



What's New

Lots happening! I attended two half-day remote sessions presented by Jim Collins through the World of Business (WOBI). Really amazing and I would encourage you to check out upcoming speakers.

I also attended the Global Leadership Summit (GLS). This was two days of amazing speakers with excellent reminders of the importance of our role in our companies, and the need to take care of ourselves so we have something to offer those in our care. Consider signing up for the August 2022 event!

We held our annual State of the Company, celebrating 35 years! What a lovely evening and everyone looked great!

- Catherine Wendt

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September 2021



The Changing Face of Anti-Virus

Security used to be so simple (we've been around a while). Install anti-virus (AV), train employees not to click on unknown links, and keep the software, hardware, and websites up-to-date. Throw in a firewall with some country-filtering and what more could you need? Those days are gone ☹️.

Many of us love being able to use a variety of devices and move pretty effortlessly from our office to our car to our home office; we can even access what we need/want from a coffee shop or a public computer. None of these options were in the traditional model – all the computers were on the network and all devices ran through the network, therefore they could all be secure. The most common solutions for work now include a growing number of apps and cloud services, neither of **which are under the IT team's control**. Then you have company-specific files, even confidential files outside your

network in solutions like Dropbox or Slack (two examples). Most companies allow BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) which saves the capital cost of purchasing phones and laptops, but results in having unmanaged devices on your network and accessing your data. These same devices then add data back to the company systems. Then there are wi-fi networks; we could go on, but I think you get the point.

Anti-Virus alone just doesn't cut it anymore. It's important, but it's not enough. AV is designed to look for known signatures and stop them. When AV software is updated with the **latest definition files, it's the new things that are now 'known.'** Basically, something has to be identified as a bad actor in order to be added to these definition files to avoid future compromises. This is a race with the hackers that is a never-ending battle

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and difficult to win.

According to a whitepaper by Egnyte, 85% of all breaches involve a human element, and this sentiment is echoed throughout our industry. Our teams are pounded with phishing attempts, business email compromises, lost or stolen credentials, the chronic use of insecure credentials (weak passwords!), and human error. Mobile devices, and I would add home devices, are the weakest link when it comes to IT security since staff members tend to be less cautious when **they're on-the-go or at home.**

Here are four (4) of the new risks we're facing:

- Documents that look like PDF attachments but when opened, execute attacks over the network
- Attacks that are not files, but execute from memory, making them very hard to identify
- Zero-day threats that find a vulnerability in a computer or operating system and exploit it before the manufacturers even know about it and can address them.
- Ransomware attacks which can bring a network to its knees. Then you get the demand for a lot of money to restore the data, which

you hope will work, and pray they **don't add another 'bomb' that will go off at a future date.**

So what's an anti-virus software to do? What else can we do to protect our team members and our company data from this onslaught? We'd like to introduce you to Managed Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR).

The pattern of the threats is changing, so the type of software protection needs to be more sophisticated. Newer threats **don't have 'signatures' which is what AV solutions use to find the threat in the first place.** Managed EDR uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to stay on top of new threats and it monitors processes, **something traditional AV can't do.**

In the coming months, we'll move all of the computers we manage from our current AV, which has been very good, to the new EDR solution. Here are a few reasons and outcomes:

- There is a roll back feature that will be available on the laptops and desktops. These devices can be **'rolled back' to a pre-infection state.** Our servers have had Disaster Recovery options for years, but we've never had this capability on the laptops and desktops.

- Using Artificial Intelligence (AI), current and emerging threats can be detected, with continual updates to the platform. No more waiting for a new AV release to get the latest protection in place.
- EDR monitors processes before, during, and after execution to prevent new threats from slipping in.
- With continual monitoring, we will reduce possible performance slowness, as when traditional AV scans **run while you're trying to work.**

We're in the process of creating our implementation plan, then we'll provide additional details. We'll continue to communicate through our newsletters, weekly email updates (Monday mornings!), and directly with you. If you have questions, please reach out and we can talk!-
CMW

"A leader does not deserve the name unless he is willing occasionally to stand alone."
— Henry Kissinger

The Microsoft Story by Dan Good

The subtitle to this book is 'How the Tech Giant Rebooted Its Culture, Upgraded Its Strategy, and Found Success in the Cloud.' **That's not how I'd describe this book. It definitely gives the timeline and history. Many of the facts are very interesting and the timeline is really amazing. When you consider the groundbreaking introduction of the personal PC, to the technology available through Microsoft right now, it's almost a little scary to think about where we might be in another 40+years!**



The book is part of the Harper Collins Leadership series; it reads like a **'what not to do in leadership' when it comes to the behavior of the original founders and the tactics used to grow and 'own' their markets.**

Book Nook

It's also interesting to reflect on changes during the maturity of leadership and the company's growing responsibilities to the world. Only **three (3) CEO's along this tumultuous journey,** each one bringing the change that was needed at that moment in time. As the Microsoft offerings became business-critical, they branched out to other technology areas, looking for new trends, trying to stay relevant and dominate new markets. Many times this was done ruthlessly, and they've had some pretty expensive brushes (fines) with government institutions.

This is not a 'yeah MS' book; it's an assessment of the timeline and players, the tactics, the successes, some of the misses, and the ramifications of their decisions over the years. It's a pretty fast read. It seems they've succeeded in spite of the personalities involved. - CMW



End-of-Life Dates

Probably not high on your radar but there are some software support dates to keep in mind, especially if you have one of the **Windows 8.1 computers, you're running Server 2012 R2, or have a TZ300 device.**

Windows 8.1 — This version reached (past tense) Mainstream support on Jan 9, 2018. That means no new features, just security updates. The extended support that includes security updates will end **January 2023, that's a little over a year** from now. Computers are in short supply (see our previous articles about the world-wide chip shortage), and Windows 10 is solid; time to upgrade the OS or replace the computer all together, well in advance of the Jan 2023 deadline.

Microsoft Server 2012 R2 — this server OS came out in November 2013, WAS Mainstream end-of-life (no new features, security updates only) in October 2018, and is scheduled for complete retirement in October 2023. Does that seem far away? Kind of, but replacing or upgrading a server operating system takes some planning and involves down-time.

If the server it's running on is six (6) or more years old, you can choose between replacing that hardware or moving to a hosted solution. See our two-part series on these two options and how to choose next steps (April and May 2021 newsletters).

Sonicwall TZ300 units — these firewalls were end-of-life in January 2020. All support will end in January 2025 which means you have some time. As you consider your capital budget for 2023, we recommend that you plan to replace them.

Dell BIOS Updates

For those of you with Dell computers, there are some critical BIOS updates that need to be installed on the computers. All manufacturers are battenning down the hatches (tip of the hat to our New England clients) when it comes to the security of their systems, and Dell is no exception (HP had some, too).

Dell has a critical firmware update that needs to be installed. Unfortunately, it cannot be pushed out with our regular patches; it requires some specific steps.

Here's what the techs want to share:

- There are five (5) high severity flaws **that have been discovered in Dell's** firmware update drivers impacting Dell desktops, laptops, notebooks, and tablets released since 2009.
- Dell has released a security update to its customers to address these vulnerabilities and it should be installed right away.

You can coordinate this with Dell or give **us a call and we'll be happy to help.** FYI — this will be a work interruption. The upgrade will take several minutes, so plan ahead, do some filing, grab a snack, and let these updates do their work! - CMW

Do You Have a Mac?

It needs anti-virus, really! Macs can be infected, and more importantly, you can spread the computer virus to other computers through infected files. These are popular machines, especially in the marketing and graphic arts disciplines, as well as with home users. Bite the bullet and get anti-virus installed! - CMW

The 'Blue Guy'

You've seen our 'blue guy' in various iterations, in our signatures, on our website and shirts, and all over our **'fun' materials.** We ran a contest to name him several years back. Do you know his name?



Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Grillbot

Raise your hand if you like cleaning the grill!

We don't see any hands. The Grillbot Automatic Grill Cleaning Robot will take this chore off your list. The "Roomba of grills," this gadget is your personal robot minion equipped with brushes to do the dirty work for you.

A rechargeable lithium battery powers the Grillbot. Push a button and watch your minion scuttle around your grill in a random pattern, attacking the grill residue. **You don't have to wait until your grill cools down** to set your little robot buddy loose — it works on grill grates up to 250 degrees.

Let one machine clean up after your other machine — you can just **toss your robot's brushes in the dishwasher.** Choose brass brushes for steel or porcelain grills, stainless steel brushes for cast iron or steel grills, or nylon brushes for all grill types. Note that your grill needs a lid to keep your robot contained, or it will fall off your grill. (AI not available.)

Read more at <https://grillbots.com>.



Construction Corner



Sage 100 Contractor – Some Tips

Stored Materials, Retention – Several of our clients are able to bill for stored materials as part of their Progress Bills (G702/703-style from the 3-7 screen). In some cases, retention applies to these stored materials.

If you've filled in the Retention column for all the line items, you would expect the retention to come through on the stored materials – **but it doesn't.** This column is considered the Primary rate. **There's an extra step needed to add stored retention.**

In the 3-7 screen, with the progress bill pulled up, click on the Setup tab in the lower left corner. Enter the retention rate in the Material Rate field, Save and re-calculate. The retention will now be correctly calculated (thanks McKayla).

Subcontract Hold – **Here's an interesting feature.** Many clients have a workflow of setting Subcontract AP invoices to status 2-Review so they're not selected to pay until the PM's have released them, or there is a retention balance you aren't going to pay until your retention is released by the owner/GC. Very typical.

Instead of managing these statuses and changing them during the job, you can **click the 'Hold Payment' button in the 6-7-1 Subcontract screen.** The AP invoice is already entered (it's a real cost) and you'll have it on your aging (use the

Valued Partner

'Syscon has become a valued partner to our company.'

-James Lees, Managing Principle, Kisby Shore HVAC

retention column if it's retention), but it won't come up in the AP Selection screen, so it won't accidentally be included in a check run. Then when you're ready, **unlick the button in the Subcontract and any open invoices are now available to select to pay!** (Thanks Megan)

'Click the 'Hold Payment' button in the 6-7-1 Subcontract screen. You'll have it on your aging but not in the select to pay.'

Service Invoice Override - **Here's one I hadn't seen used before, and in this case,** it was accidental by the client. In the 11-2 Service module, you can post a Work Order as an invoice once the work is completed; nothing new here. In this case, there were multiple rows with descriptions of what had been sold, with quantities, nicely compiled for presentation on the invoice. But when they went to print the invoice, none of the details printed. When we tried it with other records, same report, same report form, **still the details didn't print.**

Turns out they had (inadvertently) checked the Override box and entered a billing amount that was \$50 lower than the total of the detailed records. The system would not include the detailed quantities and prices (only the item descriptions) because those details did not match the total amount in the override column. Unfortunately, the record had been posted so it couldn't be un-checked, so the record was voided and re-posted without the override.

This is a great option though if you're matching a quoted total and billing through the 11-2 screen. You can show all the details then enter the override total for billing. (Thanks TX) - CMW

S100C v23 – Some New Features
Last month we pointed out some logistics with the .NET 4.8 requirement for the server with S100C on it, the need for updated third-party integration software, and the timing of your upgrade to this new, major release.

This month we have a few highlights from our August 25th webinar where we covered the new features and some other information.

If you're running Sage Estimating version 20.1 (or older), it is NOT compatible with version 23. You'll have to upgrade to 21.1 to take advantage of the integration.

Halleluiah! They 'fixed' the slowness issue in the note pads. This is caused by the spell check feature when it is enabled. They say this has been fixed!

The new 'quick sum' feature is now available in the 9-5 takeoff screen, and **there's a new 'Clear All' button** when exporting Change Orders, Budgets, Subcontracts, and the like once you've been awarded that bid.

Here's a simple one, but very annoying – when you run the 2-4-51 Subsidiary ledger, the long description runs into the Debit column so you can't read the numbers; this has been fixed!

Another simple but irritating item – when you have multiple cash accounts and you change the cash account number, the default check number doesn't update; this has also been fixed!
Thanks Sage! Keep 'em coming! - CMW



Joke of the Month

What did the computer do at lunch?

Had a byte!

M365 Education Station

6 Cool Things You (Probably) Didn't Know About Outlook



Forget to attach a file?

Outlook can stop you from sending an email without an attachment. If you write a new email and type the words 'attachment' or 'attached,' then try sending without including the attachment, Outlook will remind you that you might have forgotten to attach a file. You can go ahead and attach your file before sending your message!



Don't miss important messages

On the lookout for an important message, but you can't keep staring at your inbox waiting for it? Customize your alerts so you'll get a notification about your critical emails. Right-click the email, then select the 'Rules' option. Click 'Create Rule,' and check the boxes for the options you want!



Travel reservations auto-save!

If your flight, hotel, or rental car reservations are sent to your email, Outlook will automatically add these to your calendar, plus the associated information like confirmation numbers and links.



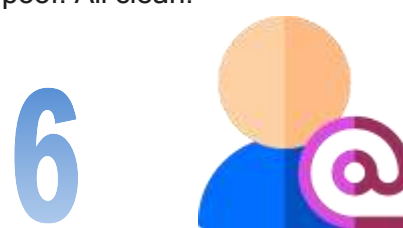
Clean up a folder

Got multiple threads with dozens (or hundreds) of emails sitting in your inbox? Use 'Clean Up' to help you clean up your inbox (or Other folder). Select the message, then click the 'Delete' button at the top (next to the New Email button). Select the 'Clean Up Conversation' option – poof! All clean!



Ignore an email thread!

If you've found yourself on the receiving end of an email thread that you don't need/want to be on, you can 'Ignore' the entire conversation instead of deleting every message in the thread as it arrives. Right-click the message in the thread you want to ignore, then select 'Ignore' (towards the bottom of the menu). Poof! Messages will be deleted.



@ Mentions

Sometimes you need certain people to respond to your email. You can type @ in front of their names and then 3 things happen:

- Their name is automatically added to the To line of the email message.
- Their name is highlighted in the message body.
- When they receive the message in their inbox, they'll see the @ symbol in the message list, indicating they're mentioned by name.



How Did They Do It? Better Builders

Courtney Burke has always loved real estate and architecture, so serving as controller at a design build firm aligns her talents and interests well. Everyone at Better Builders loves what they do and knows that creating a space people actually enjoy living in is important. Courtney's favorite part of her day is when she reviews the live status of their projects so she can see the progress the team is making and the impact their work is having on their clients' homes.

Syscon's Cost to Complete report helps her monitor the expected costs to complete projects throughout the lifetime of a given job. This up-to-date-information makes her life easier for billing, also making it easier for the production team to monitor projects and keep them on track.

Having a good system in place allows everyone to focus more on the clients. Better Builders makes every effort to go

out of their way to help people. In one case, they had an elderly client who needed a deck and ramp built for her husband, who was wheelchair-bound and his health was deteriorating rapidly. Better Builders worked as quickly as possible, even adding extra hours and weekends to get it done. Ultimately, they were able to finish the ramp in time for him to enjoy the space before passing on. Their dedication to service and care truly sets Better Builders apart. - BK



Courtney Burke,
Controller

Fast Facts

Location: Seattle, WA
 Specialty: Design, Build, Remodel
 Founded: 2010
 Affiliations: Master Builders Association, Built Green



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: How to Get Field Time that's FULLY Integrated with Sage 100 Contractor, webinar

Date: Thursday, Sept. 16

Time: 1 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

Event: M365 Series, webinar

Date: Thursday, Sept. 30

Time: 1 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events



Featured Articles

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