



Alternate Access Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 1

Jan.—March 2010

In This Issue

Creating a Disaster Recovery Plan1

Five Tips for Making — and Keeping — New Year’s Business Resolutions1

Alternate Access Offers New Touch Screen Phone1

Five Tips for Making — and Keeping — New Year’s Business Resolutions

Each New Year brings with it a clean slate and the opportunity to make this year better than the last. As you create New Year’s resolutions for your business in 2010, consider a few tips to help you strategically make and keep them.

- 1. Create specific and realistic business goals.** Review 2009, and think about the things that need changing the most. Do you need to reduce operational costs? Could your customer service use improving? Or maybe you need to better balance work and family time? Identify several specific goals for 2010 and keep them realistic to achieve.
- 2. Keep those goals visible.** Whether you schedule an Outlook reminder to review them monthly or post them on your desk so you see them every day, keep your 2010 business resolutions in plain view and top of mind. *(Continued on page two...)*

Creating a Disaster Recovery Plan

For nearly a month Haiti has been suffering through a natural disaster of epic proportions. While the people of Haiti remain in our thoughts, we are reminded of how quickly and unexpectedly tragedy strikes. Whether natural or manmade, disaster is unpredictable. The one thing that business owners can predict is how they will respond to such an event. Creating, or updating, your company’s disaster plan is of the utmost importance.

Developing a Plan

Creating a disaster recovery plan may seem a daunting task, but it is necessary in today’s technology-driven economy. Business transactions now occur around-the-clock, so even the briefest downtime can hurt a business. Major data loss can be detrimental, with one source reporting that only 6% of businesses that experienced such a severe loss survived long-term.

A thorough disaster recovery plan will spell out actions to take before, during and after a disaster. If you are not sure where to begin, a quick Google search will reveal many resources available to assist you.

Steps to Take Year-round

Most companies think in terms of protecting server data and client files, but often overlook the phone system server. A phone system may contain numerous hours of voice messages, recordings and data.

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Alternate Access Offers New Touch Screen Phone

Do you have a love for all things touch screen? If so, you’ll love the newest desktop phone to join our lineup. The Aastra 6739i features an impressive 5.7” full color, high resolution VGA touch screen display with an intuitive graphical user interface and multiple customizable touch screen softkeys.

This phone is impressive to look at, but it also offers superior audio due to the incorporation of Aastra’s Hi-Q™ audio technology. The integration of a full duplex wideband audio speaker and handset and frequency response software allows for the highest quality audio whether using the handset, speakerphone or a headset.

Speaking of headsets, the 6739i offers a built-in Bluetooth interface and multiple headset connection options – meaning you can be mobile in your office using your preferred headset.

The Alternate Access team tested out the 6739i before adding it to our demo room. One team member thinks the touch screen is the “bee’s knees” and likes that, when entering new contacts, an on-screen “computer keyboard” is displayed for easy name entry. We also like the USB port on the back of the phone, which enables users to record calls directly to a thumb drive. Finally, the ability to have a picture ID pop up with the caller and calling line information rounded out the long list of features that made our team dub this phone “cool overall.”



Start the New Year with a new touch screen. For more information on the Aastra 6739i phone, call Alternate Access at 919-831-1860.

(Disaster Recovery continued...)

Without the proper precautions, one quick power outage from a passing thunderstorm can pose a serious problem.

Regular back-ups of your phone system's voice and database files can help prevent interruption of normal business operations. Determine how often to back up these critical files, and implement a company policy to ensure they are archived off of the phone system.

Another way to protect your phone system from a sudden power outage is to regularly test back-up power supplies. Power surges or lightning strikes can wreak havoc on electronics, and ensuring that power back-ups are tested and replaced regularly will guarantee continuous communication.

Finally, proper and routine server maintenance is critical. An overheated server or a clogged dust filter can be disastrous on its own. Keep the temperature of the server at or below 70° F, and maintain a dust-free server area. Servers should be located in an area that promotes air circulation and cool, dry temperatures to maintain optimum performance.

Voice over IP Helps to Limit Disruptions

A VoIP phone system can be used to your advantage during a disaster. Develop a plan for routing or forwarding calls to the cell or home phone numbers of a few employees so operations can proceed with a sense of normalcy. If necessary, contact your telephone service provider to find out if they can provide call routing or forwarding in the event of a total outage.

Periodically review your company's inclement weather policy with staff, and make sure they know the number(s) to call to find out about closings or delays. Investigate how a communications system can help you keep both employees and customers informed. For example, some VoIP solutions will enable you to change auto attendant greetings to reflect closings or delays – even while out of the office. An SMS texting tool may also provide an easy and economical means of disseminating information. Contact Alternate Access to learn more about how these and other innovative technologies can benefit your business during a disaster.

Advancements in technology have made larger storage capacity and "off site" storage viable and economical choices. These secure, hardened facilities use "clean" power and back-up generators to assure no data is lost. Many can also handle your telephony storage and routing needs in an emergency.

Start Protecting Your Investment Today

No one wants to think about worst-case scenarios, but the fact is companies are increasingly dependent upon their technological infrastructure.

The most important thing is to always have a plan of action. To learn how a communications system can become an integral part of that plan, contact Alternate Access. Our experts can recommend complete solutions customized to your business needs. Contact us today at 919-831-8288 for information on how to make VoIP and unified communications part of your disaster plan.

(Business Resolutions continued...)

3. Create a definite plan. Consider the steps you need to take to achieve your goals. Can I cut down on phone bills? How can I reduce the amount of paper we use? What can I implement to make our loyal customers happier while also leaving a good impression on new customers? How can I work one less weekend a month?

4. Consider how technology can help you reach your goals. For example, switching to a fax server will help cut down on operational costs by reducing paper usage, while also improving employee efficiency by enabling faxes to be automatically routed to the correct person. Maybe your team could benefit from a texting service, enabling them to reach one or many customers in a non-invasive way and with just a few computer clicks. Or perhaps implementing a VoIP phone system is just what your business needs to achieve its 2010 resolutions. A VoIP phone system can help reduce operational costs, improve customer service and increase employee productivity.

5. Make it a team effort. It takes a village to raise a child...and a business. Create a team and inform them of your business resolutions. Your team could consist of your top executives or your entire employee roster – you can even include family. Ask your team to help remind you of the business goals and encourage you to stay on track. Allow them to help you brainstorm and research ideas on how to meet those goals.

Don't forget to include Alternate Access on your team! Inform us of your New Year's business resolutions, and let us assist you in determining how technology can help you achieve those goals. Our experts can help you sort through the available technologies to find the best solutions for your company. Contact us today at 919-831-1860.



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