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**Don't Fail to Backup Your Data**



Often times it's not the big bad hackers out there that pose the biggest threat to your organization's continued survival. More often than not, it's simple issues that create a world of problems for your business. One common way that an otherwise sound business plan could be disrupted is through an unexpected disaster derailing operations without having an adequate data backup solution in place.

Disasters are more common than you might think in the workplace. Whether it's a natural disaster or occurrence, like a fire or electrical...



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**AI and IT: A Natural Match**



Artificial Intelligence is one technology that garners excitement and fear. People's imaginations tend to run away with them when they have conversations about AI. Businesses of all types are starting to figure how they can utilize advanced artificial intelligence platforms and machine learning to facilitate better business, but is it working? Let's take a look at how AI innovation is changing business and see how ready AI is for primetime.

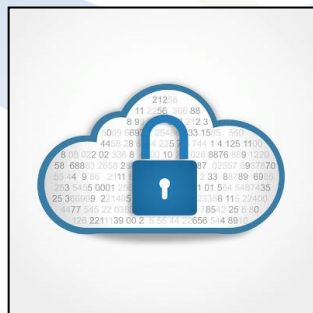
**Cybersecurity**

Artificial intelligence is being used to make automated systems smarter. As this automation "learns" how to be most effective, it can be used for a litany of purposes. One of the main purposes where AI is already being utilized is in cybersecurity. The results have been mixed thus far, but one could see how AI's role in cybersecurity will be profound in the future. The truth is that since the technology is still very much in its infancy that the application viability with something as complex as cybersecurity isn't helping mitigate some of the most dangerous threats.

That's not to say that today's AI don't offer some value. According to the Ponemon Institute, AI is already affording businesses cost savings, a reduction of data breaches, and higher productivity tied to system viability. They found that companies have been able to cut their cybersecurity budgets by nearly 65%. Another benefit AI is currently providing businesses is that it makes up for what is a long-standing industry shortage in talent. With companies relying on so few IT onboarded technicians, simple issues can be quickly remedied before they become problems; and, coupled with analytics it can help the IT professionals that companies rely on, pinpoint where (and what issues) to analyze further.

*(Continued on page 2)*

**A Private Cloud Doesn't Have to Be a Massive Expense**



Databases are exceptionally useful for allowing access to important data, but they by default expose data to risks depending on how they are stored. If a database is stored in the cloud, for example, it could potentially be exposed to threats that put the future of your business in jeopardy. Compared to the public cloud, a private cloud database can give you more opportunities for security, flexibility, and customization.

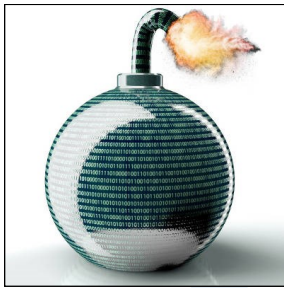
**The Benefits of a Private Cloud Database**

Databases need to be accessible, but they need to be secure in order to be effective. The cloud is the ideal resource to make this happen, but in an always-on environment, you'll need to secure your data and resources so that they are protected from external threats. When you host your private cloud databases in-house on your own infrastructure, you still have to secure it, but you also have much more control over those defenses.

Maintaining an in-house private cloud database means that you need someone with knowledge of how to manage such a thing... unless you outsource this responsibility to a managed service provider. With the right support, you can make sure that your private cloud databases are as secure as can be. Here are some methods you can use to determine which private cloud provider is best for your business.

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## The Many Threats that Come from Leaning on Technology



Your business is susceptible to countless threats and vulnerabilities, all of which aim to bring your organization crumbling to the ground. These include all types of technology-related problems that cause downtime and other terrible situations that your business has to overcome. Let's look at some of the threats you face from day to day, and try to establish an appropriate response to each.

First, it's important to recognize that threats can be classified in one of two ways: external, and internal.

### External Threats

As their name suggests, these threats are those that originate from outside your business' network. This category includes most threats, especially those

## AI and IT: A Natural Match

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### Operations

Most businesses today rely on their IT to conduct operations. Distribution companies that rely on asset and fleet management, to manufacturers that use dedicated supply chain management, to the office where customer relationship management solutions are typically used to sync business with the demands of their customers, all need powerful software solutions to help keep costs down and keep business moving fast. AI is beginning to help these automated systems work more effectively.

Most of AIs work within these constructs has to do with managing data and its analysis. Since so much data is created within these systems-- especially in systems that also deal with the dissemination of services- it is hard for people to sort through it all. AI-enabled analytics systems are now being used that can automatically go

that you may have heard of before. External threats include the likes of:

- **Viruses and Malware:** These nasty bits of code and malicious software are able to be customized by a hacker to carry out a particular task, whatever that may be. Unfortunately, we have neither the time nor the space to list all of the potential uses for viruses and malware, as the possibilities are virtually limitless.
- **Ransomware:** This is another nasty attack, where a user's files will be encrypted and the attacker will demand payment in exchange for the decryption key. These attacks are often effective, as businesses need their data in order to operate. Regardless, it is important that the demanded ransom isn't paid, as it only encourages more attacks down the line.
- **Spam:** Email has proven to be an effective means of attack for hackers to leverage, sending infected messages in the hopes that someone on

through the mounds of data to find helpful information that can be used in the day-to-day application of business.

Another place AI has begun to be utilized is in payment systems. For all the tech that many businesses use, their supply procurement and customer invoicing strategies are largely paper-based. When all other parts of a business is streamlined, having such crucial parts wasting time, being rife with errors, and causing inefficiency is not helping the business. AI systems are being used to sift through the documents and properly invoice customers in ways that were only capable through human labor only a short time ago.

### How Can I Use AI?

This question is both laughable and sincere, much like the technology we are talking about. AI is nowhere near what you may think it is, but that hasn't stopped some businesses from looking to incorporate artificial intelligence for

the other end will download them and leave the business open to threats. While spam is largely preventable, it is also easy to fall for, leaving a network vulnerable.

### Internal Threats

Internal threats can be particularly insidious, as they can come from effectively anywhere within an organization - even its most loyal and well-meaning employees who simply made a mistake. Unfortunately, these threats could also be the result of some employees acting maliciously against a business, actively attempting sabotage.

A brief sampling of internal threats include:

- **Phishing Attacks:** Hackers have a good understanding of where your business' biggest weaknesses are...



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IT operations (AIOps). The truth is that AI--that is, artificial intelligence-- probably won't help your business right now. The technology is way too new and it's only been in the last couple of years that major software developers have been interested in creating products with modern-day AI technology.

That shouldn't alter your strategies to find the best solutions you can to eliminate business problems, and if they incorporate AI technology, then great, but rolling out your own AI to solve operational inefficiencies, is currently rare, since the AI isn't particularly ready to build the kind of cost-saving automation that many vendors are currently advertising.

If you cannot wait, however, the key to making AI systems work for IT...



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## A Private Cloud Doesn't Have to Be a Massive Expense

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### Considerations for Choosing a Provider

#### Location

The physical location of the server will be important. Ordinarily, a private cloud database would be hosted on-site in your office, but there are hybrid solutions out there that are hosted off-site in a managed service provider's office, which is then accessed remotely. Either way, the option to have these systems maintained and secured by professionals exists.



#### Reliability

Your employees need reliable access to your business' cloud-based databases. Your goal should be to work with a provider that can ensure maximum uptime, as time when databases aren't working properly can mean situations where your employees can't get work done, as well as moments where your clients can't use certain parts of your services or order products.

#### Security

Opting for a private cloud database means that you have greater amounts of control over the security measures you implement. Even if you're not the one who manages the security of your cloud database, ask your cloud provider what kind of additional features you can leverage to best protect your data. Options include secondary authentication methods,

encrypted databases, virtual private networks, and so on.

#### Flexibility

One of the biggest perks of a private cloud database is that you have complete control over user access and functionality. Therefore, you'll need to put some serious thought into how you want to get the most out of your private cloud system. Furthermore, you'll need to take careful stock of which users can access databases at any given time, as changes in staffing could affect the security of your database.

If you're looking for a cloud provider that can host your databases in the most secure way possible, Showtech Solutions can help. To learn more, reach out to us at (813) 793-4700.



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## Teamwork Requires Innovative Collaboration Tools



Collaboration is critical to the success of your organization, and in a lot of ways, productivity can't happen

without it. Some modern collaboration tools have improved operations so much that they have completely changed the workplace dynamic, making meetings easier to manage, clients easier to communicate with, and managing in-house processes in a more efficient way. It's no surprise that the right collaboration tools can help your organization overcome just about anything.

Businesses of all sizes and industries can improve the way they function with the right collaboration tools, including the following.

#### Cloud-Based Collaboration

As a more broad solution to your organization's collaboration troubles,

cloud-based services provide a medium for employees to work together on projects in a secure online environment. Cloud collaboration can take place in documents, spreadsheets, projects, and so on, whether the team members are in the office or out and about, on any approved device.

#### Instant Messaging and Communication

Instant messaging gives employees the ability to send and receive messages on the fly in a way that email can't. After all, not everyone checks their email every other minute, so an instant messaging program gives your business a more immediate way of getting an answer to a question. In essence, it takes the guesswork out of when someone will respond to a voicemail or email.

#### Task Management

Productivity hubs and intranet solutions give your business a way to access all needed resources in a single location. One example of this is Slack, which can provide access to communication and collaboration tools for individual

employees, teams, and departments. All of this combines to create a great solution for getting projects done.

#### Video Conferencing and Meeting Software

If you want to have a meeting in your office, it's easy enough to do; just find a room that's not being used and pull together a team. Unfortunately, in crowded spaces, or for remote employees, this approach doesn't work well.

The right technology can give you the ability to hold meetings whenever and wherever you want. Video conferencing provides a way to hold meetings and collaborate in real time similar to a face-to-face gathering.

Showtech Solutions can equip your business with all the tools it needs to succeed. To learn more, reach out to us at (813) 793-4700.



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## Stretch Your Legs and Get Healthy at Work



The office is a place where work gets done, but it's also known as a sedentary lifestyle. Workplace wellness programs might be an \$8 billion industry, but the effectiveness of these programs has yet to be determined. Let's take a look at what kind of office wellness programs might work for you.

Multiple studies have been performed about how wellness programs impact the workplace, but they don't have any consistent results. Some show health improvements and cost savings, but others don't. Studies performed in the past had several problems, though. There were often no comparison groups or personal biases that interfered with signups. Simply put, the end result of these studies couldn't be relied on as accurate. Researchers from the University of Chicago and Harvard, on the other hand, have conducted larger studies that are much more reliable.

### The BJ's Wholesale Club Experiment

20 of these big-box retailers were chosen to offer an employee wellness program, compared to 140 other locations that did not offer this program. Between the 160

locations, 33,000 workers were involved in the study. All participants were asked to take part in a health risk questionnaire, and they also took health classes and had basic medical tests performed. 18 months later the results were evaluated. Workers that were involved with the program identified they were partaking in healthier behaviors, but all other factors were unchanged, including blood sugar levels, job performance, attendance, and employer health care spending.

### Why This Might Be

It's possible that the incentives offered by this program simply didn't appeal to the participants. These incentives included gift cards totaling about \$250. According to CEO of Bravo Wellness, Jim Pshock, this may not have been enough, as he predicts that any amount less than \$400 simply isn't enough to get people excited about workplace wellness. As he put it, "It's simply too small to get them to do things they weren't already excited about."

Another study from 2018 published by the University of Illinois found that the workplace wellness program simply didn't work, finding that they don't reduce costs or affect behaviors. On the other hand, it did find that

participants of the wellness programs were both healthier and more motivated. This indicates that the programs don't necessarily help businesses cut costs, but they do assist with attracting and retaining top talent.

Other potential factors could have contributed to these results. A recent survey indicated that 84 percent of employees found their wellness programs to be "one-size-fits-all," something that doesn't necessarily work for health and individual wellness. In response to this, 80 percent of respondents thought that more personalization could have made their programs more successful.

### Why You Want to Adopt a Workplace Wellness Initiative

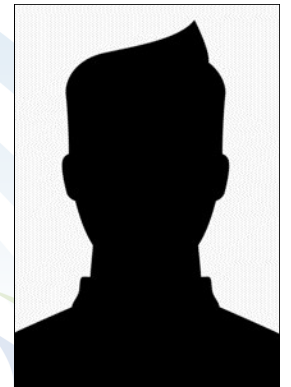
While the results are mixed, there is one redeeming factor to this argument; promoting the health of your employees means that they are less likely to call in sick, whether it's the result of mental health days or actually being ill. Here are some other benefits to these types of programs:

- **Reduced Stress:** Stress management can lead to healthier behavior...

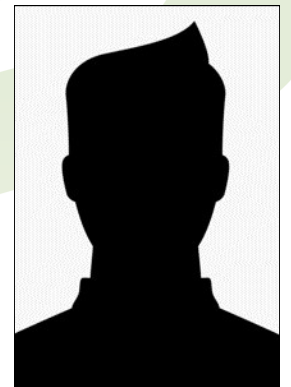


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We partner with many types of businesses in the area, and strive to eliminate IT issues before they cause expensive downtime, so you can continue to drive your business forward. Our dedicated staff loves seeing our clients succeed. Your success is our success, and as you grow, we grow.



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