

# Technology Maintenance Tips for You and Your Clients

By Garry A. Jones, CPA

Technology is great — it allows us to accomplish more in less time, and with fewer resources. But, as we all know, it must be properly maintained to retain its highest value. Here are some essentials of a good maintenance program:

## • Data Backups

The need for a daily backup of data cannot be stressed enough. Data backups are inexpensive — especially compared to the cost of recreating the original data in a crisis.

Not only should the data be backed up, but the backup should also be verified. Verification is a simple process that is an option in most data backup software: after the information is backed up, it is then compared to the original source data to

ensure that there were no glitches in the data transfer. Verification also provides assurance that the data backup is actually taking place.

Additionally, one should review the backup log for error messages, and resolve any problems.

Another vital aspect of data backups is to ensure that a copy is kept offsite in case of a catastrophic event at the office. This can be accomplished the old fashioned way by carrying the tape or CD ROM offsite, or the high-tech way by backing up to a cyber drive on the internet such as X-Drive.

It is easy to become lax about backups, but when disaster strikes, it's very costly to be unprepared. In these cases, an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure.

## • Operating System Updates

Microsoft is continually improving its operating software. These improvements are provided free of charge via the Microsoft website at Microsoft.com. Keeping your systems current by downloading the latest updates allows your operating system to function more effectively as well as potentially eliminate some of those annoying problems you may be experiencing.

## • Antiviral Software

This is a must. Since most of us e-mail and transfer data files, our exposure to viruses is greatly increased. Viruses are akin to miniature computer anarchists. Their only purpose is to reduce your computer environment to chaos. Antiviral software, properly set up, will help prevent this chaos

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from occurring on your computer. In addition to the software, you need to subscribe to a service that updates or inoculates your system on a periodic basis to protect you against the latest anarchist plots.

• **Scan Disk and Defrag** — *what are they and what do they do?*

These two programs are part of the Windows operating system that assist you in maintaining a healthy computer system. They are located under Programs / Accessories / System. Basically, the programs work in tandem to first scan the hard drive, check the file structure, and rearrange files for more efficient use. Running these programs on a regular basis, weekly or so, will enhance your computer's performance.

• **Memory Check** — Not for you, but for your computer. If your computer is relatively new (2 years or less) and the performance speed is less than you desire, additional memory may be the answer. Generally it is the most cost effective way to enhance system performance. All of my office computers have at least 128MB of memory.

Daily backups, operating system updates, anti-viral software and updating service, scan disk and defrag, and memory checks are the basic ingredients in a good maintenance program.

These and other relevant CPA topics are discussed at the Ventura CPA Discussion Group, which meets at 7:30 am on the last Friday of each month. To get on the e-mail list, send your request to [garry@jonescpa.net](mailto:garry@jonescpa.net).

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