



What's New

Welcome to 2021! New year, new opportunities, new goals, and a new weekly planner book. Hope you had a safe and fun holiday season with your family, and lots of good food!

What's new? We have new switches in our hosted environment; a new 6-page newsletter, with a new name; M365 and Azure hosting for us, coming soon to our clients; we're featuring one of our clients each month (page 6); and much more!

I'm taking the *Hero's Journey* program presented by Darren Hardy, author of *The Compound Effect*. This is a new year-long program, so I'm going to post my progress through Linked In. Feel free to check in on the posts! - *Catherine Wendt*

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January 2021



Zoom



Teams



Go To Meeting



Webex

Remote Meeting Software: Which One To Use?

In early December, I presented a webinar through ASA Chicago with a fellow colleague. Our topic was remote meeting software options, features, and what makes them different from each other. It was very well received, so I thought I'd share our findings with all of you.

Webex – This is a Cisco product, designed for enterprise companies with multiple locations, in multiple countries, with multiple presenters. It has an impressive list of languages it supports, BTW. It has all the important features such as screen sharing, application sharing, cloud recording and storage.

Although this is overkill for most of our clients, you may find yourself on the participant side of the product. As many of you know, we are Sage Business partners, VMware partners,

Microsoft partners, and have many other tech-related partnerships with multi-national corporations. It's not unusual to be on a Webex meeting with one of these vendors. The good news is that as a participant, there are only a few things to learn when joining these meetings, and the user experience is similar to other products.

Zoom – They've been around a while, but their user base has risen at an amazing pace since March and April of 2020. They have the necessary features such as video and conference calls. There's even a free version with limited features and a max of 45 minutes for the meeting.

When you're on a Zoom meeting, Chat is available. You can hold one-on-one or group webinars. They have screen sharing, file sharing, and the 'take control' feature for easier collaboration.

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The price point is very competitive with other products. It's free to attend someone's meeting, and the free version may meet some basic needs. Plan to spend between \$15 and \$20 a month. They have some great promo pricing!

When it comes to security though, they have been behind the times. Zoom is well known for feature enhancements, but their security was not up to the task last Spring, so some meetings were hijacked or had drop in guests that were not welcome!

The good news is that they immediately saw the need and focused all their efforts on security. However, they are very clear that if you use Zoom, "Whether you have a Zoom account or not, we may collect Personal Data from or about you when you use or otherwise interact with our Products." Proceed with caution!

Teams – I'm going to hit the high-lights, then turn to page 5 for more info on this product. They have everything you need in a remote meeting; video and audio, chat, group webinars, screen sharing, take-control, real time collaboration, file sharing, you name it.

One thing that makes it different than Zoom is that you can chat even if there isn't a meeting. Also, the data is encrypted in transit and at rest, is SOC 1 and 2 compliant and meets HIPAA standards.

Best of all, if you already use M365 for email, Teams is included at no additional cost. If you're not on M365, for \$5 per month, you can have all these great features.

Go To Meeting – We use this all the time and have several licenses! It has all the basic meeting features such as screen sharing, take-control; webcam and audio options; the web app is great and easy to use; there are Drawing tools; you can record the sessions. It's easy to invite others, as well. Security includes SSL and AES-256 Encryption, SOC2 data centers, and more.

For training and interactive work during a meeting, this is a great tool. The price point is higher than Teams, comparable to Zoom, and there are pricing promos.

Still not sure? Give us a call and we can talk it through with you. This 'convenience' has now become a standard for those who must or can work remotely. – CMW

Cathy & Larry Sightings



Catherine participated in a live-stream Chamber concert over Facebook. Some great holiday music!

Larry had a chance to play French Horn in a brass ensemble in between Advent services.

'Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice and discipline.'

- Jim Collins

The Entrepreneur Roller Coaster by Darren Hardy

We've been in business 35 years and have seen many changes and lived through several economies. I thought this might be about startups, but it's not. This stuff applies right now!

In addition to many stories, Mr. Hardy talks through the thrilling ride of being in business for yourself – both sides of the 'thrill'! Each chapter covers a different aspect of business and includes specific homework as well as the location of online resources to work through the recommendations.



Book Nook

Topics include: What it really takes to survive; the pit falls you'll experience with friends and family; the truth about selling; specific steps for hiring; Leadership in the 21st century; how to determine your vital contributions to the business; addressing your fears; and so much more.

This book is very practical. It's definitely designed to get you to stop, grab some paper, and think through what's being asked. There are some great quotes and some great stories. You might check out the section on 'Beware of the Crabs' (there's a You Tube version, too). - CMW



Keyboard or Mouse?

Personal computer preferences can be very, well, personal. I love the number pad as part of my keyboard; Larry loves five (5) monitors (really!). Some people prefer the mouse while others find it frustrating to reach for the mouse so they use key stroke short cuts.

Shortcuts may change depending on what program you're using. Most of our clients use Outlook, so Jonathan would like to share the five most popular shortcut combinations for you keyboard lovers.

Ctrl + Enter – Send your message

Ctrl + Shift + C – Create a new contact

Ctrl + Shift + M – Create a new email message

Ctrl + Shift + Q – Create a new meeting request

Ctrl + K – Type a few letters of the user's name and use Ctrl-K to bring up a list of user names then, use the mouse to select the correct user.—*JS/CMW*

Internet Explorer (IE) 11

This product is officially retired! Turns out that there are some software programs out there that require IE in order to access. Microsoft is stepping up its efforts to bring an end to the popular browser.

In Office for the Web, there will be a banner in the yellow browser bar for Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote. Customers accessing the web apps through the IE11 browser will see this banner each week. If you have software that you think requires Internet Explorer, contact the manufacturer and find out what they have planned. – *CMW*

A Beautiful Desk!

About two years ago, Chris found an amazing SmartDesk. The multiple monitors are interactive and respond to hand motions; you can stand up to work; the desk space is nicely shaped to wrap the work area; there's a charger for your cell, too. Other than the price, the only problem was that it was a built-in workstation.

Well, we're happy to report that the latest Smart desk lets you dock your laptop for this amazing work space. Just in time for our new 'remote workforce' situation. Might be time for some of us to look at the fixed asset budget! - *CMW*



Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Looking Glass Portrait

This gadget turns pictures into a 3D display on a holographic viewer. You can use it as a standalone device, or convert your iPhone photos into holograms.

The Looking Glass Portrait uses holographic light field technology to generate between 45 to 100 views of a 3D scene. This means that the eye will perceive different stereoscopic images from different points of view (or different angles). You can upload your own iPhone photos or use the display's own software (for PC and Mac) to create your 3D display.

It's a 7.9 inch 4:3 display with a 2,048 x 1,536 pixel resolution. You can record up to 10 seconds of a video message and you can touch the holograms. It comes in three models: Looking Glass Portrait, Looking Glass 15.6", and Looking Glass 8K.

Learn more at:

<https://lookingglassfactory.com>



CONSTRUCTION CORNER



S100C Won't Final Compute

Several versions ago, Sage added a feature that did not allow you to Final Save a payroll record if there were negative vacation hours. That ended pretty quickly; they probably got a ton of calls! Not everyone tracks their vacation hours through the software (although we recommend that you do).

We thought that was the end of it, but in recent weeks, we found a new twist. A payroll record would not Final Compute and we checked all the little tricks we knew; nothing! Turns out that the person had just approached -992 vacation hours, and this payroll record would have put it over -1,000 hours. We cleared the Vacation tracking field and everything posted just fine (thanks Michelle). – CMW

FFCRA Act, 2020 W-2's

It's a bummer, but we're not surprised. We can't even imagine the pressure to roll out payroll-related policies before the ink is even dry, not to mention constant changes week after week. We've had to make COVID-related payroll payments without knowing what reporting might be needed, and at first, how the taxes would be handled. Then there were deferrals, and the list went on.

Now we need to report all three types of

"We can call and have a real person."

"I just like the fact that we can call and have a real person help us – I'm not calling and speaking to a computer. The personal contact is huge."

-Joan Lynch, Owner, Lynch Construction

COVID-related sick benefits on the W-2 for 2020. The good news is that if you've been tracking those wages (Syscon and Sage had recommended using the Absence codes in 5-2-2), then you have the info you need. So how to report on the W-2's?

Like many things in life, there's more than one way. We've seen some suggestions that as you work through the W-2 process in the 5-4 screen, you can edit the grid to add the Codes and

'Be sure to run the Payroll Audit and clean up any errors before creating 2020 payroll tax reports!'

amounts for Box 14, up to all three types of pay. However, if you have to re-run these, or re-create the file, you'll have to re-type everything – this is not our recommendation.

We recommend creating Pay calcs in 5-3 -1 with an impact of zero additional expense, one for each type of benefit you have to report. Create a hand compute record and enter the amount for each pay type and post. Tie out the Absence report totals to the pay calc totals. This can be done before or after closing the payroll.

If you've created the pay calc correctly, there is no impact to the Income Statement. If you ever need to re-generate the W-2's, you can have confidence that you'll get the same results. – CMW

Log In Error for S100C

Ever tried to log into Sage 100 Contractor, usually after an update, or a reboot, and get 'Failed to connect to the specified SQL Server'? It's a known bug; Sage points to Microsoft SQL, but the bottom line is you can't log in!

Here's what to do:

- Type **Services** in the computer's search bar.
- At the list of services, scroll down to the one called **SQL Service (SAGE 100CON)**.
- Right-click and choose **Properties**.
- Move to the **Log On** tab of the Properties screen.
- Highlight, then delete the **Password** and **Confirm password** fields and click OK.
- Right-click one more time and choose **Start**; you'll see a tool bar that says 'Running.'
- Go back and re-launch Sage 100 Contractor.

Save this info for your other Sage users. It comes up pretty often. If you'd like the screen shots, call the office or email Customer Support and we'll send them over. - CMW

Non-Deductible PPP Funds

If you have non-deductible PPP Funds, we recommend creating an account in the After Tax range to minimize impact to the Income Statement. Debit the loan and credit the new account in the After Tax range. This will keep your Revenue, Direct Expenses, and Overhead percentages and review in tact. – CMW



Joke of the Month

According to Construction pros, what is the best side of the house to have a porch?

The outside.

M365 Education Station

The first 10 things to do in Teams

1. Start with chat.

Create a small group chat with colleagues you work with most closely. You can name and 'favorite' the chat for easy reference.

2. Connect from anywhere.

Download the Microsoft Teams desktop and mobile apps to enable teamwork from anywhere.

3. Go big.

Create larger teams with dedicated channels to specific topics, projects, disciplines—whatever you like. Better to have fewer, larger teams with more channels than several small teams with few channels.

4. Customize channels.

Upload files to the appropriate channel and pin frequently used files to make it easier for everyone to find.

5. Add apps to channels.

Do more in one place by integrating favorite apps and services,

like Word, Excel, and Planner with team chats and meetings.

6. Consolidate 'need to know' content.

Use OneNote or the Wiki feature to spotlight important content like meeting follow ups and goals separate from conversations.

7. Spotlight resources.

Pin key websites used to track news, performance, or metric tracking so everyone can access this information right in Teams.

8. Elevate email conversations.

Forward email to a team channel to continue the discussion in a threaded chat conversation with attachments automatically uploaded for easy team co-authoring.

9. Share content from other services.

Set up connectors to push content from services like Twitter into Teams; get notified of the team's activity in that service.

10. Help foster active channels.

Be personally active in channels and @team to highlight posts for the whole group.



Tip of the Month

Did you know?

Got a messy office/work environment but no time to straighten up before your next video Teams meeting? No problem! Before joining the Teams meeting, click on the 3 dots in the upper right corner, select the "Apply background effects" option, then either blur your background, or select from several options to replace your background. No more mess!

Over

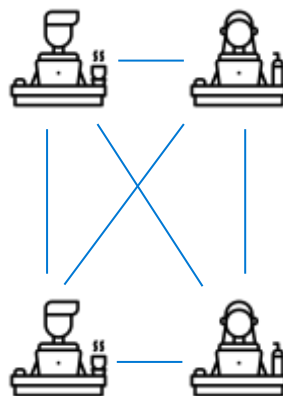
115 Million

people use Teams every day!



Communicate more effectively

Get your team on the same page with group chat, online meetings, calling, and web conferencing.



Work better together



Collaborate on files with built-in Office 365 apps like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and SharePoint.



Customize your workspace

Add in your favorite Microsoft apps and third-party services to keep the business moving forward.

Keep your team secure



Get end-to-end security, admin control, and compliance—all powered by Microsoft 365.



Microsoft

Partner

How Did They Do It? C.J. Erickson Plumbing

Frustrations are prime opportunities for improvement. At least, that's how Shawn Erickson at C.J. Erickson sees it. She enjoys identifying pain points and finding ways to remedy them. The frustration transforms into fun when that resolution is uncovered – it's like solving a puzzle with creativity and collaboration.

Collecting time used to be a pain point. Paper timesheets were faxed in or submitted as photos. Timesheets were passed through multiple touchpoints. C.J. Erickson implemented Syscon's Field Integrated Time System in May 2017. The streamlined and controlled time collection takes less time to process data and has improved accuracy, which saves a lot of time at the project management level.

Fixing these pain points with her team makes her job fun. Shawn attributed the company's success to their focus on people. The average person has been there for 18 years! Focusing on people, not the bottom line, makes a difference. —BK



Shawn Erickson,
Co-Owner

Fast Facts

Location: Alsip, IL
Specialty: Plumbing
Founded: 1906
Professional Affiliations: Construction Contractors Alliance, Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors National Association, Plumbing Contractors Association of Chicago, Construction Financial Management Association of Chicago
Other: 4th generation family-owned



Read more at www.syscon-inc.com/how-did-they-do-it



Event: How & Why to Replace Paper Timesheets with Mobile Devices, Webinar

Date: Thursday, Feb. 11

Time: 1 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

December Trivia Winner

Congratulations to last month's Trivia Contest Winner, Joann Winstead with Houston Landscapes Unlimited in Sugar Land, TX! Joann's name was drawn from the fishbowl for last month's correctly answered question.

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