

Small Business News & Notes

Most Small Businesses Feel Powerless Against Blackouts, But 'Big Business' Technologies are Coming to the Rescue

by Jim Blasingame

(NAPSA)—Remember Y2K? It was the first global wakeup call that dramatized not only our reliance on technology but also how vulnerable we can be to a design flaw or the weakest link in the technology chain.



Last August, the United States had another rude awakening when The Great Blackout of 2003 hit several states in the Northeast. This massive

electrical outage put millions of consumers in the dark and hundreds of thousands of businesses out of business for several days.

While Y2K was a once-in-a-lifetime event, a recent survey discovered that, whether due to Mother Nature dropping a tree or Mr. Murphy messing with the power grid, 80 percent of U.S. small businesses experienced at least one electrical power outage in the past year.

The 2004 Small Business Power Poll, which was commissioned by Emerson (www.GoToEmerson.com), a global leader in reliable power technology, provides illuminating, if not alarming, information about how vulnerable small businesses are to power outages. The survey revealed that while 75 percent of small business owners believe that a power outage is a threat to their business, only one in five is prepared for such an event. Here are three other shockers from the Emerson survey:

- Six of 10 small businesses do not have *any* type of backup power supply.

- Two-thirds think it's likely they will experience an outage this year.

- More than half are interested in the kind of backup power technology used by their big business customers and competitors.

Small businesses are no longer just mom-and-pop backwater storefronts. In fact, today America's entrepreneurs produce more

than half of the \$10.3 trillion U.S. Gross Domestic Product and create most of the new jobs. Also, large companies are depending more on small ones as essential integrated partners.

The good news is that "big business" backup power technologies have become available and affordable for small businesses. These include uninterruptible power supplies (UPS), which basically are battery units, and "gen-sets"—generators with automatic power transfer switches.

Consider these four steps to identify backup requirements and establish power outage protection:

1. Calculate the risk: What would it cost your business—directly and indirectly—if you couldn't serve your customers in the event of a power outage?

2. Conduct an internal audit: Walk around your business and identify the computers, equipment, lights, etc., that would be critical to continuous operation in the event of an outage.

3. Contact a professional: Show your audit to a licensed electrical contractor and/or an IT consultant or value-added reseller of backup power technologies. That can help you determine what type of backup system you need, and the cost of that investment.

4. Make the investment: If you're tempted to say you cannot afford it, go to Step No. 1 and ask yourself, "Can I afford NOT to?"

To start your backup power education, visit www.GoToEmerson.com, which also has more interesting information from the survey.

Jim Blasingame is the creator and award-winning host of The Small Business Advocate Radio Show, syndicated columnist, author of "Small Business Is Like A Bunch Of Bananas," the 2002 Small Business Journalist of the Year, and one of TALKERS magazine's 100 most important radio talk show hosts in America. Find Jim at www.jbsba.com.