ALL THINGS TECH

Brought to you by **SYSCON**

Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier And More Profitably

What's New

Unprecedented craziness! Our lives have been turned upside down in a matter of a few weeks. There are so many ripple effects ahead impacting our family, friends, finances, careers, neighbors, travel, even our shopping for basic needs.

Many of our clients have been in our hosted environments which were designed for remote access, so they are all set, or need minimum changes. Others we've been able to setup with safe and secure remote tools. Please call us if you need anything related to your computers.

Keep calm; stay safe; follow the safety guidelines. Your team is looking to you to set the tone and provide leadership; be there for them! - *Catherine Wendt*

April 2020

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.

We're Open!

On March 22nd, we sent a short video update to all of our clients. Computer services are necessary to allow the population to work remotely and stay in touch with family and friends, and that's our industry.

This is the announcement we sent:

To our Clients: Our primary office is in Illinois. In response to IL Governor Pritzker's announcement on Friday March 20th, we wanted to provide an update for you, our clients.

We are happy to report that most of our clients are in our hosting environments which are built for remote access, so they can work from anywhere as long as they have an internet connection. This has been a seamless transition, working remotely, for all our clients on these platforms.

We provide essential computer services for our customers and are considered an essential business. We are staffed and working, ready to take your calls and provide remote support so you can use your computers, access your email, submit your field time, file required reports on time, get your payroll out, pay bills, and deposit cash receipts.

For our clients with on premise servers, we've put together two safe and secure options to provide remote access for your staff. We sent this information on Wednesday March 18th as an email. If you need a copy or didn't receive it, please call the office (we're also including in this newsletter). It's also available under our Blogs on the Syscon website—www.syscon-inc.com.

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Along with safety and cleaning protocols at our office, we're taking extra precaution by adding the following updates:

- Routine client visits will cease through the April 7th date given by the Governor. Please stay tuned for any possible changes with this date.

- We are prepared to provide on-site emergency visits in situations where a client's server has failed or is at risk of failure.

These are strange days. We will follow the recommendations while taking precautions to safeguard our staff and their families. Many things are beyond our control; we will be vigilant with the things we *can* control. Call us if you need anything.

Top 3 Options for Remote Access

What a crazy moment in time—each day brings new news and more changes. This is an amazing time—with computers as part of our daily lives, we are in a unique moment in history where a large part of the population can truly 'isolate' themselves for their own protection and the protection of those around them, and still work!

We're waiving the setup fee for our hosted and managed clients through May 31st.

So here are the Top 3 remote access options in order of recommendation:

First, our favorite, the best for security and user experience, log into a Terminal Server with Remote Desktop Connection (RDC) using your regular network log on credentials. The server has additional security, it's backed up, it has all the user profiles and permissions, and it has all the software programs and data you need.

The second option is to use our Take Control feature! It's a monthly service with a one-time setup fee that allows you to remotely connect to your office computer or laptop. When you Take Control, you take over your computer and you can see everything on your computer. The monthly fee is $9.95 with a one-time $50 setup fee. The monthly fee allows you to scale up or down as needed. BTW—for clients in our hosted or fully managed services, we're waiving the setup fee through May 31st.

The third option is also very secure. You purchase an SSL VPN license, we configure access through the Sonicwall firewall, then you sign in through the internet to remotely access the computer, safely. Eash license is a one-time $50 purchase and a $90 one-time setup fee. There's no monthly charge since you now own these licenses. To scale up, you can purchase more licenses; you can transfer a license between users. If you no longer need a license, it can be saved for future use.

We're ready to help—630-850-9039.

Cathy and Larry Sightings

Catherine was in Washington DC assisting a client. Nice to finally meet the staff in person!

Larry had several events cancelled, as many people did last month. Birthdays go on anyway, so we celebrated with some excellent steaks.

'Keep it simple and focus on what matters. Don't let yourself be overwhelmed.'
- Confucius

Free to Focus by Michael Hyatt

Like many authors in this space, Michael Hyatt started his journey when he found himself successful, but overworked, out of touch with his family, and experiencing health issues—there had to be a better way!

He starts with the need to Stop and decide what you want, evaluate where you're going and re-energize yourself. Then there's the work of learning when to say 'No,' determining what you love and are best suited to do, and taking yourself out of tasks that others can do (maybe even better than you!). Finally, he works through specific action steps you can take to put in motion what you've learned about yourself and your goals. Many of the concepts are found in similar books.

The book is very practical. He has online tools to assist with some of the list-making assignments so you're not staring at a blank piece of paper. There are some nice quotes and some great reminders. One of the reminders I appreciated was, 'ideas in your business or personal life come when you're relaxed enough to let your mind wander.' A good reminder in our fast-paced lives! - *CMW*

From the Techs
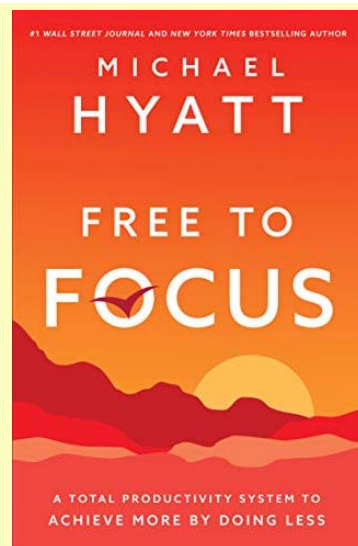
Shiny New Gadget

NexOptic Double-Take Binoculars

Binocular technology has remained the same for a long time – and for good reason! It works well. But now, one company has decided to bring binocular optics into the 21st century and give it a technological makeover.

NexOptic's DoubleTake blends binoculars with common smartphone technology. With 10x digital zoom and a wide field lens, DoubleTake delivers outstanding 4K video and high-resolution photos. Plus, it's packed with a powerful imaging processor to ensure your videos and photos look fantastic every time, and its compact size makes it ideal for travel.

DoubleTake's battery provides three hours of continuous use, meaning it will last most people several days or more before the next charge. Images are saved to an onboard memory card and can be sent over WiFi to your phone or other device for easy sharing or personal use. Learn more at NexOptic.com/doubletake.

User Passwords—Tracking

It's been a long time since this came up, but with all the remote access changes in the last few weeks, the topic of who knows the users' passwords has come back to the top of our clients' minds.

We don't track your users' passwords. We never have, we don't now, and we don't see this changing in the near future. There are a couple of very good reasons.

A user can choose to change their password any time they wish. We cannot see their password anyway, so we would have no way to know what they changed it to.

In fact, when we setup a new user, we send a temporary password. As soon as they log in for the first time, they are prompted to change the password right away. You've probably run into this when you've been given a temporary password for a website login; same idea. This provides safety for you and for your user. No one has the new password except the user.

We can change a password for any user, any time you need this done. If a user's account has been compromised, or their computer is lost, we can change the password right away. If they're leaving your company or you've released them, we can change the password.

One other thought—we recommend requiring users to change their passwords every 90 days. We know that many people use the same password on other sites. Requiring a change every 90 days limits the risk of compromised passwords in your environment.

When it comes to the users' login and password, we do not and cannot track their passwords. A user can change their password any time they wish. We can change their password any time *you* wish!

Microsoft Patches—Lots of Big Updates

So you're finally on Windows 10 (at least you should be). Microsoft has some significant updates for the Windows 10 machines. These are all good updates, no concerns, but the files are larger than usual, so downloading them during a patch management window is taking longer than you're used to.

So how do we know all of this? Well, we have Windows 10 computers, but the real answer is the calls we've been receiving. Several of our clients have shut down the updates because they were taking too long and didn't want to wait. The end result was that the computer became 'frozen' and wouldn't respond. In two cases, we actually had to rebuild the computer; time-consuming and expensive!

For many of our clients, we review the Microsoft patches each week, determine they're ready and stable to be released, approve them, then they automatically get 'pushed' out to our clients' computers on a predetermined day and time. This process is Patch Automation, a service we provide. Sometimes the comuter needs to restart, other times they just install without a reboot.

Let your staff know about this longer install cycle and ask them to be patient and plan ahead so they're not rushing out to a meeting when these updates are happening. – *CMW*

Construction Corner

Changing Jobs— Employer Tax Rules

When helping some clients with yearend W-2's, there were problems with the FICA reporting. As we dug in, turns out that when the employee joined the company, they were close to the FICA limit and didn't want to exceed it, so the employer agreed to consider previous FICA contributions and only take the difference through the end of the year— that's not how this works.

Let's stick with the FICA situation. Regardless of when a new employee starts, the FICA rules begin. And you the employer have to match those contributions. It is possible that between you and the previous employer, the total employer contribution will exceed the limit, and the government is just fine with that.

As for the employee, at the end of the year they'll have more than one W-2. If between them the employee has contributed beyond the limit, they can handle that on their tax return. Get with your CPA on this, but I believe it's considered as an overpayment that can be used against any taxes owed. This is how the employee will be made whole.

The SUTA and FUTA limits are handled the same way, and they're a much lower bar. If an employee has 3 jobs and earns at least $7,000 at each job over the year, each employer will pay the FUTA contribution for that employee. Same thing for State Unemployment.

Bottom line: You can't override the calcs for a new employee. They need to pay in, and you need to match.—*CMW*

Union Benefits and Wage Changes—Webinar!

One of our most popular webinars is just around the corner. We cover the process of **updating Union Paygroup wages and benefits in Sage 100 Contractor**. We also include tips and tricks to make sure you can pass audits with flying colors, and have correct pay info for your employees.

This year the webinar will be **Thursday May 14th at 1:00 Central** time. You can sign up on our website (www.syscon-inc.com/events) or call the office and we'll sign you up right then and there. –*CMW*

New I-9 Form Starts April 30th

ASA of Arizona issued an alert regarding the new I-9 form. On January 31st, USCIS issued a new version of the Form I-9, according to this alert. Most of what I'm sharing is a direct quote thanks to Julie Pace, David Selden, and Heidi Nunn-Gilman.

The newest version of the I-9 is dated 10/21/2019 in the bottom left corner and expires 10/22/2022. Through April 29th, employers can use the 7/17/2017 or the 10/21/2019 forms. After April 30th, only the 10/21/2019 form is valid. If you use the older version it is considered a technical error and can result in fines.

According to this same notice, the changes are mostly in the Instructions section of the form. They suggest printing the latest form and posting it with other required employment posters.

If you have questions or need more info, you can contact American Subcontractors Association of Arizona, or I'm happy to forward the notice to you.—*CMW*

Learn to Love Your Mondays

Processing last week's time just got a LOT easier. You won't find a better, fully integrated, field time collection solution than ours because we wrote it to do what our clients need!

No more pictures of hand-written time cards. No need to key it all in by the deadline. One place to call for support! Interested? **Want to enjoy Mondays again?** Join us Thursday, **April 30th at 11:30am Central Time** to hear all about it! Register at www.syscon-inc.com/events.