

How to make your IT more effective and your business more efficient

Start by asking yourself these five simple questions:

How well are you using Cloud?

Cloud based file sharing and email can make your business run more efficiently. Even something as simple as Office 365 suite of collaboration tools (Sharepoint, Teams, Skype for Business), used well, can make a huge difference.

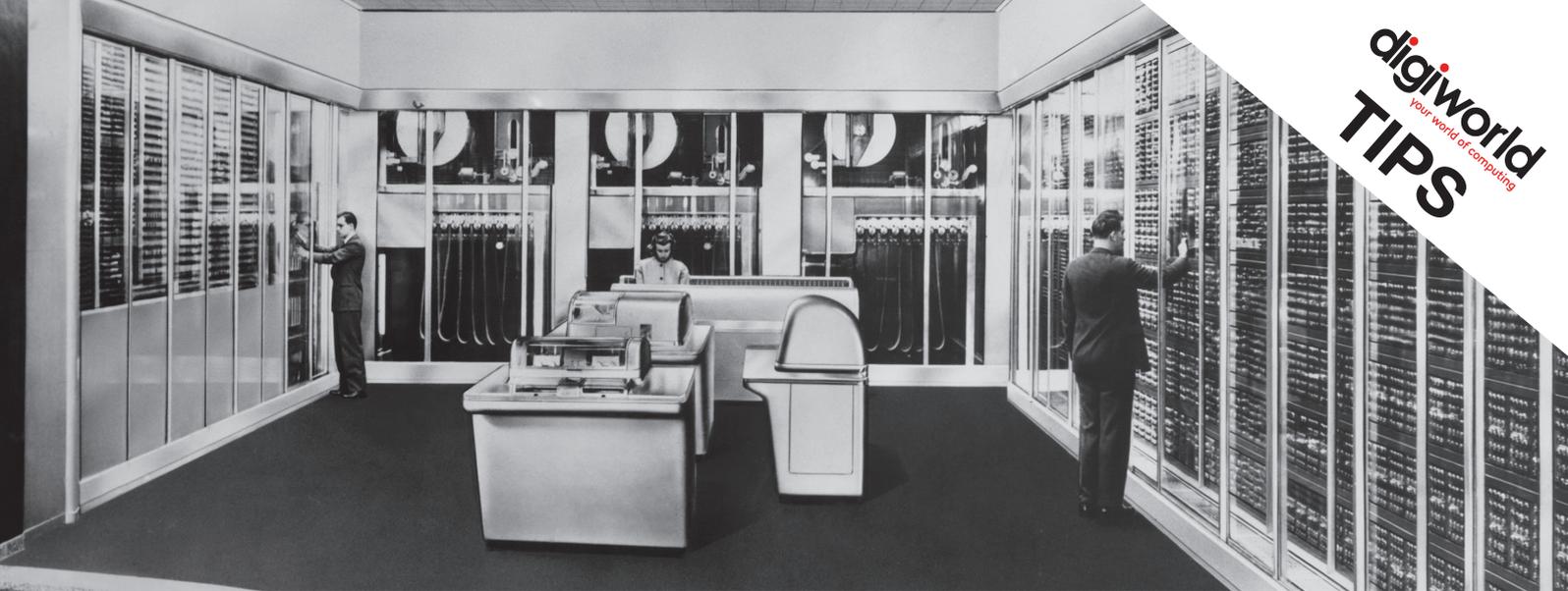
How robust is your back up system?

You do have backup for your critical business data ... don't you? That's a relief! But when was the last time you reviewed it for stability and reliability? Online backups are more and more affordable and may be a good alternative or an addition to tape. Thumb drives and external hard drives have disadvantages. They are not automatic and require back up files. They can break, get lost or be stolen.

Did you know that a spam filter service can be part of an excellent disaster recovery and business continuity plan? It not only reduces spam by 98%, but also holds emails for several days and provides access to them during an unplanned outage.

How secure is your data?

Investing in a business class firewall device is critical. Preferably a deep packet inspection firewall that looks 'inside the envelope', not just at the address. Today's firewall technology has the processing power capability to be that much more thorough. Also, check whether your antivirus protection is centrally managed on a server as this is where virus definition updates are pushed out automatically to the workstations.



Do you allow Remote Access?

If you have a mobile workforce, you're probably some way down this path. If not, it's worth noting that costs have come down dramatically for real time connection with email, calendar, contacts and tasks on handheld devices. So much so, that it might make sense to improve productivity by providing employees the flexibility to work from home or while travelling. Remote access is a feature that comes with small business server software. Despite some limitations, it can be a good solution. Investing in a more robust remote access server, which allows for faster performance and greater flexibility, is also an option.

Do you have an IT Maintenance and Monitoring Plan?

No, not the break-fix call to your IT guy. Do you have a plan that gives you proactive, monthly maintenance schedule and 24x7 monitoring of your network to ensure that technology runs smoothly? Servers typically don't just crash. Things happen along the way. Monitoring will identify and address these issues early. Downtime can be avoided if your technology is maintained correctly. Surprisingly most managed services cost less than traditional break-fix services, especially when you consider the true cost of downtime.

How did you go?

If in doubt, check in with a knowledgeable, experienced IT professional. A good foundation in IT can be very cost effective and allow for business growth and scalability without costly mistakes.

Last, but not least, **pay careful attention to your software licensing**. Just one disgruntled employee or improper licensing can leave your organization exposed to large fines.

