



## What's New

April is the beginning of Q2; hard to believe it! Looks like we'll have a new Federal 941 possibly for Q1, and definitely for Q2. And of course, if April showers bring May flowers, what do Mayflowers bring?

Many of you know that Larry is riding his very nice bike from the Pacific to the Atlantic ocean. We have some fun pictures and blogs to share on our special web page, [syscon-inc.com/coast-to-coast-ride](http://syscon-inc.com/coast-to-coast-ride). Big adventure!

This is the year we are depreciating our Hosted Exchange. We continue to move Hosted Email services to M365. There are so many 'wins' here with Teams, OneDrive, SharePoint, oh my! - *Catherine Wendt*

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**April 2021**



## Servers, Hosting, M365 What Should You Do?

I remember when computers were new in construction offices and were considered 'expensive paper weights' by most owners. Then came servers, tape backups, and network gear; then the internet at every computer; then virtual servers and off-site backups. Eventually construction owners wanted remote access, so Citrix and Terminal Server sessions entered the scene. Lots of hardware changes, lots of software options.

Note: If you've already replaced aging servers with hosting, feel free to skip to the next section (Page 2) for changes in data access, Exchange email hosting, as well as the latest changes in the world of hosting; it will definitely be relevant!

**Agging Computer Equipment** – I remember a call with one client who said his server was about 7 years old,

so when should he look at replacing it? I told him that every morning, when he walked into his office and that server was running, he was blessed! I don't think his car was even that old.

The computer industry changes quickly and user demands continue to increase. The latest accounting, estimating, and CRM software and updates require new Operating Systems (OS), more memory, and faster drive speeds than ever before. You may not even be able to install that new software! Even if you don't mind slow software responses, older software may be end-of-life meaning no security updates, as well as no new features. You may be familiar with the Windows 7 end-of-life last January 2020, as well as the Microsoft Server 2008 end-of-life at the same time. (You don't have any of these security risks still running, do you?)

*Continued pg.2*

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If you've had four or five wonderful years with your current server(s), or you have end-of-life software, you have a choice to make—make a capital purchase and replace the server(s) and OS, or move to a hosting option. Before we dig into this question, let's look at a portion of your data.

**First Steps**—Most of our clients had Exchange servers for many years. These were part of the SBS Server licenses with one server for all your data and Exchange. When this product hit end-of-life, our clients had to choose whether to add servers, move to virtual servers, or move their email to hosted Exchange. Then came Microsoft 365 and now, it's ready for email and more!

Whether you keep your server on premise or not, you definitely want to look at the Microsoft 365 solution. At a minimum, the Business packages include email up to 50GB per mailbox with Teams, OneDrive, and SharePoint. At the higher levels, you also get Office apps (Word, Excel, etc.) on up to 5 devices per person, and the next level includes remote access licensing. Be sure to add a third-party backup solution.

Not only do you have a replacement for your Exchange server/hosting, you have

immediate access to Teams for Chat between your staff members and groups, as well as video meetings. Teams allows you to share documents, too. It's a great tool and one that couldn't have 'matured' at a better time now that so many of us are forced to work remotely. Do some planning and add OneDrive and SharePoint, making important job documents available to the field, too.

**To Replace or Not to Replace**—There are several benefits to replacing your server(s). The first 'win' is Control. With the hardware onsite, you have control of the environment. You own the hardware, the Operating System, and the licenses. The data is in your environment, too. The trade is that you are responsible for maintenance, software compliance (ever been part of a Microsoft audit?), backups, and security. Maintaining a network and keeping it safe is not a 'one and done' event; it's an ongoing responsibility.

If you choose to replace your equipment and keep a local network, be sure to connect with a Managed Service Provider, one with solid knowledge of servers, networking, and security, as well as backups. If you need remote access for any part of your workforce, you'll want to review the options and put appropri-

## Cathy & Larry Sightings



Catherine was in IL for client visits and our mid-year State of the Company. Great presentations by our Leadership team.

Larry is well into his coast-to-coast bicycle ride, which ends in FL in early May. We have stories and pictures on our special webpage.

ate security in place; don't leave your network exposed to the internet. Even with local backup units, you'll want to look at cloud backup options in addition to local. Whether it's a natural disaster, water damage, electrical issues, employee error, or a ransomware attack, you'll need an off-site backup.

**Move to Hosting**—If you decide not to replace, what's next? There are several things to consider, and not all hosting solutions are equal. Next month we'll cover the changes in hosting options. This entire segment of IT has matured quite a bit, and with the onslaught of cyber-attacks, it's now an excellent option to meet the changing needs! - CMW

### *Mission Drift* by Peter Greer and Chris Horst

Although this book is focused on the Mission of non-profit organizations, specifically those grounded in Christian principles, there is a direct line to any business. Who are you? What do you stand for? How do you maintain that focus, now and in the future?

In addition, many business owners are also philanthropic, giving to charities they believe in, both in time and money.



I was very interested to hear some of the well-known charities who are both Mission True and those that are off-Mission. Something I'll

## Book Nook

continue to look at as I evaluate the organizations we support.

Nor surprisingly, there was a pretty big section on hiring. Character and mission-alignment are just as important, maybe more important than skill and experience. Not only when it comes to 'mission' but also as it relates to company culture and ethics, not to mention customer service. Is the focus profitable at all costs, quality at all costs? Hiring definitely impacts these outcomes.

There are some amazing historical figures in this book. I found the history fascinating, too. Recommended! - CMW



## Cyber Security Attack Blitz

Cyber attacks are relentless! Here are some recent happenings and warnings as reported by ID Agent that you can share with employees, families, and friends.

### Microsoft

Microsoft reported that they suspect Chinese hackers exploited a flaw in Exchange that gave them access to data or email accounts to an estimated 30,000 customers. The hackers stole emails and installed malware to spy on their targets. Microsoft has made patches available, and we've applied them to our Hosted Exchange, and clients running Exchange servers.

### Kia Motors

Kia Motors was hit with a suspected ransomware attack that impacted its entire U.S. operations, crippling some functions and damaging others for dealers and customers. Impacted services include Kia apps, phone services, payment services, Kia owner's portal, and some internal sites used by dealerships.

So far, it looks like no sensitive personal or financial information was compromised as part of this cyber security incident, but the investigation is ongoing. This affected an estimated 50 million customers.

A ransomware attack is a specific kind of malware attack when a cyber attacker steals your data and ransoms it back to you, often for a lot of money.

### Spotify

Spotify, the streaming music application, was hit with a credential stuffing attack.

This type of cyber attack is when hackers take a large batch of usernames and passwords, then try to 'stuff' them into the login page of a digital service, according to *Wired*. For Spotify, data from about 100,000 users was used to try to log into Spotify. This is the second credential stuffing attack on Spotify within a three-month time period (the first and separate incident was in November 2020).

Details about the stolen data are not available, but this impacted an estimated 100,000 Spotify customers. Spotify users should reset their passwords and watch out for spear phishing attempts, which are phishing attempts to get passwords or other sensitive information.

### Covenant Healthcare

This Michigan-based healthcare system fell prey to a phishing attack. Cyber attackers were able to access two employee email accounts, which lead to exposing the personal information of an estimated 45,000 patients. Patient information that may have been stolen includes names, addresses, dates of birth, Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers, medical diagnosis and clinical information, medical treatment, prescription information, doctors' names, medical record numbers, patient account numbers, and medical insurance information. Covenant offered identity theft protection to impacted patients. -*BK, ID Agent*

### Spring Cleaning, Tech-Style

Many of us have spring cleaning routines; wash the screens, mulch the flower/tree beds, pack up the winter clothes and pull out the Spring/Summer items; clean up the garage; and on it goes. When it comes to our computers, Spring is a good time to do some cleaning, as well.

Pull out the cans of air and screen wipes. Blow out the keyboards and workstations. Wipe down the screens (how many do you have?), the keyboard and mouse. Review items in that Recycle Bin and empty it out. Do you still need those documents from ten years ago? How about old programs you don't use any more? This is your chance! - *CMW*

## Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



### Gardyn

Gardyn is an AI-powered indoor gardening system for the home. The automated system means 'no green thumb required,' according to Gardyn's website.

The Gardyn apparatus is 24 inches wide, 12 inches deep, and 60 inches tall. It does *not* need to be placed with access to sunlight or water. The Gardyn apparatus has tall, round structures with slots for what they call yCubes. These yCubes are individual little planters with a seed in them. Gardyn-ers can choose from a selection of over 30 organic, non-GMO seeds that are greens, herbs, fruits, and flowers for their yCubes. Or you can plant your own seeds in non-seeded yCubes.

Where's the tech part? Well, the Gardyn comes with a companion app. AI growing assistant Kelby monitors light and water schedule and sends alerts about these and when the plants are ready to harvest.

Learn more at: [mygardyn.com](http://mygardyn.com).



# CONSTRUCTION CORNER



## What's a Budget Anyway?

This is a regular discussion point when we're on calls with our clients. Your customers have budgets to do their projects, you have budgets to get the work done and make some money, so how does this play out in Sage 100 Contractor? Why is this important?

You probably have a personal/family budget. You've determined how much money you have budgeted for food purchases each month, insurance, clothing, your car, and some fun. You may even have a budget to set aside money for future repairs, buying a new car, saving for retirement or even the kids' college. This is how you've planned to spend your money; your budget.

Your customers have a budget, the amount they plan to spend to have their project completed. From your perspective, it's the amount they've agreed to pay to have you perform a specific scope of work, the contract, your bid. If they add to the scope, your contract goes up and they agree to pay it (their budget for the project increases).

When you bid the job, you had a scope of work and you determined what it would cost you to do the work, your budget. The difference between what you'll spend and what you'll be paid is your profit on the job. Make your budget and you'll earn the profit. Spend

### Syscon is great to work with.

*'Sage 100 Contractor gives us the ability to have all our data up-to-date and easily accessible. Syscon takes time to understand the client's objectives and then works with them to achieve them. Syscon is great to work with and is always there to provide support when we need it!'*

-Dennis Oster, Vice President/  
Controller, Hovlands

less and you'll increase your profit; there are a lot of things that could cause you to exceed your budget, which will reduce your profit on the job.

Be sure to setup your budget in the 6-2 screen when you get the job. Then as you create change orders, be sure to update the budget tab as well as the Prime (contract) tab. There are some great Change Order reports you can use.

***'Be sure to setup your budget in the 6-2 screen when you get the job...then update the budget tab on the Change Order, too.'***

With a contract and budget in place, and updated change orders, you can now use the budget-to-actual reports, the Over/Under billing report, the 6-1-1 summary report, and so many others to track your progress on the job. - CMW

### **'I never know what's going on with my jobs!'**

When I hear this one, it usually means there's a delay in entering important data. When one or more data entry areas get behind, it creates a cascade of problems, making it almost impossible to check the status of your jobs.

Let's start with billing – when billing is entered in Excel or Word documents, it has to be re-entered in the accounting software (correctly) or you can't tell how much is billed or what your receivables are, let alone retention. The most common error here is entering the Net Due instead of the Billing Amount.

Outsource Payroll can result in delayed job costs. If you use an outside service, be sure to stay up-to-date with the entries and posting so all job costs are current for the PM's and your cash is

correct. Consider using our FIT System to pull time straight into payroll to cut down on the data entry time. You might consider if this is a good time to bring payroll in-house.

Many of our clients are quick to get those checks deposited ASAP! Be sure to make the Cash Receipt entries right away, as well. That keeps your cash current and your AR Aging report usable.

The original budget needs to be in place, and all approved change orders need updated budgets, too. Approved change orders should be entered and reflected in the 3-5 Contract Summary. This makes the information available for Over/Under billing reports, Budget to Actual cost reports, and Job Summary reports.

By keeping the day-to-day entries current, you'll know what's going on with your cash and your jobs. Need help on any of these points? You know where to find us. - CMW

### Copy-Paste from Excel

Many things can be copied from Excel into various grids in Sage 100 Contractor. However, the original Excel data needs to be clean. If you have formatted with dollar signs, the copied numbers will fail. If you have special characters in descriptions, the data will fail and may not copy over at all. Remove all formatting before you copy!



### Joke of the Month

**What nails do carpenters hate to hit?**  
*Fingernails.*

# M365 Education Station

## Why Power BI?

Microsoft Power BI combines data from various sources into beautiful and functional dashboards. The flexibility to present the data in unique formats is amazing.

### Supports Scale

Organizations can perform petabyte-scale analytics with instant response times, exploring, and analyzing trillions of rows of data interactively extracting insights on the fly.

### Eliminates the Need for Multiple Tools

Establishes a common, cost-effective analytics platform that provides seamless collaboration across the data with drill downs.

### Improves Decision-Making

A single platform that intelligently reacts to data changes and applies them globally ensures that business users have the latest info and gain insights fast.

### Enhances Security

Provides a single, centralized se-

curity model with end-to-end visibility, control, and operational reporting capabilities to safeguard against security, privacy, governance, regulatory, and compliance concerns.

### No Need to be a Programmer

Features self-service functionality and provides business users with access to consumable dashboards and reports.

### Removes the Data Integration Barrier

Whether cloud-based or on-premise, Power BI integrates data with built-in or custom data connectors, creating a single, accurate view of critical business insights.

### Provides Data Speed

Backed by Azure, Power BI enables companies to analyze and extract insights from large datasets with instant response times. The refresh times are truly amazing.

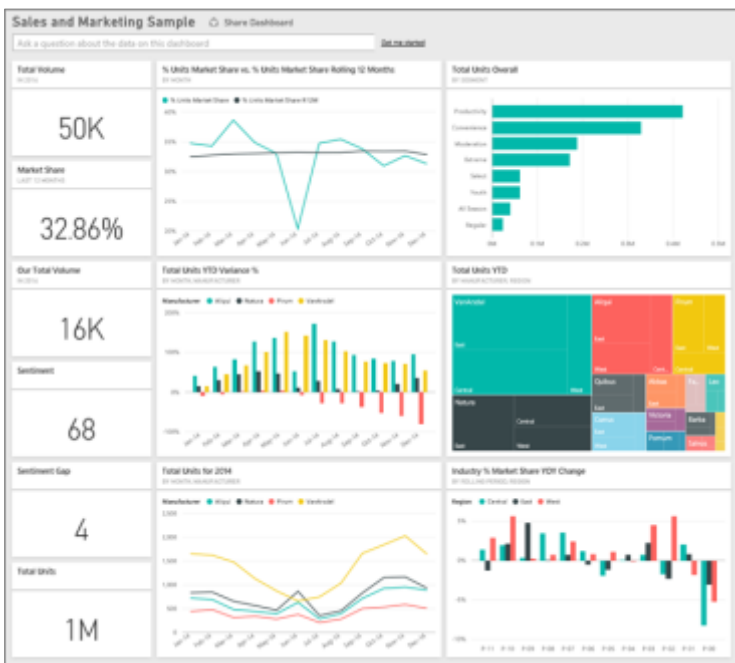


## Tip of the Month

### Did you know?

You can connect Power BI to Teams and embed reports in your Teams channels and/or chats. Click on the three dots on the left panel of Teams. This brings up a search box of apps. Type 'Power BI' in the new search bar. Click to select Power BI, then look at the purple Add button. There is a drop-down arrow with two options: Add to a team, or Add to a chat. Select where you'd like to add Power BI and then click the Add button. Congratulations! You have now added Power BI to Teams!

## Sample Power BI Dashboard



95%

of organizations have deployed big data initiatives on a department or company level.

Power BI Users

Non-Power BI Users

52%

vs.

33%

Likelihood that users maintain ongoing, company-wide data initiatives.



Partner

## How Did They Do It? Powell Architecture and Building Studio

Luke Tidwell started as a sculptor in the art world. As much as he enjoyed it, he wanted to find a career that let him contribute to society in a more impactful way. By getting a Masters in Architecture, he carved out a niche that feels like sculpting on a large scale: Powell Architecture and Building Studio, where they design and build. They are operating in a unique industry – most architects do not build their projects, but Powell is licensed as both an architect and a general contractor. This combination calls for creativity as well as the ability to manage complex projects.

Powell applied that creativity to an unusual situation. After a tornado hit Nashville, two clients reached out for

two distinct projects. Powell realized that if one person owned both projects, they would be more valuable, so Powell helped broker a sale between the two clients. Much of this project was managed remotely. Luke pointed to Syscon’s automation tools and Cost to Complete calculator as helpful resources to increasing Powell’s accuracy and profitability. Ultimately, this greater efficiency helps the Powell team be creative while managing complex projects. -BK



**Luke Tidwell,**  
Managing  
Partner

### Fast Facts

**Location:** Nashville, TN  
**Specialty:** Architecture and Building  
**Founded:** 2007



Read more at [www.syscon-inc.com/how-did-they-do-it](http://www.syscon-inc.com/how-did-they-do-it)

Are you interested in having your story featured? Let’s talk!

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<b>Upcoming Events</b>						
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**Event:** M365 – Ask Us Anything! Join us for this Q&A Live Webinar

**Date:** Wednesday, April 7

**Time:** 1 p.m. CST

**Register:** [www.syscon-inc.com/events](http://www.syscon-inc.com/events)

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

**Date:** Thursday, April 29

**Time:** 1 p.m. CST

**Register:** [www.syscon-inc.com/events](http://www.syscon-inc.com/events)

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