

What's New

Welcome! Perhaps you've called our office recently and heard our 'Hold' music. These are original compositions written by Lawrence Wendt on our Realmusic label from the *Quiet Times Series*. The pieces feature some great Chicago-area musicians with background environmental sounds we collected from all over the U.S. Hope you enjoy!

Holiday Blessings to all of you and your staff. Our staff will enjoy time with their families on Friday Dec 23rd and Monday Dec 26th.

We love taking care of your IT so you can take care of your business!

- Catherine Wendt

\$1.5M Cyber-Heist Typifies Growing Threat



Efficient Escrow of California was forced to close its doors and lay off its entire staff when cybercriminals nabbed \$1.5 million from its bank account. The thieves gained access to the escrow company's bank data using a form of "Trojan horse" malware.

Once the hackers broke in, they wired \$432,215 from the firm's bank to an account in Moscow. That was followed by two more transfers totaling \$1.1 million, this time to banks in Heilongjiang Province in China, near the Russian border.

The company recovered the first transfer, but not the next two. They were shocked to discover that, unlike with consumer accounts, banks are under no obligation to recoup losses in a cyber-theft against a commercial account. That meant a loss of \$1.1 million, in a year when they expected to clear less than half that. Unable to replace the funds, they were shut down by state regulators just three days after reporting the loss.

Net result? The two brothers who owned the firm lost their nine-person staff and faced mounting attorneys' fees nearing the total amount of the funds recovered, with no immediate way to return their customers' money.

Avoid Getting Blindsided

While hacks against the big boys like Target, Home Depot, and Sony get more than their share of public attention, cyber-attacks on small and medium-sized companies often go unreported, and rarely make national headlines.

Don't let this lull you into a false sense of security. The number of crippling attacks against everyday businesses is growing. Cybersecurity company Symantec reports, for example, that 52.4% of "phishing" attacks last December were against SMEs - with a massive spike in November. Here are just a few examples out of thousands that you'll probably never hear about:

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December 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.

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- Green Ford Sales, a car dealership in Kansas, lost \$23,000 when hackers broke into their network and swiped bank account info. They added nine fake employees to the company payroll in less than 24 hours and paid them a total of \$63,000 before the company caught on. Only some of the transfers could be canceled in time.

“Require two people to sign off on every transaction.”

- Wright Hotels, a real estate development firm, had \$1 million drained from their bank account after thieves gained access to a company e-mail account. Information gleaned from e-mails allowed the thieves to impersonate the owner and convince the bookkeeper to wire money to an account in China.
- Maine-based PATCO Construction lost \$588,000 in a Trojan horse cyber-heist. They managed to reclaim some of it, but that was offset by interest on

thousands of dollars in overdraft loans from their bank.

Why You’re A Target – And How To Fight Back!

Increasingly, cyber thieves view SMEs like yours and mine as easy “soft targets.” That’s because all too often we have:

1. Bank accounts with thousands of dollars.
2. A false sense of security about not being targeted.
3. Our customers’ credit card information, social security numbers, and other vital data that hackers can easily sell on the black market.

If you don’t want your company to become yet another statistic in today’s cyberwar against smaller companies, **you MUST take action without delay – or put everything you’ve worked for at risk. The choice is yours.**

Here are three things you can do right away:

1. Remove software that you don’t need from any systems linked to your bank account.
2. Make sure everyone with a device in your network NEVER opens an attach-

ment in an unexpected e-mail.

3. Require two people to sign off on every transaction.

Let Us Help

When it comes to defending your data, whether it’s bank account information, customer and employee records, or proprietary intellectual property or processes, Do NOT take chances. Our experience with Technology Systems combined with our Business process experience over the last 30 years makes us a great resource to review your current situation and help implement necessary changes!

Cathy and Larry Sightings

Catherine attended an MSP event in Nashville where General Stanley McChrystal, Retired, presented on the topic of Teams in our businesses; really great event!

Larry rode with the Strada Bike Club in AZ on their ‘Hilly 100K’ to raise awareness and funds for Muscular Dystrophy.

‘Pleasure in the Job puts Perfection in the Work.’

– Aristotle

Client Spotlight: Eugene Matthews

Eugene Matthews has been in business for 21 years, a nice long time in the façade repair and restoration business. They have worked on over 6,000 projects ranging from \$2,000 to \$2,000,000. Some are as straight forward as tuck pointing, sealing, and caulking. Other more complex projects include high rise concrete restoration, as an example.

There are a couple of things that Eugene Matthews feels sets them apart from their competition. One is the way they approach a project. It’s not just about maintenance, but taking their years of experience to accurately diagnose the problem and what it will take to repair the root cause. Sometimes it turns out to be less drastic than originally expected, and they always provide a fair, detailed, and accurate assessment. Another differentiating factor is the Project Managers on staff. They have many years of experience in this industry, and with Eugene Matthews, sharing their knowledge as a team to meet the demands of the project and provide an excellent outcome.

If your building could use some attention, Jeff Dickson would love to hear from you at 312-666-4646. He would be happy to come out and take a look at your building and provide a needs assessment at no charge!

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Your Desk is Killing You: Do This Instead

The evidence is piling up that sitting all day is bad for your health. Though not perfect, Varidesk offers a compelling solution.

On the plus side, The Varidesk sets up right out of the box – no assembly required. With its weight-balancing system, you don't need any hardware to fasten it to your desk. And it features an attractive, sturdy design. You can lean on it and your monitor won't go crashing to the floor. Springs and levers make it easy to raise or lower it to one of 11 preset levels.

The main flaw is that when you raise it, it also moves forward – a problem if you're in a tight space. All in all, though, it's worth looking at, especially if you have a wireless keyboard and mouse – and enough space in your office or cubicle to back up a bit.

Construction Corner

For our clients who use Sage 100 Contractor



Fair Labor Standards Act—If it's not overturned, can S100C handle this?

Yes! We sent out some blogs and a video about this upcoming increase in the wage requirements (all on our website), and as late as November 23rd, the judge has put the December 1st roll out on hold—who knows what will happen next.

However, the rate is **only half the story** here. To be exempt from overtime wages, even for a salaried person, the job responsibilities must pass the Duties test. Loosely summarized, the person has to have some autonomy and authority to make decisions while performing their job. Strongly recommend that you double-check this.

If they don't pass the duties test, and they work over 40 hours, you may owe OT regardless of their salary amount. If that's the case, leave the Salary field as-is, then in the 5-2-2 grid, enter the date and OT hours and rate and process as usual. Check out my blog for more specifics.

—CMW

How To Get a FAST AP Aging Report

For years, the AP Aging report by Vendor (4-1-2 report) has been incredibly slow to generate. You can take your break, come back, and it still might be running. For some of our clients, you can go to lunch! Not only is this frustrating, it's a waste of overhead dollars since you cannot work on other things in Sage 100 Contractor while you wait.

What to do? Larry wrote a very fast AP Aging report by Vendor; he can't stop talking about it! Basically, it's a custom spreadsheet that is 'pointed' to your dataset. You enter the posting period, Refresh, and within seconds you have a spreadsheet, by vendor, with aging columns, ready for printing or data manipulation.

If you're interested, call the office and we'll get back to you with more specifics. If you regularly play the waiting game for this report, you're gonna love it!

—CMW



Wow! Great presentation in Nashville by General Stanley McChrystal, Retired. His comments and stories were thought-provoking and very appropriate to our businesses. I look forward to reading his new book *Team of Teams* (which I have a copy of!).

Thank you General, and thanks to all the Vets who have defended our country so we can enjoy our rights and responsibilities as citizens of the USA.

Other Stuff



Before You Choose A Hosting Company, Read This.

A competitor of ours that offers hosting similar to our offerings gets a lot of referrals because they give a referral fee; not uncommon, but something to be aware of. Very recently, their hosting environment was hit with the Cryptolocker virus and their clients were down for a week! Even when a company is referred to you, get client testimonials, ask questions, be sure you know what service you are buying, how secure it is, how they will recover when an attack comes (and it will), and ask for their backup plan if everything goes crazy! Can you afford to be down for a week?

-CMW

Retail Backup Solutions in the Cloud – Do You Know

How Long It Will Take To Get Your Data?

There are some great retail cloud backup solutions, but not all are appropriate for a business, even a small business. If you had to restore critical data from one of those cloud solutions, how long would it take to download those files (once you had a machine ready to download them to)? We had a client using one of these services; the data was correctly selected and all in the cloud ready to restore. The problem was that the critical files needed to run their day-to-day software had not fully downloaded **four (4) days later!** Not to mention all the other data they still needed to recover. It's not just about having a backup anymore, it's also about recovery time, cost per hour to be down, speeds to recover files from the cloud, and a whole lot more. Given the growing attacks, human error, and the need to have your computers every day, this is NOT a place to cheap-it-out; give us a call! - CMW

Social Media – A Positive Outcome with Yelp!

You may have read our recent article on the dark side of media; we have an encouraging story to share with you! I received an email from Yelp that we had a new review; very exciting. I logged on and found a terrible review saying we had not finished a project, not returned the deposit, and they had found a different company that they highly recommended and named right there. The 'review' was from the same town as the recommended company; VERY suspicious. I right-clicked and contacted Yelp to let them know that this seemed like a Marketing scam. We didn't have any such project in production, we certainly had not walked away from any project, and in 30 years of business, we've never absconded with a client's deposit! Would they please look into it? I got the automated reply, but much to my surprise, within a few days I received a real message. They agreed and took down the damaging review. Thanks Yelp for taking the time to look into this and taking it seriously! -CMW

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

This month's trivia question:

To view the objects at the surface of the water from a submarine under water, the instrument used is:

- a) kaleidoscope b) periscope c) spectroscope d) telescope

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: December 20, 2016

Congratulations to last month's Trivia Contest winner, **Beth McCormick**, with

Polhemus, Savery, DaSilva, in MA! Beth's name was drawn from the fishbowl for last month's correctly answered question:

Who was the 38th President of the United States?

- b) Gerald Ford

What To Do With Those Old Computers And Monitors?

We get this question all the time. For the computers, 'shred' the hard drives, including your copier hard drives. This is a specific process, or you can pull them and 'damage them.' There are recycling places that can pick up the equipment (depends on quantity), or you can bring your things to them!. Any questions, a tech will be happy to give you the details. -CMW