



What's New

We are very excited to announce that Chris Wendt has been promoted to VP of Technology Services! This is a well-earned and hard-won position that incorporates our new Azure and M365 services, as well as IT support and our programming integrations.

Our annual State of the Company is this month, celebrating 35 years! We have a lovely evening planned for our team members and a guest. It's been so fun to look at the timeline and milestones on this amazing journey. We're so blessed to have served all our clients over the years, and benefited from the talented professionals who shared some of their career with us!

- Catherine Wendt



35 Years – A Cause for Celebration We Are So Blessed!

Thirty-five years ago, Larry and I were heading back from a self-improvement seminar. We were very excited and encouraged and wanted to attend the next training. With two small boys and **Larry still in school, we didn't have the funds, but we had an idea.**

During one of the sessions, they had some music in the background, then someone talking over the music. We could also hear the sound of planes overhead, cars, and other neighborhood sounds that were very distracting, not to mention that this was probably not in keeping with copyright rules. If we wrote original music to provide the background, recorded it, and gave them the rights to sell the cassettes at their events, would that cover the fee for the two of us to attend together? The answer was yes!

The Realmusic Label – The first

recording was a solo flute with background environmental sounds of a summer storm we recorded in Geneva, IL. It was entitled *Forest Song*. Our friend Carlyn Lloyd played the flute part that Larry had written and did an amazing job of capturing the mood. Our friend Bobby Thomas overdubbed the environmental recording and it was just magic to hear it all come together. We created the cassette label and insert with artwork and font selections, along with our new company logo; we were in business!

In the coming years we recorded *Mountain Soliloquy* for brass instruments with sounds recorded in the Appalachian Mountains, then *Embrace the Wind*, which featured clarinets with classical guitar and the sounds recorded on a sloop on Lake Michigan. The field recordings were handled by our friend Vern Williams from Janesville, WI.

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Artwork was created by a talented young medical artist, Craig Keifer from Villa Park, IL

What does all of this have to do with computers? While we were growing our distribution of these audio cassettes, and eventually the sampler CD, computers were just heating up in the **construction industry**. **Larry's dad was a** Mason contractor and very active in his associations. Some of the larger Masons in the Chicago area were beginning to use computers to print AP checks and help with Payroll. They knew that the computers could help them turn around bid alternates faster and more accurately. They also knew they would need help with the computers and wanted someone they could trust. Larry had worked for his dad over the years and Larry knew many of these men. When **they found out about Larry's computer background**, we started getting calls to come over and help. With the money from the computers, we could continue to build the music business while Larry finished school and his internship.

Right Time, Right Place—With our construction background, growing knowledge of computers, and our small business experience, requests for com-

puter assistance grew pretty fast. All support was onsite at that time. We helped set up the networks, the printing, backups, and helped the users with their computers. We attended many of the Mason Contractor Association events, meeting many Masons from all over the US.

This grew into educational training sessions to use the computers. Since **Larry's dad was an Engineer by training**, his methodical process of estimating along with his math skills were a perfect match for the programming languages. We actually wrote an estimating program, Benchmark Estimating, and had a good following. We held trainings at the various industry events, including classes on Estimating best practices.

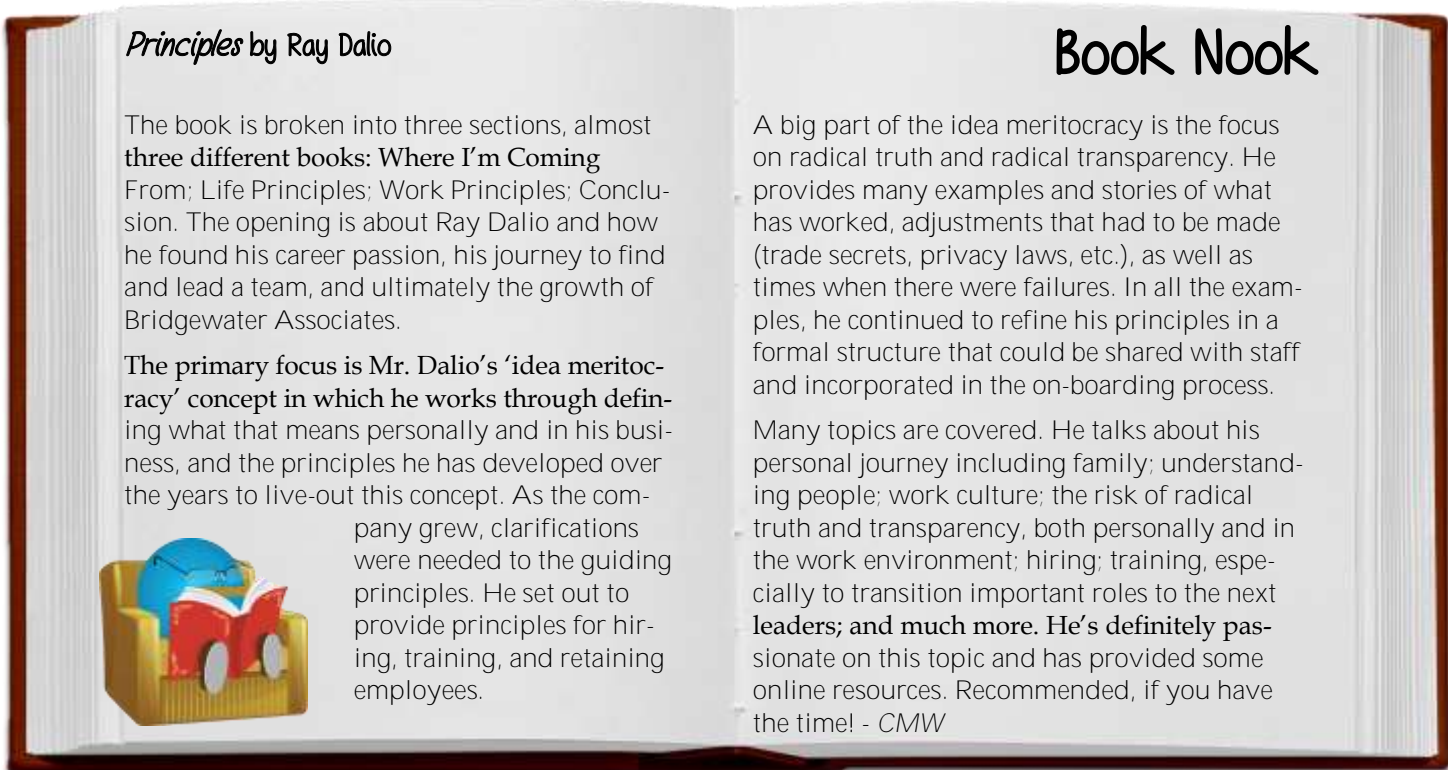
During that same time, one of our Mason friends was interested in Master Builder for accounting and project management. Looking at the software, we decided to attend the training in California. **There's an entire backstory to this event — turns out a nerve in Larry's arm was dying and the pain was out of control.** Check out our website to see the interview and hear the story. In the end, we did the first Windows upgrade **and Larry's programming background**

made all the difference. We moved into Sylvan Learning Centers and Pre-GED **software for PC's and Apples, and lots of** custom reports for Master Builder.

Networking has come so far since the mid **-1980's. Our Techs have navigated lots of** changes; adding internet; devices to scan and read timecards; tape backups; imaged-based backups; VMware for server virtualization; Citrix then Terminal Services for remote access; Exchange email; hosting servers; even a trip to Rwanda and Mozambique to help World Relief get critical information to the states.

We want to thank all of the wonderful people who have worked at Syscon over the years. We are so grateful for the **fantastic clients we've been privileged to** serve. Such a pleasure to watch your companies grow, and see the next generation stepping in and stepping up! - CMW

“Don't wish it were easier; wish you were better.”
— Jim Rohn



Principles by Ray Dalio

The book is broken into three sections, almost **three different books: Where I'm Coming From; Life Principles; Work Principles; Conclusion.** The opening is about Ray Dalio and how he found his career passion, his journey to find and lead a team, and ultimately the growth of Bridgewater Associates.

The primary focus is Mr. Dalio's 'idea meritocracy' concept in which he works through defining what that means personally and in his business, and the principles he has developed over the years to live-out this concept. As the company grew, clarifications were needed to the guiding principles. He set out to provide principles for hiring, training, and retaining employees.



Book Nook

A big part of the idea meritocracy is the focus on radical truth and radical transparency. He provides many examples and stories of what has worked, adjustments that had to be made (trade secrets, privacy laws, etc.), as well as times when there were failures. In all the examples, he continued to refine his principles in a formal structure that could be shared with staff and incorporated in the on-boarding process.

Many topics are covered. He talks about his personal journey including family; understanding people; work culture; the risk of radical truth and transparency, both personally and in the work environment; hiring; training, especially to transition important roles to the next **leaders; and much more. He's definitely passionate on this topic and has provided some online resources.** Recommended, if you have the time! - CMW



Sonicwall Firewalls—Critical Updates, All Devices

You may have already seen our update on this. Sonicwall has security firmware updates across its product lines, including all TZ and NSA units, two of the most popular products used by us and our clients.

Is there a problem? No, nothing 'dire.' Sonicwall is one of many IT vendors who is taking the security risk seriously and continuing to lock down their devices. Firewalls are the first line of defense for your network or home office; these are critical for the safety and security of your data.

We have a list of all Sonicwall units across our clients. We'll schedule these updates with you since there will be a short work interruption. We'll log into the firewall, install the firmware update, then it will require a reboot of the unit, which is when the interruption will happen, so that's why we want to do some planning with you. The whole process will be an hour or less.

We have an FAQ-style document available. If you need a copy, just reach out to us and we can share it with you. Thanks in advance for working with us to get these important updates rolled out! If you haven't heard from us yet, feel free to call and let's get you on the schedule! - CMW

Anti-Spam—Moving to M365

Many of you have just moved, or are in the process of moving to Microsoft 365 for email. From a day-to-day perspective, not much has changed; you launch Outlook and work through your email.

You already have email on your phone, too. If you've used Outlook Web Access (OWA) in the past, then you'll just log into Office.com to get email from the internet; easy.

What *has* changed is your anti-spam. Within the last two years, Microsoft's anti-spam offering has matured and is ready for prime-time. We moved to it last year, ending our AppRiver service. I have to say I'm really glad to have made this change since I don't have to log into a separate portal to review email caught by the spam filters, and I don't have to request that someone flag something as 'never' or 'always' block. But, I'll also admit it's a transition.

With M365, I can right-click on any email address and choose 'Junk' to either flag something as 'Always Block' or 'Never Block' (and there are a few other choices, too). I can also click on my Junk folder and view all the email that has come in that might be junk. We have a rule that automatically removes these after 60 days so my Junk folder doesn't get too out of hand. If anything in that Junk folder is legit, I just right-click and make the change.

Lastly, anti-spam actually has a 'learning' component. As you work with the incoming email, it begins to 'learn' what you do and don't want to let through. During this process, we ask that you remain calm and be patient. In no time at all this will get better, and in the meantime, you have more control and one less portal to visit. This is a 'win' for each of our clients, too. If you have questions or need some help, give us a call. - CMW

Changing Banks

Our bank has changed hands too many times, so we're moving on. We had to provide new ACH information to clients and we're happy to report one of them called us to confirm it was really us! Everyone should do this. Go Team!!!! - CMW



Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Camera Snorkel Mask

Who's ready for an underwater adventure?

The camera snorkel mask captures photos and video so you can share your underwater explorations. The camera is built into the dive mask and is meant to accompany you on diving/snorkeling trips up to 130 feet deep.

While you provide the manpower to propel yourself for your dive/snorkel, four (4) AAA batteries run your camera snorkel mask. It uses color-coded LED lights so you know if you're taking photos or video as you explore the underwater domain. Be sure to get some footage of Aquaman or SpongeBob if you see them!

Note that the camera snorkel mask does *not* come with internal memory, so you'll need to insert a micro SD/SDHC card to save all your recordings (and prove you saw what you say you did). It records about 2 hours of video or about 2,800 images through a 135 degree lens. You can buy extra GBs to record more – you'll get an extra 700 images or 30 minutes more video per 1GB of memory.

Learn more at: <https://www.thisiswhyimbroke.com/camera-snorkel-mask/>



CONSTRUCTION CORNER



Sage 100 Contractor – Version 23
It's been a couple of years since S100C
 version 22 was released back in 2019.

There have been minor updates, but nothing major – until now. On July 29th, Sage expects to release version 23. We **don't have the release notes yet with the feature updates**, but we have info about some very important structural changes.

S100C has API's that allow third party programs to pull data from and/or write data to specific tables in Sage 100 Contractor. Some example companies with integrated products include Trivantis, Sage Paperless, Sage Service/Field Operations (SSO/SFO), ProCore, DASH, FieldFlo, and others. Most of the **Syscon integrations do not use the API's** since we use the actual tables wherever possible for a full integration, so our FIT System is not impacted by this release.

The Sage API's will now require .NET 4.8 to be installed on the server to run these third-party programs. What does that mean to you? If you use any integrated programs with Sage 100 Contractor, then you need to contact those vendors about an upgrade **BEFORE** you move to version 23. As of this writing, SSO/SFO from IFScore has already announced that they have an **upgrade available**. You'll want to coordinate the third-party upgrades as **part of the S100C upgrade so you don't** experience any work flow disruptions. **If your vendor doesn't have a new release**

Easily Track Employees' Hours

'The F.I.T. System's biggest benefit is the ability to easily track our employees' hours, edit mistakes during the payroll cycle, organize them by job, and import that information directly into Sage 100 Contractor.'

-Bret Carpenella, Finance Manager,
 MBA Building Group

available, then you'll have to wait to install the Sage upgrade.

Also, in January 2022, the Microsoft 2012 server Operating System (OS) will be **end-of-life**. **They'll still have support** and security updates, but no new features will be available as Microsoft begins the cycle to discontinue this operating system. Hard to believe but **it's been 10 years since this OS came out**. Sage 100 Contractor has been compatible with Server 2016 R2, then more recently with Server 2019.

'If your vendor doesn't have a new release available, then you'll have to wait to install the Sage upgrade.'

With all this in mind, if you're running Server 2012 R2, and any version of .NET less than 4.8, this is a good time to consider upgrading your server to Server 2019 and the latest stable .NET **release**. **If you're in our hosting environment, the timing couldn't be** better! All of our hosted clients will be moving to Azure this year, which will include the latest Server OS and the latest .NET release.

In preparation for all of these changes, reach out to any third-party vendors who have integrations with your S100C software and ask them about their plans to provide an upgrade that accommodates the .NET 4.8 release. **We're pretty sure that Sage will follow** previous protocol and only release the 2022 Federal and State tax table updates for this latest version 23 release. That means you have about 4 or 5 months to get things in order and make the changes.

Most of us don't like change, but there are some 'aligning of the planets' here that are really a great opportunity –

upgrade your third-party software, upgrade your server Operating System, upgrade your .NET software (on the **server**), **and if you're in our hosting environment, move to our Azure hosting**. **You'll be all set to have a fantastic 2022!** - CMW

Tracking COVID Sick Pay—Our California clients are now mandated to track earned and used COVID sick pay.

Sage is suggesting you use the Custom Fields in the Employee screen to track the remaining hours and add those new **fields to your check stub**. **This isn't our** favorite option since it requires manually updating each employee every time they use any COVID sick leave.

We recommend using a formula on your check stub that will calculate the remaining COVID sick leave available based on the hours used with your COVID Absence Codes. No manual updates required!

Federal 941 Taxes—Tracking Many years ago, we had separate General Ledger numbers for Federal withholding, FICA, and Medicare. Now that our calcs take care of the limits, and these are all reported as a 941 payment, we typically have one General Ledger number. Cut the checks, post the payroll, determine the Federal 941 payment amount, and confirm with the liability account; pay, post, and confirm.

One of the most common cleanup items **we find is multiple GL's with odd** balances and no clear way to tie out. We recommend you consolidate the calcs to one GL and track from there. - CMW



Some Fun – Unscramble
 Solution (from last month):

MIOIMPTS = OPTIMISM

M365 Education Station

What is Advanced Threat Protection?

Advanced Threat Protection (ATP) is a cloud-based email filtering service that helps protect your organization against unknown malware and viruses.

Microsoft's **Defender for Office 365** includes ATP to protect organizations throughout the lifecycle of an attack. This level of security is part of the M365 Premium or M/O365 E3 or higher license series.

Microsoft's ATP also includes a **Safe Links** feature, a **Safe Documents** feature, and a **Safe Attachments** feature for added protection from possible cyber security threats.

Safe Links scans inbound URL links (websites) sent by other users. This is in addition to anti

-spam and anti-malware protection. When a dangerous URL is identified, Microsoft has a pop-up window that warns that the link leads to a malicious website. There is an option to go back to the message or continue anyway, but proceed with caution!

Safe Documents scans documents and opens files up in a protected view. A user can't open the document until the scan is complete, ensuring that the file is safe.

Safe Attachments scans email attachments before they reach an inbox.

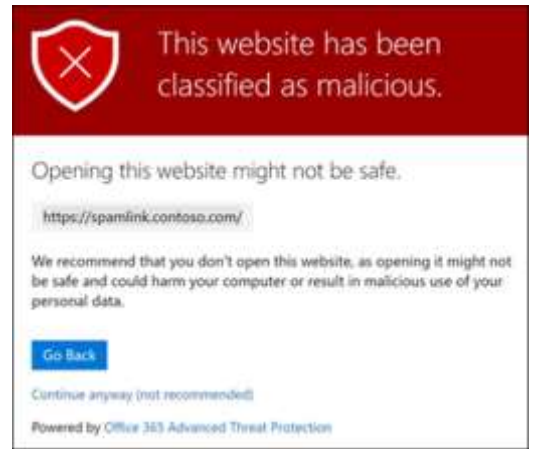
Please note that these Microsoft security features must be configured and users will need training. These are available at the higher license levels.



Tip of the Month

Did you know?

This is what a warning against a malicious website looks like from Microsoft's **Safe Links** feature. We advise against clicking a link that triggers this warning.



Advanced Threat Protection

Safe Attachments

Defend against malicious documents
with ATP Safe Attachments

Safe Links

Ensure document hyperlinks are harmless
with ATP Safe Links

URL Detonation & Dynamic Delivery

Neutralize spear-phishing tactics
with ATP Detonation and Dynamic Delivery



How Did They Do It? Corenic Construction Group

Donald Wilson grew up with construction—his grandfather, dad, uncle, and brother all worked in mechanical contracting. Donald spent his college summers doing field work for a mechanical contractor, which helped him realize he wanted to work in construction, but as an accountant. Donald brings over 30 years of experience to Corenic.

He recently tackled two major challenges: accounting processes for a remote environment, and finishing the transition from QuickBooks to Sage 100 Contractor (S100C). **Virtual meetings and construction site visits don't gel easily, but Corenic found a way to make it work.** Donald's experience managing accounting across multiple states has served Corenic well.

He also helped Corenic transition from using QuickBooks to S100C. As the Director of Accounting, Donald had high praise for using S100C. QuickBooks is great for transactional accounting, but

job costing is “nonexistent,” Donald said. He now uses Sage to accurately calculate actual construction job costs. Prior to Sage, he exported data into Excel and manipulated it to calculate job costs.



Donald Wilson,
Accounting Director

Corenic wouldn't have made it as far as they did without Syscon's help. Cathy held regular training sessions where she taught Donald how to use Sage and showed him some tricks. Chris helped customize their Sage reporting, so they are able to get the financial data that they need to keep Corenic running smoothly.
-BK

Fast Facts

Location: **Washington D.C.**
Specialty: **Commercial General Contractor**
Founded: 2009
Affiliations: DC Building Industry Assoc.,
Washington Building Congress



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

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

Upcoming Events

Event: S100C version 23—Lots of Prep Needed, webinar

Date: Wednesday, August 25

Time: 1 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

Event: How & Why to Replace Paper Timesheets, webinar

Date: Thursday, Sept. 16

Time: 1 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events



Featured Articles

Ransomware and Zero Trust published in:

The Business Ledger newspaper

&

TUG membership magazine

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

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

