

PRACTICAL IT

with **Oscar Murray**



The Busy Season

If you have been doing your due diligence throughout the year, then you should be looking forward to busy season; it is a time your company can really shine. If you are worried about it, then you need to take some additional steps you missed this year throughout the next year. Either way, you need to buckle down and accept the fact that busy season is upon you. If you have last-minute projects you need to concentrate on, get them finished — or at least finished for now, which means your project may not have all the functionality but performs the basic function to a stable point for this year. To some, this might seem like a failure, but you need to keep your expectations realistic. Society and the economy want you to have speed to deployment, reliability and low cost of implementation. You may get lucky on some projects, but the real formula is to get two out of three of these.

Busy season should be a time where any down time is unacceptable. So going into busy season, you need to make sure all your disaster recovery plans are up to date. You also want to have the very latest updates implemented so it will not take much time to switch over. Examples of this are making sure backup carrier accounts are still active or backup hardware's virus software is all up-to-date. You do not want disaster to

strike and not be ready; in most instances, you do not get a second chance.

Once you are in busy season, you want to take more time to review logs and perform more trend analysis. As volume increases, so will the likelihood that you will run into the unexpected. It is easy to ignore automated emails by routing them to a folder or deleting them unread. In today's technology world, electronic communication can be overwhelming, but like anything else, with the right plan, this, too, can be managed without missing some crucial information. I like to keep everything, but I know that is not always practical on many fronts. There is only so much room, but more importantly, if you keep everything, it will take you longer to search for stuff you might need later but cannot remember where you put it.

The best place I can keep data is in other people's heads. It might sound funny in this competitive world we live in, but I think that the more other people can remember for you, the less detailed information you need to keep in short-term memory and the more different items you can remember.

The key to memory is putting in good hooks; things you can think of as keywords that trigger complete thoughts. For example, warm apple pie might remind you of fall, and fall is busy season, so you remember that you need to get everything done by warm apple pie time.

Having other people remember is not the only way to keep massive amounts of data; having computers as your memory also helps. This is easy to recall; anyone that has ever used a search engine knows how to do this. But how does all that data get into a usable form? OK, I admit, all the data in the world could take some time, but how can the data in your head become searchable in your company?

That's just one way to handle the busy season — what's yours? ■

Brain Dumps

In busy season, I am sitting back and monitoring more, thus giving me more time in my day to do brain dumps. I start with emails. All the ones I saved, I try to spend some time going through and storing them in a Help Desk/Knowledge bank. I cut down all the unneeded info and add as much information as I can remember. This process helps everyone. It gets useful information where everyone can search for it. It keeps my inbox free, and both my mind and my email are able to gather new information.

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