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# TECHNOLOGY TIMES

**INSIDER TIPS TO MAKE  
YOUR BUSINESS RUN  
FASTER, EASIER AND  
MORE PROFITABLY**



## Starting The School Year Strong Parental Tech Tips To Ensure Academic Excellence

In the coming weeks, kids from around the country will return to school to continue their academic journey. It's an exciting time in their lives, and many begin the school year with high hopes and expectations. Do you remember how enthusiastic (or disappointed) you were when the first day of a new school year arrived? Now that we're parents, we can put specific strategies and techniques in place to help our children find success when school resumes.

It's interesting to see how much has changed since many of us were in school, especially from a technological standpoint. Nearly every kid starts middle school with a smartphone, tablet and laptop. While this has provided them with access to more information and opportunities, there are things that parents should do to keep their children protected and out of trouble.

If you have a kid returning to school this month, try utilizing some of the following strategies to help your child start the year strong. You may even help yourself along the way!

### Create Guidelines

Electronic devices like smartphones, tablets and video game consoles can be fun for kids but can also be distracting. You shouldn't want your children to be on screens all day, as it can damage their mental health. There's no one-size-fits-all approach to screen time, so you must determine what works best for your situation.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry reports that, on average, children ages 8 to 12 in the United States spend four to six hours a day watching or using screens, and teens spend up to nine hours. Getting your kids to use their



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To provide businesses in Culpeper and the Piedmont area with not only top-rate IT support and services, but also a true business partnership.

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screens less can be difficult if they're already watching for multiple hours a day, but it's necessary in helping their development. Set specific hours they can use their screens for personal use or make them log the time when using their devices. If you're worried they won't be honest about their screen use, create a rule that they can only use the devices in public areas of the house, not their room. Put guidelines in place as soon as possible. If you wait until school starts, you will be looking at an argument and further disruption to their studies.

### Monitor What They're Doing And Set Website Restrictions

Does your child do their homework on a computer? If so, how do you know they're actually working on their homework? Keep a watchful eye on your children when they're using their devices to ensure they're using them properly. They may trick you to get a few more minutes of screen time. Continually check on them while they're using a screen to do their homework, and don't be afraid to take a closer look.

You should also look into setting up website restrictions on your network. You don't want your child stumbling upon an inappropriate website, and you don't want them on an unsecured website that could put your network and personal information at risk. Set up website restrictions through your network and each device to ensure your child doesn't go where they shouldn't be.

*"Children ages 8 to 12 in the United States spend four to six hours a day watching or using screens, and teens spend up to nine hours."*

### Talk With Them About The Dangers Of Social Media

If your child doesn't have one already, at some point they will create a social media account so they can stay up-to-date with everything going on with their friends and family. Social media can be harmless when used cautiously; you must explain that to your children. Let them know other people can see everything they post, so they need to think carefully before posting anything, especially pictures. As a best practice, turn off all social media applications' geolocation and messaging features. That way, your child won't receive message requests from strangers or inform strangers of their location.

If you have a social media account, you should also be cautious about your posts. Your child will look at your account for direction, and if you post questionable content, there will be some confusion. It might even cause them to ignore your rules.

The start of a new school year is an exciting time in your child's life. You can help set them up for even greater success by implementing a few tech strategies to help them focus and keep them out of trouble!

## "I DID'T KNOW"

Unfortunately, That Excuse Doesn't Replenish Your Bank Account, Resolve A Data Breach Or Erase Any Fines And Lawsuits.



It's coming...

- That day a hacker steals critical data, rendering your office useless ...
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## Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



### The Philips SmartSleep Wake-Up Light

Sleep is essential in our lives. When we don't get enough sleep, we feel physically and mentally drained. Many of us wake up in the morning feeling groggy and state that we're simply not morning people, but what if that wasn't the case? After using the Philips SmartSleep Wake-Up Light, you'll wake up each morning refreshed and renewed. This light acts as an alarm clock that simulates the sunrise over the course of 20 to 40 minutes to help you wake up steadily. If you don't wake up naturally with the color change of the sunrise feature, you can choose one of six sounds to entice you out of bed. It's easy to set up and will completely revolutionize your mornings.

# The 5 Degrees Of Listening

## Become The Listener Everyone Wants To Talk To

Listening is a skill we can build on and improve, but many leaders consider it a non-skill. However, what could be a more fundamental skill for hiring talented teams, leading people or closing the next big sale? And what skill is more important in getting hired for your dream job and achieving career success? Listening is much more important than many of us like to think.

Beginning during my PhD training as a psychologist, and over the following two decades as a leadership advisor, I observed five degrees of listening skills. Here they are, from worst to best:

**You Talk Instead Of Listen.** It's tough to listen when you are the one making all of the sounds in the room. Don't be the one doing all the talking.

**You Just Listen And Never Respond.** Your future boss may think you are not smart enough to keep up or you don't care, if you just sit there and don't talk. Not talking is not the same thing as actively listening.

**You Nod And Say, "Mmm-Hmm."** Oh good, at least there is a pulse in you. But just nodding and making noises is not insightful and does not build rapport.

**You Reflect On What You Heard.** Just say what they said. If they said, "Our growth strategy is primarily through international expansion," then a pure reflection would be to



say, "So, your growth strategy is international." Your future boss will say, "Yep," and will be only mildly impressed with you.

**You Reflect On The Emotion Behind The Statement.** Imagine if your future boss just told you the industry is changing fast and the company has been struggling to match that pace. She told you this with a frown on her face.

With degree five listening, you can respond by saying, "It sounds like everything is changing quickly. It must be stressful keeping up." Your future boss will say, "Yes, it is." Then you add, "You need to count on your team and know they can keep up with the speed of change." Your future boss will say, "Exactly."

Once you first hear the word "exactly," the probability you will receive a job offer is at least 80%. That is because your future boss feels you understand them, you care and you are the person to deliver them something good (like results) or to remove something bad (like stress).



*Dr. Geoff Smart is the chairman and founder of ghSMART, a leadership consulting firm that exists to help leaders amplify their positive impact on the world. Dr. Smart and his firm have published multiple New York Times bestsellers. He stays active in his community and has advised many government officials.*

## ■ Is It Time To Unplug? Avoid Burnout And Feel Mentally Refreshed

Our phones are always on us, making many areas of our life more convenient. We can communicate with our friends, family and coworkers easily; look up important information instantaneously; and read through our e-mails effortlessly. Although our phones and other electronic devices have brought a lot of good into our lives, there comes a point when we have to disconnect and unplug from them for our mental health and connect with the world around us.

Burnout is one of the biggest obstacles that business owners, leaders and employees face. They spend their days completing and working on projects, and when night rolls around, they stay buried in their devices as they continue to work or research things related to their business or industry. They think this will put them ahead, but they're doing more harm than good.

When you get home from work for the night or if you're going on vacation soon, put your phone down and try to live in the moment. Your work will always be there for you to go back to. Keeping your phone and work away while you're not actively at your workplace is the best way to avoid burnout and live a happier lifestyle.

## ■ Get Comfortable Outside Your Comfort Zone

We all have activities and situations that push the boundaries of our comfort zone. Nobody likes to be uncomfortable, but stepping outside our comfort zones provides us with new growth opportunities. Here are a few ways you can become more comfortable being uncomfortable.

- Establish the boundaries of your comfort zone. Before attempting to tackle your discomfort, understand what makes you uncomfortable and why.
- Start small with little changes to your routine. You don't have to dive in headfirst right away. Ease yourself into it so you don't become overwhelmed.
- Insert yourself into unfamiliar situations. Take a class at your local community college or join an organization.

Find a mentor. You're going to want someone who will stick by your side and push you when things get tough.

## ■ This Stay Ahead Of The Game

### *Be Proactive To Attract Younger Customers*

As the years pass, your business will start working with new generations of customers. Many Gen Z adults are already in the workforce, and it won't be long before Gen Alpha joins them. These younger generations come with their own set of standards, beliefs and ideals that you must familiarize yourself with if you want to stay relevant with your consumers. That's why you have to be proactive if you want to attract these individuals to your business. Learn about their trends and interests, and find ways to incorporate them into your marketing and company messaging. If you decide to stay reactive, it will constantly feel like you're playing catch-up. Don't wait to make the necessary changes that will improve your business!



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