

What's New

Welcome! We're rolling out a new ticketing system at Syscon. This has been coming for a while; we need better reporting and metrics on how promptly we respond to requests and get them fully resolved. Please watch for email updates with Client Note information, and we plan to have a client portal available in late Q1 of 2017. We'll keep you posted as we fine tune our new work flow.

Please vote on November 8th!

November is a reminder to give thanks for our many blessings, and to consider and support those less fortunate than us. If you're living in the US, you are one of the most fortunate compared to the world we live in. We give thanks for our relationship with you and the opportunity to serve your computer-related business needs. We **love** this stuff and we're blessed to make it our career, as well. - *Catherine Wendt*

November 2016



This monthly publication provided courtesy of Catherine Wendt, President of Syscon Inc.

We love this stuff!
Our passion is helping businesses use technology to run their organization successfully and profitably.



Thanks to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and ever-improving cloud technologies, the phone-service options available to you as a small business are plentiful, with more features at a lower cost than were ever available before.

However, with all the options and vendors, separating the good from the bad and navigating the hype can be difficult. Not only are some VoIP systems a complete waste of money, but fees can be "hidden," so what appears to be a big cost-saving decision can end up costing you more in the long run once you've calculated in ALL costs over a three-to five-year period.

Here are six revealing questions you must ask to cut through the hype, half-truths, and "little" white lies that could bury your company.
1) What will the call quality be like on my new system?

Companies that sell phone systems

6 Questions To Ask Before You Move To VoIP

and do not install and support computer networks – which is what your VoIP system is running on – are often NOT qualified to recommend or install a VoIP phone system for your office. One of the biggest reasons for VoIP failure (poor sound quality, slow internet speeds, etc.) is that the person selling you the system does not understand how to properly assess your company's firewall, routers, network traffic, Internet connection speeds, as well as a host of other factors, to make sure their phone system will work as advertised in YOUR SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENT. That's because they're phone-system sales guys, not network engineers.

2) How many data centers do you have and are they geographically dispersed?

If the answer is only one, run away! What happens if their ONE data center goes down? Or, more commonly, what happens when the VoIP equipment *inside* the data

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center goes down? Your business is without a phone until they get their systems back online! Insist on at least two redundant data centers that are states away from each other to lower the risk of a natural disaster wiping out both data centers at once.

“VoIP runs over the Network and Internet...”

If your provider’s system isn’t constantly monitoring the status of your network, VoIP system, and VoIP phones, you should consider going with another provider. If your Internet goes down, or even a single phone stops working, the system should know that within a few minutes and automatically forward the calls to a predetermined destination (like a cell phone or another office location).

3) What was your uptime last year? What’s your guarantee for uptime?

If it’s anything less than 99.999%, find a different provider. And don’t just take them at their word; ask for documentation proving the reliability of their network in the previous year. If they can’t even do that, don’t buy their system!

NOTE: Uptime is the system’s ability to make and receive calls. If an individual office happens to be down due to an Internet outage, this does not affect the overall reliability of the system, because the system was ready and able.

4) If my phone is unreachable, do you have automatic failover to another phone?

5) Do you monitor my phones and system 24/7/365 for any potential issues?

If you have to tell your provider the phones aren’t working, then find another provider. Any quality vendor should be monitoring and maintaining your system for you, using remote management tools. If you are missing calls, move on to a different system.

6) Do you offer a money-back guarantee?

If your provider is not willing to back up their claims with a WRITTEN, no-small-print, money-back guarantee, free of “weasel out” clauses, look for a vendor that does. Every phone-system sales guy is going to tell you how wonderful their system is and how you won’t experience any problems. If

they’re THAT confident, have them guarantee it in writing so you’re not stuck paying for a new system that doesn’t work.

We know many of you are hearing from Comcast and other vendors. If you remember one thing from this article, keep this in mind – VoIP runs over your Network and Internet lines, so **you need input from your Network provider!** This is an exciting, complicated, and constantly-changing technology. Before you sign anything, give us a call; it will be worth the investment!

Cathy and Larry Sightings

Catherine attended an Open House in Arizona for Family Policy Alliance, formerly known as Citizen Link. Their new President, Paul Weber, shared some great info.

Larry visited a couple of our East Coast clients in October. It was great to have face-to-face time.

‘You’re future is created by what you do today...not tomorrow.’

– Anon

Some Great Books to Check Out

A couple of great resources are available for building your core team, as well as your department teams.

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, by Patrick Lencioni

This book has a compelling story line, a fable, that walks through the various team members, their roles and qualifications, and how they communicate (or don’t) amongst themselves. It’s a fun read with a lot of interesting insights. Our Network Department had a great time reading through, then talking about the story and how some of the scenarios play out amongst ourselves.

Take it to the Bank, video with Horst Schulze, founder of Ritz-Carlton Hotels

This is an **amazing** video and worth your time. Hear Mr. Schulze describe his first visit to a bank that he was going to talk to the next day about Customer Service. It’s entertaining and there are some ‘zingers’ everyone in your company can benefit from hearing about. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DeV27LuB3IE>



Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Resist the Dark Side: Custom Lightsaber

The Sith Lord is about to strike – this is no time for an ordinary lightsaber. Time to pull out your own hand-made custom lightsaber...

You'd be hard-pressed to find an imaginary weapon as iconic as the Star Wars lightsaber. Haven't you (or someone you know) ever secretly yearned to wield one against an evil warlord? Well, in case you didn't know – you can. And, with your own custom-made lightsaber, you'll be well-armed.

These are no ordinary Hasbro plastic toys. In fact, the features and choices available at some of the top-rated lightsaber shops could well leave you "starstruck." From "flash-on-clash" to blade color to heavy, medium, or light battle-readiness, to custom soundboards and circuitry, the choice is yours.

If you're a diehard do-it-yourselfer, complete kits are available. You can even get a double-bladed or cross-guard-type lightsaber. Prices range from about \$400 on up. For more details, check out <http://www.ultrasabers.com/>.

Choose well, young Padawan.

Construction Corner

For our clients who use Sage 100 Contractor

Interesting 'bug' in version

19.7.52.0

I was checking an employee's accrued vacation in the 5-2-1 screen, and when I was done, I hit Escape to leave the screen – I hadn't changed anything. I received the message that my changes were not saved, 'Yes' to Save, 'No' to leave without changing, and 'Cancel' to return to the screen.

I was still on the Compensation tab and happened to notice that the Pay Period now said 3-Semi-monthly. No one in our company is paid semi-monthly; odd... So I exited without saving, and on a hunch, did the whole thing again.

When you hit 'Escape' the Pay Period automatically changes to 3-Semi-monthly. This takes me back to my standing recommendation that you should **always** use Escape or Exit, never the Save button, when looking things up. Many, many clients use 'Save' to exit a screen, then call me with bizarre results and say they didn't change anything. I would add the word 'intentionally' and I believe you, but if you're in the habit of using 'Save' to exit a screen, whether or not you made a change, it's time to change your habit and here's a great example of why. Try it yourself!

Progress Billing: What are Those Radials for Anyway?

I was working with some office staff and their list of questions. When you're in the Progress Billing screen (3-7), and you click the calculator, there are two choices with radials in front of them. What's the difference and when to use which one?

The first one says 'Calculate the Current column based on the amounts entered in the Percentage column.' This is a great one to use when you are asked to bill 50% of a line item, or 25% of a line item. Update the %Complete column with the percent estimated through the end of the Billing cycle, then choose this first radial. The system will automatically calculate the amount for the Current column based on these percentages, and each row can have a different percent.

What about the second radial? Sometimes the decision is to bill a specific dollar amount, so enter the amount in the Current Complete column and choose the second radial, 'Calculate the Percent column based on the amounts entered in the Current and Stored columns.' The system will calculate the percent based on the dollar amounts from the Previous and Current columns.

Note: If you have calculated based on the percent, and you now want to round out the results in the Current column, simply update the numbers in the Current column and use the second radial to recalculate.

How Do I Get a Backlog Report to Give to the Bank?

Use the Job Status field in the 3-5 Job Screen. This is a lot easier (and more accurate) than keeping a spreadsheet. When a contract is committed, create the job in the 3-5 screen and use the status 3-Contract. This indicates you have the work but you are not yet actively scheduling for the job. Be sure to include the Contract amount (it can always be updated later when the final contract arrives) AND the Project Started date on the third tab.

Print the backlog report using the 3-1-1-41 (or similar) report for Job Status 3. You'll have an on-demand list of contract backlog work that can be sent as a PDF, printed to Excel, or just printed and left on the Estimators' desks.

Don't forget to go back and update the status to 4-Current when the job starts and adjust the final contract amount if needed. Add the Contract Signed date and maybe use the paperclip to attach Tax Exempt letters, and other job-specific documents.
—CMW



Other Stuff

Being “smart” isn’t just for phones and TVs anymore.



Soon, Microsoft’s Cortana will be able to see inside your fridge. With cutting-edge, fridge-safe technologies, Cortana can identify the foods you place there. After spending some time with your fridge’s contents, Cortana learns your food preferences. It can even offer up recipes or shopping lists to make your life easier. While other smart fridges have cameras that show users what’s inside without opening the door, the Cortana version actually helps you keep your fridge stocked. By the time this fridge hits the market, it will have captured thousands of photos of food packages from around the world. And that means you may soon have a smart new helper when it comes to shopping and fixing meals.

-TechCrunch

Ditch the meeting, get more done.

The average manager spends 30%-50% of their time in meetings. And most feel 67% of meetings are an utter waste. So what can we do to stop killing time? Quit having meetings. Here are three ways to tell if a meeting is worthwhile. 1) Compare cost to benefit. Take the number of folks attending times their average pay rate. Multiply that by their time spent meeting. Is the desired outcome worth it? 2) Will this be a one-sided affair? A dead giveaway is the conference call when the boss puts everyone else on mute. 3) Is the meeting a guise for “communication”? Instead, send an e-mail, point to a website or suggest someone to consult with. Now you’re talking...

-Entrepreneur

Want earbuds that last – and sound great?

Bragi’s new earbuds, named simply The Headphone now have

“bragging rights” on both battery life and sound quality. At six hours of battery life, these buds shred all competition. That includes Erato’s Apollo 7 and the Earin buds – both of which wimp out at three hours. Bragi’s Headphone also delivers a crystal-clear sound that beats most Bluetooth and WiFi earbuds. And they let sounds come through from whatever space you’re in. They also receive phone calls and respond to voice commands. Plus, all of this is 100% wireless. They even include a sleek-looking lanyard-style carrying case. All that being said, The Headphone is well worth a look if you’re looking for a great pair of earbuds.

-DigitalTrends

Google’s Chromebook Pixel may have faded into a high-resolution sunset...

But the good news is, some great new challengers will soon take its place. The Dell Chromebook 13, for instance, sports a 1080p touch-screen display, aluminum chassis, glass trackpad and a (very fast) Intel Core i3 processor. Meanwhile, weighing in at just 2.9 pounds, the Toshiba Chromebook 2 delivers nearly the same performance as the Dell. Yet at a full two pounds less, you’ll appreciate its light weight. And the new kid on the block, the Acer Chromebook 14, offers a high-end feel and near top-of-the-line specs for just \$300. Any of these challengers will fill the bill for you if you love the low price of a Chromebook, but want something a little more premium.

-AndroidCentral.com

Who Else Wants To Win a \$25 Amazon Gift Card?

This month’s trivia question:

Who was the 38th President of the United States?:

a) Herbert Hoover b) Gerald Ford c) Ronald Reagan d) Richard Nixon

To enter: Go to www.Syscon-inc.com/Trivia and type in your answer. All correct answers will be put into a fishbowl and we’ll randomly draw the winner. The Winner will be contacted shortly after the deadline and will be announced in next month’s newsletter.

Deadline: November 21, 2016

Congratulations to last month’s Trivia Contest winner, **Rachael Garnett**, with

Warwick Construction, TX! Rachael’s name was drawn

from the fishbowl for last month’s correctly answered question:

Japanese computer-gaming company Nintendo was founded in what year:

c) 1889