

THE HAWK I VIEW



Hawk iSolutions Group, Inc.

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7 Things to Expect From Your IT Partner

As a Microsoft Partner here are some things that they suggest you expect from your IT Partner, such as Hawk iSolutions Group, Inc.

1. **Technical expertise—and strong communication skills.** Of course, an IT partner should be well-versed in the ins and outs of technology. But that sort of knowledge can be of little more than academic value if your partner doesn't have first-hand knowledge of how it applies to your business.
2. **An awareness of your budget—and resources.** IT partners are proving increasingly essential to a broad range of small to medium-sized businesses. But that sort of critical function shouldn't necessarily come at a crippling expense. When looking for an IT partner, ask how fees are structured. A responsive IT partner certainly won't be free, but should be sympathetic to those sorts of services that can bleed business coffers dry.
3. **An advocate who cuts through product hype.** No IT partner stays afloat long if a business doesn't go along with his or her recommendations, be it a new software package or a plan to implement it. But truly effective partners go to bat for their client companies, identifying genuinely effective technical options.
4. **A long-term planner, implementer, and strategist.** Even the most carefully thought out technology plan is of little use if it grows old on the drawing board. An involved IT partnership also means a handle on implementation, whether it's suggesting a gradual introduction over time or a veritable technology lost weekend where everything is shut down and changed over. Be sure your IT partner knows the best way to put technology recommendations into place
5. **An industry watcher who maps technology advances and developments to your needs.** A proactive IT partner stands ready to pinpoint new technology needs and suggest updates and changes accordingly. That means keeping close tabs on your business's growth and development—as well as on developments in the world of technology that might apply to your needs.
6. **A keen ability to troubleshoot and solve problems.** It's unrealistic to think that any element of technology, no matter how expensive or sophisticated, is totally immune to breakdowns. Rather than wallow in that tech 'Never-Never Land,' an effective IT partner should always be ready to address technical problems quickly. Even better, your IT partner should go a step further and be proactive about overseeing regular maintenance and other steps that can head off problems.
7. **An interest in handling all of your technology needs.** Nothing can prove more annoying—not to mention wasteful—than you having to hop from consultant to consultant or business to business to address individual elements of your technology needs. One final element when shopping for an IT partner is knowing that all of your technology needs will be met under one roof, no matter if it's as involved as a completely new technology infrastructure or as elementary as a basic user's question.

These are all things that our company strives for in a relationship with our small business customers. If you are not currently receiving this support from your current technical partner or you don't have an IT partner to help your business, please call us at (314) 727-1174, we would enjoy the opportunity to build a relationship with your company.

Safeguarding Your Laptop

Recent thefts of laptop computers that contained sensitive business data have exposed a weak link in many corporate security plans—mobile devices and the people who carry them. In recent months there have been several high-profile theft or losses of laptops. In November, a Boeing Co. laptop with personal information on 160,000 current and former employees was stolen and never recovered. Last month, Ameriprise Financial Inc. of Minneapolis had to notify 226,000 people that their names and personal data were stored on a laptop that was stolen from an employee's car. Here are 9 tips on how to safeguard your laptop.

1. Choose a secure operating system and lock it down. Use passwords with a combination of letters and numbers, and take advantage of built-in encryption software.
2. Don't leave access numbers or passwords in the laptop carrying case.
3. Register the laptop with the manufacturer. This can flag it so if a thief sends it in for maintenance, you have a better chance of getting it back.
4. Write down the laptop's serial number and store it in a safe place.
5. Engrave the company name and address on the top case or use a metal tamper-resistant commercial asset tag.
6. Use tracking software that allows your laptop to "call home." With this software, the laptop periodically checks in to a tracking center with a traceable signal.
7. Back up data on an external hard drive, tape drive or CD-ROM.
8. Use a nondescript carrying case, such as a backpack or padded suitcase.
9. At airport security points, wait for the person in front of you to pass through the metal detector. Make sure the laptop is well into the screening machine before you step through the detector. Keep an eye out for it as it comes down the conveyor.
10. Don't leave your laptop in an unlocked car—or in plain sight.

The Lighter Side...

A married couple was sitting in the living room one evening when the husband turned to his wife and said, "Just so you know, I never want to live in a vegetative state dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug."

Without a word, his wife got up, unplugged the TV, and threw out his beer.

As they were driving to yet another dinner, Albert Einstein mentioned to his chauffeur (who resembled him) that he was very tired of speechmaking.

The chauffeur said he had heard that speech so many times, he could give it himself. So Einstein let him do it. At the dinner, Einstein wore the chauffeur's cap and jacket and sat in the back of the room. The chauffeur gave a nice rendition of Einstein's speech. Then, a pompous professor stood up and asked a question about antimatter formation.

Without missing a beat, the chauffeur said, "Sir, the answer to that question is so simple that I will let my chauffeur answer it!"

Come and see us...

Hawk iSolutions Group, Inc. will be participating in the St. Louis Small Business 5th Expo! We will be located in booth 502, come by and get additional contacts from other Small Businesses in our area. There will also be FREE Seminars covering the following topics:

1. "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Securing An SBA Loan"
2. "Getting Noticed: Marketing Your Business Effectively"
3. "Relationship Marketing: Growing Your Business By Contributing To Your Network"
4. "Business Plans That Impress The Bankers"

The event takes place on March 21, 2006 from 12-7p at the St. Charles Convention Center, we

Meet Our New Employee!

Hawk iSolutions Group, Inc. is pleased to announce the hiring of our new Lead Technical Architect, Darren Roback. Darren comes to us from an enterprise-class corporate environment, where he was responsible for the support of 50+ servers, 450+ workstations, 400+ users, as well as 10+ VPN tunnels over a redundant Internet fabric. Darren is very enthusiastic and eager to help all of our current and future customers with their IT needs. So if you see him lurking around your offices—say Hi!



Microsoft Announces The End Of It's Support For Windows 98 and Windows Me

On July 11, 2006, Microsoft will bring a close to Extended Support for Windows 98, Windows 98 Second Edition, and Windows Me. That means no more public or technical support, including security updates.

Microsoft will continue to host a self-service website that will provide information on troubleshooting, configuration, and other how-to content, but you are pretty much on your own.

If you are currently using any of these operating systems, we urge you to upgrade your software immediately due to the security risks that will most certainly increase following the retirement of Microsoft's support. If you aren't certain that your current system will be able to meet the minimum requirements for an upgrade, call our office and we'll be happy to help!

If you currently need to upgrade your system, call us before June 30th and you will receive a **FREE** Network Audit along with 2-Hours of **FREE** Computer Support.



"Breed? He's a Pointer...and a Clicker."

Important Security Alert To Anyone Using Instant Messaging

According to the Radicati Group, 85% of businesses—both large and small—are now using instant messaging (IM) as a communication tool.

Unfortunately, hackers are rapidly developing ways to use IM to spread viruses and gain access to computers and networks. Instant-messaging security vendors FaceTime Communications and IMlogic Inc. have both reported an exceptionally high spike in attacks over recent months.

IM attacks work similar to e-mail viruses; the sender tries to get the user to click on a link that takes them to a website where they'll be infected with a virus, or it tries to get the user to download a file. Many of these attacks appear to be from legitimate sources or people on a "buddy" list.

Just recently, FaceTime discovered a threat on AOL's instant messenger system. They quickly contacted AOL but tens of thousands of computers had already been infected with a peer-to-peer file sharing program called BitTorrent. Hackers then used this program to upload movies to the victim's hard drive and use their computer as a vehicle for sharing it with others.

These attacks are also getting more complex. Savvy IM users will often reply to an IM and ask their buddy if the link or file sent was safe. However, hackers have now developed an intelligent bot that will actually automatically respond to the message confirming the file or link is safe. One bot actually had 6 different responses depending on the question that was asked by the user.

Just like viruses, worms, and other security threats, businesses need to put measures in place to protect themselves from these new threats. The first step is educating your employees about these threats through your employee's acceptable user policy. However, since there is always a chance someone will click on a link or download a file, education is not enough.

If you currently use IM, we urge you to contact our office about installing the proper software and security measures to make sure you don't fall victim to these growing attacks.



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**IT Solutions...helping
build your business!**

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- 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. Ask about our Small Business Computer Support Program.

SPAM—Are you looking for a solution to solve this problem?

At various times, Hawk iSolutions Group, Inc. has printed articles regarding that ever-increasing problem of electronic junk mail called SPAM. In May, 2005, we started off by providing you with 5 ways to minimize receipt of spam. We have also discussed several of the dangers of spam: delivery (viruses and spyware), capture of personal information (phishing), and, of course, the junk mail that professes to improve your life if you respond or order today (make you rich, improve your sex life, train your dog, go shopping, free vacations, or give you the next skyrocketing stock).

And guess what? You are probably receiving more spam than ever. You may actually receive more spam than legitimate email. And whether your incensed, offended, or simply don't care, there is still a cost to you and your organization to receive this junk mail. For example:

- **Bandwidth**—amount of network capacity spam requires to reach you.
- **Processor**—cycles used to process the spam you don't want to receive.
- **Storage**—the disk capacity used by spam to reside on your organization's mail server or on your own desktop or laptop disk.

- **Infection**—the virus or spyware that may be delivered in the attachments.
- **Additional software**—used simply to protect you from the effects of spam.
- **TIME**—that precious commodity that can't be recovered at any level. This cost is comprised of your time and your organization's time to recover and prevent spam and it's dreaded payload. It is the time it takes you to delete or filter your unwanted email. It is the time it takes to continue work if you have been offended or need to counsel a person (perhaps, a child) that has been subjected to an unwanted message. Or it could simply be that short moment in time where you were distracted from an important task to handle the spam and need to continue on with your important tasks.

The bottom line, spam is robbing you and your organization. The only way to CHANGE the underlying burden of spam is through legislative or economic measures that make spam too costly for the senders. Until that happens, don't let spam interfere with your organization. Call Hawk iSolutions Group, Inc. so we can help protect you from these thieves with a solution that will eliminate spam in a cost effective manner.