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In June, I dropped my laptop and lost all data on my hard drive. The black cloud moved over my PDA, duplicating everything, then to our kitchen, where the cooktop blew up. It was not a good month. The lessons learned were painful, including a gentle “I told you to back up” from my insurance agent, but here’s the thing: No one died.

That became my mantra through the next months, as we sent out the machine to be repaired, reinstalled systems and recovered as much as we could.

My last article for CNY Business Exchange — on networking — disappeared and I missed an issue. I had to learn a whole new, temporary way of doing e-mail via the Internet, I had no on-the-run access to contacts and e-mail and I lost all my photos and 12-years worth of presentations. But no one died. And there was more. It turned out that:

#1 — The networking article

would have been obsolete. Along the way, I discovered the world of LinkedIn, which one of my fellow Women Presidents’ Organization directors describes as “networking on steroids.” Within a week and a half of signing up, she’d had a speaking engagement invitation. With a few weeks of fiddling around and one LinkedIn webinar under my belt, I’d reconnected with a long-lost associate who referred a piece of business to me, joined a throng of people answering a question from a fellow WPO director in England for a white paper she was writing and wrote a reference for a colleague whom I deeply respect, for viewing on her LinkedIn profile. Our staff is beginning to understand that this not just a networking tool but a powerful marketing technique.

#2 — We had been brilliant or incredibly lucky in our decision to subscribe to online storage of our business files when we went virtual two years ago. I lost personal data, but not one bit of business information.

#3 — There’s more to life than the laptop. For instance, reading... as in books. My most recent business favorite: “The 4-Hour Workweek,” by Timothy Ferris. Even for an admitted, long-time self-help book junkie, this was an eye-opener. It’s a must read for anyone looking to de-clutter and enrich life.

#4 — Common sense lives. Some of my colleagues and friends, not getting answers to their e-mails to me, picked up a phone and called, with “Did you get my e-mail?” How astonishing! How smart! How simple!

#5 — One doesn’t buy a cooktop today. One buys a computer. Ours is now sitting on our kitchen counter, a vast expanse of flat, black glass, with not a knob in sight. I have figured out the touch pads, conquered the beast and am now cooking in style.

Cheers! 

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HELPFUL TIPS

1 BACK UP DATA
Get the hardware, get the software and schedule a regular time to do it. No excuses.

2 RESOLVE TO LEARN, ALWAYS
A new way of doing e-mail, a new way of networking, a new way of cooking, whatever. Keeps the brain in shape.

3 KEEP PERSPECTIVE
Remember: life goes on. Go sit on the back porch. Read a book. Hold a baby. Have a glass of wine. Enjoy.