

What's New

Many of us are watching the last of the colorful leaves fall off the trees, and we've even had a snow flurry or two. Shopping has begun in earnest and the stores are full of lights and music.

We're also busy preparing for the end of 2017. We have year-end payroll closing webinars coming up; opportunities to replace that server or laptop (how old is it?) and take the Section 179 tax write off; final testing before the move to S100C version 20; and wrapping up those jobs before the hard freeze gets here!

Have a Safe and Blessed Holiday!

- Catherine Wendt

December 2017



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.



Choosing to Work In a Cloud Environment

Part II: The Private Cloud

'In the Cloud' is something we hear all the time. There are public clouds and private clouds, and they're different.

Last month, we talked about the **Public Cloud**, what it is, how it works, and the pro's and con's of using the Public Cloud for business needs. What about the Private Cloud?

A **Private Cloud** is a great solution for a multi-location veterinarian clinic, or a multi-location church that has its servers, backups, and infrastructure centrally located (one location). Many (if not all) users access the network, software, printers, security cameras, and on-premise software through Remote

Desktop Services or an internet browser. All users authenticate through the network's Active Directory (AD) and all security is handled by the network administrator(s).

Another example is a company with no central office; perhaps everyone works remotely. If the server is hosted in the cloud, all parties can access the server which can be centrally backed up. In a private cloud solution, you have a lot more flexibility about security, control over software upgrades, and backup options. Most private cloud solutions provide a flat monthly amount for the resources and licensing, allowing you to pay for what you need, when you need it. These agreements may include local equipment and support, or

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only the hosted server(s).

Advantages start by trading the replacement cost of aging equipment, equipment maintenance, network software and licensing, all for a monthly fee to use what you need. This is a great way to avoid large purchases and amortization, and avoid future hardware upgrades. When business-specific software has a new release, you can choose when/if to upgrade, allowing you to plan ahead for staff training and roll out. Even local computers can be less expensive since they only serve as a gateway to access the hosted server. If you don't need Office Word and Excel on the local computer, you may even lower your cost for software on these local devices.

There's a flip-side to this option, as well. You still need that internet connection, so your local Internet Service Provider (ISP) up-time and speeds become a big deal. If you're on the road, everything is accessi-

ble, but you're still at the mercy of the ISP where you are.

Your business-critical information is not under your control. Does your IT company have control of the equipment and services where your hosted server resides? This is where a trusted IT company becomes so important, and you want a company, not a one-man show. It's important that your solution provider is reputable, pays their bills on time, and is integral in their business dealings – this is your company's data, your livelihood. What backups do they have in place? What security is in place? How quickly can they respond? Is there redundancy built into their services in case power goes out or the ISP goes down? What about a natural disaster; how will you get to your server?

There are cultural differences, too. If you're working on a cloud server, you may have to stream music over the local computer rather than over the cloud

connection; printer choices may be limited or slower than you're used to; policies about saving documents locally may need to change to be sure they're backed up and accessible to others. Your staff will have new things to learn such as how to extend a desktop across multiple screens, or how to recognize if you're on the cloud server or the local desktop.

Lastly, it's not really a 'cloud.' Everything we've been talking about runs on hardware, requires software, needs power, and has to have internet access.

Cathy and Larry Sightings

Congratulations to Focus on the Family, 40 Years in Ministry. The Disney Dream Cruise celebration was amazing!

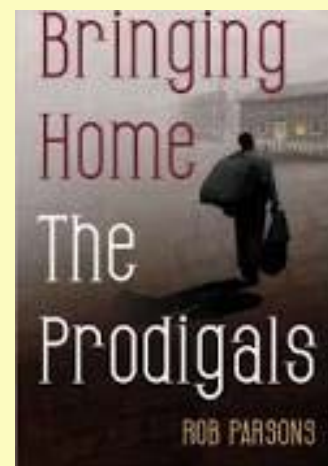
'Don't mistake activity with achievement.'

- John Wooden

Bringing Home The Prodigals by Rob Parsons

Most people are familiar with the story of the prodigal son. He demands his half of his father's inheritance, leaves home, squanders everything, and decides it would be better to be a hired hand on dad's farm than to starve to death. When he shows up with his speech, how does the dad respond? How does the brother respond?

There are many families with a light on every night, waiting for that prodigal son or daughter. Rob Parsons shares heart warming stories, as well as some that will break your heart. Whether you're waiting for a lost family member or not, this is an eye-opening book. It causes you to stop and think how we interact with the next generation in social activities, as well as in the work environment. Recommended! – CMW



Shiny New Gadget Of



Email Signature Rescue

The business world runs on e-mail. According to LifeWire, around 269 billion e-mails are sent around the world each and every day. But for every e-mail sent, millions go unread, and those that do are often found wanting. How, in the midst of all that noise, can you possibly get your own work e-mails to stand out?

Enter E-mail Signature Rescue (emailsignaturerescue.com), a business dedicated to creating custom, professional e-mail signature templates for all kinds of companies and teams. Using their proprietary software, it's easy to build a robust and beautiful HTML e-mail signature template that will make your e-mails pop. Signatures may seem small, but they can go a long way toward convincing a recipient that you mean business.

News From Our Techs

Why Do I Need To Replace My Server, Firewall, Laptop?

It's coming to the end of the year and many of our clients think about what equipment they need to purchase, and if they're going to pull the trigger, they'd like to buy it this year if they can get the tax credit.

On one such call, the owner said they've had their server for eight (8) years, so when should they start thinking about replacing it. I responded that every day, when they arrive at the office and it's running, they should give thanks!

If you get four (4) years out of your server, you're doing great. It's not just how long the equipment will last, but the age of the operating system, the speed of the drives, and the processor speed, to name a few things. In the meantime, you're adding new software, upgrading old software, and all of these count on the latest hardware speeds for a great user experience.

Firewalls are another upgrade option. These are your first line of defense between the outside internet and your network. The firmware needs to be updated from time-to-time during maintenance, but that's not enough. These devices also have a life-cycle. The manufacturers will issue end-of-life dates on the Firewall units. After a certain date, they will not renew annual service agreements, they'll stop issuing firmware updates, so any known loop-holes can be exploited. How old is your firewall? Is it already end-of-life?

The last one I'll mention is the laptop/

workstation. I've seen bookkeepers with ancient workstations that are slow and frustrating to use. Replace it! Not only will your bookkeeper save time each day, but you'll have an appreciative employee. - *CMW*

Monitoring Your Information On the Dark Web

We've had a great response to a new service we began offering this Fall. Now available for small to medium-sized businesses, this service monitors the Dark Web for breaches involving your company domain name and associated email.

You'd be surprised as to what data is available for sale on the Dark Web. We've seen passwords compromised, the home address, father's middle name, previous addresses, all the necessary information to get past security protocols; and it's for sale.

If you're interested in finding out more about this service, we are offering to run your company's domain name as a one-time search at no cost to you. We'll show you the results so you can be confident all is well, or take steps to get passwords changed, remove former employees from your network, or any other necessary steps. We offer the monitoring service, where you can receive notifications when new compromises are found. Just give us a call!



Construction Corner



Some things to watch out for in Sage 100 Contractor version 20?

Sage is working very hard to get everyone moved to version 20. They won't release any 2017 yearend tax forms, or the 2018 updated tax tables for version 19. That's a lot of incentive, so we're all racing the clock to make this change.

As more and more companies move to version 20, we're uncovering quite a few 'gotcha' type of frustrations. Here are a couple we've uncovered so far...

- A Final Compute in payroll will fail if the employee has negative vacation hours. This has never been an issue, but it is in version 20. Some of the frustration is that not all companies track vacation

hours the same way. There are two methods in the 5-2-1 screen, and we encourage you to consider using one of them (it's way better than the spreadsheets you use now, anyway!). Either way, if you have someone with negative vacation hours in their 5-2-1 screen, you will not be able to Final Computer their payroll record (5-2-2) in version 20, so plan ahead.

- ACH and Direct Deposit files need to be saved to a specific location, something other than the default. In previous versions, these files were in a specific folder under the shared drive letter, then MB7, under the company dataset. All of that structure is changed. Not only that, but the default location that comes up in version 20 is a location that most users do not have security access to, and are unfamiliar with. To top things off, if you choose a new location (and we recommend you do),

version 20 does not 'remember' what was chosen, so you have to choose it each and every time. We recommend creating a file on your User Drive (often G:) which should have restricted access from other users, or choosing a folder visible to only specific people, and have your tech setup the rights to the folder.

- Migrating prior year archives (payroll and fiscal) will have to be done, but there are a LOT of steps and some unexpected issues, especially for those of you who have been on the software for many years. Watch for our webinar on this where we'll walk through the steps and provide a checklist.



Collecting Time From the Field Just Got Exciting!

We're helping our clients collect field time from mobile devices, and we're fully integrated (really!) with Sage 100 Contractor version 20.

We can collect cost code information, work order numbers, phases, client signatures, and a whole lot more. Interested?

Your field can use iPhones, Androids, or Tablets. Join us for our next demo!

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

This month's trivia question:

Time to shut down the computer. Which is one reason you should go to Start and choose Shut Down rather than just turning it off?

- There is no reason; it's perfectly safe to just flip the switch
- Flipping the switch could cause your computer to explode
- By just turning it off, you risk losing your work, even it was saved
- Your computer sometimes installs updates when you shut it down properly

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, 2017

There were no entries for last month's Trivia Contest, so we are sending the \$25 to the Phoenix Rescue Mission!

Toothbrushes are as old as the history of humanity. From what were the first teeth-cleaning devices, known as chew sticks, manufactured?

- Tree Twigs