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### Total Networks' Staff Holiday Wish List



It may come as no surprise, but here at Total Networks, our technicians love to play with the latest gadgets, video games and computer-related products on the market. For fun, we surveyed our staff to find out what items they are looking forward to this gift-giving season. Their choices ranged from modern home assistants or smart speakers to classic throwback video games, computer accessories and home décor, and some other cool items in between. For those of you that are 'techie' or that have a loved one who is a 'techie', here are some of our techs' top picks for gifts this season.

#### If retro is the way you want to go:

**Atari Flashback 8 Gold** – This system features 120 built-in games. If you want to 'go back, way back, back into time' where graphics are primitive, but the gaming was pure, this might be the one for you. Some updates include a 720p HDMI output, and the ability to pause, save or replay difficult sections of the game. **ATGames** offers variations on this system, with different games available, as well.

**SNES Classic** – This gaming system can fit in the palm of your hand and includes 20 classic Super NES games plus one never before released game. Feel free to take a snack or potty

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### Captivated and Inspired by Haben Girma: A Global Inclusion Leader



In September, I had the privilege of attending a keynote address delivered by Haben Girma at the Annual Clio Cloud Conference. Haben is the first deaf-blind person to graduate from Harvard Law School. She is deaf-blind, and she speaks with conviction and power. Haben "listened" to the audience with a digital braille device. It was wonderful...



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### About Total Networks

Locally owned and operated since 1986, Total Networks is the only firm in Arizona to receive CompTIA's Security Trustmark validating the firm's adherence to best practices for information security. Services include IT support, security & compliance assessments, document management, backup & disaster recovery and IT planning/CIO services.

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### Why Hasn't Mobile Payment Really Taken Off?



Digital payment options have become commonplace in today's society. In fact, ever since people could purchase goods and services off of the Internet, some of the world's most successful companies are a result of digital payment. It was a natural progression then, as the mobile device boom came, that mobile payment would take the place of cash and/or cards and bring these digital payment options beyond the Internet, and into our retail stores. This simply hasn't happened and here are four reasons why.

#### The Tried and True Payment Still Works

The first reason is simple. Retailers still accept cash and credit cards. Why would anyone who has been using these tried and true methods of payment for 20-plus years change things up? According to First Annapolis Consulting's "Study of Mobile Banking & Payments", while 64 percent of all smartphone users have used some form

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## Total Networks' Staff Holiday Wish List

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break, because you can pause and re-wind gameplay. As an alternative, you can check out the other **NES Classic Mini** gaming systems.

**Tetris Stackable Desk Lamp** – Not much to be said about this one, except that it's REALLY cool. Stack it any way you want it. The LED lights turn on once stacked together, and they turn off when you take the lamp apart. You can purchase multiple sets to make your lamp bigger and to optimize the visual effect.

*Now, let's get back to the future:*

**Nintendo Switch** – Continuing with gaming, there is the Nintendo Switch. If you want a system that transforms from a home console to a portable gaming system in a snap (literally), the Switch is for you. It can connect to your TV, you can play online with friends, but it also has its own screen, making it portable, with the Joy-Con controller. The Joy-Con controller can be combined with a single controller or split for multi-player functionality. Also, you can connect the controller to the Switch screen and have complete gameplay on the go.

## The Value of Outsourced IT



IT maintenance is something of a sensitive topic for some organizations. While most understand that it

needs to be done, they often don't have the resources to make it happen, either due to a limited budget or timeframe. How does your business handle IT maintenance? If your organization is having troubles managing its annual technology budget, or if you are consistently experiencing profit-sapping downtime, consider managed IT services the answer to your problems.

Simply put, the traditional method of technology maintenance doesn't work

**Rocketbook Wave Erasable Notebook** – A notebook to end all notebooks? Maybe. With this reusable notebook, take your notes with pen and paper. Using the accompanying app on your smartphone to send your notes to the cloud. Erase the pages using your microwave. Curious? We certainly are.

**Smart Speakers/Home Assistants** – In this category, we have a few to choose from, so buyer compare. Amazon has had a head start on its competitor, Google, for a couple of years in this area. This means that the **Echo and Alexa families of devices** and accessories will offer more functions. With compatible appliances and devices, you can automate your life with the sound of your voice. Check the weather, get the latest news, listen or watch entertainment, and even control your smart home.

While newer to the market, **Google Home** is a solid alternative to the Amazon devices. If you use Google, then you know that it knows a lot about you. Using your Google account, not only do you have access to a wealth of information available through Google, but it can help you keep track of upcoming appointments, create a shopping list,

well anymore. The break-fix method to technology management is generally how small businesses have run their organizations for quite some time. Break-fix relies on your business reaching out to a maintenance provider only when your systems are malfunctioning, causing downtime and inefficiency that is sure to show up on your organization's bottom line.

Without a reliable way to guarantee that the downtime-causing issue won't happen again, the break-fix method is like slapping a Band-Aid on a wound and hoping that it won't reopen. Managed IT, on the other hand, is designed to address problems before they happen by taking preventative measures.

Managed IT accomplishes this goal by providing you with comprehensive

or check the weather or your commute in real time. It works with compatible devices and has accessories. It can be used for games and entertainment. Both brands offer attractive designs to fit in any space.

And the list goes on. Here are some other honorable mentions: Xbox One X, Steam Gift Card, Oculus Rift VR Headset, Sphero Robots, Professor Einstein – AI Robot, Apple Watch Series 3, Apple TV 4K, TrackR Pixel Bluetooth Tracking Device, H96Pro TV Stick (available thru various online retailers), and the Raspberry Pi.

**Not yet Released Geek Award**

Last but not least, the geek pick award goes to the **PIC18F57K42**. David Rice has this on the top of his list! Purchase this one only for the true computer aficionado.

We hope this gives you some great gift ideas and makes someone's day!!



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access to technicians who you can proactively monitor and fix any technology problem you may have with your network or infrastructure. For businesses that lack an internal IT department, managed IT can fill the void you have in technology administration quite nicely. Furthermore, managed IT can provide value even for organizations that have dedicated internal IT staff.

More often than not, a small business will have, at most, an internal team consisting of only a handful of technicians who, more than likely, have a lot on their plate. By supplementing their skills with a managed IT service provider, you're giving them more time to focus...



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## Is Your Organization Utilizing Software from the Cloud?



All businesses require at least some type of software in order to perform as expected. It's how organizations ac-

quire this software that has a considerable impact on cost. For some, software can be a budget-breaking nightmare, but others have found a much more convenient way of acquiring this software: as a service.

Software as a Service is a method of software distribution designed to help your business acquire the applications it needs without suffering from the large upfront costs that software acquisition

typically carries with it. Do you remember purchasing software licenses for each and every user on your network? This can get somewhat challenging to maintain, as these licenses need to be renewed frequently, and if they are not, your organization could be put at substantial risk.

Businesses can instead use software as a service offerings to purchase access to cloud-based applications and storage. Basically, you pay for access to the software and reap all of the benefits of actually owning it—plus some additional ones—by leveraging cloud computing.

### More Cost-Effective

Think about how much it costs to purchase software for your organization. The same services that are necessary

for operations, could be a major detriment to turning a profit. With the use of an application hosted in the cloud, you can cut the cost of ownership and transfer the once recurring capital expense into a manageable operating expense.

### Up-to-Date Editions

When you purchase software as a service applications, you always access the most recent version of it through an online interface. This means that you'll never have to worry about updating the apps with patches or security updates, as they will be taken care of by the service provider...



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## Why Hasn't Mobile Payment Really Taken Off?

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of mobile payment platform, only five percent consider themselves frequent payment users. The fact is that it's not as attractive as you may think, and is further relegated to the background because...

### There is a Lack of Incentive

What added value does a mobile payment service actually offer? Sure, in some states that have gone to a digital ID system, this would seemingly allow consumers to forgo the wallet completely. That's it. Most mobile payment interfaces make it difficult for users to redeem loyalty points or take advantage of special offers at mobile point of sale machines.

There are companies, such as Starbucks, that have made a point to integrate their loyalty points system into their mobile payment platform. Their mobile app combines the loyalty point program with mobile payment options, which is great for consumers.

But like the consumers themselves, if a company doesn't see an immediate (or even long-term) demand, they will avoid laying out the capital until that demand is present.

In order for mobile users to take full advantage of the mobile payment platforms, you will need to give them some form of incentive to use it. This is mainly since...

### Mobile Payment Actually Takes More Effort

One of the claims that mobile payment providers make is that it is much easier to use than any other type of payment. Just tap and go. While this seems reasonable on the surface, the reality of it is that it takes just as long or longer to access your mobile payment platform through your smartphone as it does to take cash or a card out of a wallet.

Consider for a minute the steps you have to take in order to make mobile payment work: You have to take your phone out, unlock it, access the mobile wallet app, select which card you want to use, and then hold your phone to the terminal. After this they still need to either sign the screen/paper or provide a pin. Why take so much effort to make purchases when it takes less time to buy goods in a traditional way; and, still have to deal with...

### Mobile Payment Security Concerns

To be fair, mobile payments may be as

secure as any other form of digital payment, but there is an inherent fear in many consumers' minds that because there is an all-digital transmission of financial information that it is somehow less secure than traditional digital payment options. This fear isn't unfounded, as each day people can read about data breaches at banks, stores, and major online retailers, that only work to fuel the anxiety surrounding mobile payments.

Many cyber security experts have cautiously endorsed the use of secure payment apps, while others point to studies like the 2015 Mobile Payment Security Study that overwhelmingly urges a wait-and-see approach, but does admit that the industry is making headway in the security of mobile financial transactions with the inclusion of account tokenization, device-specific cryptograms, and multi-factor authentication.

In the future, mobile devices will become the only computer we'll need, but will they become the only wallet we'll need? Only time will tell.



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## Thieves Materialize Most Around the Holidays



In terms of identity theft, data loss and good ol' fash-

ioned pickpocketing, the holiday season is one of the riskiest times to travel. When it comes to protecting your personal information, thieves and cybercriminals are counting on you to be distracted and make careless mistakes. In 2016, the number of fraud attempts went up by 31% during the holiday season. In addition, credit cards, mobile devices, and open Wi-Fi are common targets throughout the holidays.

Here are a few tips that can help keep you and your family safe from hackers and thieves.

**Hide the Goods** – Pickpocketing is an old-world method of theft that is still extremely effective – especially in a hectic environment like an airport during the month of December. A favorite target of pickpockets are smartphones. Travelers should avoid storing any personal belongings, including smartphones, in places that are easily accessible.

**Bring Only Necessities** – Between work and personal uses, most adults have at least three mobile devices. In general, bringing all of them

with you while traveling isn't necessary. The more devices along for the trip, the more targets there are for criminals. Travelers are encouraged to bring only the technology they need.

**Free Wi-Fi is Not Free** – To conserve mobile data usage, many people are tempted to hop onto Wi-Fi whenever possible without fully comprehending the risks. Some open Wi-Fi access points are easily hacked and you'll likely have no idea what kind of security the connection will have. It might be a bit costly but using your data instead of open Wi-Fi may save you from having to deal with identity theft in the future.

**Patch It** – It's always a good idea to keep your technology up-to-date with security patches and bug fixes. Many of the large ransomware attacks that made headlines earlier this year could have been avoided by security patches. When traveling, reduce vulnerabilities by patching and updating your software before you leave for your trip.

**Go Phishing** – During the holiday, phishing scam emails emulate holiday-centric messages. Scams will often appear to be from legitimate establishments like FedEx or Amazon. They will often ask for account or password

information – or offer exclusive coupons that need to be downloaded to use. Remember: if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Avoid downloading any attachments and never give out your password or account information.

**Skimming a Bit Off the Top** – For those of you who aren't familiar with card skimmers, the premise behind this type of theft is to copy your credit or debit card information by disguising a scanning device on a legitimate source, like a gas pump or ATM. The scammers are then free to use or sell that information. Skimmers are easily overlooked and protecting your information requires constant vigilance. Whenever you're using a credit card during your holiday travels, look closely at any device that you are going to be swiping your cards on. **\*Note:** You can access an application designed to help you identify skimmers with your Android device here: <http://bit.ly/2m5y6qD>

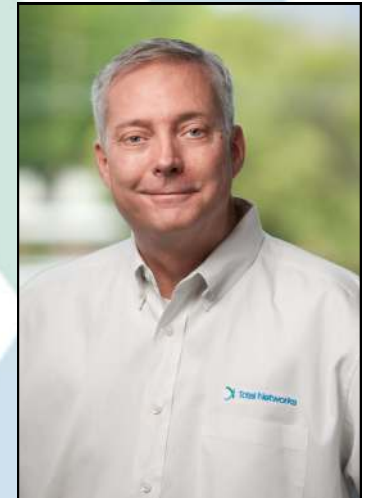
**Social Media for Burglars** – For many, social media is about sharing their good times and memories with friends and family. For thieves, it's a road map to...

We work together with our IT Managed Services clients to jointly create and maintain an up-to-date, effective written technology plan and budget.

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