



TECH TALK

A feature from the Queens Chamber Info Tech Committee

Open Source = More Open Government

By Scott Wolpow

Scott Wolpow is a member of the Chamber's IT Committee who attended the Oracle Seminar. He will share some of his thoughts on cloud computing.

Questions? E-mail Scott at qcc@scottwolpow.com Scott Wolpow is a member of the IT committee and helps companies with Internet related issues. You can reach him at qcc@scottwolpow.com

Last year, I wrote about New York City creating a better web site, allowing its citizens better interaction with different agencies. This year, the Queens Chamber of Commerce Infotech Committee met with the

CIO and person in charge of managing the New York State's senate web site.

New York State has created a new Senate web site built on an Open Source platform called Drupal. This platform made history as it is now being used by the White House. By using Drupal, it is now easier to get informed about what is going on in the Senate. You can now tell what your senators are doing and what issues are at hand.

The site was built under the guidance of Noel Hildago and State Senate CIO Andrew Hoppin. I also have had the pleasure of meeting them both at other functions, which exemplifies the networking power of the Chamber.

The site provides feeds in all forms: RSS, text, XML, JSON and others. For most people,

this is just another set of letters that do not have meaning. Each is a format that streams the data from the site, which you can display on your desktop, web site or smart phone using the appropriate reader. It is like the Times Square news ticker.

A community web site can now be current without any extra work after installing the reader. The senate site now allows the posting of comments in an easy fashion, and your representative will now be able to hear and read your opinions. You could even choose to follow your senator on Twitter or have the data posted to your Facebook page.

We were also introduced to an initiative by New York City to open data from agencies. If you have read my previous articles, you know

that I am a big fan of data. New York City has hundreds of agencies and many departments within each one. In the past, you had to write data for various reports, and if you needed to use that data, you would have to recreate it on your own spreadsheet. While all that data is now available in various forms, not all of it is available in live feeds, but that will change.

For instance, you can now get a list of all bike racks in the city. That would be useful if you wanted to reach bike riders who commuted. You could also find out what restaurants failed inspection, which is helpful for health reasons, but could also be a sales opportunity for your business.

All this data is available free of charge at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/datamine/html/home/home.shtml>

Five Easy Steps For A Safer, Happier Year In Technology

By Evan Stein

If you want to get a good start on 2010, there are a few simple principles that can do wonders for your safety and productivity:

1. Run your backups. Everybody says they'll back up their machines, but how many of us actually do it? And, even if your workplace is running automated backups, you should still get in the habit of backing up your own work to an external hard drive or to the corporate server. That way you won't have to bother your

IT guy if you've been working for several days on an important project that suddenly vanishes from your machine.

2. Update your virus definitions. This is another task that people promise to do periodically, rarely actually get to and are generally safe anyway because the service runs automatically. However, if you have your antivirus software set to update and scan during the day, it can slow your machine down to the point where you're constantly suspending or cancelling the update just so that you can get some work done. That leaves you vulnerable to new virus attacks. So, to be on the safe

side, make sure your antivirus software updates regularly at night or during hours when you're usually not working.

3. Clean your keyboard. Have you ever dismantled your keyboard and seen what's floating around in there? Enough said.

4. Empty your temporary files. Temporary files are backup versions of open files created automatically by many programs. In the event that the program unexpectedly crashes or quits before a user has a chance to save their most recent changes, the temporary file will offer the most up-to-date version of the file. They're handy for that reason, but over time,

temp files can take up a lot of space on your hard disk. Look for the temporary files folder on your hard drive. Verify that you don't need any of the files, and simply move them from the recycle bin.

5. Change your passwords. Even the most foolproof, uncrackable passwords should be rotated out once in a while. Just make sure you remember the new ones!

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Online Marketing Tools to Grow Your Business

By Gerald Goldbaum

You may be wondering, "Why would I want to learn about or consider investing in online marketing?" That is actually a very good question, and you have come to the right place to get the answer. Marketing products or services online is a relatively new phenomenon, and many companies have failed to keep pace with the opportunities that it affords. There is one overriding reason why you should be utilizing the Internet to promote your business, and it is the one reason that every business would agree on: increased revenues.

Owners of Small and Medium-sized Businesses (SMBs) are keenly interested in getting a significant Return-On-Investment (ROI) for their marketing efforts. Some offline forms of marketing continue to be effective, but when you consider the cost, the value of those campaigns drop significantly.

According to one marketing watch organization, the top four methods of marketing for ROI at the current time were of the online variety.

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

- Permission Based Email Marketing
- Paid Search Marketing (sometimes called pay-per-click)
- Social Media

The move towards using the Internet to market products and services is continuing to trend upwards. In fact, the emergence of online marketing has put several former juggernauts of marketing in peril. Commercial phone directories are an example of a marketing tool waning as a result of online marketing.

There are a number of online tools that many companies have begun to use with great success. We will introduce just a few in this article.

SEO is the process of increasing the amount of visitors to a web site by ranking high in the results of a search engine. The way that SEO has been implemented has changed over the years, but the end result is to bring more targeted traffic to a web site so that these interested seekers can begin the process of becoming a prospect. This, in turn, leads towards being a client or customer. It has been correctly stated that SEO can level the playing field between small and large business owners. Another effective tool for online marketing is

Paid Search Marketing, or sometimes called Pay-Per-Click (PPC). PPC can open up your products and services to additional interested searches almost immediately. An added bonus is that the analytics PPC affords can help your SEO campaigns.

Has anyone bothered to keep track of how many people are on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, searching YouTube, etc? The explosion of Social Media sites is giving businesses both large and small increased brand visibility to a targeted audience. Did you know that YouTube (owned by Google) is now the No. 2 search engine behind Google itself? This can bring a lot of benefits to business.

Imagine a corporate Facebook page and advertising campaign tailored specifically to the demographics of your typical customer base. Perhaps a YouTube video on a corporate branded channel that demonstrates your product and service, even something as simple as an instructional video on the benefits of doing business with your company or establishment. The benefits of Social Media all lead back to getting your brand out there, and here's an extra bonus – having the search engines

find all this RELEVANT information to link back to your web site.

Many people fail to realize the value of email marketing. Did you know that email marketing could be as much as 200 percent less expensive than print marketing? Having the ability to track the results of your email campaigns in real time is another reason why online marketing is taking root among businesses.

Technology is changing at a rapid pace. A web site or Internet Marketing Strategy that was standards compliant six months ago could have changed to the point that it might be hurting your opportunities for success. Having a complimentary WSI Web Scan run on your web site, even on a competitor's site, can quickly let you know how effectively you are positioned to take advantage of the explosive growth in Internet marketing.

Call WSI now at 516-610-0927 or visit www.wsimarketing.com/ggoldbaum to schedule your complimentary Internet Business Analysis and, for a limited time, a free Web Scan Intelligence report valued at \$350.