



Executive IT Insider

...The Exclusive Edge to Today's Technology

Published and Distributed By Southern New England Computer Services

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3 IT Investments You Should Never Skimp On

There's a disturbing trend underlying the business world's increased reliance on technology. No, we're not about to decry technology itself. Nor will we downplay the endless list of ways in which tech has enhanced business owners' ability to reach more prospects, build meaningful relationships with clients and make the previously labyrinthine tasks of yesterday seem positively mundane today. There's no denying that the Internet age has empowered companies of all sizes to do incredible things and that technology is forever transforming the way we do business. Today's savvy businesses are intertwined to an unprecedented extent with the technology they use.

But there's a problem that goes along with this increased dependence. Despite the inextricable relationship today's companies have with IT, the vast majority of them—SMBs in

particular—are neglecting key aspects of their tech. They're skimping where they shouldn't, cutting corners wherever possible and, as a result, leaving themselves open to a huge variety of potential disasters.

To avoid the pitfalls of our technology-dependent world, it's important to ensure you have a firm IT foundation. Here are three IT investments where you should avoid underspending or risk shuttering your business forever.

1. CYBER SECURITY

Across the tech industry, it has practically become trendy to point out how woefully underprepared SMBs are for modern crime. But it's true: according to the 2016 State of Cyber Security in Small and Medium-Sized Businesses report, a full 50% of all U.S. small businesses succumbed to cyber-attacks in 2015, a...

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June 2018



Provided By:

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With the constant threat of cyber-attacks and data breaches, you need to

know that your business is **properly protected**. While a team of technicians can protect and secure your business, they *can't* do it all.

Regular cybersecurity training for your staff is **critical** to your company's defense against attacks. Is your staff *properly* trained to handle, store, and dispose of data? Can they **identify phishing scams**? We can **help educate your staff!**

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statistic that is rising and shows no sign of slowing down. Most small business owners assume that since they're the "little guy," there's no reason why a well-equipped and highly trained team of hackers would ever target their meager stores of data. But, in fact, it's these hapless businesses that end up being the low-hanging fruit for these operations. Millions upon millions of dollars are stolen from SMBs each year, and most of it is gleaned via vicious ransomware.

2. PROACTIVE TECH SUPPORT

It's probably easy to imagine how a vicious cyber-attack could leave your business reeling, but there are equally insidious risks that could cost your business bigtime. Consider server failure, for example. No matter the caliber of equipment you're dealing with, failure is an inevitable risk of technology. But instead of being proactive, most business owners just assume that downtime is a fact of the modern world. As a result, 73% of businesses have had some type of operations interruption in the past five years, causing a staggering \$70 million loss, according to an infographic published in VentureBeat. The worst part? The vast majority of these outages are avoidable.

The fact is that a cheap "break-fix" technology technician is only there to put out fires, not to proactively prepare your business for success. By the time your break-fix IT guy shows up on the scene, the damage will already be done. This results in dramatically lowered efficiency and potentially



thousands of dollars in lost sales—not to mention the cost of all those customers you lost while you were off dealing with a tech crisis. And that's only one example. Finicky software, stuttering computers and lost backups may seem like small issues until you're in the midst of disaster and the costs are adding up. It's better to avoid these catastrophes in the first place.

3. TECH STRATEGIES TO BEAT THE COMPETITION

Technology isn't just a crutch we use to make navigating the marketplace easier; it can equip us with a set of tools that allow us to actively surpass customer expectations and streamline our efficiency, lowering expenses and empowering our employees. You can bet on the fact that your competition is doing everything it possibly can to stay abreast of the latest technological trends. Don't let them pull ahead. Instead, invest in strategies and software that will trim away precious seconds from inefficient processes and enable you to focus on what really matters: making your business succeed.

Refer-a-Friend and Get Free Gifts!



We love having customers like you and honestly, we wish we had more just like you! So, we are doing an ongoing "Refer-a-Friend" event.

Refer any company with 5 or more computers to our office to receive a FREE Computer Network Assessment (a \$300 value). Once we've completed our initial appointment with your referral, we'll send you a **\$50 Amazon gift card**. For **every referral** that you send, you get a \$50 gift card as your referrals complete the Network Assessment. Just a small "Thank You" for thinking of us. As an added bonus, if they join and become a client of ours, we will send you a \$500 Amazon Gift Card for introducing your friend to us.



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Technology Spotlight: Echo Dot Kids Edition

If you have an Alexa device in your home, you know that your kids **love** talking to her.



Amazon released a kid-friendly version of the Echo Dot. The Kids Edition is in a durable blue, green, or red protective case. With the Kids Edition, your children can play games and music, listen to audiobooks, ask Alexa questions, and more!

The Kids Edition has an array of controls, making it easy for parents to control exactly what kids can and cannot do.

Parents can set daily limits, bedtimes and alarms. The Echo Dot allows you to set filters to remove explicit music and apply an age filter to make Alexa even more age appropriate.

The Kids Edition also functions as an intercom. The device has a "Drop In" feature, that allows you to connect compatible Echo devices. The "Drop In" feature then turns the device into an intercom, allowing you to listen and speak to your child from a different room.

The device has one year of FreeTime Unlimited for free. This offers more content like fun and educational games, ad-free radio stations and playlists, Audible books, and a list of Alexa skills. There is also a two-year replacement policy if something happens to the device.

If you and your child **love** Alexa, then this product is for you!

You can purchase the Echo Dot Kids Edition on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) for \$79.99.

5 Practical Ways To Learn Something New In Business

Based on my experience interviewing and advising over a thousand successful business leaders, I've come to the conclusion that great leaders aren't smarter, more hardworking or luckier than the rest of us. Most of their success comes down to the fact that they simply learn better than the rest of us.

The truth is that without too much cost or hassle, we can bolster our confidence and expertise to move toward the top of our field. Here are five practical ways to learn something new in business.

1. READ 10 BOOKS.

It's easy to start down the road toward mastering a topic. Go to Amazon, type in your chosen topic and read the 10 bestselling books that come up. Pay attention to the words and concepts that seem to matter the most. The total cost? About \$200.

2. GO TO THE BEST WORKSHOP ON THE TOPIC.

When I was learning about predictive analytics, I bought the book *Predictive Analytics* by Eric Siegel. I soon learned that the author hosted a huge conference on the topic under the same title, so I went to it as soon as I could. These meetups are an invaluable source of information no matter what you want to learn. The total cost is \$1,000 - \$15,000.

3. INTERVIEW 10-100 EXPERTS FOR ADVICE.

A year ago, I decided I wanted to learn

more about digital marketing. Many of our clients at the time were struggling with the increasing digitization of demand creation.

Rather than interview 10 experts, I made a target list and used referrals to interview over 100 experts on the topic. People are happy to have a 30-minute discussion about their favorite subjects to help you learn and get oriented. You know you are beginning to grasp a topic when you start to hear the same buzzwords and pieces of advice. The total cost is \$0 if you interview by phone.

4. HIRE SOMEONE AS A MENTOR OR PARTNER.

You probably know a topic that an expert in another field would love to learn. Consider doing a "mentor swap" where you agree to exchange advice and pick each other's brains a couple times a year. The only thing better than having an expert mentor is hiring an expert full-time. The total cost for a mentor swap is \$0, but it costs much more to hire an expert full-time.

5. LEAD A PROJECT.

You've heard the expression, "The best way to learn something is to teach it." It's always a good idea to run a project in an area of interest. When I see clients dive into these, they're often an expert from the beginning, but running the project boosts their expertise significantly.



Geoff Smart is chairman and founder of ghSMART. Geoff is co-author, with his colleague Randy Street, of the New York Times bestselling book, *Who: A Method for Hiring*, and the author of the No. 1 Wall Street Journal best-seller, *Leadocracy: Hiring More Great Leaders (Like You) into Government*. Geoff co-created the Topgrading brand of talent management. He is the Founder of two 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations. SMARTKids Leadership Program™ provides 10 years of leadership tutoring and the Leaders Initiative™ seeks to deploy society's greatest leaders into government. Geoff earned a BA in Economics with honors from Northwestern University, an MA, and a PhD in Psychology from Claremont Graduate University.

Experts of the Month: The Team at “The Journey to Hope, Health, & Healing”



In the battle against substance abuse, three people are at the forefront trying to help those that are ready for change. Owner and CFO **Ann Baccari**, owner and chairman **Ken Richardson**, and president and CEO **Thomas Hill** are *determined* to provide their patients with the top-quality care and treatment they *deserve*. Because they're dedicated to their patients, we've chosen them as our Experts of the Month!

The Journey to Hope, Health, & Healing is a full-service outpatient recovery center for those that struggle with addiction. Originally known as the Center for Behavioral Health, the center was founded in 1987. Having worked behind the scenes at **over 30** clinics, brother-sister duo Ann Baccari and Ken Richardson knew *exactly* what it took to start and successfully run a clinic. Ann and Ken decided to purchase this practice six years ago.

At The Journey to Hope, Health, & Healing, they take care of everyone that battles addiction. What makes them different from other facilities? The Journey is a *certified* **Center of Excellence** by the Rhode Island Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH). Currently, there are five opioid treatment programs in Rhode Island, and only **two** have been designated as a Center of Excellence. Tom Hill states they are an extremely thorough practice that focuses on “providing care that is *essential*” to their patients.

The Journey's main goal is to break away from the stigma that is associated with most treatment centers. They want to add that “*local, Rhode Island touch*” and make patients feel comfortable when they walk in. Tom believes that “healing takes place when you walk into an environment that embraces you.” At The Journey, they strive to be the best because everyone **deserves the best**.

When asked what they like best about working with us, they were full of compliments. Ann stresses that our “team is wonderful,” she continues, “no matter what time of the day I call, no matter who I get, *they are wonderful*.” They patiently listen to me, and they solve my problems.” Both Ann and Tom agree that our customer service is the best. When compared to other agencies they've dealt with over the years, Tom believes that our “customer service is unparalleled.”

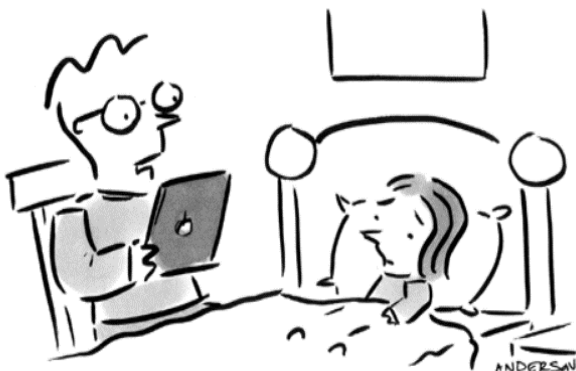
The Journey to Hope, Health, & Healing currently has four locations in Westerly, Johnston, Providence, and Middletown. If you would like to learn more, visit them online at www.thejourneyhhs.com. If you need immediate assistance, call them at **1-877-400-HOPE** (4673). If you, a family member, friend or colleague are struggling with addiction, contact them today.

3 Big Trends Businesses Need To Adopt Now – The fate of your business is entwined with the way your organization utilizes technology. If you fail to stay abreast of the latest trends, you're letting the competition pull ahead. You need to keep an eye on the shifting digital landscape to give your business an edge. One of the best ways to do that is to latch onto the continuous growth of your mobile market. According to Statista, more than 51% of web traffic now comes from mobile users. You need to start mixing up your marketing strategies to accommodate this newly mobile-centric world, no matter your industry.

You need to be aware of the growing prevalence of online threats to your business. According to an article published in the Guardian, 90% of SMBs don't use any safeguards to protect against the data breach of key customer info, and most assume they simply won't be the target of a cyberattack. You need to realize that 70% of cyber-attacks are aimed at small businesses, and you need to act accordingly. One more way to take advantage of technological trends is to master augmented reality in the coming years. You can create virtual environments to promote and explain how to use your products and services, so customers can engage with them wherever they are. *StartUpNation.com, 2/27/18.*

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“No story tonight; the wi-fi's out. Good night, sweetie.”

Back To Basics – Everyone worries about the newest scams and cyber-crimes, but if you and your team can remember the basics, you'll have a big head start. Document your security policies, such as strong password requirements, requiring a VPN to connect remotely and Internet usage guidelines, and make them a part of every employee's training. You also should include strict penalties for violating this protocol.

A couple more basics: It's not a good habit to save files onto your computer if there is a location on the network or server where they can be saved. If you use websites or software that does not require regular password changes, set a calendar reminder to change the password yourself every other month. As with anything, a little prevention goes a long way. Remembering the essentials is the best thing you can do to protect yourself and your company.

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