



T. Daniels Consulting

THE T. DANIELS TIMES



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Our Blog is filled with helpful technology tips and insights for your business.

We post new articles that provide valuable information for your business almost every day. You can sign-up to be notified of new topics when they are posted or you can visit <https://www.tdaniels.com/blog>.

Here are a few examples of the kind of information that is available:

- **Leveraging Tech to Improve Customer Experience: 11 Smart Techniques:** <https://www.tdaniels.com/improve-customer-experience/>
- **Beware of Voice Message Phishing Attacks Called Vishing:** <https://www.tdaniels.com/vishing/>
- **Notification of New Subscription Billing Could Be A Phishing Attack:** <https://www.tdaniels.com/subscription-billing/>

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This monthly publication provided courtesy of Timothy D. Ricketts, President of T. Daniels Consulting.

“As a business owner or leader, you don’t have time to waste on IT issues. That’s our expertise. Call us and we will put an end to your IT problems so you can stay focused on what’s important—growing your business.”

These Technologies Hold The Key To Growing Your Business

After a roller coaster of a ride in 2020 and into 2021, businesses just like yours are looking to the future. Their eyes aren’t just on recovery. Many businesses are eager to make up for lost time, and they want to bring new customers into the fold.

There are countless growth strategies out there, but one area offers a lot of options you can dial into your specific business needs: technology. Under the umbrella of tech, you have plenty to choose from. It really comes down to finding the right solutions that fit the current or future needs of your business.

This month, we’ll dive into two ways you can utilize various technologies to grow your business in the second half of 2021 and in the years to come. Let’s get started.

Using Automation

Many businesses have yet to crack the code on automation. They aren’t sure how to implement it and make the most of it. And that’s okay. Automation

comes with a few hurdles, like just getting started for one. It’s an investment of time and money. However, once you get started, it does the rest.

A majority of daily business activities can be automated. One increasingly popular form of automation is artificial intelligence (AI), often used by chatbots. In the past, chatbots were useless. From the user standpoint, they never worked as expected. But those days are over; thanks to major strides in AI technology, chatbots are automation kings.

Chatbots are highly customizable. You can use them as the first “person” a customer or potential customer sees when they visit your website. From there, a chatbot can ask questions and mimic a real person. But here’s where the automation really comes into play: if a potential customer has a specific request or question, the chatbot can instantly direct them to the person within your company who can help. It saves a lot of time.

Continued on pg.2

Continued from pg.1

Automation is also useful when it comes to collecting data. Now, you can rely on numerous apps to collect different types of data and have it all sent to one place. For instance, you should have forms on your website where people can input data, such as their name and e-mail (and other similar data you may be interested in). You lock free content (such as special offers, etc.) behind a “data wall.” Once a potential customer gives you what you want, they get access and you have a lead.

Investing In IT Security

Many businesses went through huge changes last year. One common change was the shift to remote or hybrid work models. In the process, these businesses had to figure out a lot of things on the fly, from how to get their employees up and running to making sure their data was secure.

Unfortunately, many businesses, particularly small and medium-size businesses, struggled to balance getting their employees up and running and staying secure, due to a lack of resources, support or know-how. They ended up having to focus on one or the other – data security often got left in the dust. And in the mix of it all, growth completely fell off their radar.

We’re going into Q3 2021, but many businesses still lag behind when it comes to their IT needs. Not investing in network security, and an overall IT security strategy, has the

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potential to hold your business back and prevent the growth you’re looking for. Not only is your data at risk from both internal (hardware failure, data loss, etc.) and external (data breaches, cybercriminals, etc.), but there are also other issues to be aware of.

Here are a few questions to consider:

- Do you know if your employees are using the same password they use in your company on other sites they go to? (and are the sites all rated G for general admission)
- Do you know if your employee or family member has had a personal account breached with the same password? (which means the person who stole the password now has access to your company and probably knows where the employee works because they stole are of the personal data including employment data)
- When was the last time you test the armor of your network by performing a Penetration test by a qualified 3rd party?

These questions are a starting point. If you aren’t happy with the answers, it’s time to fill the gaps and give your business the advantage it needs for the future.

Getting Started

If technology still eludes you, you want to jump into the cloud or automate parts of your business, or you need to boost your data security, your best next step is to partner with an IT service provider like T. Daniels Consulting that specializes in supporting small and mid-sized businesses like yours. You never have to do any of these things on your own – especially if you have questions or aren’t sure how to get started. This is the kind of partnership that can put your business on the path to hitting your growth goals and set you up for tech success!

Win A Network Assessment And Penetration Test (Valued at \$2,995-\$19,995*)



Here is your opportunity to win a Network Assessment and PEN Test. If selected during our chance drawing, our highly skilled team of IT pros will come to your business and conduct a Network Assessment and PEN Test (which simulates a real-world cyber-attack to identify security issues) to pinpoint any weak spots in your network.

After the assessment is done, we’ll prepare a customized “Report Of Findings” that will reveal specific problems and provide a Prioritized Action Plan for getting these issues and vulnerabilities addressed fast. This report and action plan should be a real eye-opener for you, since almost all of the companies we’ve done this for discover they are completely exposed to various threats in a number of areas.

Register To Win The Assessment And PEN Test Today At*:

<https://www.tdaniels.com/assessment>

*One winner will be drawn by chance drawing. All other registered entrants will receive 50% off a Network Assessment and PEN Test (exact savings will be determined by the size and complexity of your current network.)

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Sticker – The Smallest Finder By Tile

First, there was the Tile – a small, square device used to find just about anything. You attach Tile to the thing you don't want to lose (keys, for example) and you pair Tile with the Tile app. Easy!

Now, Tile has introduced Sticker, their “smallest finder.” It's a mini-version of their popular fob, and it can be stuck to just about anything, from TV remotes and portable electronics to tools, bikes, you name it – anything you don't want to go missing.

Plus, not only does Sticker stick to anything, but it also has a three-year battery life, so as they say, “you can set it and forget it.” Once it's paired with the smartphone app, it's super-easy to track. And if you lose a “Stickered” device, Sticker emits a loud ring to help you locate your misplaced item, at a range of about 150 feet. Learn more about Sticker at [TheTileApp.com/en-us/store/tiles/sticker](https://www.tileapp.com/en-us/store/tiles/sticker).

What Does Your Business & The Colonial Pipeline Have in Common?

User accounts and passwords. We all have them. Some use the same password for all of their logins (both personal and professional); others switch them up. There are even some that go above and beyond and use auto-generated passwords (with a random generation of upper and lowercase letters, numbers and special characters). Colonial Pipeline employees have passwords and so does your team.

By now, we have all heard about the Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack and how the largest pipeline system for refined oil products in the U.S was completely shut down for nearly a week. You may have even heard about the multi-million-dollar ransom they paid to be able to restore their systems (and by now, how the US Department of Justice has recovered some of those monies) but do you know how they opened themselves to the attack in the first place? It was a password. A stolen password that allowed access to their systems. That is all it takes- a password.

This password belonged to an active, yet unused, account which provided access through a VPN (Virtual Private Network) to the Pipeline's data systems. Often times, VPNs are used as a way to provide employees with remote access to company data and applications. This type of access has been available for years but gained a lot of attention and use during 2020 due to the COVID pandemic.

The password that was used to gain access has since been discovered inside a batch of leaked passwords on the dark web, suggesting that an employee of the company may have reused the same password on another account that was previously breached. Even with that compromised password, the ransomware attack could have been prevented if Multi-Factor

Authentication (MFA) was enabled on the account. Multi-factor Authentication (MFA) is an authentication method that requires the user to provide two or more verification factors (such as password and a code sent to your cell phone) to gain access to a resource such as an application, online account, or a VPN.

Back to what your business and the Colonial Pipeline have in common- user accounts and passwords. The Colonial hackers used a account that was active, but **unused**. Think about your business. How many user accounts for email and financial applications and so on does your business have? How do you know which user accounts are active and which have not been used for months or even years?

Now think about passwords. How do you know if your employees use the same password for all accounts? Do you know if any of your company's passwords have EVER been compromised?

And if you think you are not a target, think again. According to [Ponemon Institute's](https://www.ponemon.com/) Global State of Cybersecurity in Small & Medium-Sized Businesses study, 66 percent of small businesses experienced a cyber attack. You need to protect your most valuable asset, your data, today in order to prevent falling victim to a cyber-attack tomorrow.

If you do not have a good answer to the questions posed earlier, then you need to take a closer look at your security. If you don't know where to start, contact us today at 810-621-0131 or info@tdaniels.com.



The T. Daniels Difference

For over 25 years, T. Daniels Consulting has provided Small and Medium sized organizations with excellent customer service. Our Microsoft Certified Professionals and Engineers have an average 10 years' experience benefiting you by fixing problems quickly and correctly the first time. No other competitor comes close to our level of knowledge, experience and professionalism. We are continuously adding new and improved services to meet your ongoing needs. We never stop improving. That is the **T. Daniels Difference**. Thanks to all of our customers for making us one of Michigan's fastest growing IT consulting and service companies.

■ 2 Things Every Customercentric Brand Needs

When you're building a new brand from the ground up or rebranding, there's a good chance you're thinking about the customer. *How can my brand connect with customers?* Not every business puts thought into their customer experience, nor do they strive to connect with the customer outside of the sale, but for a brand to be successful, that connection is a must. Here are two things every business must do in order to build a customercentric brand.

Be Empathetic. Understand where your customers are coming from. What are their needs, wants and desires? What's causing them stress? Be there for customers and their problems. You might not be

able to solve every problem, but by listening to their needs and helping them (even if that means referring them to someone who can help), you make a positive difference in how they perceive your brand.

Know Your Customer. You need to have a "full view" of your customers. Not only do you need to understand the demographic you serve, but you also need to get personal and understand what they like and dislike. It goes hand in hand with knowing what they need and want. The more you know about your customer, the better you can serve them. Send out surveys. Ask them about themselves when you engage with them in person or online. Build this approach right into your business. *Forbes, April 15, 2021*

■ The Best Incentives To Attract And Retain New Employees Post-Pandemic

Businesses Are Struggling To Hire. The pandemic has created a workforce that is pickier than in years past, and this isn't likely to change anytime soon. They want to work from home (at least part of the time) and to know their workplace is safe, and they want to know their work is valued. Here's what some businesses are doing to attract attention and to fill vacancies.

A Focus On Wellness. Several businesses have started providing various resources for employees. This includes child care services to help ease the burden many parents face. Others are subsidizing various health and wellness programs, including paying for some or all gym or training memberships. Some employers are even paying for their employees to further their education.

A Focus On Vaccination. As the COVID-19 vaccine reaches more communities, businesses are doling out bonuses for employees who get the vaccine. Some businesses are even tacking on bonuses to new hires who come on already vaccinated. *Inc., April 16, 2021*

