

What's New

We're all looking forward to an extra long weekend at the end of the month with our favorite Thanksgiving dishes.

Our office has been under construction! We have new floors, ceiling tiles, fresh paint, new kitchen cabinets, and right at our entrance, a really neat window with our logo etched into it. If you're nearby, stop in and take a look; we'd love to see you.

We're also putting together dates for our yearend closing webinar. We're booking appointments for payroll closing assistance, too, so give us a call to schedule your slot.

Have a blessed Thanksgiving!
- Catherine Wendt

November 2019



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

We love this stuff!
We are committed to helping businesses use technology to run their organization successfully and profitably.



3 Ways To Prevent Your Employees From Leaking Confidential Information

A lot of businesses need to come to terms with the fact that their employees are their greatest IT risk. As a business owner, you may be aware of cyber-threats to your business, but your employees might not be. They might not know about the threat of cyber-attacks or malware. They might use unsecured WiFi on company equipment. As a result, your employees may be putting your business at serious risk.

What can you do to change that?

1. IT ALL STARTS WITH EDUCATION. One of the biggest reasons why employees put their employer at risk simply comes down to a lack of education. They don't know about the threats targeting businesses or that small businesses are a major target of hackers and scammers.

You need to do everything you can to

train your employees. Give them the education and resources to be a line of defense rather than a risk. Develop a consistent training regimen. If you need to bring in IT professionals to help, do it. Don't make assumptions about critical IT security training if you aren't sure. Professionals can answer your questions and make sure you and your employees have everything you need to know to keep your business secure.

Another important thing is to *hold this training regularly*. Threats evolve, and you need to stay ahead of the curve. Keep IT security on the minds of your employees. When they forget about it, that's when the risk is highest.

2. SAY NO TO UNSECURED, PUBLIC WIFI. This is a big problem for businesses with remote employees, employees who work from home or employees who use

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company technology outside of the business walls. According to a Spiceworks study, 61% of employees said they have connected to unsecured WiFi while working remotely.

This is cause for concern. Connecting to public WiFi is like leaving the front door of your home wide-open while posting on social media that you're going to be out of town for a week. You never know who is going to let themselves in and snoop around. Hackers use public hot spots to circulate malware and steal data. Sometimes they even set up fake hot spots with the same name as a legitimate hot spot to trick users into connecting to their WiFi, which makes data theft *even easier*.

Discouraging your employees from

“It’s all about understanding the threats and taking a proactive approach to security.”

using unsecured, public WiFi is a good step to take, but don't be afraid to take it further. Don't let them connect company equipment to unsecured WiFi *at all*. And place a bigger focus on end-point security – make sure your equipment has up-to-date software, malware protection, local firewalls, as well as a VPN (virtual private network). The more layers of security, the better.

3. PROTECT ALL OF YOUR DATA.

Your employees should never save personal or business data on portable/external hard drives, USB drives or even as printed material – and then take that data out of the office. The theft of these types of devices is a real threat. An external hard drive is a tempting target for thieves because they *will* search the drive for sensitive data, such as financial or customer information that they can use or sell.

If you have remote employees who need to access company data, put a method in place to do just that (it should be discussed as part of your regular company IT security training). They need to know how to properly access the data, save the data or delete it, if necessary. Many businesses go with a secure cloud option, but you need to determine what makes the most sense for your business and its security.

While these three tips are great, noth-

ing beats helping your employees develop a positive IT security mindset. It's all about understanding the threats and taking a proactive approach to security. Proactivity reduces risk. But you don't have to go it alone. Working with experienced IT security professionals is the best way to cover all your bases – and to ensure your employees have everything they need to protect your business.

Is this convenient? No. But it sure beats being hacked, having data compromised, or receiving a ransomware notice. You have great employees; they're 'nice.' Teach them to be 'cautious as serpents, yet innocent as doves.'

Cathy and Larry Sightings

Catherine and Larry were joined by Carol Fuchs to perform a Schubert trio for horn, voice, and piano as part of the Chandler Chamber series. Carol and Cathy even performed a 20th century aria about a snowman coming to life. Several of our friends were able to attend, too – thanks!

'Excellence isn't doing extraordinary things. It is doing ordinary things extraordinarily well.'

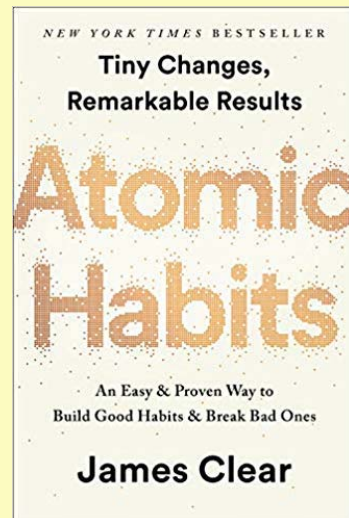
- Darren Hardy

Atomic Habits by James Clear

The story of James Clear is fascinating; a freak accident during a high school baseball game left him in a coma on life support. Miraculously, he survived, but was then faced with quality of life limitations. Motor skills had to be re-learned; the recovery road was very long. Knowing the odds were long, he committed to small improvements and structured routines to gain back some semblance of his life.

The steps to form habits and rebuild his physical strength were choices he made, one at a time, with the focus on small improvements. Over time, staying the course, these small improvements created a tidal wave of results. In reflecting on his journey, James identifies Four Laws of Behavior Change; 1) make it obvious; 2) make it attractive; 3) make it easy, and 4) make it satisfying.

What I appreciated the most out of the book is the section on the role talent and genetics play in our opportunities; he has a wonderful sports example. Then he talks about staying motivated, learning how to tolerate the boredom of 'staying in shape' in our area of discipline. An Excellent Book! - CMW



Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Dyson Pure Hot + Cool Air Purifier

The Dyson Pure Hot + Cool Air Purifier takes air purification to the next level. It's a fan, space heater and air purifier all in one. It includes a HEPA filter that helps reduce allergens and pollutants as it quietly cycles air through your home or the room of your choice.

One of the best features of the air purifier is the ability to monitor your home's air quality in real time, and the information appears on an easy-to-read display. Through this display, you can actually see your home's air quality improve! On top of this, the air purifier is an Internet of Things device. Connect it to your WiFi and control it directly from your smartphone, or enable voice control through Amazon Alexa.

From the Techs

Who Hosts Your Domain Name?

We just went through the process of moving all our hosted email clients from an end-of-life anti-spam service to a new service. This kind of project is typical in the IT industry, but we always learn a 'lesson' during the course of the work. In this case, we found out that a few of our clients have some pretty risky (sketchy) companies hosting their domain.

Your domain name is the website address, the extension on your email address; basically, the location of your company's online presence. Two of the most well-known and reputable companies are Go Daddy and Network Solutions. Did I mention this is the location of your online presence? Not a place to cut corners.

In making this anti-spam change, we had to point the new anti-spam service to each client's hosted domain provider. The anti-spam service filters inbound and outbound email messages and often filters 90+ percent of the incoming mail as junk. When this service stops or fails, you are inundated with ridiculous and offensive email, non-stop!

We had to contact each client's domain hosting company and re-point the MX records; suffice it to say that we were re-routing to the new filtering source. Well, we came across some pretty scary scenarios. Some of these were one-man shops; what if they go out of business? Some we could only contact via email and had to wait for them to respond in order to make the change.

Your domain name is a very important part of your online identity. Give some serious thought to moving it to a business-class

organization. It is worth the few extra bucks you might have to spend. - CMW

A Lesson From the Notre Dame Fire

Many of you followed the news when this historical building was on fire. In April 2019, a fire broke out as restoration work was underway. While the fire was happening, many hands were focused on rescuing the artifacts held within this historical building. Some were under lock and key, with combinations, so it took a while to get to the artifacts.

Firefighters, volunteers, staff, and historians were on hand to assist. Due to the restoration, many were already working on cataloguing the various historical artifacts which saved time.

So what does this have to do with your business? So glad you asked. If you had a disaster – fire, water, corruption – do you have a plan to gather the 'artifacts' so you don't lose precious data and risk losing your business? That's what disaster recovery is all about. Maybe it's time for a conversation. - CMW



James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits*, the key note speaker at an industry event in Nashville (he's tall!).

Construction Corner



going on at any one time. The jobs have to make enough to cover the company's overhead costs.

Indirect Cost Allocations

Do you have indirect costs? These could be trucks, shop expenses, field cell phones costs, and similar. These are often costs that are part of getting the field work completed, but can't be charged to one specific job. Maybe you have a truck and even a driver that move between a lot of jobs; cell phones for PM's and Foremen that work on different jobs during the week; a shop that supports the field across all its jobs. These aren't overhead costs; they're absolutely necessary to get the field work done.

Overhead costs are typically thought of as expenses you have whether or not you have any jobs going on. Rent for the office, internet service, the receptionist, electric bills for the office, and similar are all expenses you have to pay every month whether you have one job or fifty

For Indirect expenses, each job has to make enough to cover its portion of the indirect costs. There has to be enough profit in the job not only to cover materials and direct labor, but truck deliveries, project managers, cell phones, and the various expenses that are part of running a shop.

So what are the options to allocate these costs down to the jobs each month? Some of the most common are to allocate by the **total number of labor hours**; or the **total revenue billed** on the job; or as a **percent of total job costs**. We usually recommend talking through these scenarios and even running a few tests to see which one makes the most sense.

Next month we'll break down the three most common indirect allocation methods and how they can be applied. In the meantime, if you're already using one of these methods,

Our most anticipated webinar—*Closing the Year in Sage 100 Contractor!* We'll walk through ALL of the steps to close your payroll and get ready for the new year, **Thursday December 12th at 11:30 Central Time**. Sign up to reserve your slot—no charge to Syscon clients!

it can be time-consuming work to get the calculations, determine the job cost records that need to be posted, and setup the allocation journal entry. We have a tool, our Indirect Cost Allocation Program (ICAP) that automates this process, allows you to choose your method, and even allows you to select which accounts are considered indirect. Then it does the math, creates the journal entry right in Sage 100 Contractor, with job costs, for your review and ultimately for you to post – a fantastic time-saver. Give us a call if you'd like to see our recorded demo or have other questions! – CMW



Collecting Time From the Field Just Got Exciting!

You won't find a better, fully integrated, field time collection solution than ours because we wrote it to do what our clients told us they needed!

Interested? Give us a call or check out our landing page on the website!

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

This month's trivia question:

George de Mestral, a Swiss engineer, came up with what brilliant "fastening" product after becoming irritated at the number of burrs attached to his clothes and his dog after hunting in the Alps?

- a) Zippers b) Velcro c) Buttons d) Shoelaces

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 20, 2019

Congratulations to last month's Trivia Contest winner, Susanne Cole with **Controlled Access** in GA! Susanne's name was drawn from the fishbowl for last month's correctly answered Question:

Which of the following is the correct order for the next three prefixes after "Mega-", from smallest to largest??

- d) Giga-, Tera-, Peta-