

BetterSMB

TECHNOLOGY

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BridgeTower Media series of guides for small and midsize businesses

How to deal with negative reviews

The correct
response can
amplify your
brand's voice
and make
things right

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cause headaches
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This book
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A supplement to:

Arizona Capitol Times | Central Penn Business Journal | Charleston Regional Business Journal
Columbia Regional Business Report | Daily Journal of Commerce | Finance & Commerce
GSA Business Report | Idaho Business Review | Lehigh Valley Business | Long Island Business News
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Adam Reinebach
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To accommodate customers, focus on core technology needs

In today's rapidly evolving economy, innovation means everything. Business leaders are constantly faced with the challenge—either consciously or subconsciously—of how to split their focus between present-day blocking and tackling and having a plan that anticipates the risks and opportunities of the future.

Some innovations, like the advent of driverless vehicles, take a longer time to hatch and thus shouldn't be too high on the priority list (unless you're in the delivery business, perhaps). But other innovations do require immediate attention and action. The growth of Amazon is a classic example, quickly pushing retailers to accelerate their e-commerce initiatives and website development. 'Nice to have' online functionality became the cost of doing business very quickly.

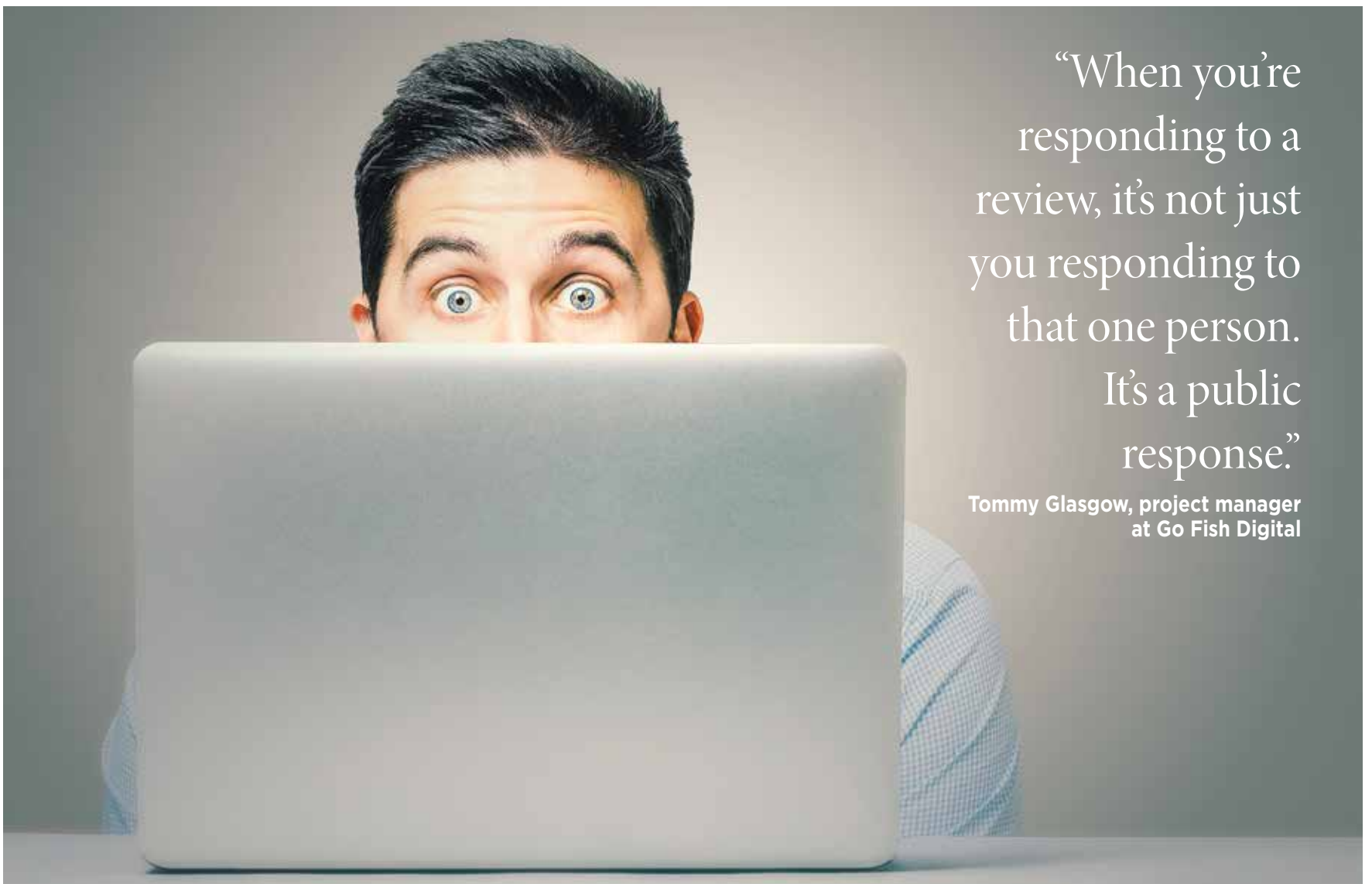
In this issue of BetterSMB we talk about chat bots, which I believe are another example of technology innovation that most industries need to prioritize. Whether you're complaining about your cable bill, applying for a mortgage or doing research on a computer, getting answers immediately — versus waiting for an email response or a phone call — can be the difference-maker for the end consumer.

To be sure, it's important for all of us to think and plan ahead for what might be coming. But when it comes to innovation, we would all do well to focus more attention on core technology needs—those that help us stay competitive within our industry, that make life easier for the end user. Thankfully, the cost of technology 'blocking and tackling' for innovations like chat bots is getting lower and less painful from an implementation perspective.



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“When you’re responding to a review, it’s not just you responding to that one person. It’s a public response.”

Tommy Glasgow, project manager at Go Fish Digital

Turning negative reviews into an opportunity to respresent your brand

A plan for how to respond to customer reviews and ratings will guide responses

By Jason Whong
BetterSMB

Your business needs a plan for how to interact with websites and apps that let customers write reviews and leave ratings.

Websites such as Yelp, Avvo, Google and others have taken customer service beyond the physical boundaries of your business, into the always-on Internet, where current and future customers can form opinions about your business based on what others have said about it, and how your company has responded.

Word-of-mouth has become a digital concept, said Tommy Glasgow, project manager at Go Fish Digital in Arlington, Virginia, who helps companies manage their reputations on sites like Yelp or Glassdoor. “The biggest trust factor for people is what other people are saying about a business.”

Studies have shown correlations between a business’ star rating and how much people trust

the business, or even how well the business does, he said.

“You want to make sure that when a customer is searching ‘best moving companies in my area’ or ‘best restaurants in the city that I’m in’ that you’re showing up at the top and you have star ratings that are better than everybody else’s.”

Don’t be caught unprepared

When businesses haven’t given any thought to how they will interact with review sites, they could find themselves in a position where someone wrote a negative review, and weeks have passed before anyone at the business noticed, said David Waiter, senior digital marketing strategist at Foster Web Marketing in Fairfax, Virginia, a company that builds websites mainly for professionals such as doctors and lawyers.

“Moments like that really emphasize the need for having some sort of review monitoring tool in place,” said Waiter, who works with clients to improve their local visibility.

That sort of tool will let you know immediately when you’ve received a review, so your business can craft a polite and professional response, Waiter said. Monitoring can also help in situations where your business is receiving notifications of the reviews, but at email addresses that nobody checks, a



Glasgow

Five steps to responding to negative reviews from the SBA blog

Anita Campbell, who writes for the Small Business Administration’s blog, offers five steps to respond to negative reviews:

- **Respond to customer reviews** — It can result in better ratings and improve your business’ online reputation.
- **Be nice and avoid getting personal** — It’s hard to win an argument with an unsatisfied customer. So, don’t argue. Your response could live in infamy forever online.
- **Thank your reviewers and customize responses** — Campbell recommends being professional, authentic and humane, and also recommends using the reviewer’s name in the complaint.
- **Take the time to upload an image with a review response** — On Yelp, business account users are required to upload a real photo to message a user. Campbell also suggests using photos or video to show you’re responding to a complaint seriously.
- **Show you’ve taken the necessary action** — By replying to complaints and demonstrating you’ve taken action to rectify the issue, you’re showing other customers that you’re responsive.

Study: Responding to online reviews could boost your star rating

If you're on the fence about whether to spend your business' resources on managing your reputation at review sites, some research published in the journal *Marketing Science* may convince you it's worth the effort.

Among the findings of marketing professors Davide Proserpio of the University of Southern California and Georgios Zervas of Boston University are that responding to negative reviews can increase your business' star rating, at least on the TripAdvisor travel ratings platform.

The researchers, who examined thousands of hotel reviews and responses from TripAdvisor said that once hotels started responding, they got 12% more reviews and an average of .12 stars in increased ratings.

Because TripAdvisor rounds up to the nearest half-star, the added .12 stars may push the business past the threshold to the next rating. About a third of hotels raised their rounded ratings by half a star or more within six months of their first response from management.

Wanting to be sure it wasn't a



coincidence, Proserpio and Zervas looked at the same group of hotels on Expedia, a travel website which also publishes ratings from customers. Most of the hotels responded only to complaints on TripAdvisor. The researchers found that once hotels started responding on TripAdvisor, their TripAdvisor ratings went up, but their Expedia ratings stayed the same.

The researchers also ruled out the possibility that hotels were making improvements to cater to

the tastes of TripAdvisor users by looking for patterns in reviews left by people who stay in the same hotel at the same time. They found that reviews left by users who could see responses from management were about .1 stars higher than ratings by people who didn't see management responses.

Proserpio and Zervas also found that responding to positive reviews has the same benefits. Once hotels started to respond to reviews, people who read those responses were less likely than others to leave short reviews. They suggested that it may be because users who see management responding to reviews, they may be less likely to leave a brief or unsubstantiated negative review, because they'll avoid having to interact with management on the platform.

The marketing professors say their research shows that businesses aren't helpless in the face of customer review platforms. By watching for reviews and responding, a business can present an image of good customer service, and perhaps raise their ratings in doing so.

problem Waiter said he's encountered often.

If you have sufficient resources, Glasgow recommends appointing a person in your business, such as a communications or social media employee, to be in charge of finding new reviews and responding.

He suggested your business should give some thought to a general strategy for reviews. What kinds of reviews will your business respond to? What will you ignore? When trying to resolve an issue raised in a complaint, what will your business offer, if anything, to make things right? If a rule needs to be restated to a customer, does that happen on the review website, where everyone can see your interactions, or in a separate conversation with the reviewer?

Catching flies with honey

"A lot of people sometimes will overreact if they get a negative review," Waiter said. "It's unnatural to have a perfect five star or 10 out of 10 review. These days it's really unlikely that businesses are going to have the absolute perfect score." A collection of reviews that vary from three to five stars appear more natural, he said.

When clients ask Waiter how to respond to a particular negative review, he tells them: "respond in a very timely, polite and professional manner, and don't be afraid to stick up for yourself a lot of times, especially on Google."

Your response is your opportunity to inject your own brand's voice into the situation and to try to make things right, and that's important even if you can't sway

that customer's mind, Waiter said. "A lot of times, future customers, when they come across this negative review, if they see that the business responded in a polite fashion, they're generally willing to overlook a negative review."

There can be a temptation to bicker with customers, especially if you have a feeling they're wrong. It's best not to let emotions get in your way.

"When you're responding to a review, it's not just you responding to that one person. It's a public response," Glasgow said. "You want to make sure you come across as sincere, as welcoming feedback, sincerely taking the good with the bad."

Some businesses encounter advice to respond to every negative review, because that helps project the image of your business as one that cares about customer experience.

Glasgow said that's not a hard and fast rule. "Sometimes it's better to not respond if the review is just somebody venting," He said. "Any response you give is not going to help them," Glasgow said.

Sometimes, there may be ways to have negative reviews removed from the review site, so it helps to be familiar with a site's published rules or guidelines.

On Yelp, a business can flag a review for language violations, or not providing evidence of a personal experience at the business, such as when their review is about a friend's experience or perhaps one they had even heard about, Glasgow said. "Usually you can flag those and Yelp doesn't want those reviews on there either," he said. Waiter noted that it's sometimes difficult to have posts removed from the site.

Similarly, on Glassdoor, a workplace review site, if a review was left by someone who didn't work there, a business can ask

Glassdoor to verify the employment of the reviewer, Glasgow said.

Getting good reviews

In addition to having a plan for how to respond to negative reviews, there are ways to get positive ones, as well. In the long run, these reviews can be more valuable than paying for advertisements on the review platforms, Waiter said.

His advice: do what you do best. If you're a lawyer, keep being a good lawyer. Keep a customer service mindset in every customer interaction.

"Everybody you meet with is a potential review, either on Google, Facebook, or any of those review sites," Waiters said. "You want to have confidence that they're going to have nice things to say."

Waiter also recommends the use of customer interaction software, such as Podium, which has features that let businesses request reviews from customers.

You can also ask for a review at the most opportune time, such as when you're handing over a settlement check you just won for them. "That's usually a good time to ask for a positive review, right when they've wrapped up having an awesome experience with you," Waiter said. That's especially important for attorneys, he said, because they don't have the volume of customers that places like pet stores do.

It's good to keep each site's rules in mind when soliciting reviews, to make sure your business doesn't run afoul of them, Glasgow said.

"Usually we like to say that right at the point of sale is probably the best time to ask for a review," Glasgow said. So it's right after the installation or right after the services provided are right after payment's received."



Waiter



GRAY AREAS

Emerging technologies cause headaches for corporate counsel

By David Baugher
BridgeTower Media Newswires

ST. LOUIS — From big-data analytics to artificial intelligence, enterprises must be more creative and diligent than ever before when seeking the best ways to protect their rights in a world where technology IP claims are becoming harder to uphold.

“It is not as easy to get a patent on software — which is what drives much of the new technology — as it used to be,” said J. Bennett “Ben” Clark of Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner in St. Louis, who focuses much of his practice on intellectual property lawsuits, including patent, false advertising, trademark, unfair competition, copyright and trade secrets.

That fact comes largely thanks to the after-shocks of *Alice Corp. v. CLS Bank International*, a 2014 case in which the Supreme Court unanimously invalidated a plaintiff’s patent under Section 101 of Title 35 U.S.C. which covers “abstract ideas” as a non-protectable exception.

Mark E. Stallion, intellectual property group chair at Greensfelder, Hemker & Gale in St. Louis, said that such exceptions were once quite rare.

“Since the Alice decision, it has become much more prevalent,” he said. “These 101 rejections are being handed out like candy for software-based technologies and in the life sciences space as well.”

With a growing market for innovations in artificial intelligence seeping into everything from vehicles to power grids to health care, the implications could be enormous. Bioengineering by seed producers might be particularly

vulnerable because “laws of nature” cannot be patented.

“If something has been genetically modified, is that genetic modification significant enough or does it rise to a level where it is something beyond what is naturally occurring?” Stallion said.

But the rocky new world of IP doesn’t require the complexities of a genetics lab to run into trouble. Simple data processing and storage isn’t what it used to be, either.

Questions of who owns the data and what can be done with it are advancing with alarming frequency. The recently enacted General Data Protection Regulation initiative in the European Union has roiled legal waters worldwide due to its heavy emphasis on consumer rights, extensive requirements for data security and hefty penalties for violating either one.

“The question is, ‘Does the United States follow suit in that regard?’” Stallion said. “That is very much in parallel with the intellectual property space as far as data rights.”

One of the larger IP gray areas during the coming decade may be found in the phenomenon of blockchain.

While mostly associated with cryptocurrency such as Bitcoin, the technology actually has wide-reaching applications, according to Keith J. Bae, a Kansas City-based partner at Shook, Hardy & Bacon who advises on such complex technologies as artificial intelligence, immersive environments, virtual and augmented reality, natural language processing and distributed ledger technologies such as blockchain.

Often, enterprises become involved in consortia to create and manage the technology, Bae said. But it is important for participants to

answer basic questions that could become legal issues down the road. Who owns the technology? If you improve it, do you have rights to that? Will those improvements need to be shared with the group?

"Because blockchain requires a large number of parties to work properly, it is essential for one to understand their rights and obligations under these agreements," Bae said.

Much of the technology underlying blockchain may be open-source and could contain licensing provisions which prevent patenting improvements, he said. Other problems can arise as well.

"Particularly where you've got various competitors who are working together to maintain this blockchain, there are some antitrust issues that come into play with regards to the sharing and use of information among competing parties in a common enterprise," he said.

Bae said that smart devices, from buildings to cars, also could exert a sizable impact on the future legal landscape. Even "smart contracts" now are emerging in which

provisions are triggered by code which executes automatically when certain conditions are met.

"Smart contracts are essentially little programs that can be stored on a blockchain," he said. "And what it provides for is a means of automation to execute transactions without

human intervention."

Back at Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner, Clark said the pace of innovation has the potential to create problems for corporate counsel. Still, in-house lawyers may find their biggest headaches don't lurk in the future but rather in the past.

"Technology that most of us — including in many instances, general counsels — think is new and cutting-edge has actually been around for a while, or at least the precursors have been around for awhile," he said. "So what you see a fair amount is a general counsel or a company that's a little bit late to the dance [in] thinking they are ahead of the curve [when they] are actually a little bit behind the curve."

In short, certain pieces of your company's brand-new invention may be old news to the patent office. Clark said certain aspects of self-driving vehicle technology, for instance, have been around since the 1930s. New to your company doesn't mean new to everybody.

Fortunately, the same changes that have wrought such uncertainty under the Alice decision also can work to a general counsel's benefit.

"If you are behind the curve, you probably can't get a patent — but maybe you can use Section 101 to invalidate someone else's patent, should they come after you," Clark said.

He recommends that companies form patent committees so they keep abreast of the landscape and understand the best ways to write applications that won't get scuttled on Section 101 grounds.

Meanwhile, legal action is becoming common by large and small enterprises alike. At one end of the spectrum are established players trying to litigate startups out of business. On the opposite end: predatory patent trolls looking to shake down large companies for a payout on the other.

Moreover, from next-generation batteries

to virtual workers, the technology continues to evolve and build upon — or even against — itself. Clark notes that the explosion in drone technology has sparked its own counterrevolution: a flood of patents on contraptions to disable or capture the pesky devices.

Also worth noting is another area of emerging tech, Clark said. 3-D printing is creating its own set of challenges, headaches and opportunities in IP, a trend that seems likely to intensify before it settles down. Clark compares it to battles of yesteryear involving Napster and illegal file-sharing, but the issue today involves electronic blueprints rather than music. These printers can effectively act as mini-factories which churn out anything from vases to appliance parts in a legally nebulous world where IP violations are hard to detect, creators are difficult to find and the end user is nearly impossible to police.

"The use of 3-D printing, both by businesses and individuals, is triggering potentially huge issues in copyright and patent law in particular," Clark said. "General counsel need to be thinking about the risk to their intellectual property portfolios created by the increasing proliferation of 3-D printers. On the copyright side, there is the potential for widespread personal manufacturing of copyrighted objects independent of established markets which the copyright owner can monitor."

No matter how one views the issue, patents will continue to be on the plate of corporate attorneys from coast-to-coast as technology rolls on, cryptocurrencies move forward and the fallout from the Alice decision and Section 101 questions shake out.

"In almost any new technology area on any list you pull down off of Google, a patent war is looming and perhaps already in progress," Clark said.

"If you are behind the curve, you probably can't get a patent — but maybe you can use Section 101 to invalidate someone else's patent, should they come after you."

J. Bennett "Ben" Clark,
attorney at Bryan Cave
Leighton Paisner in St. Louis



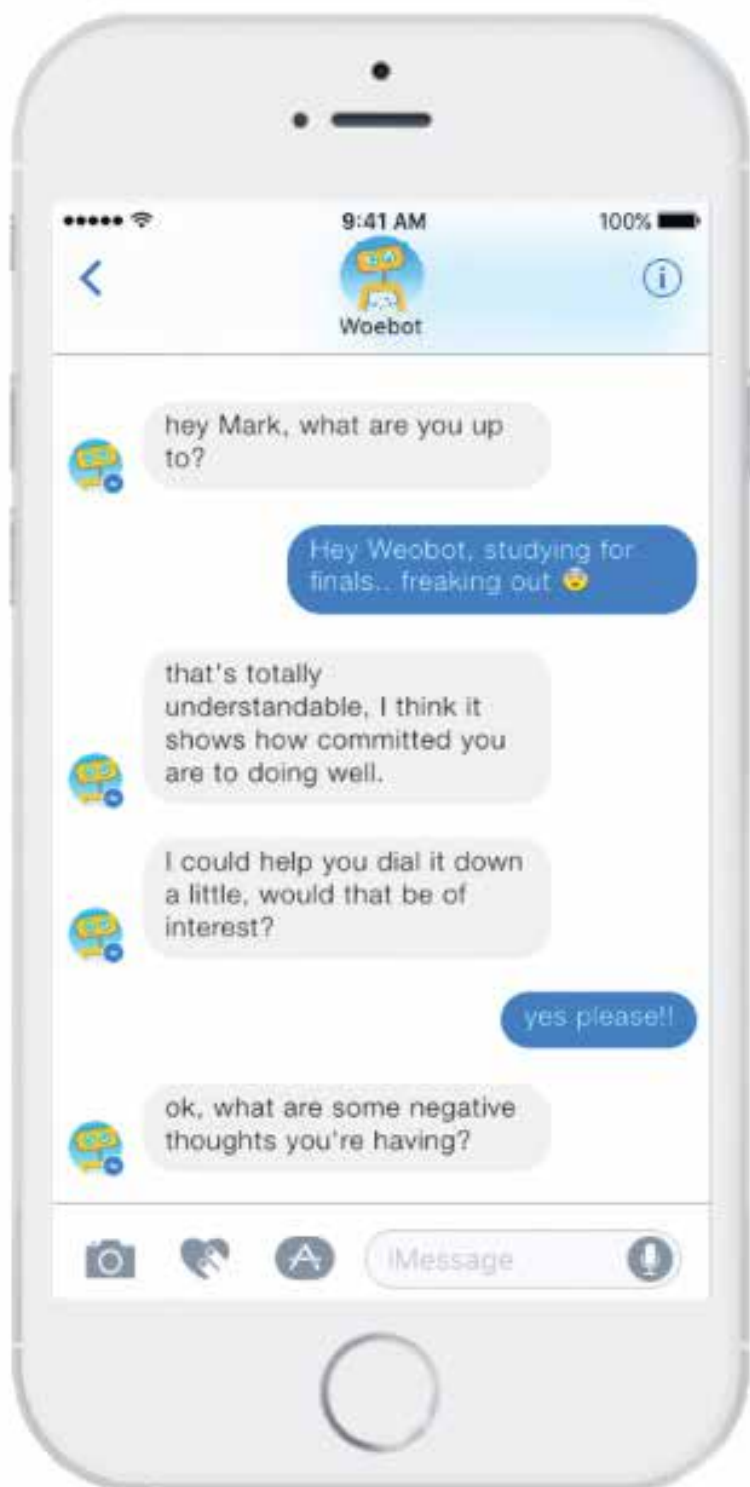
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Jack Welch Former CEO of General Electric

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IBM's Watson chat bot is available for free, its subscription rates scaling up per number of user interactions per month.

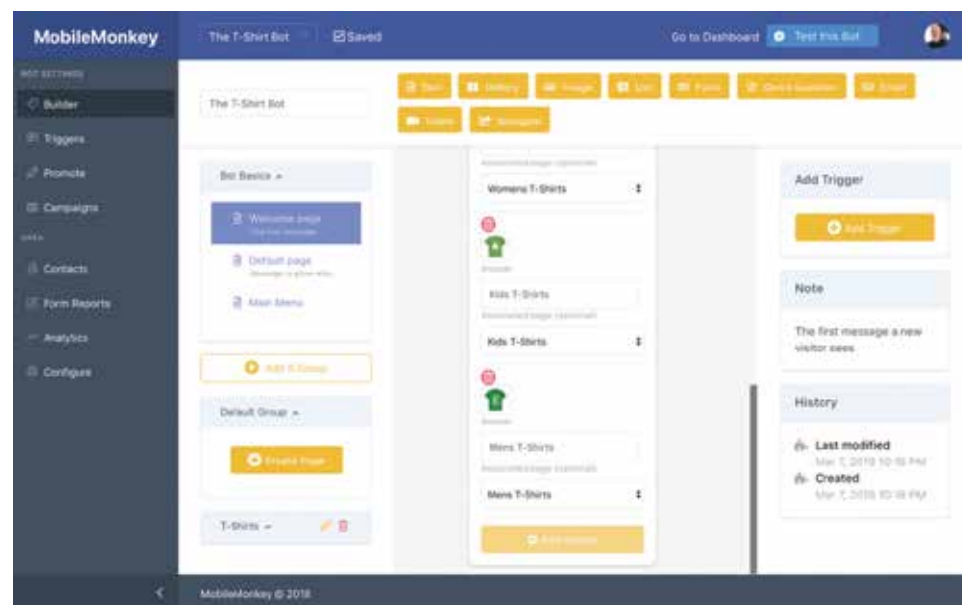
Companies use chat bots to cut costs

New technology may be in reach for your business

By Chris Barylick
Special to BetterSMB

Decades ago, the origins of the chat bot began with phone trees. Customers would call in, select the options that were appropriate to their needs, and be routed to someone trained to help with their specific problems.

This has only grown in the more than 30 years since then, and AI-based chat bots are on the rise as one of the best ways to interact with clients visiting their websites, greet them, take in data as to what their needs and concerns are, and not only corral them toward a human who can help them, but work to offer advice and solutions on their own.



MobileMonkey allows for easy, template-driven chat bot creation for your website.

A May 2017 study from Juniper Research, entitled “Chatbots: Retail, eCommerce & Healthcare 2017 – 2022” highlights how the health care and banking sectors are poised to benefit the most from this. The study forecasts cost savings of \$8 billion per annum by 2022, up from \$20 million in 2017. The study also illustrates how chat bots can save an average of just over four minutes per inquiry, amounting to a cost savings of 50 to 70 cents per interaction.

Juniper’s study also showed that while chat bots are less likely to successfully generate revenue than app-based bots, they could offer a ubiquitous service for mass messaging, forecasting predicting that chat bot-based text messages could exceed 100 billion by 2022.

Niraj Patel, Senior Vice President of Artificial Intelligence for DMI, a tech services company, said chat bots can be used to make a call center more scalable and extendible. “Bots are also available 24 hours a day, enabling companies and brands with limited support hours to expand to 24-hours, delivering on-demand customer support for consumers,” Patel said.

Chat bots can be used to automate routine tasks such as updating a shipping address or checking on the status of a request, freeing up human staff to focus on more complex requests, he said.

“Bots will transform how people communicate with brands. Today, consumers live on their phones, and use them everywhere – on the train, waiting in line, waiting for a meeting to start,” said Patel. “Consumers want to use this time to communicate with a brand and quickly get answers to questions or resolve issues. Bots will provide scalability to respond to these growing number of requests. The challenge is to not only reach consumers through a brand’s website or mobile app, but on any communication channel where consumers happen to be, including text messaging, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Snapchat, etc.”

For those of you looking to build and incorporate your own chat bot for your business’ needs, the tools are readily available, but require some tinkering for a perfect fit.

“The ‘mechanics’ of building a bot are not difficult. But building a bot that is engaging and that consumers want to use is key,” noted Patel. It takes time to align consumer needs with a brand’s personality to make a bot that is most engaging to consumers.

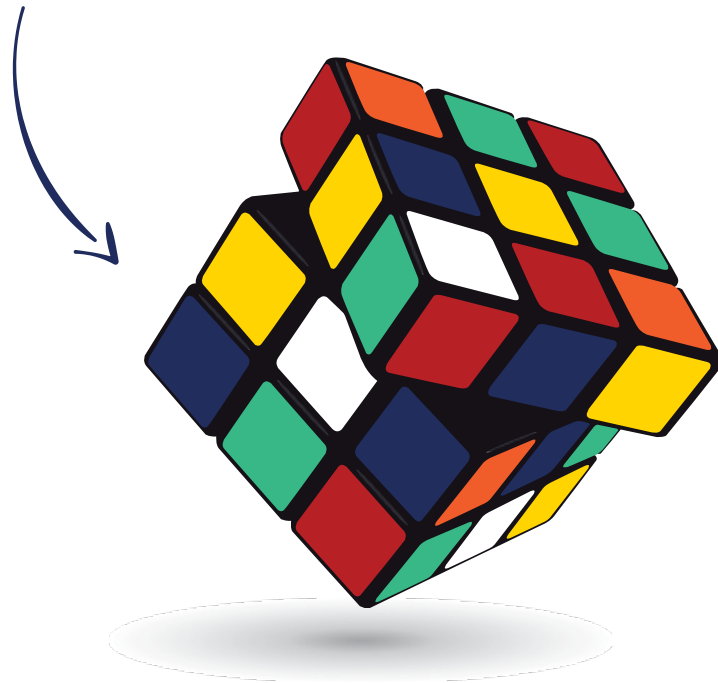
When it comes to creating and installing your own chat bot, there are a variety of both commercial and open-source chat programs that can be programmed into your website. Perhaps the best place to start is Mobile Monkey (www.mobilemonkey.com), which offers a free trial and has plans that scale to \$49 a month for its Pro Plan and \$179 a month for its Team Plan. IBM (www.ibm.com/Watson/chatbot) has also moved into the chat bot business, the company offering variants of its Watson artificial intelligence. The Watson-developed chat bots are available at a free pricing point, handling up to 10,000 calls per month for free. After users reach this monthly cap, the feature retails for \$.0025 per call on the Standard Plan.

Chat bots aren’t a replacement for excellent human employees, nor are they meant to do the majority of day-to-day tasks, but they can be excellent gatekeepers, channeling traffic to where it needs to go and handling an increasing array of smaller tasks. Poke around, see what’s out there, and there may be something that frees up several of your employees from their daily grind to achieve something better.



Patel

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How are tech employers different from other Best Places to Work?

Flexibility, independence among benefits valued by tech employees

By Lauren Eisenhauer
Best Employee Surveys

When you think of technology companies and their employees, what comes to mind first? Maybe it's brightly colored accent walls, beer on tap, or bean bag chairs and walking desks. What the heck is a walking desk, you ask? Just think: treadmill meets IKEA office. Though this particular industry is known for its funky décor and nontraditional perks, there's more to the employee engagement story than meets the eye.

We were curious to learn about this growing industry, and specifically, what motivates its employees to perform at their best. What are technology employers doing that's different from other employer groups, and what do their employees really want and need? Competition for talent, especially in this booming sector, is extremely high. Employers want to know how to attract and then retain top talent in an environment where recruiters waiting in the wings are offering bigger, better, and wilder perks than ever before.

Best places to work program data

As the research firm behind more than 70 Best Places to Work programs worldwide, we measure engagement and what drives it all day, every day. To be identified as one of the Best Places to Work, an employer must undergo a rigorous process of employee feedback collection as well as a review of their human resources practices and policies.

Using data we've collected from some of the country's leading organizations, particularly those that have earned the sought-after designation of being Best Places to Work, we took a closer look at employee attitudes and employer practices and policies. We compared two data sets in our analysis: all U.S. employers designated as Best Places to Work in 2018; and all technology companies designated as Best Places to Work in 2018. We wanted to answer this question: what, if anything, is really so different about the most competitive employers in the tech industry?

Flexibility and control of time spent

Employees in the technology industry crave more independence and flexibility than those in other categories. The ability to work remotely tops the list of benefits, with nine out of ten (85%) Best Places to



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The ability to work remotely tops the list of benefits, with nine out of ten (85%) Best Places to Work in the technology industry offering remote employment options as a standard practice.

A deeper understanding of employee engagement among technology companies

There are lots of reasons managers come looking for ways to increase employee engagement. They want to reduce high turnover, hire the right people the first time, prioritize the customer experience, and be more profitable. Dive deeper into employee engagement data collected from technology employers and their employees when you download our Spotlight Report: <https://bit.ly/33sCuBV>

Work in the technology industry offering remote employment options as a standard practice. This, as compared to only 68% of all Best Places to Work, shows that the option to work outside of the office is practically a requirement for this group.

Employees of tech companies are also more likely to control how they use their time off, instead of designating "sick" and "vacation" days, 71% of these employers offer general paid time off. That's compared to only 59% of other Best Places to Work.

Creature comforts and work/life blend

Gone are the days of the lone snack machine in the hallway. Technology employees today enjoy fully-equipped cafeterias, beverages (remember the beer on tap?), and free snacks galore. The more the office space can transform into a comfortable and homey environment, the better. Offering these creature comforts within the office space means tech employees can spend more time doing what they came to do: work. An impressive 93% of Best Places to Work in the technology industry state that they provide cafeteria or meal subsidies, free daily snacks or beverages. Another marked difference in this employer group is that they are more likely to offer fully- or partially-paid parental leave for the birth or adoption of a child. Blending the separation of work and home life into a more seamless and holistic experience seems to be a goal of technology employers.

Incentivizing workforce growth

Because they operate in a very competitive employment market, technology employers are more likely to incentivize their employees to refer new hires. Nearly nine in ten (86%) technology Best Places to Work offer monetary incentives and bonuses to their employees for referring new hires, as compared to all Best Places to Work at 78%.

Email tracking and lawyers: not a great mix

Just because the technology exists doesn't mean you can use it

By Nicole Black

BridgeTower Media Newswires

For most lawyers, email is their primary method of correspondence with clients, courts, opposing counsel and others. Over the years, we've become increasingly reliant on email because it's a fairly simple and cost-effective way to communicate.



Nicole Black

Of course, as technology has advanced, so too have the tools that can be used to make email more useful. Many of these tools have the end effect of streamlining email correspondence. Email add-ons and built-in features allow users to schedule emails, automate the process of sorting and filing emails, and snooze emails for viewing at a later date, among other things. In most cases, these new features increase the efficiency of email.

But sometimes email add-ons can have a more nefarious purpose. Case

in point: email tracking tools. Typically this type of software allows the sender to track a wide range of things, including when a sent email and its attachments are opened, how long the recipient views the email and attachments, how many times they were opened, whether they were forwarded, and the geographical location of the recipient.

Email tracking clearly raises some ethical red flags in the context of lawyer communications, so it's no surprise that its use by lawyers has been addressed by a number of ethics committees.

First there was New York Opinion 749 (2001), wherein the Committee on Professional Ethics determined that a lawyer may not "use available technology to surreptitiously examine and trace email and other electronic documents." Then there was the Alaska Bar Association Ethics Committee, which concluded in Opinion 2016-1 that even if the use of email tracking software is disclosed, its application to emails sent to opposing counsel is ultimately both dishonest and unethical.

Pennsylvania has also issued an opinion addressing email tracking. In Formal Opinion 2017-300, the committee concluded that Pennsylvania lawyers should avoid using email tracking tools with opposing counsel. Most recently, in Opinion 18-01, the Illinois State Bar Association likewise determined that it is unethical for lawyers to use email track-

Email tracking clearly raises some ethical red flags in the context of lawyer communications, so it's no surprise that its use by lawyers has been addressed by a number of ethics committees.

ing software with opposing counsel.

Recently, the issue of whether lawyers should use email tracking software once again reared its ugly head, but this time in the context of a war crime court martial. As covered in a number of major news outlets, defense counsel for Edward Gallagher — a man accused of stabbing an Islamic State group militant to death — alleged that the military prosecutor in that case sent an email that included email tracking software to multiple lawyers, paralegals, and a reporter with the Navy Times.

Two weeks after the allegations were made, the judge presiding over the case issued a ruling that resulted in the removal of the prosecutor from the case. The reasons for the removal were based on constitutional due process and Sixth Amendment grounds and because the

threat of investigation into alleged prosecutorial misconduct could be viewed as a conflict of interest.

If you weren't already convinced about the perils of lawyers using email tracking, this case offers even more evidence that lawyers and email tracking software are a bad combination. Likewise, it offers additional support for the recommendation I made when I wrote about email tracking software last year — and that I still stand by today:

"For those of you who practice in one of the many jurisdictions where this issue has not yet been addressed, I would suggest that it would be wise to err on the side of caution and, in the absence of consent, avoid using software with opposing counsel that could provide insights regarding their online behavior, whether it's part of an email program or otherwise. After all, it's better to be safe than sorry."

Nicole Black is a director at MyCase.com, a cloud-based law practice management platform. She is also of counsel to Fiandach & Fiandach in Rochester, New York and is a GigaOM Pro analyst. She is the author of the ABA book "Cloud Computing for Lawyers," co-authors the ABA book "Social Media for Lawyers: the Next Frontier," and co-authors "Criminal Law in New York," a West-Thomson treatise. She speaks regularly at conferences regarding the intersection of law and technology. She publishes three legal blogs and can be reached at niki@mycase.com.

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SEO



5 tips for content optimization from DMWF 2019

AllaSerebrina via depositphotos.com

By Roxana Dicu
and Roxana Rangu
W-Systems

About 1200 attendees gathered from all over the world to share experiences and ideas about how digital technology is changing the way we use marketing today at the The Digital Marketing World Forum Global 2019 event.

The conference sessions focused on different areas, from content and influencer marketing to eCommerce and digital transformation, and after two full days of great insight and information to take in, here are our key takeaways for content optimization and search engine optimization.

1. Putting customers at the heart of your content works

Catherine Wignall, UK digital lead for Microsoft, spoke on how storytelling offers your business a great opportunity to emotionally connect with your audience. Catherine focused on four goals that fuel better conversation and resonate with the public:

- Maximize discoverability
- Unlock advocacy
- Create connected content
- Harvest demand

Many speakers touched upon these four goals. For example, William Bonaddio, Director at Will B Social Ltd. spoke on how a 2016 McDonald's campaign went viral by simply connecting and listening to their customers. McDonald's launched new flavors of milkshakes and rather than relying solely on internal ideas, the campaign focused on what flavor of milkshake consumers would like to dip fries in. We personally hope they came up with a salted caramel chocolate flavor!

2. Build trust by listening

With so many other businesses offering similar services, you have to make sure you stand out. A great way to achieve this is to build the trust of your community.

Marisa Thomas, Head of Brand at Bloom & Wild, touched on the subject of the importance of paying attention to your audience's needs. On Mother's Day, Bloom & Wild launched an email campaign and noticed that many recipients were unsubscribing, and realized that the holiday was a sensitive subject to a lot of people, for various reasons.

3. Make the most of your own resources and avoid additional spending

When it comes to justifying our marketing spend and proving results, it can be challenging to find ways to do more with less money.

Janis Thomas, B2C Marketing Director at Deltatre, shared a few easy-to-follow steps about that:

- Audit your assets - To understand what you're already working with, ask yourself a few questions. What different channels do you have? Do you have or need an app? Do you have a website? Which social channels are you using? What form of communication do you have? Evaluate how many people they are reaching, what traffic they're driving and what part of that traffic is converting. Map everything out and then start thinking

about where the gaps are and where you could be doing more.

- Understand your audience - Do not make assumptions, but research instead. Understand what your audience looks like, where to reach them, how to motivate them and use that data to inform your marketing initiatives.

- Drive engagement - Figure out what you're trying to do and your short term and long term goals.

- Build a relationship over time - Customers are more likely to buy from you if they like you or identify with you. To get there, focus on their needs and learn what they want to be reassured about. Show them your expertise and social proof (reviews and testimonials) and discover their touch points along the way.

- Maximize your conversion - As good as your conversion is, it can always be improved!

- Keep testing and evolving - Test one thing at a time to properly understand its impact and be clear about what success looks like and how you will measure it.

- Use your learnings to move into paid activity - Now that you've created great organic content that your audience engages

Speakers talk about what priorities brands should focus on. Speaking at right is Nupur Manchandam, COO at Future Learn. From left, Ben Glatz, Head of Digital Transformation at Shell; Tom Baker, Head of Digital at National Trust; and Ramzi Yakob, Head of Digital Strategy & Experience at Aviva, listen.

(W-Systems photo)



4 ways you can manage your business reputation through social media

By Devon Heavey

ThriveHive

Did you know 85% of people trust online reviews as much as a personal recommendation? And, 49% of consumers say a business needs at least a 4-star rating before they feel confident in working with them. That means that no matter what type of business you have reputation, reviews, or stars are important to your success.

You've heard this a hundred times, right? You work your checklist to manage your reputation by responding to reviews, posting updates on Google My Business, and asking current customers for reviews. But have you ever tried managing your business reputation with the help of your social media platforms?

With 3.2 billion people on social media, it's crucial to look at social media to build your reputation. People are turning to social media for so much more than sharing cute pictures; they're discussing and researching their local businesses, too. So it's extra important for you to take advantage of social when it comes to reputation. Here are four ways to use social that can help build your local businesses reputation and inspire your reputation management strategy.

1. Building Trust with Social

Trust is the name of the game in reputation. To put it simply, people don't want to buy things from a business they don't trust.

A great way to build trust before you ever meet your customers is on your social media platforms. Social media allows consumers to get to know the humans

behind the business and the logo, making them trust you more. Here are some examples to help build trust and authenticity with social media:

- **Live action** — Take them around with you for a day in the life by going live on Facebook or Instagram.
- **Share Educational Resources** — So share some tips that might be useful to your target audience. If they find your tips helpful, prospects can be more inclined to trust you.
- **Be Unique** — No one wants to believe in a brand that just copies and pastes, so make your posts unique and interesting every time.

Sixty-three percent of people are more likely to buy from a brand they think is authentic. So, building up your trust online will get you more customers and improve your reputation.

2. Reply to People on Social

Businesses are taking to social media to address negative reviews, as United Airlines did above, and it works! Seven out of 10 people said that when a business replies to a negative review, it changes their opinion of the business for the better.

How do you incorporate social in replying to those reviews? First things first, check who is mentioning your business on social platforms. What are they saying about it? Good reviews? Negative remarks?

Once you find customer feedback, reply to them publicly and then message them privately for negative reviews. People post reviews because they want someone to hear them. Knowing what to say to a review is tough, especially if a customer shared negative feedback. But similar to when you respond to Google reviews, make sure you are giving your customer an

empathetic response to show you are listening and open to improving their experience.

3. Make It Easy for Followers to Give You a Review

The easiest way to improve your reputation score is to get more positive reviews for your business. And the simplest way to reach a lot of people is to put something out on social media for your followers to notice.

Ask people which product of yours was their favorite, then make it easy for them by linking out to your number one review spot. This makes the audience engaged with your post, and easy for them to right then and there write your business a positive review.

Another way to receive positive reviews through social media is to go through your mentions and notifications. See if anyone has talked about your product on social media. The same way you replied to the negative review on social media, reply to the positive remark too! Then, ask them if it would be OK to feature their positive review on your website.

4. Use Social Media Monitoring Tools

If you are having trouble managing your social media and helping your reputation through social media, you may want to look into an easy to use monitoring app! A social media monitoring app such as Perch, allows you to see who is mentioning your business, keep track of your engagement, and your amount of posts you have all from one platform.

Do you feel ready to take on your businesses reputation through social media? Remember, reviewers and customers are all people just like you! Don't be afraid to reach out to them through social media!

with, complement it with paid search activity and develop your relationship with sites that link to your content.

4. Use the right keywords

On the organic versus paid search subject, all of the speakers agreed to disagree, underlining that everyone should find a balance of what works best for them by combining the two for the perfect recipe. They all agreed that when it comes to organic search, SEO has the biggest impact on lead generation.

Lukasz Zeleny, director of organic performance at ZPG, said that "how" is the most often used word on the internet. Most questions start with how, then with "what" and lastly, "why," followed by millions of other words.

He did a stellar job on exemplifying the use of the Keyword Magic Tool, a great way of setting up the right keywords for your website, based on keyword difficulty or ease of ranking. He also stressed the importance of tracking your brand mentions and links to your website, and how you can easily do it by using the right tools, like Talkwalker, Brand24, or Majestic.

Lastly, improving your page speed is crucial and Lukasz's recommendation to do it efficiently is GTmetrix, an easy-to-use website speed and performance optimization tool that analyzes your page's speed performance and provides actionable recommendations on how to optimize it.

5. Prepare Your Teams for Digital Transformation

Among other things, the need for digital transformation can be a recognition for your



business that you no longer have the ability to keep up with customers' expectations and needs. So how can companies adjust to match this ever-evolving digital landscape?

Nupur Manchandam, COO at Future Learn, along with Ramzi Yakob, Head of Digital Strategy & Experience at Aviva, Tom Baker, Head of Digital at National Trust and Ben Glatz, Head of Digital Transformation at Shell offered in-depth insight on what key priorities brands should focus on implementing and how to prepare their teams to adjust to new technologies in digital marketing:

- **Clear constant communication** - what is the purpose of digital transformation and why is it important?
- **Top-down leadership** - establish that this transformation is a priority and filter down to every department of your company. Make sure every single individual understands why this is a priority, reiterate,

and embed it everywhere: in goal settings, rewards settings, etc.

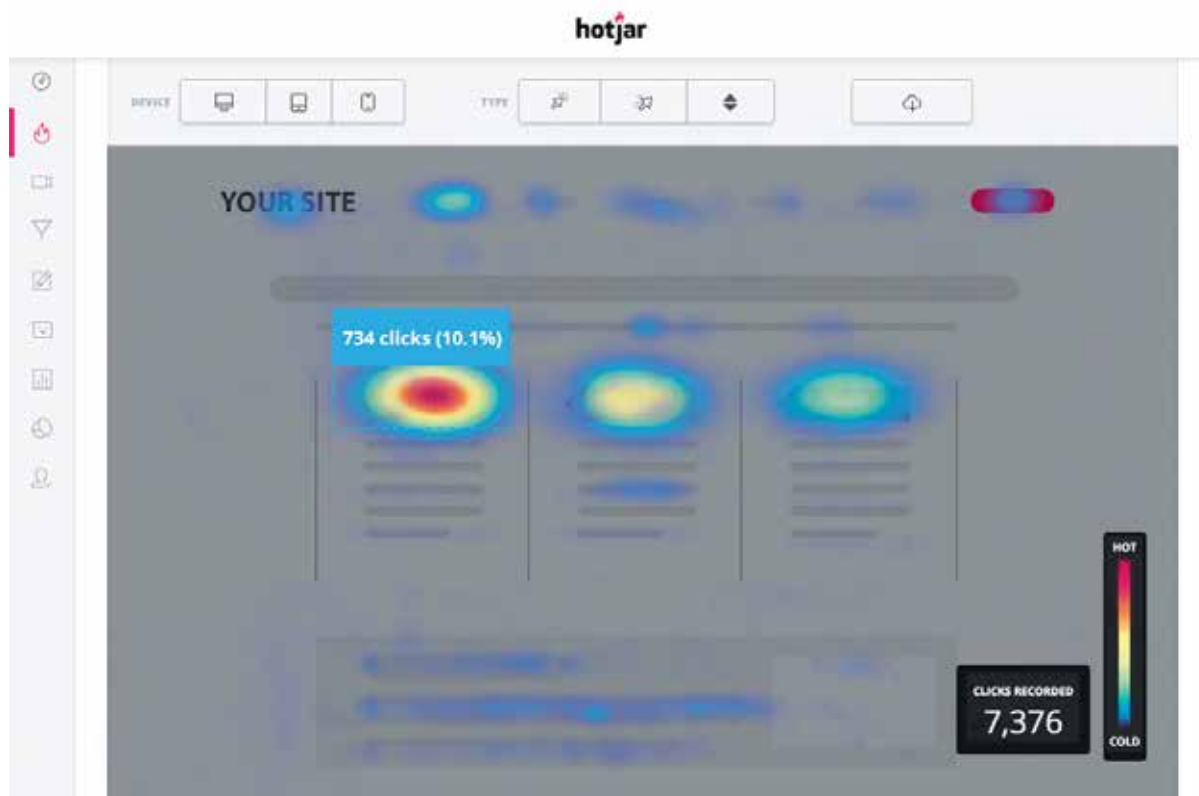
• **Bring people with you:** find the anti-bodies. These are people that are trying to resist a digital transformation, who have worked in the company for many years that are not interested in change. To reach success with your program, you must find them and make them champions of your transformation.

• **Deliver on time and on budget** - delivering something valuable early on in the stage of a program will give you attention and credibility.

Concluding thoughts

There is no recipe for success, but keeping up with technology is key no matter what industry you find yourself working in. And no matter what, be genuine and build loyalty with customers.

Janis Thomas,
B2C marketing
director at Del-
tatte, speaks
at DMFW 2019.
W-Systems photo



Hotjar: Hotjar's heat map feature can isolate where users are pointing their mice and clicking on upon visiting your website.

These tools can help you improve your company's website

Visualizing what users do on your site can help with improvement analysis

By Chris Barylick

Special to BetterSMB

Yes, people are visiting your company's website.

Yes, they're clicking around and sometimes emailing, calling, or asking questions about your services.

But what are they doing when they get to your website? For years, analytics packages have been telling you how many unique computers visited a website in a given day, what links they clicked on, how long they were on the site for, what countries they visited from, and not much else. More specific data has been thin on the ground, leaving companies to guess as to what's working, what needs to be changed, and having complete data to back up whether a site change has been effective or is merely preferred by employees.

Enter **Hotjar** (www.hotjar.com), which has become the big fish in the sea of user tracking and data interpretation for web site traffic. Hotjar, which is generally free for basic use, but also has different plans

available at different price points, allows for users to track website data, usage patterns, as well as replays of users' click patterns, cursor movements, and scrolling heatmaps. Companies can also incorporate feedback polls or send out surveys and forms that can be triggered when users enter certain sections of the website, as well as track when a visitor has abandoned the page and establish how much time and scrolling has elapsed before this happened. All of that information helps companies understand how visitors interact with their websites.

Hotjar is relatively easy to install, with a good tech support staff available on hand and tutorials available through the website. Once the Hotjar code has been installed into your website, users can open the dashboard to view reports, behaviors, and customize their Hotjar settings to yield better data feedback.

While Hotjar enjoys its status as top dog in this field, there are a considerable number of other tools you can look into that can pick up where Hotjar falls short, especially where feedback analysis and reporting are concerned:

Mopinion (www.mopinion.com): Where Hotjar falls short on user feedback and analysis, Mopinion offers these features in real-time. Companies can build custom user feedback forms in multiple languages as well as create feedback forms for demographics they might be struggling to convert. A series of smart alerts can also

warn companies when quick action is needed to address user complaints or concerns from their end. Mopinion is available for free for a two-week trial period, and starts at \$229 a month for its introductory plan.

Usersnap (www.usersnap.com): It's unconventional and more of a development tool geared towards web designers, but it's neat. Usersnap allows users to offer live comments and feedback as to a website's design. Through a feedback button, users can make notes, add comments, and circle elements of the website they like or dislike. This feedback

is then sent along as a screenshot, which can be extremely handy when working out a new site design. Usersnap begins at \$29 per month for a basic package with prices and features scaling upwards from there.

SessionCam (www.sessioncam.com): If you're looking to gauge where your company's website is succeeding and where it's falling short, there's nothing better than video replays of site visits. SessionCam allows users to watch recordings of website visits, which can then be used to focus on where customers might be abandoning the website by closing the browser tab. Another nifty feature is that SessionCam uses a custom algorithm to detect struggle, creating a Customer Struggle Score for each recording that focuses on where a user might be frustrated with their website experience, which could provide honest, useful feedback that might not be available elsewhere. SessionCam is available as a free trial, with subscription services starting at \$79 per month.

ClickTale (www.clicktale.com): Finally, ClickTale functions as a catch-all utility to help you study website traffic. The software collects visitor data from website sessions, and can filter them by user environment, demographics, mouse movements, traffic sources, in-page behavior and other criteria. Additional features include heatmapping, conversion funnels and form analytics for further data analysis after the fact. ClickTale is available for \$99 a month for the basic plan, with a free trial available as well.

No one said having a website would be easy, and the Internet and its users can be extremely fickle at the best of times. Still, with tools like Hotjar and others, you can do better at spotting patterns, seeing what's working and what isn't, and listening to your audience.

Hotjar is relatively easy to install, with a good tech support staff available on hand and tutorials available through the website.

How to use Google Tag Manager to make sense of your analytics

By Sarah Cavicchi
ThriveHive

Google Tag Manager is one of those “hidden gem” bits of functionality that can make your marketing analytics way more digestible. But the learning curve can be intimidating for those without webmaster experience.

Here’s what you need to know about the basics of Google Tag Manager and some helpful hints to get you going.

What Is GTM?

Google Tag Manager is a free tag management system (TMS) tool that allows users to store and manage measurement tracking codes. After you layer in the first bit of GTM code into your web-based project, you’re able to deploy analytics and measurement of tag configurations online. No more manually adding tags into the back end of your website’s code, which can save huge headaches for those marketers without web developer help.

In plainer words, say you have a bulky blog that generates a lot of leads. A decent spot to be in, for sure, but you want to dig a little deeper on where all those leads are coming from; are certain topics or writers generating more leads than others?

GTM allows you to create segments into your performance analytics, so you can sort by category, author, or really whatever else your imagination dreams up. With this level of insight, you can then create more of what’s working well, and cut out the things that don’t help so much.

The first step is adding your working with your first tag to connect GTM and Google Analytics. It’s not too tricky, but even so, Google has a Tag Manager Help center with helpful overviews and an active community forum to help you beta test ideas and chat with fellow GTM users. Once your universal tracking code for GA is set up in GTM, the sky’s the limit! But before we really dive in, let’s go over some vocabulary.

Google Tag Manager vocabulary

“Tags” are the snippets of JavaScript or tracking pixels from other third-party tools that tell Google Tag Manager what to do. Common tracking codes include the universal tracking code for Google Analytics, as well as Adwords’s remarketing and conversion tracking codes. Though there are far more than just two; popular tracking codes include Facebook pixels or heat map tracking codes like Hotjar, CrazyEgg, and so forth. “Triggers” or “events” are how GTM fires



The biggest benefit to Google Tag Manager is just how “easy” it can be to customize your data as it gets sent over to your Google Analytics dashboard.

a tag that you set up. A simple way to think about triggers and events is that these are all the different actions your reader can make on a page. So you can set up triggers for when a user visits a page, clicks on a link, or even fills out a form or completes another action.

Lastly, “variables” are the additional information GTM may need for your tags and triggers to work. We say may because these are conditional and are not necessarily occurring each time or with each user. Variables, as you can imagine, can get as robust and detailed as your heart desires, with the most basic variable being the universal tracking code for Google Analytics.

This whole thing — tags, triggers, and variables — is called a “container,” and a tag manager container can replace manually coded tags on a site or app.

How GTM can make life easier

The biggest benefit to Google Tag Manager is just how “easy” it can be to customize your data as it gets sent over to your Google Analytics dashboard. Want to set up tracking for your complex e-commerce campaign? Or maybe you want to start tracking PDF downloads? GTM has you covered. You can even run a heat map to record where your user hovers before they click with GTM. And to Google’s credit, they do a great job of coordinating and supporting third-party tags and provide helpful tag templates for users just like you.

GTM is also great because it houses all of your tags in one location, making it easier to audit, clean, update and adjust as you go. In addition, your website may even load faster once you’ve cleaned up any unnecessary or stale tagging structures and only use what you need.

Best yet, GTM has a very handy preview and debug mode that allows you to see what tags are firing on what page. This is helpful, especially for those just starting to fiddle with this feature, because it allows users to test their tag functionality before going live with a page.

The biggest caveat with this free tool is the learning curve it comes with. Google has been doing its best to provide a Quick Start Guide and a free Google Tag Manager Fundamentals course to help with further learning.



G Suite vs. Office 365

Which is Best for Your Business?

By Koosha Araghi

UpCurve Cloud

Businesses of all sizes have a wealth of options available to them for productivity suites. The two solutions standing head and shoulders above the competition are Google's G Suite and Microsoft Office 365, both of which offer a full range of collaborative cloud-based productivity apps including email, word documents, spreadsheets, slideshows, cloud storage and much more.

With each solution boasting unique features and having its own competitive advantages, it can be difficult to decide which is best for your business. We'll walk you through all the essentials when making your evaluation.

Pricing

G Suite is available to users on a monthly basis without any user obligation, and in three tiers:

- Basic (\$6/user per month)
- Business (\$12/user per month)
- Enterprise (\$25/user per month)

Office 365 is available to users on a monthly basis, but requires an annual commitment for each:

- Business Essentials (\$5.00/user per

month)

- E1 (\$8.00/user per month)
- Business (\$8.25/user per month)
- ProPlus (\$12.00/user per month)
- Business Premium (\$12.50/user per month)
- E3 (\$20.00/user per month)
- E5 (\$35.00/user per month)

Cloud Storage

All G Suite Business and Enterprise accounts with more than five users gain access to unlimited cloud storage in Google Drive. In addition, G Suite Basic accounts have access to 30 GB of cloud storage. Google Drive allows for easy file sharing with other users and features the might of Google's search capabilities, ensuring that your team members can track down files, folders, and team drives quickly and accurately.

Microsoft Office 365 gives users 1 TB of personal cloud storage on subscriptions with more than five years. In addition, 1 TB of OneDrive storage per user is available to OneDrive for Business accounts, with users having the option to upgrade to 5 TB/user.

Mobility and offline use

Using G Suite, your team can create

documents offline from anywhere, and edit, view, and open recent offline files while on-the-go. Mobile users with an Internet connection can also access, edit, and collaborate with other users in files. G Suite administrators can also be proactive in keeping important data secure through Google Mobile Device, allowing you to easily manage connected mobile devices, distribute apps, implement workplace policies, and identify security threats through the administrator console. G Suite users also have the option to download files in a wide assortment of file formats for offline use.

Microsoft Office 365's desktop version can be accessed on PC only, only allowing users to access files offline if they have first been opened in the online app. Microsoft does offer Mobile Device Management features for Office 365 users, allowing administrators to easily lock out devices that have been compromised, as well as manage mobile devices and enforce company practices.

Collaboration

Since G Suite originated as an exclusive cloud-based solution, collaboration has

[SEE **BEST** ON PAGE 17]

4 Ways to improve the cybersecurity of your startup

By Bekah Rhea

UpCurve Cloud

The exact numbers vary, but cybersecurity experts are in agreement that small businesses are one of the most popular targets for cyberattacks.

43% of data breach victims are small businesses, according to Verizon's 2019 Data Breach Investigation Report. A 2018 report from Hiscox revealed that 47% of small businesses had experienced data breaches in the past year, with almost half of those businesses reporting more than one breach. ESET Senior Security Researcher Stephen Cobb says that over 70% of security breaches target small businesses.

Despite cybercriminals' overwhelming preference for small business targets, Hiscox also found that only 52% of small businesses have a clearly defined cybersecurity strategy, even though a proactive strategy is the best defense. By the time there's a breach, the damage has often already been done: data misused, ransomware spread, viruses unleashed.

The estimated direct cost of this havoc for a small business is around \$34,600. And that doesn't include lost customers, recovering from the outbreak, or workplace distractions that come from a cyberattack.

OK, now I'm sufficiently concerned, thanks.

You're welcome. You should be! And you're not alone. Hiscox found that even though many small businesses are unprepared, around 66% of them are se-

riously concerned about cybersecurity.

Why are none of them prepared, then?

The truth of the matter is that small businesses underestimate their risk. It seems logical that cybercriminals would have bigger fish to fry. After all, breaches featuring big corporations are the ones that make the news. Small businesses, however, are just as likely to have personal data to plunder, with a fraction of the security protocols in place.

Andreas Rivera of Business News Daily refers to this as the "sweet spot" for hackers, with "more digital assets than an individual consumer but less security of a larger enterprise.

Shaking the target off your back

A comprehensive cybersecurity program isn't built in a day. It takes considerable time and investment of executives and employees alike, but the processes are well worth the trouble they save. As you work on your cybersecurity protocol, here are a few things you can do sooner rather than later to reduce your risk.

1. Risk assessment

It may seem like a no-brainer, but with technologies ever-expanding, cybercriminals are likely to find the holes in your system before updates and patches do. Stephen Cobb suggests making a list of all the computer systems and services your business uses, because "if you don't know what you have, you can't protect it." He recommends including any mobile devices

that you and your employees may use to access company information.

Cybersecurity audits are definitely worth hiring outside help if needed. Alternatively, there are several free online security classes and guides that can enable you to better assess not only what security measures you lack, but also the ones that you (hopefully) already have in place.

2. Spread awareness

This doesn't refer to our 21st-century version of awareness that comes from video challenges or celebrity tweets, but rather genuinely training employees to recognize basic cybersecurity threats. While our vision of cybercriminal is usually a mastermind operating out of a basement, it turns out that the majority of small business breaches can be traced back to employees and emails.

Sean Allen, digital marketing manager at Aware, says that if small businesses spent even just one hour spent training staff on "basic internet hygiene" such as "spotting phishing e-mails, good browsing practices, not downloading suspicious files or clicking links," then cybersecurity would improve drastically.

3. Check your passwords

One of the easiest ways to improve cybersecurity in both personal and business life is to use more complex passwords. That means your information would also be more secure using different passwords from different apps so that if one account is compromised, the rest of your accounts don't get hacked too.

It seems like a chore, but constructing complex passwords, and even changing them regularly, immediately reduces the chances of a cyberattack.

4. Multifactor authentication

To be honest, the first few messages in my inbox right now are from various accounts verifying my identity. And tomorrow, they'll have to send security codes once again in order for me to access them. And not because I forgot my very responsible and secure passwords. This is the reality of multifactor authentication.

In cases of multifactor authentication, there is not only a password in place, but users must also enter a security key sent to their phones, or a hardware key. This adds another layer of protection that not only makes your inbox appear extra popular but also fends off security threats. Look for this in the products and services your business decides to use, and know that the time spent entering that extra code is much less costly than a data breach.

Reinforce those defenses!

Cybercrime is out there, and it hasn't limited its prey to the big-box competition. Small businesses are the perfect combination of valuable data and lower defenses, just begging to be breached. Take the time to develop a cybersecurity plan, and invest in it long-term since technology is only getting wiser. In the meantime, take the small steps that you can to reinforce your small businesses' defenses against cybersecurity threats.

[BEST FROM PAGE 16]

been a major part of the platform since its inception. Native tools like Drive, Docs, Sheets, and Slides are built for multiple users to access, edit, and work within at all times, no matter where they're working from or what device they're using. Version history, one of G Suite's most celebrated features, makes reverting to previous versions of a file seamless, meaning your team will never lose important data again. Version history also allows team members to view information about when edits were made, who made them, and where the edits are in a document, making it extremely easy to track changes and access history. G Suite also comes equipped with tools like Hangouts Meet, making it easy for employees to make audio and video calls to one another, or just stick to text chat. Google Voice is also integrated with G Suite, making it easy to get the most out of your Voice over Internet Protocol system.

Office 365 has also adopted a number of collaborative features, allowing multiple users to edit and access files in real-time, letting them easily leave notes, comments, and suggestions for other team members to see and respond to. Office 365 uses Skype for conference

calls and other chat features, letting your team communicate easily and efficiently in an app that they're comfortable using. Unfortunately, Skype for Business isn't available to a number of Office 365 subscription plans, and Skype-to-phone calls require a Skype number and credits for local or international calls. Google teleconferencing options are included with all paid versions of G Suite, and calling within North America with Google Voice, to any phone number, is free.

Security

Google has worked diligently to implement groundbreaking security features in G Suite. The summer of 2018 alone saw the addition of a brand new administrator security center, increased email security features, and much more. The security panel allows your company administrators to proactively identify user devices and accounts that have been compromised, allowing you to lock them out and reset them to avoid further infection. It also lets administrators more effectively control business data and enforce data guidelines and policies, giving you the option to store data in specific geographic locations.

On the email side of things, G Suite users can set their emails to expire

within a certain period of time, send self-destructing emails that vanish from the recipient's inbox, and even password protect emails with text messaging passcodes. Anti-spam measures have also been implemented to automatically detect spam, ransomware, and phishing attempts, greatly lessening the risk of a costly data breach.

Microsoft has taken the security aspects of Office 365 seriously, implementing a number of anti-spam and phishing measures that work to filter out potentially harmful emails. Third party security integrations are also available to further protect email accounts, allowing for better recognition of spoof emails, unsafe links, and more.

Machine learning and AI

Applied AI and machine learning is an extremely effective way to improve employee productivity and accuracy, lessening the amount of menial but time-consuming tasks that can quickly eat up your day. Whether it's searching for files or emails, completing sentences through auto-fill, suggesting commonly used words and phrases, or detecting spelling and grammar errors, applied AI and machine learning features are an invaluable tool for businesses and are a great addition to any

worthwhile productivity suite.

Applied AI and machine learning capabilities are where the technological might of Google becomes apparent within G Suite. The platform has added a number of machine learning features over the years, including the acclaimed Smart Compose and Smart Reply features, which allow users to easily send canned replies to lower priority emails and compose emails more efficiently without sacrificing quality. Applied AI features have also been added to Google Calendar to automatically decline meetings that are held outside of established work hours or during times where users have marked themselves as unavailable. These features help your team maintain a healthier work-life balance, which in turn increases employee satisfaction and lessens the chance of workplace burn-out.

Similar to the Smart Reply feature in G Suite, Office 365 lets users quickly send out emails through suggested replies, though no Smart Compose feature has been implemented in the platform. File suggestion and prediction features have yet to be added to the platform, with G Suite having a clear advantage in terms of machine learning and applied AI features at this stage.

These tools and tips could boost computer security at your business

Bad actors want your company's data. Are you doing enough to fight them?

By Chris Barylick

Special to BetterSMB

The Equifax breach led to roughly 143 million accounts being compromised, with user data invariably being traded on the black market.

The Facebook hacks have led to millions of users' account data being shared.

The recent Capital One breach led to more than 100 million U.S. and Canadian accounts being compromised, as almost everyone who had applied for or received a Capital One credit card between 2005 and 2014 now had sensitive information floating out in the digital ether.

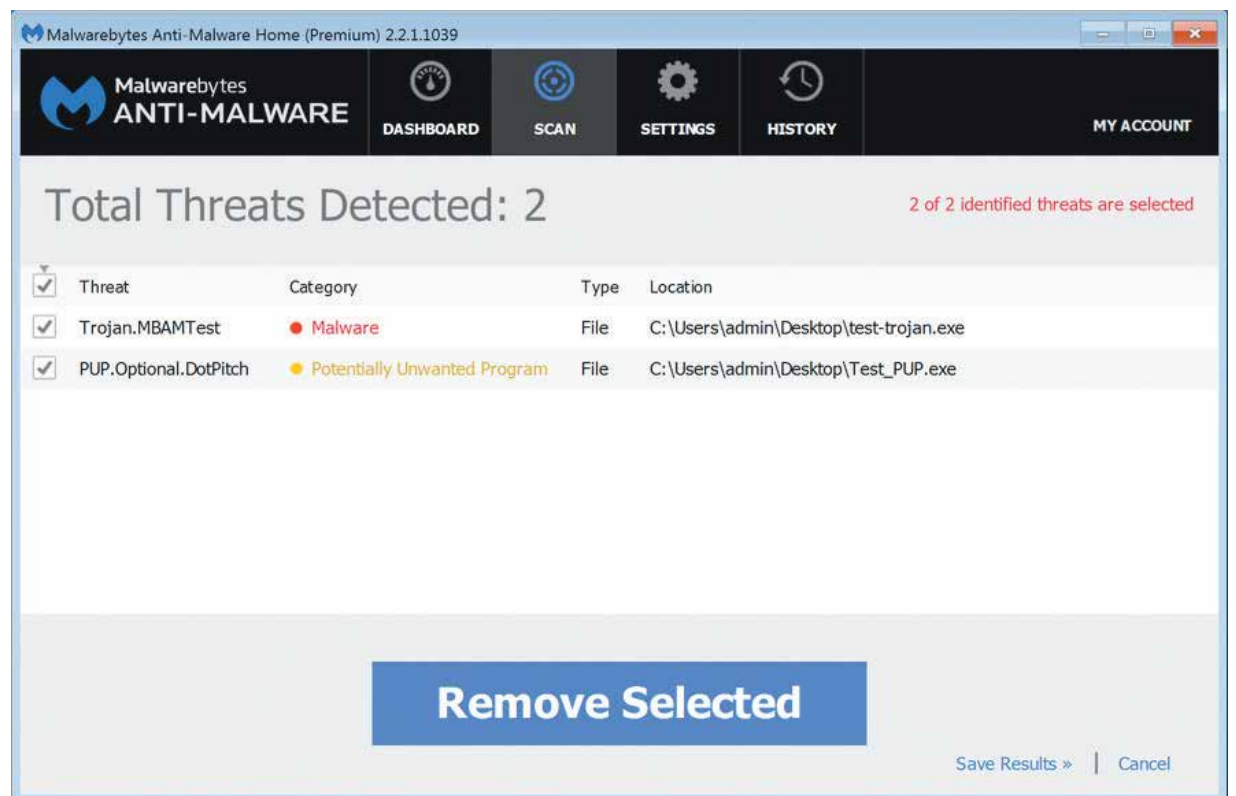
And the list goes on.

With hacks, data breaches, and intellectual property theft both on the rise – and achieving levels almost never previously dreamt of before – it's a good idea to look into what your business can do to keep its information secure. And while no cloud-based service, be it Amazon's Amazon Web Services, Apple's iCloud, Dropbox, Microsoft OneDrive, Box, or any other provider can claim it will never be breached, it's important to keep your local machines secure where possible.

Here are some tools that have fared well, are relied upon by veteran IT staffers, and are readily affordable to almost any business looking to protect its information:

Malwarebytes (www.malwarebytes.com): One of the simplest and best anti-malware tools anywhere, Malwarebytes can be easily downloaded, installed, and features an effective monitoring feature that scans downloads on the fly for viruses and malware. The program comes with a 14-day free trial and annual subscription rates start at \$39.99 per year for a single Mac, Windows, Android, or Chromebook computer or device. Pricing plans can be found at www.malwarebytes.com/pricing/ and it's worth the annual subscription fee.

Windows Defender: This arrives with Windows 10 and where IT professionals used to scoff at the feature in years (and Windows versions) past, it's gotten immensely better. And it's free, which nobody can argue with. Simply keep your copy of Windows 10 updated via the Update setting regularly, even if it means chewing through dozens of previous updates, make sure you're entirely up to date,



Malwarebytes: One of the simplest - and best - catch all anti-malware protection programs, the program is available for annual subscription and can scan for threats to your computer.

With hacks, data breaches, and intellectual property theft both on the rise – and achieving levels almost never previously dreamt of before – it's a good idea to look into what your business can do to keep its information secure.

and Windows Defender will do the rest. It's bare bones, but it does prevent much of malware and exploits from slipping through, which is the first step to keeping your data secure.

Use a cloud email provider: This is where you can put larger companies' R&D budget to use for your benefit. Some malware attacks come through email attachments and links to malicious websites. Apple's iCloud, Google's Gmail and Microsoft's Office 365 presently channel a fair amount of time, energy, and funding into anti-spam and anti-malware and protection through their email systems.

Use Devices: Another means of using

Apple and/or Google's security budget to your end is to check emails on an iPhone, iPad, or Android-based device. Users can get their email through the email client of their choice on the device, and the security layers generally prevent spam and malware from slipping through and activating. Just remember to keep your devices updated (you can turn on auto updating to achieve this) and you'll be good to go.

External Drives and Backup Services: Always have a backup. For the price of a \$40 hard drive from Amazon, Best Buy or Fry's, you can easily snag an external USB hard drive that you can then configure as a local backup drive in case things go south with your computer. For a variable subscription price per month, you can easily back up your data to services such as Dropbox, Box, Microsoft's OneDrive, Apple's iCloud, and Google Drive. Services back up your data throughout the day.

Erase hard drives when you're done with them: More than anything, you don't want your data hanging around on a hard drive once you're done with the computer or device. Darik's Boot and Nuke (www.dban.org) effectively destroys all information from hard drives and makes that data as unrecoverable as humanly possible. The DBAN software is available for free for personal use, while the Blancco Drive Eraser (www.blancco.com) is intended for enterprise level use, supports more erasure standards, offers technical support, and is available as a free trial with the full product available at different price points.

Book review:

This book could help your business capitalize on the connected device economy

By Jason Whong

The billions of smart devices that transmit data in real time all around us are bringing about an era of change, not just for people, but also for business. Businesses that can capitalize on the Internet of Things can transform themselves by making better products and more informed decisions, while those that shy away from the technology can miss opportunities for growth.

W. David Stephenson wants readers of “The Future is Smart” to know that the “Internet of Things” — the concept that everything can be connected to other things on the Internet — is nothing short of a revolution, because now businesses that embrace the technology can get data about practically anything in real time, a feat that until recently was impossible.

Stephenson opens his book with the example of a city trash can, something that just sits there. A company called BigBelly improved the trash can’s capacity by adding a compactor and solar panel to power it. When the company added networking to their solar-powered trash can, they realized they could change from a fancy trash can maker to a company that could help cities

The Future is Smart

How Your Company Can Capitalize on the Internet of Things And Win in a Connected Economy

• By W. David Stephenson
• HarperCollins Leadership.
234 pages. \$27.95.



improve the way they remove waste.

Cities that use BigBelly trash cans can move away from old-fashioned trash collection routes and use real-time data to inform their operational decisions. That can reduce the frequency of trash collection by as much as 80% while increasing the volume of recycled materials.

BigBelly also works with cities to add Wi-Fi hotspots, sensors, beacons and other connected services to their trash compactors. Stephenson’s point is that if interconnectedness can transform something as ordinary as a trash can,

it’s worth imagining what can happen if the world re-invented every product and management system as part of the Internet of Things.

Stephenson divides the book into three parts. Part I discusses how attitudes must change to capitalize on the Internet of Things, and what tools you can use to make it happen. In it, he spends one chapter explaining what he calls the four essential truths, or attitudinal shifts necessary for transformation: that privacy and security must be a top priority, that data should be shared, that data should flow in a cyclical rather than linear fashion and that products and their roles should be re-thought.

Part II discusses how businesses are transforming because of the Internet of Things. One example Stephenson cites is that of Winterhalter, a commercial dishwasher manufacturer in Germany, which rethought its product by offering customers a “pay per wash” option. Customers who use this option don’t have to pay up front for a commercial dishwasher; instead, they use a credit card online to pay to unlock wash cycles on the dishwasher.

Winterhalter benefits because they

have a more predictable revenue stream and a continuing relationship with their customer, who may be less likely to shop around because their needs are already met. Customers benefit because their washer can be better maintained because of data it sends back over the network, and because they don’t have to make an up-front investment.

Part III describes corporate strategies that Stephenson says can be used once the Internet of Things is fully realized. Everything will be different: customers will become empowered to help with product design. Maintenance will be aided by predictive insights. Products will be replaced by services. How will your business adapt?

For those interested in doing more reading about the possibilities of an interconnected future, there are 20 pages of notes and citations at the end of the hardback book, a cursory check of which reveals no hidden sensors or networking capabilities.

The future is coming when chunks of data will flow in all directions around and within your business. Reading this book in one direction, from cover to cover, could help you reimagine how your business will work in the future.

Book review:

Becoming a data visualization nerd is easier when you read her book

By Jason Whong

Digital cameras make taking pictures easy, but owning one doesn’t mean someone takes great pictures. Computers made it easier to fix typographical errors, but using one doesn’t make someone a great author. Microsoft Excel makes it easy to build charts, but it won’t stop you from visualizing your data as a cluttered, incomprehensible mess.

It’s far too easy to make a quick pie chart that utterly fails at communicating the point that you found obvious as you combed through the data. That’s where Stephanie D.H. Evergreen’s “Effective Data Visualization” book comes in.

Reading Evergreen’s book is a bit like sitting in a high school or college class next to a genius who probably knows the subject better than the teacher does. She tackles each problem with excitement. When you ask if you can borrow her notes, she not only lets you, but explains each part of them in detail, so you’ll understand it on your own.

Evergreen is so passionate about good design in data visualizations that her doctorate in interdisciplinary

Effective Data Visualization

The Right Chart for the Right Data (Second Edition)

By Stephanie D.H. Evergreen
Sage Publishing.
352 pages. \$58



research included a a dissertation on graphic design in data reporting. She trains companies and organizations on the principles of good data design and writes regularly about the topic.

Her philosophy is sensible: people should be able to look at your visualization and get the point immediately. Otherwise, they may struggle to find the same conclusion you did, or may even misinterpret a bad visualization.

Evergreen has researched design and perception and applied it to the art of impactful business graphics, so you can read her book, learn her skills and “become the meeting rock star, ushering everyone through important decisions,” as she puts it.

Evergreen’s unconstrained, informal

and humorous writing style can give you the impression that you’re sitting in the same room as a genius and can listen to her every brilliant tangential thought, but since you can read the book at your own pace, you can still keep up with her.

The book says it will help you use the right chart for the right data. There are chapters on how to visualize single numbers, comparisons, relative performance, survey responses, parts of a whole, correlation and regression, and more.

Aside from teaching which charts to use in each situation, Evergreen also explains step-by-step how to build these visualizations in Excel, with examples that she rates by level of difficulty that she calls “Excel Ninja Levels.” Icons of ninjas, with expressions ranging from calm to aggressive, let you know how difficult it will be to complete each task.

The first example of visualizing a single number has an Excel Ninja Level of 0, because it’s just one number. You can probably do it in PowerPoint or a favorite graphic design program. She’ll even tell you what fonts she used and their sizes. Most importantly, she explains why the strategy is effective

and what concerns you should have when using this technique.

Later on in the same chapter, she explains how to use Excel to build a chart that displays apple symbols to indicate the quantity of fruit servings eaten daily by specific families. It takes more than six pages of instructions and well-captioned screenshots to get to a chart that looks reasonably close to a USA Today infographic. And when you get there, your first thought may even be “wait, I just did this in Excel? Am I becoming a data nerd?”

There’s also a \$10 companion book, “The Data Visualization Sketchbook,” in which Evergreen provides tools for testing out visualization ideas in pencil before committing to a design, and includes an example of her own sketches that she used in a project to report the results of a client’s customer satisfaction survey.

At 352 pages, “Effective Data Visualization” is a lot to read and work through in one sitting. But if you treat it like a master class, you may just get the sense that Evergreen is high-fiving you and calling you a rock star when you complete a visualization at Excel Ninja Level 10.



BetterSMB

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- What cyber spaces your business needs to secure
- Pros and cons for cloud technologies versus locally hosted/controlled IT

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- How to use community engagement as part of your marketing strategy
 - New technologies to help drive sales
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