

The Bulletin

Technical Tips

By Tom Snyder Ph.D.

Computer Systems Are Like Cars – Perform Proper, Regular Maintenance and they'll Run Smoothly with Modest Investments

Last week a graphic design firm called us because one of their computers wouldn't start. On top of that, this particular computer had a nearly finished proposal for a major new client on it and the proposal presentation was the next day. So, they not only needed to get the computer going again, they needed it fast. Fortunately, the computer was recoverable.

If they had properly configured their virus protection and performed regular hard disk inspections, they could have prevented the problem. The preventative work would have also been less expensive than the emergency recovery we had to perform. So, I encourage you to do your nerves and your pocket book a favor. Maintain your computer systems the same way you maintain your car. Have knowledgeable, reputable individuals take care of them and perform maintenance on a regular basis!

To get you started down the prevention path, the following is a list of items I recommend you check on a regular basis to minimize emergency situations:

Backup Systems Ensure the right information is backed up and that the backups can be restored.

System Events Look for and correct errors and warnings revealed by server event logs.

Virus Protection Ensure virus definitions are up to date and that the software is correctly configured. Test functionality with the Eicar test virus file, which can be found via a Google search engine search.

Internet Performance Ensure the promised speed is being delivered and monitor how bandwidth is being used. You may need to limit team member audio and video downloads and viewing during certain hours.

E-mail Manage mail-box size, delete old mailboxes and manage server load to

maximize e-mail reliability. Ensure e-mail antivirus software is working and up-to-date. Test the functionality of special addresses such as customer support or contact us.

Desktop Hardware Open computers to clean away dust, listen for noisy hard drives (indicative of impending failure), and ensure fans are working. A dysfunctional fan can ruin your hard drive.

Power Supply and UPS Test un-interruptible power supply (UPS) functionality to ensure your systems will continue working, even during a power outage.

Disk Storage Monitor space availability and usage to prevent system shutdowns and slow downs as a result of full drives and memory shortages which end up taxing your disk.

===== If you have questions or concerns about your particular situation, please e-mail me at tpsnyder@xantrion.com. I will use your input to direct future columns. =====