END OF THE DECADE:

Well now, as we come to the end of 2019, we approach the beginning of a new decade. And with that we need to take a look at our computer systems, application software and just how we use and enjoy the internet.

Windows 7 is NO MORE:

The key choice people need to make, especially small business owners, is whether to upgrade to Windows 10. As of mid January 2020, Windows 7 is End of Life, meaning Microsoft will no longer provide updates or security patches. Greater consideration is application support. Many vendors', including Microsoft, will no longer allow apps to run or Windows 7. Intuit Quickbooks will not run on Windows 7 platform come January, Office 365 Pro Plus, from Microsoft has several apps that won't run properly.

The bottom line here is you should really upgrade your Windows to Windows 10. Windows 10 is far mor robust and secure than Windows 7 or Windows 8 and once you get used to the new interface is much more user friendly.

AntiVirus Software:

The plethora of viruses and malware out there in the wild is absolutely frightening. More and more often I get calls from people who have had their system hijacked by ransomware, resulting in the loss of documents, pictures, videos and important data.

Make it a solid resolution to get decent COMMERCIAL antivirus software (yeah you have to pay for that but you get what you pay for) and install it and maintain it. We strongly recommend ESET and BitDefender as they're relatively inexpensive and do a GREAT job with minimal fuss.

While there are lots of other brands, our testing has found ESET and BitDefender to be the best bang for your buck, and most effective.

BackUp BackUp BackUp:

With the amount of ransomware out there, it is imperative you backup critical data and important files daily/nightly to an external drive with decent backup software. This is particularly important for business owners.

Purchase a small USB external drive, with around 2 TB of space. Amazon have them for between $75.00 and $100.00. It's one of the best computer investments you can make.

For home users we recommend EasUS ToDo Backup Home version. Cost is around $30.00 USD to $60.00 USD depending on which subscription length you choose.

For businesses we recommend EasUS ToDo Enterprise. Cost is around $40.00 USD to $80.00 USD again depending on the subscription you choose.

For businesses with a central network server setup, we recommend Backup Assist from Cortex Labs, but you should have an IT professional install and configure it for you as it's more complex to backup a server properly.

If you have a decent internet connection (which we don't have in Guysborough District) you could consider a cloud backup solution which might run you anywhere from $30.00 per month to $75.00 per month depending on how much data you're backup up.

Regardless of your choice, be sure to back nightly. If something destroys your system or hijacks your data you need a reliable backup to restore your files.

Practice Safe Computing:

Just about everyone uses Facebook for exchanging messages, seeing what's happening "around town". But one thing we see a LOT is "What does your favourite colour say about you" or "Try this game and learn who loves you" or similar "fun" stuff.

DO NOT PLAY THESE GAMES/QUESTIONNAIRES ETC.

Almost all of them ask you too many personal pieces of information that can be used to steal your identity to pose as you on the internet or even to defraud you and use your credit information.

There is NO NEED for a game to know where you went to highschool, or who your best friend was in elementary school. They are just trying to get information to use for nefarious purposes.

Lastly, your bank and credit card grantors will NEVER ask you to identify yourself by logging into a site to confirm passwords or personal information.

If you get a text message or email appearing to be your bank or credit card grantor, delete it and call your bank to see if there is indeed a problem with your account or card. In my experience banks or credit card grantors will call you to confirm information AND they will let you call them back to ensure it's a legitimate phone call from the bank or grantor.

Finally, Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) do not use email or text messages or unsolicited phone calls to get information. In most cases they send you a letter and ask you to send the required information. There is usually a number you can call to confirm it is legit.

CRA will NOT even accept emails for most correspondence, requiring written, hard copy, letters for almost all correspondence.

If you do get a call from someone claiming to be from CRA, ask for a call back phone number and extension and their name and BADGE ID. All CRA staff have an employee ID and badge so you can call CRA and confirm that Joe Blow is a valid CRA employee.

End To A Decade:

As we approach a new decade in 2020, we with all our clients and friends a very Happy New Year and hope the new year finds you healthy, prosperous and full of joy.

Mike Hedley
Creative Networking (Atlantic)