

THE HAWK I VIEW



Hawk iSolutions Group, Inc.

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A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO COMPUTER NETWORKS



THINKING ABOUT BUYING A NEW COMPUTER?

Worried about getting stuck with a bad deal? Not sure what features to look for? Concerned that you might end up buying the wrong machine?

Stop worrying and become an educated buyer! Just give me a call at (636) 256-7534 and I'll tell you what to look for, what to avoid, and how to get the best deal.

No hassles and no obligation!

Try to talk to most small business owners about setting up a computer network and their eyes will glaze over. Either they fear the complexity of the topic and the mysterious acronyms, or they simply fear the cost of setting up and maintaining one.

But computer networking isn't as expensive or as complicated as it used to be. Lower costs and "plug and play" devices have made it extremely easy for even small Mom and Pop shops to take advantage of the increased speed, accuracy, and ease of doing business offered by a computer network.

WHAT IS A NETWORK?

A computer network is nothing more than a system of computers and devices (like a printer) that are connected together to share files, information, and resources.

If you connect your computer with another computer with a cable, you've got a small, peer-to-peer network in place.

The most common type of a network in small businesses is the LAN or Local Area Network. This type of network is usually connected within the same building with cables. Another common small business network is a WAN or Wide Area Network,

which is a LAN extended to other geographic locations using the internet.

WHICH NETWORK IS BEST FOR YOU?

If you only have two or three computers, you may want to start off with a peer to peer network where all machines are directly connected to one another, but there are drawbacks.

Peer to peer networks make it difficult to backup and manage files because everyone has to store everything—software and data files—on their own machine. This type of network can also become sluggish and unstable causing unexpected downtime. It also makes it difficult to adequately protect against viruses.

A better option is the client-server network where a powerful computer called a server stores and "serves up" the information and software applications (databases, word processing, accounting, etc.) to all the machines in your network or office.

This type of configuration is much faster, secure, and stable. Backups are not only easier to perform, but they are also far more reliable and accurate.

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Security is improved because virus protection and Internet access can be managed from one central location.

Sharing software applications and large files between workers and offices becomes easier, and you can allow for remote access (people working from home).

There are other benefits such as lowered software costs, increases in productivity, and the ability to get practically any device (such as a printer or scanner) to talk to just about any other device, including your phone.

Of course, if the server goes down your business stops. Therefore you want to make sure you have a robust server configuration and a fast-response service agreement with a local computer support firm like the ones that Hawk iSolutions Group, Inc. offers to our small business clients.

WIRELESS NETWORKS – THE NEXT GENERATION OF SMALL BUSINESS AND HOME COMPUTING

Thanks to major advances in wireless technology, now even small businesses on a small budget can benefit from the new wireless networks. If you're confused, just think of it as a computer that works like a cell phone; look Mom, no wires!

The only difference between a wireless network and the "old fashioned" cable connected networks is that wireless networks communicate with other computers, devices, and the Internet without any messy cable installations whatsoever.

This is especially popular in businesses that require mobile workers to enter and access data where wired devices would be inconvenient (or impossible) to carry around, such as a warehouse, a large store, or even in a hospital.

If your head is spinning from all this talk about networks and you just want all of this "computer stuff" to work, then you can always give us, Hawk iSolutions Group, Inc., a call and we'll make it work for you.

STOP CYBER CRIMINALS!



Stop advertisers from spying on you, stealing confidential information, and using your computer to send you unwanted spam or pop ups! Schedule an onsite visit for any type of service this month and we'll perform a complete check and cleaning of all spyware software.



Hawk iSolutions Group, Inc.

Call: (636) 256-7534

Expiration Date: April 1, 2005

"We're Moving!"



HiSG is moving in March, to the fourth St. Louis Enterprise Center. The Enterprise Center is located in Wellston at the site of a former Wagner Electric Co. Plant. The Wellston Incubator is part of a larger effort to revive Wellston as a business and industrial hub. Our contact information will remain the same but our new address will be:

Wellston Enterprise Center
Hawk iSolutions Group, Inc.
6439 Plymouth, Suite 112
St. Louis, MO 63133

COMPUTER USER ALERT

Advertisers Are Now Using Hidden Programs Called "Spyware" To Steal Your Personal Information, Flood Your Inbox With Spam, And Watch Your Every Move On The Internet!

If you spend a lot of time online, share music files or photos with other users, or if you download shareware or other Internet "freebies", chances are your computer is infected with spyware.

Spyware is Internet jargon for hidden, undetected programs advertisers install on your PC to gather and report information about you and your online activities to a remote person. This program is usually installed without the user's knowledge by piggybacking on another program or file being downloaded.

While some spyware is harmless, there can be serious consequences of unidentified spyware which include spam, identity theft, corruption and slowing of your PC, and annoying pop-up ads. These programs can also profile your shopping preferences, hijack your browser start page, and alter important system files without your knowledge or permission. In addition, you may notice your computer operating extremely slow.

Unfortunately, Spyware is not illegal. However, if you are like me, you might not like the idea of a complete stranger monitoring and storing information about you and your online activities; especially since there is almost no way for you to control what data is being sent.



To safeguard your computer, turn off all file sharing and avoid sending sensitive e-mail or making online purchases.

SEVEN COMMON MISTAKES MADE BY COMPUTER USERS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM



Mistake 1: Security

Anti-virus programs will not stop all threats. However, after you have the anti-virus program installed then install a firewall or use Windows XP's free firewall.

Mistake 2: Web

Almost everyone is tempted to download free programs from the web. Downloading programs from sites you don't know is the easiest way to end up with a computer infected with adware and spyware.

Mistake 3: E-mail

Do not forward mass-mail. Don't add to the problem by forwarding mass mailings. You're spreading bad information and looking a bit naïve. (Examples: Warning of a nonexistent virus and Bill Gates is giving away his fortune). Meanwhile, watch out for the official-looking messages that point you to equally official-looking Web sites that pretend to be eBay or EarthLink or Citibank. They ask for personal information, such as passwords and Social Security numbers. Never respond to those fake sites.

Mistake 4: Power

If you don't have an uninterruptible power supply — called a UPS — buy one and start using it today. The UPS will prevent and protect your computer from Mother Nature.

Mistake 5: Protection

Almost everyone I know is guilty of this user error: we don't backup our data. If you own a computer long enough, chances are that your hard

drive will crash. E-mail addresses, business contacts, and financial records will be gone. You don't need to backup programs, you can install them again. But you must make a backup copies of the data you create. You can backup data in various ways: Flash Drive, CD-Burner, Disk, Zip Drive, Etc.

Mistake 6: Reference

People tend to throw away manuals and discs. If you must be neat, find a filing cabinet or box to store every bit of material that comes with the installation discs. It's common for programs to require an activation code before they can be installed.

Mistake 7: Password

If it's a name or a word, you're a prime target for hackers. Use a password that contains letters and numbers. There are ways to create and remember a complicated password. Don't use the same password for everything. Sure, it's a hassle. But having your bank account robbed or identity stolen is worse.



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We Make Your
Computer
Soar!

Services We Offer

- PC repair and troubleshooting
- Printer repair and troubleshooting
- Disaster recovery
- System back ups & data protection
- Virus protection & removal
- Network security
- E-mail & Internet setup help
- Wireless networking
- Consulting & support
- One-on-one computer training
- Hardware Sales

ATTENTION SMALL BUSINESSES:

Get all of the computer support you need without the expense of hiring a full time IT staff.

COMPUTER QUESTION OF THE MONTH: INBOX REPAIR

Q: I've been using Microsoft Outlook for years without any problems — but recently, for no apparent reason, it's been running slow. What's going on?

A: Without actually reviewing your system, it's hard to say. There is a good chance that it is due to not running regular maintenance on your inbox. Here are two things I recommend doing to maintain the health and performance of your data.

First, get rid of any old e-mails you don't need. There are two places to do this: in your "Deleted" items folder and in your "Sent" items folder. Outlook protects you from permanently deleting emails you want to keep by two-stepping the deletion process. When you delete an email, it gets moved and held in the deleted items folder until you clean it out.

To do this, right click on the folder and choose "Empty Deleted Items Folder." It makes sense for you to double

check this folder first for any e-mails you accidentally deleted and want to keep. When you've done that, go into your sent items folder. If there are large or old e-mails you want to keep, but don't need to access any time soon, make a back up of your .pst file "as is" then delete them from Outlook. **NOTE:** Be sure you save and do a recovery of your email files BEFORE permanently deleting them from your system.



Another trick is to save attachments to your hard drive instead of in an e-mail in your inbox. This will save room and speed up Outlook in the process.

Second, compact your personal folders weekly by going into Outlook and right clicking on your personal folders file. Choose "Properties for Outlook Folder Today" and click on the "Advanced" button. From there you'll see an option to "Compact Now." Just click on it and wait until it is complete before exiting.



Have a question you want answered
in this column?

Send it to: michele@hawkisg.com