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## **Pros can help small businesses avoid computer meltdowns**

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Many small business owners assume that information technology services are only for tech companies and mega-corporations. The reality is that every business should consider trusting the health of its computers to a professional, regardless of whether the business employs three or 300.

Without the watchful eyes of a professional, chances are good things aren't running as smoothly, efficiently or cost effectively as possible. This can be particularly true for small businesses.

Consider this: In a large corporation, if one computer freezes up, the corporation's overall productivity doesn't suffer a significant blow. In much smaller offices, however, one less computer can dramatically affect deadlines, customer satisfaction and revenue generation. Repeated computer crashes, network problems, or remote connection issues can be disastrous, even deadly, in the small business world.

In most instances, smaller companies cannot afford an in-house IT staff, and many business owners simply aren't aware of the full extent or importance of services an external company can provide.

Business owners and managers usually boil their approach to computers down to one phrase: "I just want it to work." A professional can take care of that, and can save a company money by identifying issues specific to a company's needs. A provider should do more than cure an occasional desktop malfunction. It should be proactive....

Businesses that rely on IT service providers are sure to navigate far more easily and cost-efficiently through such crucial issues as:

**Remote and wireless connectivity.** Whether wrapping up a quote from a home office or accessing company information halfway around the world, remote and wireless solutions add flexibility to how people work. For instance: the ability for employees to telecommute from home during inclement weather.

**Junk mail management.** How much time would employees save if they didn't have to sift through hundreds of pieces of junk e-mail?

**Data backup...**Business data is valuable. Without the ability to recover from a computer crash, managers can unwittingly put their businesses at risk.

**Server and network efficiency.** Ever wonder why some networks run effortlessly while others seem to break down frequently? Operational inefficiencies usually happen because a network was not thought-out during the consulting and design stage. IT vendors can prevent poor planning.

**Security.** Securing company data requires two strategies -- an external strategy that acts as a fortress and an internal strategy that controls employee access...

**Network monitoring.** Monitoring your network components is no different than any other health check-up. We all know how important it is to be involved in our personal health. Computers are no different.

It may be tempting to try muddling along without regular IT evaluations in order to save money, but it's often far more costly in the long run. Good IT solutions can produce an extremely high ROI that actually turns a profit. They can also help your business build a solid reputation for efficient reliability.

**Dave Murray is the CEO of Convergence Networks, [www.cnwi.net](http://www.cnwi.net), a multifaceted IT solutions provider based in Portland.**