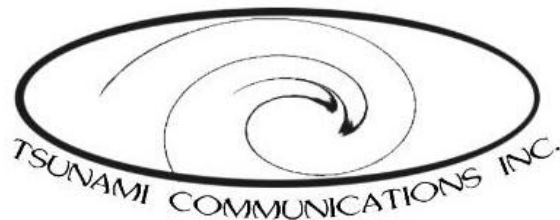


TCI Quick Reference Series:

How to Know When Your Network Needs Help

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Would you like to have some idea of how well your network is performing, but you don't necessarily want to pay for consultants to come in unless you're certain you need them? On top of all of that, you have a business to run and don't have time to learn all about computers and networking. Tsunami Communications is here to help. We've collected together some easy-to-use troubleshooting tips that will give you a high-level understanding of how efficiently your computer network is performing.

Slow Downs

Have things gotten noticeably slower on your computers? Try accessing a web site you don't often go to, printing a small document, or opening files over the network. What's the response time like? Is it consistent throughout the office on similar computers?

Lights!

Almost every networked device will have small lights in or near where the data cable (looks like a phone cord) connects to the device. Have a look at the lights during slow and busy periods in the office. Are all of the lights blinking extremely quickly? Are no lights on at all? The importance of such activity will depend on the device, but may give some clues to where the network congestion is. Lights that flash too rapidly may indicate excessive communication at that point in the network. Green lights that are hardly coming on at all may indicate that the data is getting blocked elsewhere. Amber & red lights, generally speaking, are indicative of a fault with the network equipment or connections.

Cables!

Check the data & power cables to make sure they are all secured well, but when you are checking them do not "pull out" but instead "push in" to make sure they are all well seated. Loose cables are the bane of any network environment and will tend to cause those "infrequent" problems that are otherwise nearly impossible to hunt down, and extremely difficult to replicate. Watch for data cables lying in common pathways or that appear "squished" or severely bent. Generally speaking, data cables aren't as hardy as electrical cables and will start causing problems if they are abused by being stepped on, rolled over, crushed, or crimped.

Action!

If you're feeling a little more adventurous, you can try some default network testing tools from the "command line" of your computer. On the Microsoft Windows platform click "Start", "Run", type "cmd" in the window that appears and click "OK." This DOS-like window will allow you to execute commands like "ping", "tracert", "netstat", and "route print" which are very useful troubleshooting tools. Type the command, followed by a space and then /? for help with how to use the syntax for those commands.

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