ToSolution Newsletter | June 2016

Technically Speaking

In this edition of Technically Speaking:

- Tim longs for a simpler time (but not really).
- Dan shows why he's our resident "Myth Buster"
- Hobert & Svoboda = another happy customer!
- Shawn bests a 3rd party vendor while helping a client win.
- Stop IP traffic from China (and other hotbeds of cybercrime).
- Mark reveals one of the secrets to our fast resolutions and it's a tech-tip you can learn today!

Tim's Topic

"Sometimes I wish we were a broom company."

As humans, our initial reaction is rarely to embrace change. There are times I can fall into that position too. Sometimes I wish we were a broom company.

I imagine there isn’t a lot of change in that industry. We could sell and support the same high quality brooms for a decade without ever having to change anything.

Technology has Changed - Have You?

Here’s why I ask - because making all your technology work together has become more complicated...and, at the same time, you’re more dependent than ever on your technology working correctly. Yet, when we speak to some folks about an improved type of IT Support for their business they sometimes respond with “No, we’ll just keep doing it the way we always have.”

Most people are surprised to learn that their 'little' network has hundreds of thousands of moving parts. It doesn’t matter if you have 5 employees or 5000, the IT network is built on the same principals. There are 7 layers of technology that all have to work together so that when you press the ‘enter’ key the thing you intended to happen, actually happens.

(Don’t worry, I’m not going to bore you with a primer on these 7 layers. If you want to get an idea of what I’m talking about you can check Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OSI_model.)
The difference between providing customer’s brooms, and providing them with Business IT Support is that clients aren’t losing wheelbarrows full of money if someone steals their broom or if the broom handle breaks. This makes me wonder why some people want to wait, unproductively, to hear back from their IT support company. Or why they don’t think that security patching is *that* important as long as they have Anti-virus (See this chart for where Anti-virus protection falls on the priority list - Spoiler Alert, it’s in the 20’s)

**Flat Rate IT Support** that covers EVERYTHING is the way to manage networks today. When you’re a ToSolution client you pay one monthly fee. No additional invoices. We take responsibility for your entire network and we make sure it is secure and available because if anything goes wrong, it’s on our dime to fix it – not yours. This makes sense to our clients, what about you?

Just for fun - Here's a Top Ten List of other things that haven't changed in 100 years.

**Tim O’Neil | ToSolution**
**President**
"I truly enjoy helping a company that is struggling with technology issues and showing them how IT can be better."

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**Your vCIO**

**Dan just Busted 3 Popular Myths about Managed Services**

Over the years Tim and I have had the opportunity to sit down and talk with many business owners about their technology needs and investments. I’m often surprised to hear them share many of the same myths related to the various kinds of “Managed Services” being offered. Today I’m going to BUST THOSE MYTHS! (and also give you some tips for choosing the right IT support for your business)
Myth #1 - You can get the same “Managed Services” from your copier or accounting company that you can from a Managed IT Support provider.

Here’s problem #1 - A large array of companies can claim to provide “managed services”. Here’s why, a basic definition of managed services is: “the delivery of a technology service to your business.” You can easily see this is way too broad a definition to use when seeking out a specific service, like business IT support.

For example: searching for "Home Improvement" could mean you are looking for a big box store like Home Depot, but it could also mean your searching for a local remodeling company, or even seeking advice on a DIY project like replacing your kitchen faucet, you might even be looking for old episodes of Tim Allen’s TV show from the 90s.

So, although it’s true that the company that sold you a copier offers managed services and your accounting firm may also offer managed services, they are nothing like the managed services you would receive from an IT Managed Services Provider (MSP), like ToSolution. Copier companies are focused on selling and fixing copiers, accounting firms are focused on payroll and income taxes. We are experts in business IT support, we focus on providing you the business IT solutions you need for your business and technology not only to intersect but to work together to help you grow and thrive. Myth #1 - BUSTED.

Myth #2 - You only have 12 employees. Managed IT Support is Overkill.

We recently sat down with a prospective client whose office manager said, “Whoa, this looks like way more than we need. Aren't we too small for service like this?” Clearly, they were under the impression that our service was designed only for businesses with 100 or more employees (quite the contrary - our model is perfect for businesses with 100 or less employees). They didn’t yet see the value and advantages in having business technology experts on their side. After a preliminary assessment I knew our ProVision service would be a perfect fit for them.

Whether you’re a business with 5 employees or 500 – you’re likely using the very same tools from Microsoft to support your business’s technology backbone. A company with just a few employees uses Windows Server and Active Directory. Guess what a fortune 500 company
uses? That's right, Windows Server and Active Directory. Myth #2 - BUSTED.

**Myth #3 - You have a really sharp employee who handles your IT and if you need them you have an IT Guy/Gal just waiting for your call if something major happens (like a when a server crashes).**

Just last week we received a call from a small company who had a server installed a couple years ago. The server hadn’t been touched since. We got the call because the server had "crashed". Not only did the caller not realize the server had been down since 9am – nearly 2 hours into their work day – but that it had been failing more and more frequently over the past several months. Why? Because the server hadn’t been maintained since it was installed and wasn’t being monitored externally (or even internally). On top of all this – the server was at great risk of being hacked due to it missing security patches from the last two years.

Even with a really sharp employee and the best intentions, this sort of thing happens all the time because if it’s not their "job" to take care of the server they almost always adopt the position of "if it ain't broke then don't touch it" - this philosophy may work in some cases but not when it comes to technology, things change too fast to just stick a server in the corner and ignore it for 2 years (or even 2 months). As for the IT Guy/Gal "waiting in the wings", maybe they are available when you need them but then again, maybe not - if they are sitting around waiting for your call, they aren't making any money. This is just one reason why Break/Fix support doesn't work anymore.

Imagine the amount of money lost during downtime and subsequent repair time that could have been avoided if this company was paying a simple flat rate every month to have a company like ToSolution constantly monitoring and maintaining their server (and other equipment). Myth #3 - BUSTED.

**You're Not "Too Small" for Managed IT Support**

When I walk into different environments and see various pieces of equipment and servers that aren’t updated or maintained properly I get really nervous for the business owners. As important as technology is to your business you should be monitoring and taking proactive measures to maintain your computer network, servers, workstations, thin clients, terminal servers, and even your cloud solutions. These are all services that should be included from your Managed Service Provider (MSP).

With all these things in mind, I’ve put together a few of the questions business of all sizes should be asking themselves when it comes to their current technology service.

- Am I getting fast response times from my current provider? (60 minutes or less)
- Am I paying more money every time I pick up the phone and talk to my IT Guy/Gal?
- Do I receive invoices for what seems like the same problem over and over again?
- Does my current IT company have policies and procedures in place to protect my data?
- Am I confident that my network equipment is secured with the latest firmware and software patches?

If you're happy with your answers to these questions, then I'm happy for you. You already know the value of being partnered with a high-quality MSP because you're experiencing the results. However, if you aren't able to answer these questions, or if your answers make you
nervous, don’t hesitate to contact me directly at (262) 409-2721 and we can work together to make sure you don’t end up with an untouched server just waiting to ruin your day and cost you a ton of money.

Dan Schneck | ToSolution
Executive Vice President/vCIO

“We love providing IT solutions that help to grow and strengthen the businesses we serve.”

Client Spotlight

"ToSolution - A Feather in Our Hats" - Sabrina Wall-Cantu

"Hobert & Svoboda, Inc. (H&S) specializes in offering "portfolio design and management" services. For over 30 years, H&S has been helping individuals reach their financial goals without conflicts of interest or undue pressure from Wall Street. For most people the horizon is as far as they can see. But for H&S it represents the threshold to an unseen world of new opportunities. H&S is constantly searching for solutions that lie beyond the obvious. We combine insight, knowledge, and original thinking to create new opportunities."

Not long ago ToSolution performed a major upgrade and conversion for H&S. Replacing a server, upgrading the Line of Business (LOB) application and migrating their email to Office365. This was a big under-taking, and required the same kind of insight and knowledge that H&S is known for themselves. It also required the ability to communicate and cooperate with the 3rd party vendor that supplies H&S their LOB application. If you've ever worked with an organization that's gone through a major conversion like this one, you understand the potential for trouble. However, in order to continue to provide excellent customer service and deliver the best possible solutions to their clients, H&S decided that it was time for an upgrade. ToSolution is proud that H&S has chose us as their Experts in Business IT Support and we won't rest on a "job well done" but will continue to provide them with cutting edge technology solutions that help their business and their clients succeed.

Below is a recent review from one of the employees at Hobert & Svoboda. Thanks Sabrina, for the encouraging words, and your permission to share.

"We’ve received nothing less than A+ service and support from ToSolution. They are expedient in response time, professionalism and solution - they're courteous and friendly while taking time to explain issues in terms where even the layman can understand. They are aware of and correct many technical malfunctions prior to our experiencing them on our end - we find that an exceptional quality in an IT firm. Another asset is the phenomenal support we received during a major conversion of both hardware and software products of which one in particular required extensive and tedious attention - ToSolution worked tirelessly to complete the project error-free and to our complete satisfaction. We could not be more pleased having ToSolution as 'a feather in our hats' - we give them 5 stars and !!!two thumbs up!! for ensuring
our IT is always functioning properly at maximum performance so we can offer the utmost productivity and service to our customers without interruption, as well as the comfort, assurance, and security we receive. Thank you ToSolution for the expert in you." - Sabrina Wall-Cantu

“It’s Not Us, it’s Your Network”

If you're like most of our clients, you have a third party software application that's considered your Line of Business (LOB) Application. ToSolution clients that are under our ProVision plan are encouraged to enable us to be their representatives when working out issues with 3rd party LOB applications.

Often, when our clients have performance issues with their 3rd party application, the subsequent vendor typically says “It’s not our application, it must be a problem with your network/server/computer.”

At ToSolution, we use an Enterprise Level Network Monitoring System. This system gives us the ability to monitor common things like available disk space on a workstation, and very specific things like the RPM of a fan within a server. In the case of a 3rd party LOB we can even monitor the response time of the application. Our standard procedure is to monitor everything that is related to our clients Network and Server Infrastructure. This includes LOB Applications.

In a recent case, we kept getting the same response from the vendor, putting the blame on the client's network and server. Within our monitoring system, we were able to create a map providing real time data, as well as historical data, proving that the slow-down was occurring at the application level and not anywhere else within the network. By providing this map to both the vendor and our client, we were able to help our client "push-back" a little bit and gain the leverage they needed with the vendor. Shortly afterwards their vendor did confirm that the issue, was in fact, on their end. And they went to work on a resolution right away.

Scoreboard jokes aside, we've found that by having access to these Enterprise Level Resources and by using us as their "Middle Man" we can greatly reduce the amount of time it
takes to get our clients LOB issues resolved (without all the finger pointing). In the end, we all want what's best for the customer and most 3rd party vendors appreciate that we have the ability to map such intricate details of a network.

Shawn Olson | ToSolution
Lead Engineer, Network Services

"What I like most about my job is being able to work on such a wide variety of products. Every day provides a new challenge!"

Forget Answering Your Door, Make Your House Invisible!

Imagine your network is a house, and the only way into your network is through the front door. You should be able to decide who you let in that door and who you don't - I think we can all agree on that. The people who don't agree with this are called burglars. Burglars rarely bother to knock on your door, unless they are "casing-the-joint" to determine how they will break-in at a later date and time. Burglars sneak in when no one is home, or when everyone is asleep. If they can't get in the front door, they'll try the patio door around back, or crawl in through a basement window. They're priority is not only to steal from you, but to not get caught, while they are stealing from you. Who knows, maybe you won't notice and they can come back again and again.

This is exactly how cyber-criminals think. Yes, they want your data, but they also want to steal your data without getting caught so they can come back into your network again and again without you ever recognizing them. Today, most of us have big front doors, called firewalls, at the entrance point of our networks. And when properly configured, these firewall doors are tough to get through, still cyber-burglars are sneaky, and if they have "cased" your network carefully, they will sometimes find a way in.

What if you could prevent a burglar from ever seeing your house (aka network), let alone letting them walk right up to your front door (aka firewall)? With PacketViper, you can, your network becomes invisible to anyone that you don't give permission to see it.

Based upon specific and repeatable data that identifies where most cyber-attacks are coming from you can completely block IP traffic from entire countries, or even specific companies, from ever getting near your front door. And, you can customized PacketViper based upon your needs. For example: many cyber-attacks originate in China, your small business may never have a reason to receive a "knock on the door" from China, and with PacketViper, they will never get close enough to knock, in fact, they won't even be able to see your house.
“PacketViper is an advanced IP filtering software that can easily filter both inbound and outbound traffic by port, bi-directionally, by country and company. Whether on premise or in the cloud, PacketViper software provides an essential layer of network security complementary to, but unlike firewalls, SIEMS or other existing solutions.”

To learn more about ToSolution and our partnership with PacketViper, contact Tim O’Neil directly at (262) 409-2722 or email him at tim@tosolution.com.

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**TechTips**

"*Speed is a great asset; but it’s even greater when it’s combined with quickness...*" -Ty Cobb

Ty Cobb went on to say that there's a big difference between speed and quickness. I heard someone say that speed is how fast you can go and quickness is how long it takes you to reach your top speed. Whatever the difference, our engineers have both. If you're a ToSolution client and you've ever watched Dan, Shawn, Steve, or anyone of our engineers, go to work fixing a problem on your computer your eyes may have struggled to keep up with their hands (and their brains).

This month's tech-tip is designed to help you gain a little more speed and a little more quickness. One thing I've noticed about our engineers is that their hands rarely leave the keyboard. Yes, the mouse is a great tool, and necessary, but when your looking for greater productivity (and who isn't?), keeping both hands on the keyboard is the way to go. Give it a try!

Here are a few of the most common keyboard shortcuts to get you started:

- CTRL+N: Open a new window
- CTRL+T: Open a new tab
- CTRL+W: Close the current window/tab
- CTRL+Z: Undo your last action (editing text)
- CTRL+TAB: Switch to the next child window of a Multiple Document Interface (MDI) program
- ALT+TAB: Switch to another running program (hold down the ALT key and then press the TAB key to view the task-switching window)

If you’re already using these check out this Keyboard Shortcut list from Microsoft.

May your fingers be quick enough to keep up with your thoughts. Good luck!
Mark James | ToSolution
Director of Business Development

"The best part of my job is working with an amazing team of people who are dedicated to serving others."

To Solution, Inc. is Southeastern Wisconsin's only Managed IT Service Provider to hold both the CompTIA Security Trustmark+ and Managed Services Trustmark certifications.

Here’s is why it matters to you.