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Shifting Gears

By Sumit Munjal

An uphill battle, a tumultuous year, stressful period, unprecedented times - call it anything. The past year wasn't easy, but technological pliancy helped us immensely to shift our gears.

Roughly a year ago, based on when you decided to commit to a work-from-home model, the world took an unanticipated shift. A shift that would change how we conduct business and day-to-day activities. Restricted to limited square footage and pixels on the screen, we have adapted well to personal and professional needs as we live through this phase. However, the past year explored this overarching (almost intrinsic) trait among the generation living through the pandemic. And that trait is **digital resilience.**

In retrospect, the whole world in the last year or so exuded a mass resilience model- different from the pandemic a hundred years ago. Access to technology allowed us to conduct A LOT through the virtual world. We all lived a parallel virtual life in conjunction with our existing reality. Thus, allowing technology to further add to our resilience.

A generation ago, or even a decade ago, if we had to deal with such a catastrophe, it would have been even more painful. Professionally, imagine a work culture devoid of

cloud computing, mobile connectivity, remote collaboration tools, VoIP phones, and productivity tools. The access to technology that we have today, which we often take for granted, is the reason why we continued working from home. There is a mass-shift in the idea of an ideal workplace setting, working-from-home is no-longer stigmatized, and a geographic barrier isn't a hiring hurdle.

Another mass shift that occurred during this time is fully digitized education. An industry/system that was ripe for its next stage. I feel that prevalent methods of online educational formats were under-utilized in academia pre-covid. According to this article on 'edtech' by World Economic Forum, the global market for online education is forecasted to grow $350 Billion by 2025 through investment in language apps, digitized tutoring, learning software and AI learning.

The medical health systems also shifted immensely with the help of technology. A total of 25% ambulatory care cases pre-2020 were online, now increased to 70-75% by leveraging digital channels facilitating consultations and bookings and other communication according to a paper by CD Howe Institute. During the pandemic, the most vulnerable demographics 65+ or older in Canada also adapted to the new reality and digitized their interaction with the loved ones. According to digital consumption patterns of the mature population in Canada, over 72% of Canadians aged 65+ now feel confident using current technology for their day-to-day interaction.

The access to enhanced logistical capacities, transportation, automation, and our ability to co-ordinate all this from the comfort of our homes is an immense value-add for human beings. A specific set of the workforce that helped us execute this shift are our frontline workers. Our customer service agents, cashiers at the grocery store, delivery people, order pickers, nurses, janitors, and logistical workforce all played (and are still playing) a vital role in the functioning economy.

All in all, technology is here to stay, only to become an innate part of our lives. Just like it did during the pandemic. With that, we are also becoming more digitally brave every day. *But what if we did not digitize our business? Or what if you are still using outdated technology?* While the world is shifting gears fast, building resilience in your business by leveraging technology is imperative to your growth. Outdated technology tends to be more vulnerable to cyber-risks. If technology has helped us with outmaneuvering a pathogen, the same technology can put us in a high-risk cyberattack as well. Think about it.

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MANAGED IT SERVICES

HOW BIG DATA REVEALS THE HUMANS BEHIND YOUR USERS

The Internet is a data mine. From search engines to ad clicks, we can see what people are interested in. Big Data is accessible to just about every business, and it can tell you a lot about the people you do business with – or the people you want to do business with.

If you aren't tapping into Big Data (Google Analytics is an example), you're missing out. You can use data to home in on the customers you want to acquire and reduce those costs at the same time. You can better develop products and services you know customers will love. And you'll be able to adapt to changing trends driven by real people.

Inc., Feb. 26, 2015

"IMPLEMENTING THESE CHANGES WON'T BE EASY. WE'RE PRETTY SET IN DOING THINGS THE WRONG WAY."

What Are Managed Services, And Why You Should Demand This From Your IT Company ?

We all want to protect our businesses. They're a part of who we are, and it would be devastating if anything bad happened — including an unexpected cyber-attack. But it happens. Businesses are attacked every single day. Some businesses are left in ruin. Some can pick up the pieces, but at a great cost. Then some businesses are back up and running in a matter of hours, almost as if nothing happened at all.

These are businesses that said "yes" to managed IT services and made the commitment to protect their business, employees and customers. If your business lacks managed IT services and you haven't yet embraced total IT security, it's time to say "YES!" and give your business the top-notch IT support it needs to protect it from the countless IT threats that exist in the world today.

Managed services essentially offer complete IT support without the need to hire dedicated in-house IT support staff. You get full-time access to network and technology experts without having to pay a full-time team. In other words, you save money and you have someone keeping a close eye on your network. The good news is that the IT company you already work with may already offer managed services — you just have to ask for it! (If you don't work with an IT support company or managed services provider, it's highly recommended that you do!)

Here Are A Few Reasons Why Managed Services Should Not Be Ignored:

It's A Proactive Service You Can't Find Anywhere Else. Proactive IT support is HUGE. You have to be proactive because, guess what? Hackers and cybercriminals are proactive. They're smart people and they're relentless. Managed services will give you access to your own outside team of exceptionally smart people and systems that can identify IT problems before they actually become problems. *Cont'd pg. 3*

3 Simple Yet Effective Ways To Boost Employee Morale

Good employee morale is essential to any successful business. It's a reflection of company culture and has a direct impact on not just happiness but also productivity. Here are three surefire ways to improve morale within your organization:

1) Keep The Door Open. When supervisors or management vanish without a trace, it hits morale hard. It's crucial to be present and available to your team. Sometimes it's as simple as keeping the door open, but it also includes having transparent communication. Keep people looped in, especially when there are good things to report on. On top of that, have regular one-on-one chats with everyone on the team and make sure their needs are being met.

2) Emphasize Mental Health. Everyone should have their mental health acknowledged. Always take time to assess the mental health of everyone on your team. If they need to take a break or refocus, make sure they do. If they need a mental health day (or a vacation), encourage it. Be flexible and understanding.

3) Reward And Recognize. Make sure hard work gets recognized and people get credit for that hard work. Shout out star players during meetings and make sure everyone (including management) sees the good work that's being done. And don't hesitate to dole out rewards (lunch, gift cards, etc.) in recognition of that hard work, as well.

Inc., Nov. 4, 2020

On top of that, proactive managed services ensure your network – and everything connected to your network – receives regular updates, security patches and routine maintenance. Basically, they help keep your business protected while minimizing downtime that can cut into your bottom line.

It Helps You Save Money – And You Know How Much You'll Be Spending Month To Month. Hiring in-house IT experts is expensive. It's one of the most common reasons why many small- to medium-sized businesses don't invest in good IT support. The sticker shock is too much. But managed services take away the sticker shock.

Instead, you get the exact support you need, and you pay a set fee every month. It makes it MUCH easier to set a quarterly or yearly budget. And because managed services are customizable, you can put together a specific plan for your business and pay only for those specifics – there are no fluff or padded fees. Managed IT is also scalable, so as your business grows or changes, your managed IT services can change as well.

It Protects You In Many Different Ways. You can count on your MSP to minimize malware, spyware, ransomware, phishing scams and other exploitative hacks. You're protected by advanced software, hardware and old-fashioned human knowledge and experience. But the protection doesn't stop there – far from it! Managed services providers can also protect you against potential natural disasters, such as fire or flood, or hardware failures – things that are impossible to predict yet possible to prepare for.

They can also protect you when it comes to compliance. There are many industries where compliance is a big deal, from banking to health care. If you operate in one of these industries, you know how important this is. Having managed IT services means your network is up-to-date with all the fine print. You don't have to worry about anything slipping through the cracks or breaking compliance, which can lead to all kinds of costly headaches.

It Gives You TIME. This is the most precious commodity of all. If you're running around dealing with network issues yourself – or trying to – you're spending a lot of time doing everything you DIDN'T want to be doing when you started your business. Wouldn't you rather be focused on taking care of the things you intended to focus on, like growing your business and taking care of customers?

When you bring managed IT into the fold, you have so much less to worry about. No, it's not set-it-and-forget-it, but it's close. Your MSP handles your IT, while you handle your business – and you collaborate when you need to. You can rest assured that someone is keeping a close eye on your network and that your MSP is a quick phone call or email away (should you have any questions or concerns).

These few points only scratch the surface of why managed services are so important. Stop putting it off and make the phone call. Tell your IT company you want managed services and you're ready to protect the future of your business!

Going Strong Or Burning Out?

"Burnout is what happens when you try to avoid being human for too long."
– Michael Gungor

What Is Burnout?

Burnout is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by:

✦Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
✦Increased mental distance from one's job or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
✦Reduced professional efficacy

This is considered in occupational context and should not be applied to experiences in other areas of life.

Ask yourself, how many times have you felt burnout in your career? Those who are highly engaged in their work are more likely to have burnout, not necessarily people who just "clock in and clock out." Just because someone is productive does not mean they aren't at risk.

Why do we keep putting ourselves in stressful situations? Stress can be an addiction.

•People want to make sure they are good enough and want to feel valuable.
•It can give you the sense of feeling significant and important.
•There's a sense of guilt and fear of not doing enough.

As long as stress is satisfying those needs, you will not get rid of that behaviour. Start flipping how you are satisfying your needs in order to get rid of that behaviour.

Burnout Signals – Emotions And Feelings

If you are feeling like this every day, you may be burnt out:

✦Physical and emotional exhaustion
✦Lack of energy
✦Feeling sad or hopeless
✦Lack of joy from things that used to bring you joy at work
✦Diminished connection with colleagues
✦Feeling like you are not contributing anything to your job

What Is The Cause?

Heavy workloads

✦Job insecurity
✦Frustrating work routines (too many meetings, far too little time for creative work)
✦Crunch on downtime that is necessary for restoration

Burnout = High Resources + High Demands

High Resources:

•Supervisor support
•Rewards and recognition
•Self-efficacy and work

Low Demands:
✦Low workload
✦Low cumbersome bureaucracy
✦Low to moderate demands on concentration and attention

What's Needed?
✦Employee support/high resources
✦Acknowledgement/feel good about work
✦Opportunities for recovery from stress
✦Mental and emotional well-being

Re-evaluate
✦Zero-base meeting calendar
✦Team up the A-players
✦Culture around "precious time" and wellness

Mark Comiso has over 25 years of experience in founding, building and scaling numerous companies. He's been with start-ups and publicly traded companies, including digital marketing agencies, SaaS companies and much more. He's renowned for helping other entrepreneurs grow their own businesses, and as a long-time member and leader within Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO), he's well-suited for the task!