



# PETRA PLANNING

ALL IS NOT LOST: LESSONS LEARNED  
FROM HAVING MY LAPTOP STOLEN



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### LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

One of the bedrock principles at Petra Coach is to learn from your mistakes and reinforce best practices in every part of your life. As part of Petra's commitment to share our own "lessons learned" with clients, I'm sharing a painful experience that can have a devastating impact – having your laptop stolen.

Below are two key lessons I learned after my laptop was recently stolen from my vehicle, as well as a summary what I found worked and what did not work. Hopefully you'll never have to go through this ordeal, but implementing a few of these actions will certainly help you if you ever do.

#### 1. LIVING ON A CLOUD

Working on the cloud has dramatically changed the way I do business. Because of the cloud tools mentioned below, I was able to instantly keep working even though my laptop was stolen

##### **What Worked:**

**Evernote** – I use Evernote, or what I call the "storage device for my brain," to capture all of my meeting notes, track personal priorities and capture random ideas. And since Evernote is a cloud-based application, I was able to seamlessly access my notes and prepare for meetings without my laptop. I started writing this article on a borrowed laptop by simply logging into my Evernote account. As soon as my replacement laptop was ready, the article seamlessly synced to the new laptop.

**Dropbox** – In addition to regular backups of my laptop, my standard workflow is to place all of my working files into a Dropbox folder on my laptop. So as I'm working in Word, PowerPoint, InDesign or any other program, the instant I hit "Save," the file is automatically synced to my Dropbox account. Even though my laptop was stolen and I hadn't physically backed it up in a few days, all of my important documents were available on my iPhone, iPad or any other computer through Dropbox. This process has proven invaluable many times. I can be on a golf course and still access, edit or forward any document on my laptop by simply accessing Dropbox on my iPhone. I pay extra to have unlimited "versions" of all my files on Dropbox, too. I'm confident I'll always have access to my work wherever I go.

[Microsoft Exchange Email](#) – Let's face it, we can't live without email these days. I've been using Microsoft Exchange email from Rackspace.com for 10+ years. All of my emails, contacts and calendar items are constantly updated between my laptop, iPhone and iPad. Even with my laptop gone, I never missed a beat with email or contacts. And while not related to the stolen laptop, having an archive system on your email accounts is invaluable when employees leave or you need to find lost emails. Every inbound and outbound email to my company is archived in a single place.

[iCloud](#) – I've been an Apple proponent for a long time – the stuff just works. Having all of my devices connected via Apple's iCloud service made it easy to login and permanently "lock" my laptop. If the stolen laptop is ever connected to the Internet, it will instantly be locked at the hardware level, making it instantly unusable. The laptop will also display a message with my contact information asking for it to be returned. The laptop was already password protected but now it will be permanently locked.

### **What Didn't Work:**

[Dropbox](#) – In preparing for this article, I did some research and realized that Dropbox may not be the best solution for security anymore. I'm in the process of testing Box.net services because it has better encryption and enterprise security tools. It's even accepted for the ultra-stringent HIPAA compliance standards. If I'm going to place my files in the cloud, I want to know they are secure.

[Passwords](#) – I'm very stringent about my passwords, especially for my sensitive accounts. I use the application 1Password to protect and store all of my various logins and passwords. It allows me to easily use ultra secure and different passwords like "q6W/wnTJM#4x3Gbn9fRjq" for every account. But while restoring my laptop, I realized that several older accounts still had basic passwords. I need to review all of my online accounts on an annual basis and update them with 1Password to random and highly secure passwords.

## **2. BASIC BLOCKING AND TACKLING**

In addition to leveraging the cloud, it's important that you have basic processes in place to back up and protect your data. I thought I did a good job at the basics, but after reflecting on this experience I realized that I have some room for improvement.

### **What Worked:**

[Backups](#) – I have a portable hard drive that I use with Apple's Time Machine application for backups. Within 24 hours I was able to have another laptop restored almost exactly like the stolen laptop.

Dropbox, Evernote and Exchange were able to sync my files up to the last minute that I used my laptop before it was stolen. But not everything was perfect, and it should have taken less than 24 hours.

**Password Protection** – My laptop was secured with a password and it was set up to automatically lock. I was also able to use Apple's iCloud to lock the stolen machine remotely. And even if someone retrieved my laptop password, he or she would still need to hack my 1Password security to reach any sensitive data.

**Documentation** – At my company, the system admin keeps a detailed inventory of all of the company equipment, including specifications, model numbers and serial numbers. On a Mac, you can simply go to the Apple menu and select the "System Report..." button. It will create a detailed report with all the specifications and serial numbers of your device. I recommend placing that information in your Evernote file. I was able to quickly access my laptop serial number and provide it to the police and insurance agents. Within minutes, the police had posted my serial number on a national database that is used prevent stolen equipment from being sold at pawnshops. Interestingly, the police recommended that I watch eBay and Craigslist to see if the laptop appeared.

**Insurance** – Since the laptop was company property, I made a claim on my business insurance policy with The Hartford. In less than 24 hours, the company had already approved my loss and placed a check in the mail for the replacement value of the laptop.

### **What Didn't Work:**

**Only One Backup Drive** – For the past few months I was only using a single backup hard drive, even though Time Machine allows you to have multiple backup sets on different devices. I was very lucky because the thief broke into my car and meticulously went through my backpack to only steal my laptop, charger, sunglasses and a credit card. I also had my backup drive in the backpack! So if the thief had opted to steal the entire backpack, I would have needed to use an older backup drive that was several months old. In the future, I will keep a backup drive at home, at my office and one for travel. Typically when I travel, I keep the hard drive in my suitcase and not in my backpack. For some reason, I errantly was carrying the laptop and backup drive in the same place.

**No Physical Identification** – I didn't have any physical form of identification on my laptop. I should have had a sticker, business card or ID tag attached to the laptop. While I'm sure the thief would remove the tags, it's possible that the laptop would be discarded after they discover it's been "locked" remotely. But without a physical tag, it will never be returned.

**Excessive Files** – It took way longer than I expected to restore my backup to another laptop for two reasons: 1) I had way too many files on my computers, including hundreds of gigabytes of music files and photos that I rarely, if ever, accessed. I need to do a better job of keeping my business laptop armed and ready for business. The personal files should be on another machine. 2) My company keeps a few older laptops ready for emergencies like this, but they all had significantly smaller hard drives than my lost laptop. So it took me significantly longer to restore a smaller subset of my files.

**Encrypted Hard Drive** – One of the features in the Mac operating system is FileVault, a tool to encrypt your data on your hard drive. It's an additional layer of security that I had not turned on. I have activated it on my new laptop.

**Vehicle Security** – I've been told this before, but now I know how easy it is to break into a vehicle. The thief simply jammed a large screwdriver into the driver side lock and twisted it using pliers. It literally took seconds to open my car. The thief went through my backpack and stole some very specific items. It was an oversight that I had a credit card in my backpack. I kept it there in case I lost my wallet traveling. That probably wasn't the best idea. Fortunately, the thief ignored several other items in the back of my SUV, including golf clubs, a Kindle and a box of Verne Harnish's latest book, *Scaling Up 2.0*. I guess the thief wasn't ready to implement Rockefeller Habits, although I'm certain it would make his criminal efforts even more effective. I'm looking at installing a TruckVault in the back of my SUV to protect my valuables in the future.



At the end of the day, I was able to survive the experience of a stolen laptop with minimum interruption. It still took an entire day to deal with the police, insurance agents and to restore my data on another laptop, but it could have been a lot worse. Looking back at the experience, I certainly could have done a lot more to prepare for the unfortunate experience of a theft. Hopefully you can learn from my mistakes and be prepared in case this ever happens to you.

# THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

**The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.**

## Looking to change your business life - forever?

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

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