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"With over 20 years of experience providing remote support to clients that rely on technology, I know what it takes to deliver business continuity. Add to that another 20 years of support in the service industry you'll not find another company that takes customer service to heart as I do. Find out for your business what a difference it makes. "

Dan Foote
Owner/President

What's Inside:

Got IT Problem? - Click Here!

Equipment failures and network interruptions – is your business ready?

Business downtime provokes anxiety for even the most collected CEO and with good reason. According to an recent surveys, companies report an average of five outages per month with the cost ranging from $1 million per year for midsize companies and up to $60 million or more for large corporations.

Most of the downtime cost is attributed to lost revenue and employee productivity. The biggest trouble-makers for business computer networks? Equipment failures and network interruptions. The octopus-like tentacles of a network outage have serious consequences. Your servers, applications, and devices may be working perfectly, but they can't communicate with each other when the network is down. The result is a whole lot of employees sitting around staring at each other until they can get back to work. Ouch. Aside from lost time and output, you'll also have the pleasure of dealing with frustrated staff.

What can a CEO do to make these problems go away? Either hire an in-house IT team or engage a Managed Service Provider to take care of problems before they start. The current salary of a quality network engineer averages around $94-$146K annually. Depending on the size and needs of your organization, you may need quite a few staffers at this skill level. In addition, this team must be willing to provide user support and daily grunt tasks that many engineers feel are beneath their pay grade.

What is the most damaging error for a computer system and why?
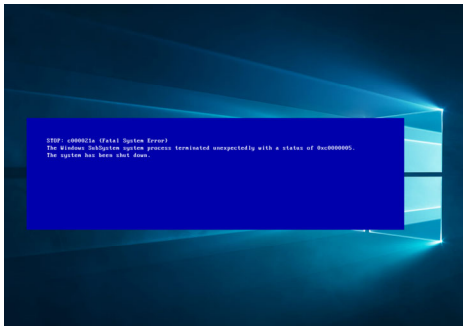
Well … a computer system consists of hardware and software … from the software viewpoint … it's the hardware!

What causes the most damage? If you can get parts to replace broken things … then it is the thing that contains the unique 'data' on the system — or the disk drive or USB flash drive or … where the data is stored, and replacement will cause loss of that data.

If you cannot get parts … you may be able to get at the data by using an adapter and/ or putting the disk/flash-drive/whatever onto another computer.

So, in all cases — if the data is important … then an error/problem that makes the data unavailable is the most damaging. (Annoying? Frustrating? Desire to use naughty language?)

If the data is not important … if the machine can be replaced … uh, toss a coin? If the machine cannot be replaced … That is probably the answer.

How many other ways can things fail? Power failure while a disk/flash-drive is being written to can cause nasty things to occur.

Knowing the desired answer might help narrow down the possibilities. :)
By Marshall Midden

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How to dry your phone's speaker

Although your phone may be considered water-resistant, its components, such as the speakers, may not be. Water in the phone's speakers can muffle the sound or make it hard to hear the person on the other end of the line.

These days, most phones are created to be durable, but water can still cause damage, especially to the speaker. And water-damage to your phone can void the warranty. Below, we offer some tips for drying out a water-damaged speaker.

The first thing you need to do is take it out of the liquid immediately. The longer your phone is exposed to water, the more damage that can be done. Don't plug the phone into the charger until you're certain that it's dry. Plugging it in can cause the phone to short circuit and permanent damage.

The next step is to manually shake the phone, which can get rid of a lot of droplets of water on the outside. Wipe off the remaining water with a lint-free cloth, and use a cotton swab to blot the water from nooks and recesses.

Remove the battery, if possible. Removing the energy supply will prevent the phone from being fried. If you have an iPhone, you may not be able to do this.

Empty out your phone by removing the SIM card and the memory card. Ensure these are dry. The iPhone will only allow you to remove the SIM card. Also, detach all peripherals, such as headphones, and dry the connection components.

Dry the phone again with a lint-free cloth. Avoid using paper towels, as particles can come loose and clog up ports of the phone.

Vacuum the water from the interior nooks and crannies using a car vacuum or any vacuum with a small nozzle attachment. Avoid using a hair dryer because the heat can cause added damage to your phone. A YouTube video demonstrates the safest way to vacuum a phone's interior, is by placing the phone in a sock and using a rubber band to hold the vacuum hose in the sock.

Once all the visible water is gone, you can use the technique of playing low-frequency sounds to cause the speakers to vibrate, shaking out the waterdrops. FixMySpeakers.com plays an effective water-eliminating sound when you press the button. Or for a less irritating sound, play "Miroh" by Stray Kids at full volume a few times.

When you do this, you need to have your phone's volume at its loudest, and lay your phone flat or on an incline, with its speaker facing down to let gravity help get the water out.

Shiny Invention Of The Month

"Polypill" – A whole day's worth of medication 3D printed on a single tablet

Having to remember to take your medication, especially if pills need to be taken at various times throughout the day, can be challenging, especially for the elderly. That's why researchers believe these "polypills," could be the future of simplified, individualized medication.

A team of engineers and pharmacists have collaborated to 3D print edible tablets that contain personalized drug dosages and timing regimens.

The team used "Multi-Material InkJet 3D Printing" to develop an ink with a molecular makeup that cures into water-soluble structures when exposed to ultraviolet light.

Then they combined the ink with varying amounts of aspirin to design customizable patterns to fine-tune each pill's available surface area.

By also adjusting the tablet's interior structure and shape, they were able to control a given printed pill's release rate and dosage amount.

Although the teams first experiments only used aspirin, future designs may incorporate additional drugs, dosages, and timing requirements. Further testing will expand their range of materials and medications, and additional research will serve to refine this procedure.

The Five Most Common Computer Network Issues for Businesses

Before our imaginations run away with all the possible IT disasters let's look at the most common computer network problems for any size business:

Using Outdated Hardware or Software

Equipment and software that isn't updated or patched on a regular basis leave your network wide open for attackers. Maintaining current anti-virus licenses, spam blockers, and spyware blocking software on all network machines adds another layer of protection. This step is often left to the user who may or may not heed the repeat desktop alerts to shut down and install critical updates. Oversight of this function by technical professionals is highly recommended. On top of the potential attacks, outdated software simply does not function as well. Vendors often stop upgrading old software leaving users stuck to deal with bugs themselves.

No Data Backups

No network back-ups or those done only on an infrequent basis mean you stand to lose critical data. Back-ups sound simple, but they require an elevated level of skill to perform effectively. Saving information to a drive that can't be quickly restored in a live environment means downtime and the potential pain of re-creating work already completed. On top of that, what if the server you keep your files on crashes? Does it have a backup?

Bad Network Connectivity

The never-ending demand for bandwidth in our business computer networks puts an enormous strain on IT resources. Almost everything used in business today is connected in some way via the Internet including third-party apps, conference and video calls, cloud-based tools, and remote users just to name a few. No internet means work grinds to a halt until the issue is resolved. With 24/7 demands on network connectivity, it's important to maintain quality equipment that supports good connectivity and speed that's fast enough to accommodate the company's needs.

Security Leaks

Cybercrime is now part of mainstream corporate America, no longer the hacker sitting in their basement. This criminal element is very sophisticated and always looking for ways to weasel into your business for personal gain. Security concerns include business computer networks vulnerable to malware, viruses, phishing, and ransomware attacks due to poor network maintenance and unprepared employees who fall prey to dastardly schemes.

Lack of IT User Support

IT Support is vital when it comes to maintaining the hardware and software for a company. Tech support makes everything run smoothly and when something breaks they fix it on the spot. Mitigating expensive downtime whether it be one user or an outage affecting the entire company needs to be done quickly and with the least amount of confusion possible.

How Much Can Networking Trouble Cost Your Business?

The annual estimate across all North American companies is $700 billion lost due to business computer network disruptions. Yes, you read that number right. The carnage broken down into further detail paints this nasty picture: 78% to lost employee productivity, 17% to lost revenue, and 5% actual cost to fix downtime issues. Of course, actual estimates vary by industry, but the cost of downtime is serious not just for business results, but employee morale and satisfaction.

Sarcasm recognition added into AI

Incorporating sarcasm recognition into AI is a challenge yet to be overcome, though researchers have been working at it since at least 2019. In that year a paper was published for an annual meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics, entitled "Towards Multimodal Sarcasm Detection (An *Obviously* Perfect Paper)."

In this paper, a database was proposed that would contain sarcasm examples taken from sitcoms like Friends and The Big Bang Theory, which would help researchers learn how to scientifically detect sarcasm in conversation.

Since that time, there has been more research on the scientific understanding of detecting sarcasm. In 2006, for instance, the University of Southern California's Signal Analysis and Interpretation announced that their "automatic sarcasm recognizer" could detect the sarcastic use of "yeah, right" in telephone calls more than 80% correctly.

Just 4 years later, in 2010, computer scientists at Hebrew University in Jerusalem developed a program that could catch 77 percent of the sarcastic statements made in Amazon reviews, including a book review that claimed a book was "Great for insomniacs."

There are many factors that help us to recognize sarcasm -- which means saying one thing but meaning another -- and those factors are often subtle. The cues that indicate sarcasm may include an overemphasis on a particular word, a drawn-out syllable, a changed tone, or a deadpan face --and knowing the context of a situation plays a great deal in perceiving sarcasm.

There are many things that can cause our sarcasm detector to struggle, including autism, head injuries, brain lesions and schizophrenia. As researchers get more of a scientific understanding of sarcasm, their results could have potential benefits not only for the future of chatbots, but even for real people suffering from these deficiencies.

Apple wasn't storing deleted iOS photos in iCloud after all

Security researchers reverse-engineered Apple's recent iOS 17.5.1 update and found that a recent bug that restored images deleted months or even years ago was caused by an iOS bug and not an issue with iCloud. Despite widespread reports from users and tech outlets confirming the alarming issue, Apple remained silent about the root cause, failing to address people's valid concerns.

Today's report can now ease people's concern that Apple was indefinitely storing media users deleted a long time ago, which would have been a massive breach of privacy. Apple fixed the bug in iOS 17.5.1, which was released on Monday.

Reappearing images

Since the release of the public beta of iOS 17.5, iPhone users reported the unexpected re-appearance of deleted images on their devices. This bug made it into the final release, reaching a much broader user base and resulting in numerous reports of this problem on Reddit.

"I have four pics from 2010 that keep reappearing as the latest pics uploaded to iCloud. I have deleted them repeatedly," a user said in the Reddit thread.

"Same happened here photo from September 2022 just appeared out of nowhere in recent section in photos app, weird," reported another user.

Since the restored photos were a lot older than the 30 days iOS's "Recently Deleted" system is set to keep files for, it quickly became clear that something else was happening.

To make matters worse, Apple's silence left room for speculation, with some thinking Apple wasn't being transparent in their data policies to images not being properly deleted from memory.

Apple removed a routine in the function responsible for scanning and re-importing photos from the filesystem, which caused it to reindex old files on the local file system and add them back to people's galleries.

"Based on this code, we can say that the photos that reappeared were still lying around on the filesystems and that they were just found by the migration routine added in iOS 17.5," explained Synactiv.

"The reason why those files were there in the first place is unknown."

Although this finding reassures users that Apple isn't storing their deleted files on the cloud and "accidentally restoring" them one day, it also acts as a reminder that deleted files can persist in memory until the blocks are overwritten with new data. BleepingComputer contacted Apple multiple times regarding the photo-restoration bug and again to validate Synactiv's findings but have yet to receive a response.

By Bleeping Computer