

Technology Q&A
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We have gathered recent technology related questions, and compiled their answers in one article.

Question: I am a small firm, and would like to scan copies of documents to pdf, but worry about finding them later. Please advise.

Answer: While large firms can invest heavily in the technology infrastructure necessary for scanning, digitizing, organizing, and retrieving electronic version of documents, the investment is harder to justify for smaller firms. Fortunately, there are a few low-cost or free products that are very effective.

One of the more popular resources for electronic document retrieval is Google's Desktop. It is a free application download (<http://desktop.google.com>) and includes two main components: Search and Gadgets. While I have not found much value in the Gadgets, I have found tremendous benefit in the Search. Downloading and installing Google Desktop Search (GDS) enables your computer to locate documents on your network by searching for words that appear within those documents. This helps to ensure that even if an electronic document is "mis-filed" (put into the wrong "client" folder for example), subsequently locating and retrieving the document is possible. This process is very similar to searching the internet by looking for words that appear within the web pages. In this desktop product, Google has turned its search inward, towards the files on your computer and network. Each file on your computer and your network is indexed for subsequent retrieval. GDS has many third-party plug-ins that expand the power of this tool. One in particular is called OmniPage Search Indexer. OmniPage essentially converts scanned PDF documents into searchable text, thereby enabling GDS to find and retrieve scanned pdf documents as well. GDS is Google's free search tool. Upgrading from GDS would include both the Google Mini and Google Enterprise search appliances.

Question: We would like to offer guests to our office wireless internet access. Is this advisable due to the security implications?

Answer: Granting guest wireless internet access from your office and conference rooms can be very secure, depending on how it is set up. There are two items to review with your IT staff/firm: the network segment and authentication. The network segment that the wireless access point is placed on should not be your local area network (LAN); it should be on a private segment (DMZ). That way, your guests will have access to the internet but not have access to your network resources and server. The next item to address is authentication. Typically, this is accomplished by turning on the security features within your wireless access point. This ensures that only your firm's guests will hop on to your internet connection. If you don't enable security, then random people will

use your internet connection for their own purposes, which is not good. One example is that a man was recently caught using open wireless internet connections for sending spam. You do not want your internet connection to be used for sending spam.

Question: I have a lot of confidential client data on my network, but I would love to have an automatic offsite backup. The problem is, I just don't trust third-party internet-based backup providers with my data. What should I do?

Answer: You are not alone, as many do not want their client's confidential information being stored with a third-party service provider. Thus, a very popular solution is to create an automatic offsite backup to your home. This is pretty easy for your IT staff to set up, and it essentially involves creating a secure connection from home to office (vpn), and then putting a backup device at your home (computer, external hard drive, etc). Then, nightly, the home-based backup device will pull a copy of all of the files that have changed that day from your office network and save them at home. This is a great solution since: it is automatic, the data is stored at your home and not a third-party, and it creates an offsite archive of all data on your network. Larger firms use branch offices for the remote backup location instead of a partner's home.

Question: I frequently collaborate with clients and peers on Microsoft Word documents, and to keep things straight we use the Track Changes feature so we know who edited what. I have heard that all of these comments are stored permanently, even when you turn Track Changes off. Is this true, and if so, how can I permanently remove this hidden data?

Answer: Yes, it is true. Microsoft has a free download that will plug-in to Microsoft Office and give you the ability to remove all of this type of hidden data. To download it, simply browse to microsoft.com, and search for "remove hidden data". You will see the link for Office 2003/XP Addin: Remove Hidden Data.

Question: While I am interested in technology, I don't make time to find new and interesting internet resources. What are some new internet resources that are useful?

Answer: Well, I could write many pages on that subject. There is so much cool stuff going on in the world of technology. So, just to keep it short and simple, I'll refer you to a couple of powerful and free tools from Google. The first is Google Docs. (<http://docs.google.com>) Google Docs is an online "office" suite that enables you to work on Word, Excel, and Powerpoint documents all through your browser. The files are temporarily stored on the Google servers. One benefit of working on a document this way is collaboration. You can have several people working on the file at the same time, from any location. If you had a document that needed a few people's attention, all working from different geographical locations, upload the file to Google Docs. Grant

them access to those files. Now, collaborate. Real-time discussion is even supported with a chat feature. When your project is complete, you can always export the file back to your computer as a Word, Excel or Powerpoint file.

The second cool new Google feature is probably more personal than business, but that's ok. It is the new Street Level view inside of their map product (<http://maps.google.com>). For selected areas of the country, they paid a guy to drive around in a van with a 360 degree video camera on the roof. All of that footage has been organized and is available through their map program. Simply click on the "Street Views" button when on their map, and you'll experience maps as never before. When combined with their satellite imagery, planning routes, trips, vacations, and client visits has never been more precise and easy.

Question: There are many people in my firm, and we are buying a few new computers for a couple of people. I am concerned about upgrading to Microsoft's Vista operating system, and I am concerned about the compatibility of Office 2007 documents. Please advise.

Answer: Well, there are two questions here. The first is "Vista", and the second is Office 2007 document compatibility. So, let's take the Vista question first. It has been our experience that Vista does not deploy easily right now. Thus, our standard advice is: wait a while. So, new computers should still be configured with Windows XP Pro until all of the kinks are worked out of Vista. If you want to play with Vista, put it on a secondary machine, not the machine you rely on to accomplish all of your daily tasks. Or, put it on a home machine.

Now, the Office question. The default file format for Office 2007 documents is not compatible with Office 2003. However, there are two ways to share documents between both versions. Option 1: within Office 2007, instead of executing a "Save" command, execute a "Save As" command, and then change the file format to OfficeXP/2003 format. Option 2: for the computers that have Office 2003 installed, download the free plug-in from Microsoft.com that enables them to open Office 2007 file formatted documents.