

Cloud, virtual, green...these are all tech industry buzz words that you may have been bombarded with recently. While these innovations cannot be ignored, let us look at what is going on in the trenches beneath all the hype with a poll.

The AICPA surveyed CPAs on the top technology questions asked of them by executives, including audit committees, chief financial officers, and chief information officers.

The list is long, but all are legitimate concerns that businesses may need to think about to some degree. Below are a few selections from the list, but please visit the following website for the entire list:

[<http://www.aicpa.org/InterestAreas/InformationTechnology/Resources/TopTechnologyInitiatives/Pages/2011TTICompleteListQuestions.aspx>]

1. Is our information security policy adequate?

Do we have an information security policy? Does the policy cover issues such as non-disclosure of data files, data encryption, and smartphone security? Consider establishing a policy regarding the company's position on information security. Include how to securely transfer data to clients – either through flash drives, email, secure links, etc.

2. How can we best align IT investment to our three and five year business plan?

IT costs can rise out of control if you are not careful. If your business relies on technology, then you need to plan for its perpetual rotation. Some tools are meant to last; technology components are constantly improving while the tool you are using today is only depreciating. Include technology costs into your business plan for short and long term.

3. Are we ensuring that our data and technology resources are protected against hacking, viruses, or other compromises?

There is a dark side to IT that we must protect ourselves against every day and, unfortunately, there is no silver bullet. You will need to trust that your IT provider or department is keeping your systems protected and is prepared to act quickly in the event of an infection or breach. Ask them about it often. Educating staff on current trends can help too.

4. Are we considering/implementing organizational security precautions even though we haven't had a data breach or loss?

Prevention is more likely to cost far less than mitigation and reputation. Establishing a policy on the organization's information security and providing extensive staff training is paramount. Do your clients feel safe that any information they provide to you is secure? They should and you should too! Security does not stop with a login password and all employees need to be well informed on security responsibilities throughout the organization – that means information security and premises security.



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5. What is your biggest/most important technology investment that has not been made?

There is always something that might seem out of reach because of its cost, complexity, or both. Think about what technology is out there that might improve your sleep. It could be simply having an online data backup or a full scale redundant network. You should always be ready to at least investigate adding that 'something' that could make you rest easier or even transform the way your business operates.

How does technology fit into your business? Whether it is with security policies, purchasing new hardware, or leveraging innovation to improve your business, you need to embrace the responsibilities that come with technology. You can't hide from them if you want your business to survive. As for cloud, virtual, and green technologies; these are all solutions that most of us have already adopted in some way; so even with all the hype, cool innovation prevails.

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