

THE HAWK I VIEW



Hawk iSolutions Group, Inc.

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Don't Get Ripped Off By A Rebate!

Think you're getting a great deal thanks to that unbelievable rebate? Think again...

The offers are irresistible but misleading; retailers advertise after-rebate prices on hardware and software to grab your attention and get you to buy. But are you really getting the bargain you expect?

They're Counting On You To Forget

According to the NPD Group, a global market research firm, almost one-third of all computer products and twenty percent of all consumer electronics are sold with a rebate. Manufacturers use rebates as an easy way to offer discounts without actually having to take the full financial hit; that's because thirty to fifty percent of the buyers never attempt to redeem them and therefore end up paying full price for the merchandise.

Multiple Hoops, More Hassle

But they're not just counting on you to forget. To further tip the scales in their favor of not having to make good on their promise, some manufacturers and retailers are imposing impossible restrictions, complicating the process to request a rebate, delaying payments, and creating other barriers that make it

difficult to get your money. All of these are delaying tactics to get you to give up the good fight.

Will These New Rules and Regulations Protect You?

With consumer complaints to the FTC and Better Business Bureau piling up, regulators have tightened the rules around advertising rebates.

Last year, the FTC settled its first dispute with a Dallas-based CompUSA store for knowingly advertising rebates from computer peripherals manufacturer Qps Inc., even though they knew this manufacturer wasn't fulfilling on the rebates advertised.

After this settlement, CompUSA was not only required to advertise the time frame for securing the rebates advertised, but also had to take financial responsibility for any rebates not paid during the promised time frame.

Even though the government is on your side, getting stuck in the middle of a rebate war is very frustrating and a huge waste of time. If you are going to try and cash-in on a rebate, here are some tips that will help.



Wit and Wisdom From A Pessimist

- ◆ Never argue with an idiot. They drag you down to their level then beat you with experience.
- ◆ On the keyboard of life, always keep one finger on the escape key.
- ◆ Life isn't like a box of chocolates, it's more like a jar of jalapenos.
- ◆ Tell me what you need, and I'll tell you how to get along without it.
- ◆ Ring a bell for maid service. If no answer, do it yourself.
- ◆ I don't have an attitude problem, you have a perception problem.
- ◆ My reality check bounced.
- ◆ You can go anywhere and walk through many doors if you walk with confidence and carry a clipboard.



REMINDER:

Mothers Day is May 14th, don't forget to recognize those special women in your life.

HOW LONG CAN YOUR FIRM SURVIVE WITHOUT DATA?

Recently in the Small Business Journal there was an article discussing the fact that 93% of Firms with Major Data Losses File for Bankruptcy. We thought this brought up an important topic to share with our readers.

There are many reasons for data loss, including fire, theft, natural disaster, virus attack, employee error, and employee vandalism. Business owners don't have a reliable disaster recovery for a number of reasons, but none are sufficient to overcome the true damage threatened by lack of preparation.

According to the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington D.C., here are some data backup statistics:

- 99% of all businesses do not perform daily backups.
- 60% of backups are incomplete.
- 50% of restores fail
- Only 25% of all backup tapes are stored off-site.

The article then discusses five questions that need to be answered in order to know if your company is ready for a disaster.

- How long could your business operate in the event of total data loss?
- How long will it take to manually recreate or re-enter data that hasn't been backed up? Is

manual re-entry even possible?

- Are you backing up all critical data?



- Are backups stored offsite? Is your backup software stored offsite?
- Are the software license keys stored offsite?

The article then covers a suggested plan of action.

- Establish a centralized, automated backup system.
- Store all documents, mail and contacts on a central server (not on desktop computers).
- Establish a backup frequency equal to how much data you can afford to lose.
- Maintain backups for at least 3 months.
- Store backups, software media copes, and license key records safely offsite.
- Document and regularly test data restore procedures.

If your company is not currently performing regular backups and you need help assessing your current requirements call us at (314) 727-1174 and we will help you design a backup system that is appropriate for your business.



DO YOU MAKE THESE MISTAKES WHEN SENDING E-MAIL?

A QUICK LESSON IN E-MAIL ETIQUETTE

In this day and age, it is amazing how many businesses and professionals still violate basic e-mail etiquette rules. Almost everyone uses e-mail to communicate with their clients and friends yet very few give any thought to the importance of those communications.

If you want to make sure you are not offending your clients and friends when sending e-mail, here are 6 basic rules to live by:

1. **Never send e-mails to people who have not requested to receive them.** This is also known as spamming and federal laws are getting much tougher in the rules and penalties for sending unwanted e-mail messages. Many businesses make the mistake of thinking that they are free and clear to send e-mail promotions to their clients, even if the client has not specifically requested to get those promotions. When in doubt, it's always smarter to err on the side of caution and NOT include them in your broadcast; doing so could cause you to lose favor with your clients, or worse yet, lose their business altogether.
2. **Don't attach files unless you've gotten permission from the recipient.** With the looming threat of viruses, it's considered bad net-etiquette

to send file attachments.

3. **DO NOT USE ALL CAPS.** Using all caps in an e-mail is the online equivalent of screaming at the top of your lungs. Unless that is what you intended to do, make sure you use lowercase letters.
4. **When sending to a large list of people, use the BCC (blind carbon copy) feature.** Otherwise, you are exposing every recipient's e-mail address to everyone else on the list. Since most people like to keep their personal e-mail addresses private, exposing your entire list will cause you to lose quite a few brownie points.

Here's another point to consider: I wish I had a nickel for every sales person that sent out a broadcast e-mail to all their clients and prospects and accidentally copied everyone on the list. This is an EASY way for your competition to get their hands on one of your most precious assets.

5. **Never send information you wouldn't want the entire world to know about.** E-mails can quickly spread around the Internet. Never send confidential information, off-color jokes, political opinions, pictures,

TIP: Make sure employees know what they can and cannot send through company e-mail accounts.

or gossip that you wouldn't want made public. This goes double if you are using a business e-mail address. And if you are a business owner, you want to make sure your employees know that it is against company policy to send this type of information through your company e-mail. Even a well-meaning joke can land you in a lot of hot water if taken the wrong way. Always take a minute to think before you hit the "send" button.

6. **Avoid fancy formatting, background graphics, and other "cute" pictures and fonts.** What looks great on your monitor may be impossible to read on someone else's; it also may annoy the reader who has to weed through the fluff to find the content.



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- 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.

Don't Get Ripped Off By A Rebate Continued from page 1...

5 Ways To Get The Rebate Check You Were Promised

1. Follow the rebate instructions carefully. Many manufacturers will reject a rebate over a tiny technicality. That means reading the small print and following the instructions to the letter.
2. Make a copy of all the paperwork, receipts, and documents before mailing them off. Some manufactures may request the original receipt; if you mail in your only copy, you could be out of luck if it gets "lost" in the mail. Which brings me to tip #3...
3. Mail your rebate via certified mail to have proof of delivery.
4. Schedule a reminder to yourself to call the company if your rebate doesn't show up within the time frame promised. Most companies will have a website or toll-free number to call to track your rebate.
5. If the manufacturer rejects your rebate or is

holding your check, let them know you plan on contacting the FTC or the Better Business Bureau. Ask the people you speak to for their names and ask to speak to their supervisor.

As a final word of advice, only purchase things you can afford without the rebate. Many rebates take months to process.

