



What's New

The Thanksgiving season reminds us to stop and take a look at our many blessings. We're blessed with an amazing staff, meaningful work, and wonderful clients. We give thanks.

We have a few clients left in our Hosted Exchange environment, so we'll be focused on moving them to M365 this month and next.

Many of you have successfully moved to our Azure hosting environment. We're anxious to get the rest of you moved soon!

Wishing you a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday. Perhaps you have a friend who will be alone; why not consider inviting them to join you!

- Catherine Wendt



Leadership – What's Changed and What's Next

In 2021, I signed up for the Hero's Journey with Darren Hardy. This is a year-long training course with a weekly call and homework, targeted to business owners and those in leadership positions in their company, in their community, or their family – so anyone who has a desire to learn and grow, bringing their best to everyone they touch, and everything they tackle.

A little background on Darren Hardy – I first heard him speak at an industry event and purchased his book *The Compound Effect*, then signed up for one of his online, self-guided programs. It was a 12-week commitment, but the commitment was to yourself; no one was going to hold me accountable, but even at that, Darren had constant challenges to 'be the exception' and finish the commitment. Since then, I have signed up for others. He even has a daily short video blog, Darren Daily, with a

thought or challenge for the day.

So, what's the 'Hero's Journey' all about? Mr. Hardy's definition: 'A Hero is simply an ordinary person put in an extraordinary circumstance – who takes action.' That's his definition of a leader. I think you would agree that the last year-plus has been 'an extraordinary circumstance' for all of us, requiring all of us to dig deep as we strive to stay in business and thrive in very odd times.

He goes on to point out that the leaders of today require very different skills than the leaders 30, 40, or 50 years ago. We live in a very different time. We have more generations working together in the work force, more ethnicities, more cultures, and more women than any other time in history. As a work force, we also have more control, more choices when it comes to careers, location, length of

Continued pg.2

In this Issue

Leadership: What's Changed.....1
Book Review.....2
MFA – True Story.....3
Shiny New Gadget3
Tracking Certificates of Ins.....4
Microsoft 365 Focus.....5
How Did They Do It?.....6
Events Calendar6

November 2021

(continued from page 1)

employment, and who we work for and work with.

In Module 1, five (5) generations are identified. I found this fascinating as I stacked up our staff against these categories—I bet you will, too. One of our homework assignments was to find three people in generations other than our own and interview them.

- ◆ The Builders, Traditionalists, Silent Generation, born 1930-1945
- ◆ Baby Boomers, born 1946-1964
- ◆ Generation X, born 1965-1980
- ◆ Millennials, Generation Y, born 1981-1994
- ◆ Generation Z, born after 1995

For those of us with children, we learned our parenting skills by watching our parents. Many of us have modified our parenting to meet gaps our parents missed, and to address the new realities our children face in their day-to-day lives, many of which didn't even exist when we were growing up. This same concept holds true for our leadership skills. Whether you're leading your family, your team, your business, a church group, or you're on a committee in your industry, the lead-

ership skills we grew up with are insufficient, actually fall short of what is needed today, right now.

There's a great quote by BB King — 'The beautiful thing about learning is that nobody can take it away from you.' I've had the pleasure of working with many business owners. They're hardworking and deeply care about their businesses. Many are very engaged in their trade, participating on committees, advocating for their industry. It seems like there's a perception that this 'leadership learning stuff' is for big companies, people with C-suite titles, not our 'regular' small businesses.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Each of you impact many people, every day. So how much time do you spend honing your leadership skills? What if you took Darren Hardy's advice and carved out 30 minutes every day to read a book on the topic? Not sure where to start? We have quite a few book reviews to check out to find a topic or author to start with.

I have this short list of five goals that I see every morning: Model the Way; Encourage the Heart; Enable Others to Act; Challenge the Process; Inspire a Shared Vision. These originate with

James Kouzes and Barry Posner as part of their research findings to discover what behaviors were common to leaders who make extraordinary things happen, right back to Darren Hardy's definition. Where could you focus in 2022 to have a bigger impact in your family, with your friends, in your organization, and with your team? CMW

Cathy & Larry Sightings



Catherine sang with the Alleluia Orchestra; great event!

Larry wraps up the second of two partial knee replacements—the marvels of medicine!

“For things to change, you have to change.”

— Jim Rohn

Great by Choice, Jim Collins, Morten Hansen

When asked if the authors were more or less optimistic after this research study, they said **'this study shows that whether we prevail or fail, endure or die, depends more upon what we do than on what the world does to us.'**

How encouraging, and sobering; we can and should take ownership of ourselves and our actions, what we can control, which is our reactions and responses.

Choice – a theme over and over again in this book. The companies in this research study had good luck and bad luck. More or less of either one did not weigh into the results. In



fact, the authors use the term ROL – Return on Luck, and they mean good or bad. Are we prepared for what we cannot foresee? Are we methodical

Book Nook

and disciplined? Do we accept what is in front of us and own it?

Although 'luck' is not the focus of the study, *Great by Choice* has as its premise how comparable companies facing uncertainty, chaos, and luck-events can have very different outcomes. Under the heading **'Luck is not a Strategy,'** this came down to a few key points: Behaviors—fanatic discipline, empirical creativity, productive paranoia, and Level 5 Leadership; 20 Mile March—consistent effort, nothing less no matter how difficult, and nothing more no matter how tempting; Fire Bullets Then Cannonballs—disciplined testing, then maximizing what has worked; Leading Above the Death Line—building big buffers and margins of safety, ready for the next disruption; SMaC Behaviors—Specific, Methodical, and Consistent. – Highly Recommended!- CMW



Ransomware Attack on Candy Corn Manufacturer ☹️

A ransomware attack on the industry's largest manufacturer of candy corn disrupted production, but did NOT lead to a candy shortage for Halloween. A ransomware gang encrypted some of candy manufacturer Ferrara Candy's systems. The Chicago-based company produces several candy varieties, including Sweet Tarts, Nerds, and Brach's Candy Corn. Ferrara was able to resume production and cooperated with law enforcement officials to find the culprits. - *Fortune, Business Insider*

MFA— True Story!

We recommend all our clients roll out Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA). We have written some articles and even have a PDF summarizing what it is, why you need it, and how it works. If you need any of these, just call the office and we'll send them.

Basically, MFA means you provide multiple (more than one) proof that you are who you say you are. This came in quite handy last month for one of our mid-central IL clients, who we're happy to say is using MFA.

The office manager was receiving multiple requests to approve a sign in request, about 15 of them, and couldn't figure out what was going on. They called our office (thank goodness) and it turned out that their password had been compromised. Someone was trying to sign into their M365 account and had the correct password, but since MFA was in place, the office manager was receiving

the second authentication request to Approve the sign-in request. Now they were able to say 'No' to the sign-in request, and knowing that someone had the password, we were able to close any open sessions, have them change the password, and they were back to work.

This is a success story! The password was compromised, which can happen, but the second level of authentication was out of the hacker's control, allowing our client to deny access. This also alerted our client that the password had been compromised, so they were able to change it BEFORE their data was at risk. Good Work! - CMW

What's a Firewall Anyway?

I was on a call with a client and we asked if they understood what the role of the firewall was in their network. They replied honestly, which we appreciate, and said 'not really.' I responded that it works like an actual firewall in construction, and they commented they had never put the two ideas together even though it's the same word — turns out the other Syscon person on the call hadn't put that together either.

I didn't make this up — if you Google this, the term firewall historically referred to a wall intended to confine a fire within a line of adjacent buildings. Taking that same concept, a firewall in technology is a wall protecting your network from the outside internet. In fact, when we draw network diagrams, the firewall image looks like a small masonry block wall.

If you're at home, you want those physical firewalls in place. At your office, you absolutely need a firewall protecting your computers (and not just your ISP's router, BTW). - CMW

Changes Ahead...

After several years of static prices, Microsoft has announced a price increase for their 365 products coming in March 2022. We're working on ways to minimize the impact to our clients. Stay tuned for updates and information!



Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Trio Portable Monitor

Laptops are great! They've come a long way from the behemoth contraptions that barely qualified as portable and convenient. However, if you've made the jump from one screen to two (or more!), switching from your desktop to your laptop may feel like a downgrade. Minimizing windows rather than glancing at another screen can get annoying, fast!

The Trio Portable Monitor is a nifty gadget that transforms your laptop from one monitor to two or three. You can adjust the brightness, rotate it up to 270 degrees, and it's energy efficient. The Trio clips to your screens. These attachable monitors display at 1920 x 1080 IPS and work best with 12 to 14 inch laptops.

Perhaps best of all, the Trio is a plug-and-play device, meaning you don't need to download/install anything to get your new monitors working. It works with USB-A and USB-C ports on Windows and Macbook laptops. It folds up so it is compact and easy to slip into your bag with your laptop. It comes in gray, metallic black, black, and cool white depending on which size you order.

Learn more at <https://tinyurl.com/rh6e5sen>



Construction Corner



Tracking Certificates of Insurance

I can't think of any of our contractor clients who don't have to deal with Certificates of Insurance. A certificate of insurance is proof of insurance, what type, and when it expires. It's our responsibility to track these expirations and receive updated certificates before any additional payments are made.

Then during an insurance audit, we're required to produce the certificates for our subcontractors showing that they had coverage during the insurance audit period. If not, we'll be hit with additional premiums to cover these contractors—expensive!

You may know that the 4-4 Vendor screen in Sage 100 Contractor has a Certificates tab. Let's review some practical ways to use this information, and some easy reports to stay on top of renewal requests.

On the Certificates screen, you can setup a Quick List of insurance types, or free-type them as needed. We recommend creating the list for consistency.

A few years ago, Sage added a Job column so you can reference a cert for a specific job; very handy. The Received column is for the date you received the cert. The Expires column tracks the expiration for the type of insurance, which is part of the report you'll run each month. You may have one cert with

several types of insurance, and they may expire on different dates, so use multiple rows.

Let's talk about the Warning and Stop Pay columns. If you put a 'Y' for Yes in the Warning column, you'll receive a message when you select that vendor's AP invoices to pay that indicates which vendors you've selected have expired certificates. You can continue and print the check if you choose, or go pick up the phone and request the updated cert.

'We can't control people who try to scam us; we CAN control staying on top of our receivables.'

If the Stop Pay column has a 'Y' for Yes, you will not be able to cut the check until there's a current date.

Each month, run the 4-1-1-41 report for the upcoming month to see what is expiring. This report includes phone numbers, so give them a call and stay on top of the expirations. Consider an alphabetical binder for all of these, something you can hand the auditor. - CMW

Backing up Sage 100 Contractor If you have backups for M365 and OneDrive, we have news—OneDrive does NOT back up Sage 100 Contractor; you need a different solution. Sage runs a nightly backup, but only to a local drive. You need a business-class backup of your S100C data, reports, and report forms. We have a couple of options for you to consider, so if you don't know if you have a solid backup, give us a call and let's talk it through. - CMW

Here's Another Good Reason To Stay On Top Of Your AR
We had a client who sent us a copy of a form that had been filled out and sent to a City they were working with. The

Ready to Close the Year?
Save the date!
Closing the Year Webinar
Thursday, December 2nd
1:00 p.m. CST
Register at www.syscon-inc.com/events

form was a request to change the bank and account information for future payments. The reason we were included is that the email address on the form wasn't receiving notifications of the payments, and the payments hadn't been received—but here's the rest of the story.

The City had sent the payment, but our client hadn't received it. The reason the employee hadn't received notice is that the domain name (company name as part of their email) had an extra letter in it; it was bogus. Whoever sent in this form created a similar domain name and routed the email to them. It was a hack.

A couple of lessons here: the City should have called to confirm the bank change, no matter what. Had they made the call, none of this would have happened.

Second, our client reached out in October for a payment they expected in September; good for them! Since they were on top of their AR, this was caught fairly quickly. Are you on top of your AR? We can't control people who try to scam us; we CAN control staying on top of our receivables. - CMW



Joke of the Month
What do you hear if you hold a construction worker's hat to your ear?
The OSHA.

Syscon's Support is 'Way Above' Other Companies

'The support offered by Syscon is way above what other companies I talked to could or would provide.'

-Judy Hart, Controller,
Mid-State Steel

M365 Education Station

5 Useful Planner Features

Microsoft Planner is a tool that makes it easy to collaborate with team members and track task management. Planner is best deployed for team projects that involve multiple team members, like moving your office to a new location. You can specify all the tasks required (called a card), categorize those task cards in buckets, assign tasks to team members, set deadlines, attach files, and track progress. Planner is included in most 365 plans, so you likely already have this incredible collaboration tool waiting for you to start using!

1. Move Tasks to Any Plan (New!)

Until recently, it was only possible to move tasks between plans in the same M365 Group. Now you can move tasks among groups. For example, perhaps your Payroll Group has a task for the Controller, who is on the Financial Group. Tap the ellipses (...) in the upper right corner of your task and select 'Move task.' Select where you want to move the task to – you'll get a notification when the task was moved successfully. Clicking the notification brings you to the new location for your task.

2. Recommended Plans (New!)

In the web app, the new Recommended Plans feature will show you tasks that have been assigned to you but haven't been opened yet. You will find Recommended Plans on the left pane between Favorites and Recent. Recommended Plans will only appear if they are not already in your Favorites or Recent sections.

3. Sync with Teams

You can bring a plan into Teams. First, select the Teams group then click on the 'plus' at the top of the screen. You can either type Planner into the search, or locate and select Planner from the app options. Next, click on the 'Use an existing plan' option. A drop-down menu will appear and you can select what plan to share. Then click the purple Save button. Congratulations—you've now synced your Planner plan with Teams!

4. Collaborate with Third Parties

Did you know you can collaborate with parties from outside your organization in Planner? Guest users can create and delete buckets and tasks, edit task

fields, and edit your plan's name. Plus, third-party users will also get some of the notifications from your plan. The owner of your group will need to add the third-party to the group in Outlook. This sends them a welcome message, then they can follow the link to get to the plan.

5. Label Your Tasks

A label is a color-coded visual cue that can be added to tasks, up to 25 labels per task. To add a label to a task, open the task in your plan. On the task card, you'll see a Label icon. Select one of the 25 color options. By default, all the tags are named by their color. Edit the label name to anything you'd like, such as naming the Red label 'Urgent.' Add or remove labels assigned to a task at any time. To delete a label, click the X on the label (note that you must have the task open to delete it).



Tip of the Month

Did you know?

Bucket – A bucket is a column in Planner. Tasks within a plan are grouped into buckets like To Do, In Progress, and Done. Your buckets, your choice of names!

Kanban – Name for the card-based scheduling system that Planner uses.

M365 Group – This is a group you set up to share a collection of resources such as a shared Outlook inbox, a document library, or a shared calendar.

Plan – A plan is the name for the project you are tracking in Planner.

Task – A work item or activity with a specific purpose related to the larger plan. A task is a card that can be moved from bucket to bucket in the plan.



Microsoft

Partner

How Did They Do It? Preferred Electric

According to Accounting Manager Renee Cichon, it's all about collaboration. Preferred Electric has a strong team that's powered by technology. Their team had to come together to keep their electricians working in the field while most employees pivoted to working from home during the pandemic. Renee's chief responsibility is the accounting area, but she helps in just about every area except hands-on electrical work. That's where strong collaboration came into play – communication lines remained open, and everyone maintained the same hours whether they were working from home or the office.

Not only did their company stay open, but they grew. They expanded from being local electrical contractors (local to the Chicago area) to a national company. "It's exciting to see how the business has changed and shifted since I've been here," Renee said.

Technology helps the team work collaboratively and effectively. Preferred Electric uses Syscon's Field Integrated Time (F.I.T.) System to capture field time. There's no longer any question about who has submitted their time. Not only does the accounting no longer need to key in time, but the field can review their time submissions any time. According to Renee, Syscon's F.I.T. System has saved a ton of time and smoothed out their workflow. - BK



Renee Cichon,
Accounting Manager

Fast Facts

Location: Bloomingdale, IL
Specialty: Electrical & Low Voltage
Founded: 1973
Other: Recently expanded from serving local markets to national



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: Closing the Year in Sage 100 Contractor, webinar

Date: Thursday, December 2

Time: 1 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

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

Date: Thursday, December 9

Time: 1 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

Featured Articles

Construction Executive magazine:

Syscon named in The 2021 Top Construction Technology Firms, Workforce and Labor Management category

Business Ledger newspaper, press release:

Syscon Celebrates Its 35th Anniversary



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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.

