as Microsoft are expanding their data center network into more and more local markets making it easier to establish ultra-high-speed connections. At the rate they are going, the speed barrier in most areas will be non-existent within 24 months.

How would this change affect how my employees work?

The changes that are developing will require very little change to your internal processes. Where most current "remote" solutions require making adjustments to current process and function, the solutions being pursued by the industry would allow your employees to interact with remote data in nearly the exact same way they currently interact with local data.

Should every small business plan to move their data offsite?

Like all technology solutions, this one will not be ideal for everyone. Some industries will find

additional challenges in this model and some business models won't adapt as well as others. The key to success will be to pay attention and seek out the best options of your specific business and your specific industry.

When will this be a viable option?

It will depend on your business. Some businesses are already finding success as the early adopters of this model. For most businesses, my prediction is that true viability will come in 2-3 years. This means that many businesses will still need to invest in additional onsite equipment during this time. Don't push the pause button on your business advancement to wait for these changes. Just make sure you understand how all of your technology decisions will impact your ability to make this change when it is most beneficial.

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INFORMATION OVERLOAD: Search tips

CONTINUED FROM P3

difficulty with conversational or detailed queries (except in cases like Ask.com that are built to operate this way).

Use qualifiers to optimize your search:

- [" "] - using quotation marks with your query will allow the search engine to consider your entry using the exact words and the exact order

in which they were typed.

- [*] - an asterisk behaves like a wildcard. Attaching it before the search word will act as a placeholder for an unknown word in the entry.
- [-] - attaching a minus sign before a word in the search will extract results that may have to do with the subject (ex. "antivirus -software"

would search for "antivirus," but not in the context of software).

- [OR] - specifically allows either word to draw search results but not both (Colorado Rockies win in 2008 OR 2009).

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Comments? Suggestions? We would love to hear from you! Email Jamie Stanislav at jstanislav@greystonetechnology.com

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In this issue:

Email Etiquette - p.2
Information Overload - p.3
Portable Computers - p.3

Technology evolution: data storage

Moving servers and centralized data offsite

by Peter Melby

It's no secret that technology is always changing. Clients express frustration to me on a regular basis that the technology investments they make can't hold their value long enough to even understand the ROI. This isn't changing and, in fact, changes in technology are poised to accelerate in the next few years. There are a few specific changes that I feel will bring the most change to small business and the businesses that plan ahead and adjust their perspective on IT investment will be in the best position to capitalize on the changes. As the future IT landscape unfolds, we will be continuing to update and educate our clients and associates to ensure everyone has the opportunity to take full advantage of the benefits. This is the third of six editions of G:drive highlighting a specific area of technology and the changes taking place.

Whether a small business has 1 employee or 100 employees, the typical computer network is based on the idea of storing business data centrally and locally. Most small businesses have at least one server onsite to store files, databases, e-mail, etc. Even businesses without a dedicated server likely have a centralized file repository on the network. One of the major changes in technology is the idea that data should no longer be stored on a server on your company's premises. Moving servers and centralized data offsite to large datacenters will be a more and more viable option in the next few years. As the reality of this has started to unfold, we have been approached with several common questions.

What are the benefits to moving my servers offsite?

The benefits of having the brains of your business operation in a remote data center

as opposed to in your office are numerous. In many cases it will eliminate the need for you to purchase and maintain your own hardware. Datacenters will provide space on their robust and scalable servers and you will no longer need to spend money buying your own servers or the expensive hardware warranties offered by Dell, HP, and other server vendors.

Remote data centers can also offer redundancy that will provide better business continuity than keeping a server in house. If the server in your office experiences problems, chances are you will see some downtime and loss of productivity. Data center providers such as Microsoft, Amazon, etc. have fully redundant systems so that if the data center in Chicago has a problem, the data center in Seattle can immediately provide the same service.

Putting your data offsite can mean outsourcing your liability in many cases. With stricter laws and regulations around personal information and other sensitive data, nothing will help limit your liability more than getting the information out of your hands.

Other advantages include simpler data backup, easier remote access, easier scalability, and more.

Isn't it more secure to have control of my data at my own location?

It's a common misconception that the closer your data is to you the more secure it is. It's a natural, but misguided feeling. Security at every data center isn't guaranteed to be good, but any data center worth trusting

TECHNOLOGY EVOLUTION | P4

Blog Spot

An à la carte world

by Dominik Toepfer



It's interesting to see how greed has changed the way products and services are presented and sold to us. In the past, for example, if you wanted to buy tires, you could shop around from tire store to tire store. You knew the price you were given was the price that you would ultimately pay. Now, if you attempt to get a quote on tires, your mechanic will often neglect to tell you the REAL cost. The real cost often includes extra add-ons like mounting, valve stem replacement, 4x4, environmental fees and so on. Also, they might notice that your oil pan screw has stripped threads and needs to be replaced at an enormous markup from what just a single bolt would cost.

I'm sure the first companies to begin this practice made a lot of money and they did it in a way that made you feel like they were watching out for your safety and best interests. However, now it seems to be backfiring because we as consumers are catching on. The real problem is that this new standard has been set and shareholder and stock prices demand a profit that cannot be attained without

SEE BLOG SPOT | P2



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Email etiquette lost in a fast-paced world

Enhancing business communication and avoiding common mistakes

by Byron Williams

Having committed many email etiquette faux pas in my day, I'd like to share some of what I've learned (or can't seem to learn). With the help of Judith Kallos' who has written an article on professional communication, may these tips help you advance your business and personal communication skills.

1. The Subject field.

I once had a coworker who crammed as much information as possible into the subject field. For example, instead of the subject being "Lunch", hers would say, "I'm going to lunch at Japon in 20 minutes if you'd like..." Then, when I opened the email, the body contained, "...to join me". This technique should be avoided. As Kallos points out, the subject field should be a "window into your e-mail and can many times determine even if your e-mail will be opened." Sadly, my coworker never took my advice.

2. It's an email. I'm allowed to be informal.

Simply put, this is not the case. In college, I had an economics professor I really liked.

I emailed her one evening with a question about an assignment and addressed her by her first name. I promptly received a response from her that read something like this: "Mr. Williams - you may address me as Doctor or Professor and not by my first name". Needless to say, I never made that mistake again. "Only time and relationship building efforts can guide the level

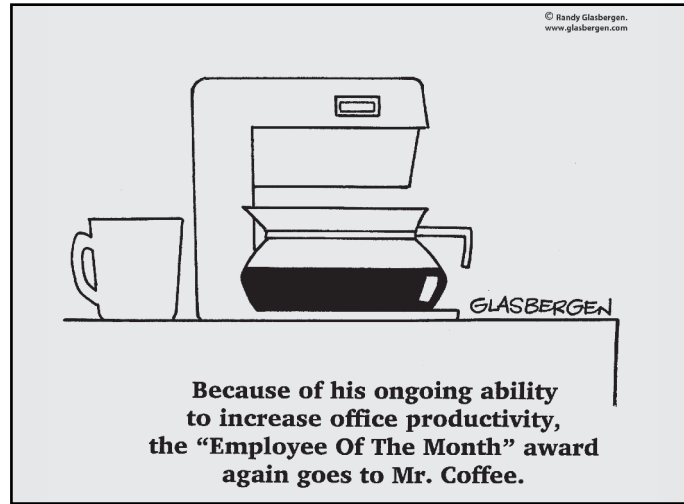
of formality of your [professional] relationships and therefore your e-mail's tone," notes Kallos.

3. Should I use a previous email to introduce a new topic?

Not unless you want to convey laziness, Kallos writes. While this may be common sense, I'm guilty of breaking this rule. It's easy to reply to the last email you received from someone. However, it can be confusing for both you and the recipient and it makes searching your inbox for relevant information more challenging.

4. Intricate formatting and signatures are cool, right?

With all respect, this is not true. "Unless you would type something in bold crimson letters on business letterhead, don't do it when e-mailing," Kallos says. Your email does not have to look as if it is constructed on pink notebook paper. I'll leave it at that. In regard to the signature, keep it simple. Kallos suggests that it should be "no more than 5-6 lines to avoid being viewed as egocentric." I don't



mean to upset anyone with signatures containing large, colorful fonts and inspirational quotes in their signatures, but it's a good idea to limit your signature to your Web site link, company name, and slogan, offer or phone number.

5. Take a moment before you reply.

Perhaps, take several moments. Make sure you are saying what you really want to say and by all means necessary, examine your tone. It's easy for words to be misinterpreted. Trust me; it's difficult to express tone and inflection in an email. I've often been accused of being short and harsh in an email so I try to remember this rule with every message I send. Most importantly, make sure you are firing off the email to the correct person. I recently received a reply-to-all that I was not meant to see. I was copied on the email and the main recipient replied-to-all (in a short and harsh manner) criticizing me! In the spirit of full disclosure, I have been guilty of this embarrassing mistake, too.

Finally, while I'd like to believe that my thoughts are all you need to read, you can find Kallos at businessemail etiquette.com.

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BLOG SPOT

An à la carte world

CONTINUED FROM P1

utilizing these practices.

Most retailers have mastered this practice. "Would you like a CD with your coffee", "How about an extended warranty with that new TV", "Perhaps you would like roadside assistance with that sandwich", or "Would you like meteor insurance with that bagel?"

Some IT consulting companies are just as guilty, pushing new products or technologies simply to increase their bottom line - without purpose. At Greystone, we will be honest with you. We have no vested relationship with vendors allowing us to be a neutral advisor, suggesting the best, most cost-effective solution for your specific need. Hmm, perhaps my coffee shop could look into this approach.

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Information overload difficult to avoid

How to optimize your search engine results

by Jamie Stanislav

We live in a world of unfiltered facts, figures and more often, myths and lies - information overload. The majority of this can be found while surfing the World Wide Web. In fact, over 50% of internet users utilize search engines on a daily basis. But how much of the information generated is truly relevant? This link might rabbit trail to more relevant details. That search might produce a better result. Research must be done for your next meeting. Even writing this article, my Internet Explorer window has 15 tabs open to editorials, blogs, articles and search engines! It makes you wonder how much of our time is spent just sorting, filtering and organizing all of this information.

While it is easy to become inundated with

irrelevant material, a few guidelines can help you find the information you need with fewer distractions and less temptation to waste time clicking around the web. Here are a few tricks to optimize your search efficiency and prevent the information overload dilemma.

Find a search engine based on your needs:

- Google - the largest and most widely used search engine; offers content-specific searching through videos, images, blogs, books, etc.
- Bing - Microsoft's new "decision" engine lists related search content and search field suggestions while allowing users to scroll over links to see a pop-up of the site's content
- Ask - responds to search entries that are posed in the form of questions or that use

natural language, while still allowing simple, one-word searches

• Dogpile - searches multiple search engines at one time, compiling and categorizing the most relevant entries

Use basic search engine tips:

- Keep your search as simple as possible. More often than not, you will find what you're looking for on the first page.
- Keep the number of words minimal but descriptive - the more unique the search, the more relevant results will be offered.
- Think like the program. What might the wording of the site sound like? A search engine is essentially an algorithm searching for key matches and the program has

SEE INFORMATION OVERLOAD | P4

Portable computers grow in popularity, availability

Find out if a Netbook is right for your mobile computing needs

by Scott Kerr

I am hearing a lot of interest these days in Netbooks. Understandable, as they are small, light, and usually pretty cheap. This ultra-portability does come at a price, however, even if it's not always calculable in real dollars and cents. Before you plop down your hard-earned cash to purchase one, there are a few things to consider.

Screen Size.

Sure, it may fit in a purse (or purse - I don't want to leave anybody out), but if it gives you a migraine when you sit down to use it, what's the point? Go to your local PC emporium of choice and spend some time working on one. Check out the screen size and make sure you can look at it for an extended period without straining your eyes. While you can adjust the resolution to make things bigger, you will not

be able to fit nearly as much on the screen and it will likely be cumbersome to navigate in and out of applications.

Productivity.

Take time to consider what you will really use it for. Whether it's an email or an essay, typing on a Netbook is a much different experience than it is on a standard keyboard. Many of the smaller models cram often used keys into half the space, if not relocating them all together. I find I'm much more apt to make typos than I'd like, often inadvertently striking two keys simultaneously. I have to type more slowly and spend more time proof-reading than I normally do on a standard PC.

Computing Power.

Netbooks are built for portability. They have less memory and smaller hard drives (unless you opt for a larger solid state drive,

which can quickly increase the cost). If you're planning on installing many applications and storing lots of photos and documents, it is likely not the best solution for you.

Don't get me wrong, Netbooks have their place. I use mine frequently. It is, however, important to consider these factors before deciding to choose one over a standard laptop. The bottom line is: try before you buy or you could end up with a \$400 paper weight.

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