Special Series "IT Pain Points" – Part Three: "I have no idea what is installed on my network"

by Jamshid Javidi

Part Three: "I have no idea what is installed on my network" – Very often, we come across many businesses who are unaware or have little idea as to what is going on with their network system. Oftentimes, the following questions go unanswered throughout the life of their system, causing chaos when a disaster or a mishap occurs. These questions include:

- What are the components of the network system?
- How many servers do I have and what is installed on them?
- What applications and services are being used?
- What clauses are in the service contracts?
- What are the expiration dates for the programs (Apps), services and current contracts?
- What are the passwords for their servers and routers, Wi-Fi, etc.
- Is there a backup and disaster recovery in place?

Business owners assumed that someone such as an office manager or a bookkeeper is privy to this information, and is handling it. Or, they are under the impression that their IT professional handles all of this, and therefore they are okay, though this is also not always the case. Or they could be partially knowledgeable about some of it but not necessarily all of it.

So, what is the solution? The best thing to do is to have a semiannual audit of your technology. To start, create an admin sheet (simple excel sheet) with all the employees' usernames, passwords, and email passwords. This admin sheet should also include the applications they use, the types of information they have access to. Also, it should consist of:

- What are the admin username and passwords for the server, routers, and other devices such as scanners, internet modems, etc.?
- What software applications are in use in the organization?
- Who are our vendors? What is the support phone number? When does the support contract expire? Is there an admin user name or password?

Any other pertinent information that is technology-related and sensitive should be included in the admin sheet, such as costs, functionality, years of service, etc.

Make someone in the C-level (or trustworthy in your organization) responsible for updating this admin sheet at least twice a year or if there were any significant updates and keeping it in a safe place. Password- protect it if you keep it on the network. As an owner/executive, you should have immediate access to it. Can you imagine a disgruntled employee or a vendor keeping this information away from you in a critical moment? It will help if you have a network schematic describing the servers and applications' relationship and other devices used in your network environment.

Having an updated record of your IT infrastructure allows you to know when contracts and subscriptions will need to be renewed, who has access to what data or applications, the status of your IT costs, as well as giving you peace of mind in a situation where the IT vendor is not available.

It pays to be prepared and knowledgeable about what is going on in your business and your IT. Call us if you require any support or assistance with any facet of your IT.

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