Are Androids Our Next Competition?

Simple Tips for Improving Small Business Data Security
Jeff's Note: Technology First
By: Jeff Van Fleet, President, Lighthouse Technologies

Looking forward to this year’s Taste of IT on November 15th. I love the “Taste” as it always gives me an opportunity to stretch my thinking, share ideas, and hear from our regional IT leaders. I hope you build some new relationships today and learn a thing or two!

The “Taste” always falls right after Halloween, and I’ve always enjoyed Beggar’s Night (and now that my kids are grown, it’s even more fun, since I no longer need to worry about the ensuing sugar rush); but this year has me thinking about the masks leaders sometimes wear—and the lessons we can learn from them.

Over the last few years, as our political climate has grown increasingly divisive, it feels like some of our leaders are hiding behind masks—leaving us to try and figure out who they really are underneath. And frankly, some of those masks are downright scary.

But, it’s not just our political leaders that hide behind masks. Sometimes it’s our C-Suite, sometimes it’s our church leaders, sometimes it’s our family leaders. Heck, sometimes it might even be us.

At Halloween, these masks are acceptable. In fact, we encourage people to play a role that is different than their true self—because we know that’s not who they truly are. With politicians and other “leaders” these days, I’m not so sure. Some of them seem to wear their masks 24/7 and block out anything they don’t agree with.

I noticed this in the last election and I wondered what it was teaching our children. In doing so, I came across a brilliant article from the Washington Post—explaining how one elementary-school teacher was teaching the Election of 1800 (between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson) to her students instead of the current one because she felt the “methods of engagement didn’t model respectful and intellectual debate.”

Take a minute and read that last sentence again. That’s not just a great insight—it provides us a wonderful opportunity to reflect upon ourselves and our own behavior. Are we allowing for respectful and intellectual debate in our lives, in our families, and in our workplace?

At Lighthouse, I like to use the phrase “respectful dissonance”. We want passionate employees who are willing to fight for what they believe in, but we want them to do it with respect.

For “respectful dissonance” to work, you need to listen and try to understand where the other person is coming from. Too often, we get going fast and furious with our own ideas—and we don’t pause and take time to listen and learn from others. I know I am guilty of this myself sometimes. But I know that when I have my head on straight, I try to do the right thing. And not only that, I encourage those around me to correct me if they see me acting otherwise.

So, I ask you, are you open to others’ opinions—even if you don’t agree? Are you creating a safe culture at work and at home where your loved ones can ask questions and challenge each other? Are you willing to stretch yourself by listening to others and trying to understand their viewpoint? Whether you are discussing an idea at work, a personal family matter, or someone who is protesting during the National Anthem, does your method of engagement model respectful and intellectual debate?

As you read this, remember that Thanksgiving is only a few days away. If there’s ever a time for “respectful dissonance”, it’s with your loved ones all gathered around the family table. It’s a time to give thanks and perhaps start a new way of communicating.

In the coming days (or maybe right here at the Taste of IT), I challenge you to talk with someone who has a different opinion than you. Stretch yourself. It’s not about changing minds; it’s about building trust and opening doors through deep and meaningful conversation.

Enjoy the Taste of IT, have a happy Thanksgiving—and of course, keep having fun.
EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Data Analytics SIG Meeting

Data Analytics SIG met 10/6 to discuss Text Analytics facilitated by Anthony Stricker of Teradata Aster

CIO Council Meeting

CIO Council met on 10/12 to discuss IT Annual Planning and Strategic Planning facilitated by John Huelsman of Hobart Services

Infrastructure/Cloud SIG Meeting

Infrastructure/Cloud SIG met 10/6 to discuss IaaS vs PaaS facilitated by Jon Scruggs of Hobart Services

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Are Androids Our Next Competition?

By: Donald Hopkins, Wright State University-Raj Soin College of Business

Since the 1990s, the American workforce has been concerned about the competition from international markets that are willing and capable to do the same jobs for less. This competition has grown driven by the lack of STEM skills in the United States and the continual improvements of graduates from other countries. We could argue that this competition originated in India as part of the Y2K transformation wave. What is more important is that it has been followed by China, Eastern Europe, and some South American countries. Students in the United States rank 20th in science and 27th in mathematics (PISA) when compared to the rest of the world. This lack of skills in our students and later workforce has caused the United States to be less competitive in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. Hence, American companies are forced to consider outsourcing to acquire skills as much as to reduce costs.

While I could continue down this path to discuss competition from abroad, my suggestion is that the next wave of competition will be in the form of robots and androids. This may sound like the story line for a B grade movie, but there have been many recent developments that make this a possibility. The capabilities of chip technology have been progressing as prescribed by Moore’s Law from the early 1960s. Based on that premise, a singularity will occur in the 2020s when a processor will emerge that will be as capable as the human mind. In fact, by the year 2045, a processor will surpass the brainpower equivalent to that of all human brains combined. In 2011, IBM introduced a new machine, Watson, that competed and won on Jeopardy. This is also a singularity in that Watson was developed to learn and is not constrained by its developers (programmers). Watson can read approximately twenty million pages a day and associate the new learning with all it has read to be applied to new problems.

The next piece to this puzzle is that Hiroshi Ishiguro, a professor at Osaka University, has developed several android-like machines. These machines are being developed to mimic human facial expressions through silicon and servos. These machines interact with people in an almost human manner. In addition, worldwide, there has been a lot development of human-like exoskeletons. All of this technology is on a collision path to a point in the future where the features will be combined to create a walking, talking, thinking human-like android. This will likely occur in one or two decades. It is progressing in the same fashion as we evolved from the first electromechanical computer, the Mark I, in 1944 to the first commercial computer, the Univac, in 1951 to the mainstream multipurpose mainframe computer, the System/360 that IBM introduced in 1964.

Our assumption in the past is that automation will eliminate the unskilled and low skill jobs first. However, this robot and android revolution will be much different from the industrial revolution and the information age that evolved afterwards. This revolution will create the competition that our technology professionals will face in the future. There is the potential that in the next decade you may have a choice between a human general practitioner or a Watson-type entity for your primary care, whichever will provide the most accurate diagnosis. The Watson-type entity will be further advanced when more medical decisions and options are based on your DNA characteristics versus statistics applied to general populations (better definition of possible complications than the lists rattled off in most drug commercials aired today).

What defense does a young and aspiring information technology professional have from this new competitor? The solution will have two components: more careful and continual career planning and more continual education to prepare for the new careers that will replace the ones becoming obsolete.

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Simple Tips for Improving Small Business Data Security

By: John Thome, President, Chi Corporation

Every day our customers release vital information about themselves to companies that they assume are going to protect their data like they would protect it themselves. The assumption is that every business they interact with is up to date and knowledgeable on cybersecurity. The reality is that there are many companies who simply don’t know how to protect that information, and they are putting our most precious and secure data at risk.

Here are some very basic tips to help you, the small business, protect the data that customers entrust you with:

Don’t Keep More Info Than You Need
The less data you are keeping long term the better. Take information that is critical, and perform frequent updates to purge data that is no longer important to pending business.

Protect and Serve
You and your employees should take an oath to protect and serve the data on file from your customers. Make sure that you give access to sensitive information to employees only when it is absolutely required for their job—critical personnel only. Make sure they are using unique and complex passwords and changing them frequently. Consider increasing the authentication procedures on more sensitive pieces of information.

Don’t Show Them the Money
Your computer contains files that are, in essence, a bank vault. Cybersecurity is the armored car of the digital economy. Make sure that you have adequate security in place to assure the safe storage of all sensitive credit card and financial information.

Bring in Some Help
The best solution is to hire an expert to walk your company through the proper steps to securing all your data, from the basics like email addresses to the sensitive pieces like payment information. Your customers deserve the peace of mind that comes with knowing that you are doing all that you can to keep their private information safe and guarded.

Visit www.ChiCorporation.com or call 800-828-0599 for more information.

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My $0.02 On The Shortage Of Qualified Information Security Professionals

By: Rob Hill, IT Security, RoundTower

This morning I shared an article from a group I follow, Dark Reading, discussing the skills most in demand which seem to be creating this Information Security resource shortage. Released earlier this year, the ISACA Cybersecurity Nexus survey shows one in four organizations take six months or longer to fill priority cybersecurity positions. It went on to report that 40% of the organizations responding are receiving fewer than five applications for cybersecurity positions. “There’s definitely a talent shortage of quality information security professionals who are capable of solving emerging problems,” says Lee Kushner, president of cybersecurity recruiting firm LJ Kushner & Associates. “It’s not a shortage of general skill or average skill, it’s a shortage of skills that can help companies solve their problems.”

I have been thinking about this article throughout my day and have developed a working hypothesis. Unfortunately the potential ramifications of this hypothesis are not good. First, based on my experience as a cybersecurity consultant, I completely agree with Mr. Kushner on the shortage of skills necessary to help a company solve business problems but it seems to go much deeper. While speaking to my son on this topic he mentioned the high dropout rate for classes which required deductive logic and critical thinking skills when he was in college a few years back. Those classes included programming, computer science, engineering, and even architecture.

It seems, when presented with a problem with no readily apparent solution, the ability to employ imagination, basic troubleshooting skills, and critical thinking seems to be absent. It seems we have inadvertently raised an entire generation devoid of these skills by relying on an educational system which teaches “what to think” not “how to think.” This generation knows how to Google for a solution someone else has previously published, they know how to contact technical support so someone else can provide a resolution to an issue, and they even know how to download a time saving app someone else has created. However, if you present a problem with no previous or readily available solution, no technical support, and no previously developed app, many resources appear to be lost as to the basic steps in developing a solution to the problem.

If my hypothesis is correct, we could be facing a future shortage of critical thinkers in more industries than just cybersecurity. This could be just the start. As I thought about the ramifications and how we got to this point I could not help but thinking about all the kids I see with their faces glued to mobile electronics. Kids no longer need to exercise their imagination because entertainment is hardlined into them 24/7. I think of regimented environments where kids are not required to develop strategies to get out of situations in which they find themselves. In addition, there is no need for problem solving because someone with a solution is only a social media post away. Lastly, consequences for one’s action are those inconveniences which parents make go away.

Yes, I think we definitely have a shortage of skills which can help a company solve business problems, but if we are dependent on the next workforce generation who created a global crisis when denied access to the White House to capture a rare Pokémon, it has the potential to get a whole lot worse...

...just my $0.02
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Data Analytics Special Interest Group
Blockchain
Facilitated by: Jad Mabaslat, Mile Two and Robert Slater, 10XTS
Open to professionals working in predictive/prescriptive analytics, business intelligence and database management for their company. The sessions offer a facilitated, collaborative discussion on a topic of interest to the group.

Friday, December 1st
8:30-10:00am
IO Data Center
3366 S. Tech Blvd.
Miamisburg, Ohio

Infrastructure Special Interest Group
Azure vs. AWS
Facilitated by: Hanen Alkhafaji, PQ Systems
Vendor-free forum and facilitated discussion where fellow IT managers and staff can share their experiences, questions, concerns, and resolutions to common business and technical situations within information technology.

Friday, December 1st
11:30-1:00pm
IO Data Center
3366 S. Tech Blvd.
Miamisburg, Ohio

CIO Council Luncheon – Invitation only
How does Your IT Measure UP?
Facilitated by: Debbie Konsoer, NCR Corporation
Comprised of the company’s highest level IT executives to collaborate and share challenges and experiences within their organizations to ensure Dayton and SW Ohio are on the cutting edge of technology. If interested in attending, contact Marcia Albers at malbers@technologyfirst.org.

Thursday, December 7th
11:30-1:00pm
Presidential Banquet Center
4572 Presidential Way
Kettering, OH 45429
5 Reasons Why You Should Consider a Contract Project Manager for Your Next Project

By: Scott Michelich, Senior Project Manager, Afidence

“Not another project,” you say as the words of the email drip from your head to the pit of your stomach. You remember the last time… You thought you picked the right in-house team to manage the project. It seemed straight forward. You had good people who were top notch in IT and very specialized. You were convinced the project would be OBOSOT (On Budget, On Scope, On Time). And by the end of the project, it was OBOSOT (Over Budget, Over Scope, Over Time). What went wrong?

I suggest one simple change. Consider a contract project manager!

A disclaimer: I AM a contract project manager! “Well then he is biased,” you say! I would answer by stating that as an IT project manager working global acquisitions and divestitures of multi-national companies with 25 years of IT experience, I have journeyed to this conclusion.

Below are 5 reasons why you should consider a contract project manager for your next project.

1. **Contract Project Managers are Specialized by Project Type**

   We call it being pigeonholed. But, our pigeonholes are exactly why you can be certain a contracted project manager has the expertise and experience needed to move your project forward with minimal meandering. We can typically, after a few meetings, list task dependencies, estimate length of time to accomplish milestones, engage our network of contacts, and layout a plan that will eliminate many of the pitfalls encountered by first timers. We know because we were once first timers.

2. **Contract Project Managers Flatten The Organizational Hierarchy**

   In-house project teams often succumb to the hierarchy affect—assigning more weight to input from those in the highest positions. This philosophy can muddle the project because the focus becomes the status of the person rather than the skill of the individual. Coming into the organization from the outside, we have no history with those who will be part of the project team. We are objective in our approach to the goals of the project. The fact that one person is at a manager level, and another is at a tech level has no bearing on its own. Our objective is to pull together what is practical, relevant and resourceful and work toward the goals of the project.

3. **Contract Project Managers Are Perspective Neutral**

   An in-house project manager is likely appointed because the project closely aligns with the project manager’s work history and group. Unfortunately, an in-house PM often fails to evaluate the needs of the other affected groups because humans tend to revert to the usual process rather than challenge themselves to be open to new ideas or methods. As a result, the outcome of the project resembles a mini-me of the project leader. A contract project manager is perspective neutral. We ensure that all affected groups are considered equally and objectively. We work inside the collaborative process which allows all perspectives to be considered and valued.

4. **Contract Project Managers Remove The Silo Effect**

   Silos are little kingdoms created by well-meaning IT staff who are very knowledgeable and know the business well. So well in fact that they work inside self-created silos that negatively affect the worker groups around them—who have also created silos. Someone from the outside can recognize and break down the barriers. Contract project managers remove the silo effect and unite team members to bring success to the project.

(continued on page 9)
5. Contract Project Managers Mitigate Office Politics

All companies have employees who care more about personal power than the mission of the project group. In-house politicians will spend much of their time working outside the collaborative process to create an advantage that will serve their purpose. They lobby to create a “we vs. they” mentality. They place themselves at the helm of the winning side. Politics can breed consternation, indignation, and stagnation—none of which will move you toward success. Instead, everyone is drug through the power struggle and the project suffers. Bringing in an experienced project manager can do much to alleviate the rise of the politicians in your project. A contract project manager is an independent third party and therefore not affected or influenced by the company politics that can hinder the progress of the project.

In conclusion, companies typically have reliable, knowledgeable, and very busy IT employees. The employees want the best for their organization and careers. Unfortunately, we tend to suffer from the human conditions mentioned above. So, until the rise of the machines (which will give us a whole new set of problems), you really should consider a contract project manager for your next project.
If You're In Business, You Care About Your Reputation. Period.

By: William DeFries, Owner and CEO of Copp Systems and Beef O'Brady's.

Specifically for B2C small businesses, positive word-of-mouth and the steady flow of organic referrals that come with it are the lifeblood. This is especially true if your customer base is geographically limited.

For my restaurant Beef O'Brady's, I know that satisfied customers who walk out of there with full bellies and smiling faces will tell their friends the next time they're asked, "Know a good place to eat around here?"

But I'm not stupid. Whenever I walk a new hire through rigorous on-the-job-training during their first few weeks at one of my companies, I issue a word of warning:

Remember the Rule of One-Fifty. If you offer poor customer service or submit the deliverable with errors, the customer will tell fifty people about it. But if you do such a great job for the customer that you earn a raise and a promotion, they will probably tell only one person.

Perhaps my Rule of One-Fifty is a bit of an exaggeration -- according to the Office of White House Consumer Affairs, negative word-of-mouth reaches more than twice as many people as praise -- but my point is made.

As every business owner knows who shakes their head at that BS one-star review posted by that real piece of work who expects a handout, negative news travels at the speed of light. But positive news moves so slow that a crippled snail could beat it in a sprint.

While this is a sign that small business owners must be proactive about scoring and spreading good press, a new breed of PR worker has flashed across many of our radar, seemingly equipped to solve the Rule of One-Fifty problem:

**Reputation Management Professionals.**

Before I explain why I believe their services are sketchy at best, *let's talk about Yelp.*

If you have access to the internet, no doubt you have read or heard the horror stories of negative review extortion that is the foundation of their business.

For example, in order to help boost our positive reputation online, a few years back I asked the Manager of my restaurant to share a social media post requesting reviews from our satisfied customers.

In the post, we made it clear that we prefer good-natured reviews. Any negative sentiments, bring those directly to us and we'll do our damndest to make it right. It's only the right thing to do.

The post worked! More than a dozen customers wrote glowing 5-star reviews about the food, the atmosphere, and the polite and expedient service.

**That's when the story takes a dark turn.**

Yelp wiped every single positive review from our page the next day.

After 90 minutes on the phone, the only explanation I got was, "We don't believe those reviews are real. They're too positive."

WTF? We had not broken a single policy, especially since we offered not even the hint of a bribe.

Then... It happened.

I was told that if I didn't become a premium member, they would "have no choice" but to make sure that users searching the web for information about my restaurant would see the angriest excerpts of the 1-star reviews on our Yelp page.

"Click."

I cursed this despicable business model after hanging up on the guy.

Why do I tell you this story?

Because Reputation Management Services are merely a more proactive version of this. You pay these professionals to leverage technology that conceals, buries, or otherwise redirects negative press and reviews about your company from all but the most curious of browsers.

The problem I have with these Services is that their "pitch" is all but identical to the unabashed sleaze I got from Yelp:

"Look at those one-star reviews! It would be a shame if more people saw them . . ."

Read those words in Al Pacino's voice, and you get the idea.

Despite the counterpoints I know there will be in the Comments section below, the fact is, you cannot buy an outstanding reputation. Yes, you can buy Reputation Management Services. But a reputation that drives repeat business and referrals your way, you have to earn.

In the words of John Matarese... .

**“Don’t waste your money.”**

Instead, reallocate your Reputation Management budget into local philanthropic causes that your customer base cares about.

Offer a survey to every customer that comes through your doors, or every client you interact with, and ask for their ideas. Taking care of your community like this allows you to build authentic, earned trust.

And whenever a customer posts on social media about you, acknowledge the comment or review as fast as possible. That has always been our policy at Beef O'Brady's. Thank the customer for their positive review, or get the details and apologize if someone had a negative experience.

In the latter case, at Beef's, we have (privately) offered a free dining experience on the house in order to win customers back when we are at fault. This is an excellent example of what authentic Reputation Management looks like. Those re-converted customers become Pro Bono Brand Ambassadors for us!

Once you've got the customer's frown turned upside-down, learn from that sour experience, investigate the personnel who were involved, and have one-on-one discussions so those individuals can improve their service.

(continued on page 11)
Over the years, we have donated thousands of dollars worth of food to charity events and nonprofit drives that are near and dear to the people who frequent Beef O’Brady’s. We also offer one of the most generous fundraiser packages in all of Ohio.

Yes, these activities help counteract the shenanigans of Yelp and the jokers off the street who want to extort free food out of us. But the fact is, people in our community benefit handsomely -- and they know it. That is the pillar of a positive reputation that drives word-of-mouth marketing and referrals.

That leads to another reason why I refuse to pay for Reputation Management Services -- no one but my business benefits from the not insignificant investment, and even then, those are not benefits we earned.

I am totally okay with a few fake one-star reviews if we have happy hordes of customers filling up our tables thanks to real, tangible value we offered to our community without asking for anything in return.

The reactions this article gets will be emotional, I can foresee that much. Like Bob Burg writes in the runaway bestselling book The Go-Giver, “Most people just laugh when they hear that the secret to success is giving.”

I think that quote deserves rewording, in this case:

“The secret to Reputation Management is giving.”

It really is that simple. Show your customers you care about them -- and the causes they care about -- and they’ll care about you, too.

Not even Yelp can delete the business your loyal customers will send your way as a result.
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David Hart is a Skydiver, Author, Veteran US Army Ranger and Pathfinder. He served three years in an Elite US Army Ranger unit and an additional five in a Pathfinder unit. David has accumulated 6,000 parachute jumps from large cargo airplanes, out of helicopters, hot air balloons and even off bridges. He has competed at the US Nationals of Skydiving and has facilitated over a thousand first jump experiences. David is a founding member of the most active commercial skydiving team in the world. Founded in 2002, Team Fastrax Professional Skydiving Team performs 300 shows a year. He has jumped over Lower Manhattan on the anniversary of 9/11, into NASCAR races, fireworks shows at night, professional sport stadiums, airshows and even symphony performances.

A Graduate of the University of Cincinnati, his experience spans from small startups to large Fortune 100 companies. He is the author of “Jump! Leaps in Organizational Performance and Teamwork.” And Founder of the Blues Skies for Good Guys and Gals Warrior Foundation, and takes celebrities and wounded warrior skydiving. David is very active in the defense industry and has been acknowledge as Small Business Person of the year by AFCEA International. He currently works as a Senior Director for Segue Technologies, a Small Business IT Solutions Service Provider, and resides in Mason, Ohio with his wife Lori and three boys.

Purpose: Enlighten, engage and inspire the conference attendees to be more fully engaged in the corporate strategic plan goals at a personal level and in a team environment.

Outcomes:
- Witness inspiring people and amazing skydiving feats and that move teams and individuals to action.
- Increased awareness of the power of teams and learn about the culture that instills a high performance culture.
- Better understand and internalize the corporate vision, mission, goals and success factors.
- Experience a simple exercise that improves communication, teamwork and workforce engagement.
- Learn a simple model of continuous improvement

Case Studies in Immersive Computing: Using AR and VR to Solve Problems in the Real World

Barry Besecker is the co-founder and CTO of Marxent (marxent.com), the leader in mixed commerce, Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality solutions for retailers and manufacturers. Prior to founding Marxent, Barry spent 10 years building software, architecting web platforms and designing content management solutions for major brands such as Pfizer, Exxon Mobil and Miller Coors while leading the digital marketing practice as a VP at an Ohio-based software development firm.

Summary: Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality aren’t just for gamers. Marxent will describe case studies from their clients as they apply these emerging technologies and learn from the problems of taking these solutions to scale.
Technology First would like to thank and recognize its Board of Directors. They provide input into the strategic direction of the organization and actively lead working committees that drive our programs and services.

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Technology First’s website has more than 15 open positions… and adding more each day!

WHO’S HIRING?

Below are some of the cutting-edge companies hiring!  
Select “Find A Job” on Employment Tab at www.technologyfirst.org

- Montgomery County – Data Processing  
- Quanexus  
- Tyler Technologies  
- Support EXP  
- Segue Technologies

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TOP 5 WAYS to Improve Website Effectiveness!

1. **Content Relevance**
   Directly address the pain points of your target prospects by communicating the value you can bring to provide relief.

2. **User Experience**
   Complete usability testing to reveal less than user friendly functionality – when visitors cannot find the information they seek, they look elsewhere.

3. **Mobile Friendly**
   Maintain accessibility regardless of the device used or the location of the visitor.

4. **Ease of Conversion**
   Provide a clear path to the next steps in reaching your business to deliver promised information and encourage personal contact.

5. **Get Results**
   Bitstorm Connect links marketing and web-based technology to help you improve website effectiveness.

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- Lead Generation
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- Inbound Marketing
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