

TECHNOLOGY TIMES



Insider Tips To Help You Run Your Business **Better, Faster, Easier** And More **Profitably**

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WHAT'S NEW?

We at the Avenir IT team wish you all a very happy holiday season. We hope that it is filled with all of the love and laughter that your heart could desire! We also wish you a fantastic and cyber-safes start to the New Year!

L'équipe d'AvenirIT vous souhaite tous de très joyeuses fêtes. Nous espérons que vos jours seront pleins de tout l'amour et de rires que votre cœur pourrait désirer ! Nous vous souhaitons également un début d'année fantastique et "cyber-sécuritaire".



I don't know about you - but I really enjoyed the overnight shift from Fall to Winter this year. I usually go into full hermit mode as soon as the first snow flake hits the ground - but I felt like I was ready for change and in fact was looking forward to it!

A lot has happened in the last couple months - but one of the highlights was definitely my daughter's "take your kid to work day". I've always looked forward to the opportunity of showing off what I do to my kids, so I circled the event in my calendar and counted down the days. It was nearly the big day when my daughter ripped my heart out and told me she was going to ask her friend's mom if she could tag along with them instead since she's an RCMP officer and my job is boring. Ouch.

Apparently sitting behind a computer in my home office all day meeting with clients, prospects or chatting with my team online is not her version of an exciting day! I'll be honest - it hurt a little, but I convinced her that my job was fun and she agreed to hang out with me anyway...

So since hanging out in the home office was out - I figured we would have fun with this. Instead of spending the day behind a screen, we visited some of our clients to learn more about their business and what they do - and what an eye opening experience that was for both of us!

Sure - I have my plans as to what I would like my kids to be when they grow up. I would definitely like to have at least one take an interest in owning a business so that I can share what I've learnt in the last decade and a half with them. So far, my daughter has zero interest in entrepreneurship and has a ridiculously huge interest in "arts" - more specifically film acting.

Ever since seeing Millie Bobby Brown in Stranger Things - she's been passionate on building a career in film. She's taken a few theatre classes, but has found her true love in film acting. She's auditioned for a few parts, and has us nearly convinced to get her an agent. This is more than a phase as she has a plan of moving to the city, finding a job

Consumer Awareness This Holiday Shopping Season

The numbers are on the rise – and in this case, we aren't exactly talking about post holiday shopping credit card balances. The number of consumers that suspect they are at risk of identity theft has increased. The rise of identity and personal information theft is usually the case nowadays during the holiday season with the uptake in online shopping.

In a report from CyberScout last year of 1050 employed adults, 57% of them were expecting to be a victim of identity theft. In addition to identity theft, 55% felt that it would somewhat likely that they would be a victim of a financial hack and 20% believed it to be "very likely" to happen to them.

So, now you must be wondering what you can do to prevent your personal information from being stolen. Although keeping up with cyber-criminals is an ongoing process, especially when it seems that as soon as we've identified one tactic, they've created another, there are still measures you can take!

Make sure to keep your social accounts on lock-down and don't friend strangers. Also, it's a good idea to use a VPN to add an additional layer of security to your setup. Be sure to monitor your identity and credit reports as often as possible – which can mean checking on your bank account daily for unknown charges. And most importantly, make sure you create strong, unique passwords for each online account that you have!

and working at building out her acting career.

So what does this have to do with spending the day meeting our clients? Well, it turns out - arts is everywhere. And while I was hoping to encourage her to think about a different career path, she was instead encouraged to keep working hard at her dreams, and truth be told, I was encouraged to help her follow that dream! While the highlight of her day was getting to see how things worked backstage at Rainbow Stage - we also had a few eye opening conversations with some of our other clients.

One stop included a tour of a facility where arts plays a prominent role not only in attracting young visitors - but also in their programs. In fact one of their employees was a past theatre teacher! Learning what she does now and how she's applied her experience was truly amazing.

We also met the CEO of a larger insurance brokerage that used to dance and was an extra in a feature film. She used to run a dance studio and strongly believes that this shaped her to become who she is today.

Another meeting included an employee in the economic development sector who used to be a movie director and how this helped her transition to her career in attracting and building the industry in Winnipeg. Her knowledge and experience in that field has allowed her to do what she loves.

So yeah - this day was very eye opening for me as well as my daughter. And come to think of it - I should have known! I also grew up with arts being a prominent part of my life. I used to be a tap dancer for 14 years and did

theatre growing up. I like to think that my parents signed me up to dance since they couldn't afford a third kid in hockey - but looking back, I am confident that performing on stage hundreds of times in front of live audiences and sacrificing hundreds of hours rehearsing made me who I am today. In fact - my best memories growing up include representing Canada in dance festivals.

This day with my daughter left me realizing just how important "art" truly is - and how it has shaped thousands of people become who they are today.

She still thinks my job is boring and that I just sit behind the computer "fixing computer stuff", and I suppose that's OK. As for her friend's cool mom? She did a webinar on fingerprinting or something like that, behind a screen. ;)

- Mathieu Manaignre
President and CEO of Avenir IT



I have enjoyed the services that we have received so far from Avenir. The onsite tech is great and is quick to respond to issues. The support that my satellite reps have been receiving has also worked out wonderfully. Thank you so much for everything, and keep up the great and prompt work.

Peter DeBoer
*General Manager,
Piq Potential, Premier Printing*



Prices may go down over the holidays but hacking incidents go up. Way up. While online shopping is something we all need to be diligent about when it comes to our personal cybersecurity, we need to be mindful of our working environment as well.

Many employees take this time of year as an opportunity to work from home or remotely. Whether it is stationing themselves in a home office, coffee shop, or checking in periodically while “on holiday break”, with this change in circumstance, the risk of loopholes being created in cybersecurity increases.

Danger Zones

No, we aren't talking about bringing up politics at the family dinner table. But if you're using that free Wi-Fi while your family strolls the mall, make sure you're not sharing and viewing in a private environment. That includes typing in your credentials to log into accounts.

Time to give your cousin the family photos from last year, and you've put them on a flash drive you had at work – with outdated company information. Stop right there. Just because those old documents on the drive aren't relevant anymore doesn't mean they aren't to a hacker. Cousin Carol is unlikely to be as cautious as you might think. Furthermore, that data wasn't intended to be viewed by Carol, either.

The Hustle & the Bustle

We're all working like crazy to wrap up year-end, get gifts purchased, and finalize the dinner menu. You don't want to be working, you want to be doing all of the holiday things with your friends and family. So, you may work quickly and likely in a more careless manner to get it done. Slow down and be safe. You don't want one quick click, share, or unsaved file to expose you or your company to a breach in the New Year.

We're all busy, we're all entitled to enjoy this time of year with family and friends. Just make sure you don't fa-la-la your way right into the dangers of the dark web unintentionally.



Holiday Energy Saving Tips

1. The holidays are often the most expensive time of year. Between buying gifts for loved ones and hosting family dinners, the bills can rack up. Although we may not be able to help you save money on most of the festivities, we can offer some tips to help you keep your electricity bill from racking up as well.

2. Switch from incandescent to LED string lights. Not only are they more energy efficient, they are less likely to be the cause of a fire.

3. Use smart plugs and timers for your string lights to illuminate on a schedule. No need to remember to plug them in when the sun sets, and no more wasted energy if you forget to unplug them!

4. If you're planning on going away for the holidays, be sure to unplug your lights and appliances to stop phantom energy drainage.

5. If you are able to host a gathering, be sure to turn down your thermostat by a couple of degrees before guests arrive. Not only will this help you save on heating costs, it will also make your guests more comfortable as your home warms from their body heat.

3 Tips To Motivate Your Team That Most Leaders Don't Know

Motivation isn't born out of a dollar sign, and passion doesn't arrive after getting a raise. The truth is, most people aren't driven by money. If you are looking for ways to motivate your team, you must learn to look elsewhere. By getting clear on what my team's personal needs are, I have found that I can discover different ways to motivate them and identify alternative opportunities to impact their lives.

1. Encourage their external goals. Many of my employees have a side hustle or side projects. Some businesses frown upon this, going as far as to have employees sign contracts prohibiting external work, but I don't ask them to stop. Instead, I approach the conversation with the same amount of enthusiasm for their side hustle as their internal career growth. By recognizing these are individuals who have goals in life outside of your office building, you can build a stronger relationship and more respect as a leader.

2. Develop other leaders. Strong leaders create other leaders, they shouldn't create minions who follow them into battle. Empower your employees to lead, be it leading themselves, a smaller team, or a large project within the company. This empowerment generates organic motivation that has legs to grow.

3. Consider the life cycles of your employees. Similar to how you view a product life cycle, consider the life cycle of each employee and adjust your actions and the root of the motivation accordingly. Although it may be tempting to think in the moment of what your business needs, look at where your employees fit within the life of their career. Someone going through the early stages of parenthood might be motivated by more time off to be with family or daycare perks. On the flip side, a fresh graduate showing up for day one at the office might be motivated by the opportunity for a promotion, to travel for business, or to lead a project. When you know where your employees are in their careers, it's easier to pinpoint what will inspire them to do great work.

Adapted from "The Truth About Motivating Your Team That Most Leaders Don't Know" by Raj Jana

5 Emails You Should Never Open

1. The Authority E-mail. The most common phishing e-mails are ones impersonating your bank, Canada Revenue Agency, Autopac or even the boss at your company. The rule of thumb is this: ANY e-mail that comes in where 1) you don't personally know the sender, including e-mails from the CRA, Microsoft or your "bank," and 2) has some horrible time sensitive consequence for not acting fast, delete it. Remember, important notifications will be sent via old-fashioned snail mail. And you can always call and verify with your boss.

2. The "Account Verification" E-mail. Any e-mail that asks you to verify your password, bank information or login credentials, OR to update your account information should be ignored. No legitimate vendor sends e-mails asking for this; they will simply ask you upon logging in to update or verify your information if that's necessary.

3. The Typo E-mail. Another big warning sign is typos. A lot of time, these phishing emails are written by criminal rings where English is not their first language. They don't have time, nor care to proofread as a legitimate company would. Therefore, if there are obvious typos or grammar mistakes, delete it.

4. The You've Won E-mail. If you can't recall entering a contest, you didn't win. And the last thing you should do is give them any information. If you did enter the contest, they already have your information. This also includes anything that would require a shipping fee for the prize to be sent. 99.9% of the time, these are fake.

5. The Zip File, PDF Or Invoice Attachment. Unless you specifically KNOW the sender of an e-mail, never, EVER open an attachment. That includes PDFs, zip, video files and anything referencing an unpaid invoice or file (many hackers use this to get people in accounting departments to open attachments). Always be sure you know what you are downloading before clicking.

Enterprise-grade, HD VoIP solution to strengthen your business communications.

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