



TECHNOLOGY TODAY



Insider Tips to make your business run Faster, Easier, and More Profitably

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Amazing offer from our new partner

We have recently joined forces with one of the area's best technical service providers- Higher State Technology.

HST is a Round Rock based company with regional reach supporting businesses of all sizes. They have developed a unique business support program named "Peer2Peer Tech".

Read all about it on Page 5.

When it is better to have local help

As frequently happens this newsletter is inspired by events emerging during the month. This one is no exception. I was sitting down to write this article when we had one of our clients call with a huge Dropbox failure (maybe 1000 files deleted). So we're pulling out the shovel and digging into his Dropbox setup.

What so often happens in small business is a tendency to use free or cheap tools when they are available. The other tendency is to use, for your business, the expanded version of what was a free, personal tool. And it all works swimmingly until the day that it doesn't. At that point you've got a system, originally created to sync a few personal files, which has now crashed your business.

This is not just a Dropbox issue but it a problem across the board. When used in the workplace, personal tools (read 'cheap' or 'free') are a quiet danger to the business. The problem arises when your business starts to depend on them only to discover that 'free' means 'unsupported'.

For instance, Gmail is an amazing product but it is a personal email service. Google Apps or, better yet, Office 365 are business email platforms.

Open office and Libra Office are perfectly fine for home use but MS Office is the business standard.

After years of waiting for companies to come up with a file synchronization product I could work with I gave up. See page 4 to read about our Friendly solution.

Meanwhile, be very suspicious about 'business' products that are free or cheap. Look for the support. Think of what will happen when (not if, but when) it fails. Who will you call and will they answer the phone?

Why is my Computer Running so SLOW?

Computers generally start slowing down within 12 months, but it's not because their parts are broken.

Woah, who slammed on the brakes? Your computer used to speed through startup and let you open almost everything at once, but now it's struggling to crawl along! Everything takes so much longer or crashes without warning. Something isn't right. If it's gotten so bad that you've found yourself drooling over the idea of a new computer, even though your system isn't that old, we've got some good news: you can get your whizzy speeds back with a little TLC.

Computers generally start slowing down within 12 months. But it's not because their parts are broken. And it's not because they're faulty. It's not even because you have so many browser tabs open that you lose count. Slow computers have a number of causes, but the most common ones are easily fixed.

Background programs

Whenever your computer is turned on, it's running programs in the background. You didn't start them and they may not be essential to operation, but on they go anyway. You can't even see some of them, they don't have windows or anything to look at. A good example is your antivirus program. You don't need to see it all the time, but you know it's running in the background, protecting you. Over time, more and more programs might slip into the background and casually suck up your resources, like iTunes helper, Acrobat updater, Cortana listening, Skype or Spotify.

We can speed up your system by setting these background programs to run only when you need them, or remove them completely.

Application bloat

How do you improve last year's version of a program? Add more features! The problem with this is the applications become bloated with features you may not need (or even know about), but that keep needing more and more resources. Each time the developers review their programs, they assume you've bought the latest and greatest computer and can run whatever they release. This means a slow computer can sneak up after an auto-update. You may not even know the update happened, just that your computer is suddenly making you very unhappy. Eventually, your system grinds to a halt. We can remove unused applications or increase your computer power as required.

Slow hard drives

Your data is stored on a part called the hard drive. It's usually a mechanical type that works like a record player, with a spinning platter and a 'needle' reading it. If your data is spread out across lots of places on the platter, the hard drive head 'needle' has to go backwards and forwards thousands of times just to retrieve a single file. Unsurprisingly, that takes more time to bring up your file. We can optimize your data to give the hard drive head a break, but an even better solution is to upgrade to an SSD. That's a Solid State Drive that stores data in memory chips, like your USB drive, and has no moving parts. Without the physical need to move a hard drive needle, your computer can access data much faster.

Unfortunately, once your computers starts slowing, for whatever reason, the problem only gets worse. The background programs will continue to multiply, the bloat keeps coming, and the hard drive begs for relief. Rather than buy a whole new system though, it's completely possible for your current computer to go back to being lightning fast – and for a fraction of the cost.

4 tips for Internet Banking

I do as much as I can online. Much of the reason for that is I'm lazy. But I do spend a lot of that time I've saved and energy I've stored beefing up my cyber security. We have a state of the art firewall on our building's Internet connection. I use the best antivirus I've found (<http://www.fcofg.com/time-to-renew-your-avg/>). Much to the annoyance of many web pages, I use an ad blocker (<http://www.fcofg.com/i-sometimes-wonder-about-anyone-using-ie/>). And I use a password storage program (<http://www.fcofg.com/passwords/>). But mostly I pay attention to what I'm doing. Here is what I think about when I'm online in a secure site like my bank.

Online banking has boomed in the past few years to become the new norm. Branches are out and apps are in. Half the time when you visit a branch, you're steered towards a computer for a DIY transaction – with optional assistance. But is internet banking really safe? You're always told to keep your financial details private, but now also to jump on board the online banking train – talk about a push/pull scenario! The good news is you *can* bank safely online with a few simple precautions.

Always type in the website address

Many attackers will attempt to trick you into clicking a fake link to your bank website. Usually sent as a 'phishing email', they'll claim there's a problem and ask you to click through to your bank and correct it ASAP. The link points to a fake website that looks almost exactly like your real bank site and is recording your private account info. You can avoid scams like this simply by accessing your bank by manually typing in the website or using a bookmark. I actually type it into Roboform, a handy applications where the site address, user name and password for every site on which I have an account is stored.

Avoid public computers and networks

Jumping onto a PC at the library or mall might seem like a quick and easy way to check your account, but public computers are often targeted by scammers. In just a few moments, they can install keyloggers to record usernames, passwords and other private data, then sit back as all future user details are emailed to them. The same problem applies with free, unsecured Wi-Fi. You're better off using an ATM or a data-enabled smartphone.

Use a strong password with 2- factor authentication

Create a unique password for your online banking, something you've never used anywhere else. Mix up words, numbers and symbols to create a complex password that can't be guessed easily. Avoid giving attackers a head start with data they can find on Facebook, like kids names, pet names, birthdates, etc and really think outside the box. And of course, never write it down anywhere near your wallet, phone or computer. If remembering is likely to be an issue, you might like to consider a secure password manager app. Many banks will also help boost your security with two-factor authentication, sending random codes to your phone (or a special LCD device they provide) to verify any activity.

Check page security before entering data

Finally, take a micro-second to spot the small padlock icon before you enter any data. You're looking for a padlock appearing as part of the browser itself, not just an image on the webpage. It will be either in the bottom corner or next to the URL. The address will also start with **https://** instead of **http://**. If you don't see these things, the page is *not* secure and you shouldn't log in.

Quick late note: Hotels have become the targets of cyber thieves recently. Think about it. Thousands of people who think they are safe on the hotel system going to their secure sites. Hotels are good at hospitality but not necessarily cyber security.

Solar Eclipse

- Depending on the geometry of the Sun, Moon, and Earth, there can be between 2 and 5 solar eclipses each year.
- Totality occurs when the Moon completely obscures the Sun so only the solar corona is showing.
- A total solar eclipse can happen once every 1-2 years. This makes them very rare events.
- The longest a total solar eclipse can last is 7.5 minutes.
- The width of the path of totality is usually about 160 km across and can sweep across an area of Earth's surface about 10,000 miles long.
- Almost identical eclipses occur after 18 years and 11 days. This period of 223 synodic months is called a saros.
- During a total solar eclipse, conditions in the path of totality can change quickly. Air temperatures drop and the immediate area becomes dark.
- If any planets are in the sky at the time of a total solar eclipse, they can be seen as points of light.

August 21st at 6:08PM just north of Kansas city is Austin's closest point of full solar eclipse.

Sounds like a field trip to me!!

Austin to Kansas City:
Drive time 10 hours 54 minutes

Southwest Flight time: 1 Hour 55 Minutes



Better than Dropbox

We came to the decision to create Friendly Sync after the two primary alternatives, Dropbox and One Drive failed our customers repeatedly. The problems were many and varied but ultimately ended up in the same place, nearly zero support when it is critical.

File synchronization has become increasingly important to small businesses as they discover that the file they needed is not where they are but back at the office. Enter file sync. This creates an exact copy of every file in the directory synchronizing every change onto a server somewhere (most of the storage sites are remote, very secure, and known only to those who need to know). The sync is immediate and a new version of the file is created. The previous version is also maintained on the remote server which is a critical part of the system. All the previous versions are kept.

All of the files from the Friendly Connections IT business is in Friendly Sync. I can get to any file on any computer anywhere in the world. I can also bring them up on my phone. And since the versions are kept I don't worry about backing them up. I store my Quickbooks Backup file in a Friendly Sync folder. While live files such as the actual Quickbooks file are not made to work in any synchronization system, the backup files are perfect for it.

Since the entire directory that is my company can be rolled back not only to a specific day but to a specific time we are bulletproofed against the ransomware that is so endemic in the world.

At \$15 per month per user it is a little too expensive for the average residential customer but for a small business that can't afford a fully accessible server or that is just tired of having to support one, this is the truly Friendly way to keep your files safe, secure, and available to your entire workforce.

Give us a call and let us show you the Friendly Sync way of doing business.



Be sure to continue on to Page 5 and check out the newest offering of our great IT partner, Higher State Technology.

