



What's New

The last month of 2021 — hard to believe. It's been an eventful year. Many of us will enjoy a holiday party, gather with family and friends, and celebrate the December and January holidays.

When we're not celebrating, it's 'nose to the grindstone' as they say, finishing projects before the bitter cold, wrapping up 2021 financials and payroll, while we get ready to start a new year.

I had the opportunity to help out with the phones recently where I had a chance to talk with many of you. So nice to hear your voices and connect.

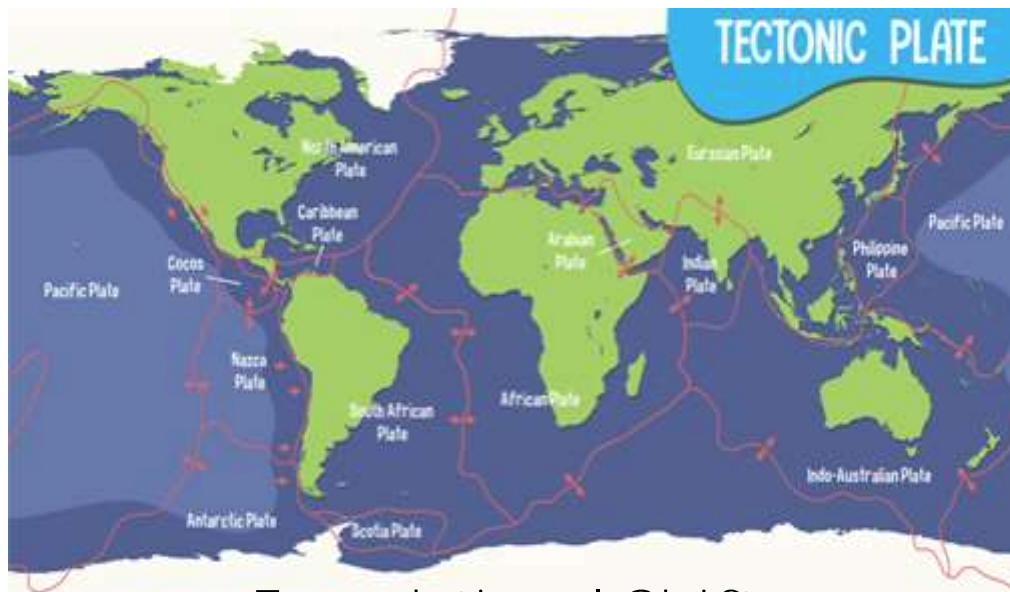
Wishing all of you a Blessed New Year, Good Health, and continued success!

- Catherine Wendt

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December 2021



Foundational Shift: How To Get Your Arms Around The Azure Change

I've mentioned in some previous articles and videos that there is a significant shift happening in business computer services. Our industry evolves at a hectic pace, but there are moments in time when there are significant shifts that impact our clients at a foundational level. We put together a technology timeline as part of our 35th Anniversary celebration, and it was eye-opening!

Looking back — the shift from having a few computers in the office to having a network of connected computers; adding internet access for each computer on the network; moving from tape to image-based backups; virtualization of servers rather than a physical computer for each server; agents on each computer that monitor its health and can provide anti-virus and patch management automation; remote access through Citrix, then Terminal Services; Wi-Fi everywhere;

the power of cell phones, way beyond a 'phone'; hosting a server somewhere other than your office.

And now, the move from a central server for all company data and programs to an on-demand, file storage access from anywhere with hosted cloud servers for programs that require a server Operating System. SharePoint and OneDrive have been available for a while, but the **culmination of Microsoft's R&D efforts** in this product and the pandemic have accelerated the product as well as its adoption. Add to this an expectation that everything is available at all times, and you can just feel the ground shifting.

To many of us who are familiar with and happy with most aspects of the traditional server/network model, this can feel overwhelming. At a minimum, it brings up concerns about protecting

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your business, its unique processes, and when it comes right down to it, **worries about losing control. I'd like to address some of these.**

Whether you feel ready for this or not, your staff is already using personal devices to stay connected during and **after work; they're already downloading and using tools to have access to what they need. If you don't provide the roadmap and put the structure in place, they will look for ad hoc tools to meet their needs and you will definitely have lost control of your data.**

Over and over again I hear the need for the field to have access to documents. This is followed by the many non-business apps and programs that are in use to work around the inconvenience and expense of providing access to the shared data on the server (s). If you have everything on your server right now, hosted or physical, **and you need to solve the 'access' dilemma, here are the steps you'll take in the coming months.**

Step 1 – If you're not already on Microsoft 365, take the plunge. This platform incorporates email, Teams for on-demand communication and meetings,

SharePoint and OneDrive for document access from anywhere, while addressing some chronic licensing issues. We continue to see clients pay Google for some services, then purchase other services for meetings and shared files, all of which are part of the M365 packages. Add the licensing of up to five (5) **devices per user, and you can't afford to skip this product. Don't forget to add cloud-to-cloud backups and roll out Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA).**

Step 2 – Time to do some planning. Take a look at the types of files on your server and the folder structure. For the folders, think in terms of groups, who has access, and categories. Many of you have excellent folder structure that can be translated to **SharePoint. There are some 'gotchas'** so be sure to include us in the planning. We have some great tools and a checklist of things to stay on top of when migrating to SharePoint.

One of the most common questions I get is, **'The word 'Share' scares me; we have to limit who can see what.'** At this point, I often show my SharePoint folder structure and explain that these folders have security limits; many of the folders I see are not visible to others on

our staff just due to the nature of my responsibilities. In SharePoint, the files **are similar to 'Shares' on your server; a way to organize the folders and to limit who has access to which folders.**

I'm out of space but have one more step and several thoughts. I'll have the rest in the January 2022 newsletter and on our website! - CMW

Cathy & Larry Sightings



Catherine attended a two-day marketing CRM presentation with Beth in Scottsdale.

Larry is recovering well and back on the bike; thanks to all!

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

— Aristotle

The 5 Levels of Leadership by John Maxwell

I found this book exciting, irritating, frustrating, and encouraging as I read through the chapters. It seems that leadership is not a linear journey. You can be at different levels in different circumstances, all at the same moment in time. You might be new to a charity board while at the same time have many years **and contributions to an association's board.**

If you're new to someone or a role, you may be at Level 1: Position, which is a title. As you work with the team, you can move to Level 2: Permission, something you earn. With this foundation, Level 3: Production is in sight as you experience the synergy that produces results in the business. It's very normal to stop here. This is an exciting level and the results are very visible, tangible.



Book Nook

Making production rates, sales targets, KPI's, meeting efficiency, and profitability goals is very exciting.

A conscious decision to take on Level 4: People Development moves past production as you help your team grow in their own leadership journeys. Basically, you begin to focus on working your way out of a job, assisting others as they work through the leadership levels.

Then there's Level 5: The Pinnacle. At this level, your job is more about developing leaders than 'getting work done,' allowing you to expand your influence in your industry, community, and organizations. The last section of the book about Coach John Wooden provides some excellent stories that when added to Mr. Maxwell's, reflect his passion for the topic. Definitely Recommended!- CMW



NRA Hacked

A Russian ransomware group claims that it hacked The National Rifle Association. The hacker group calling itself Grief posted 13 files that they assert belong to the NRA. The files do not contain consumer information – they relate to grant forms, grant winners, and meeting minutes. Grief threatened to leak more files if they're not paid, but did not specify their demands. –ID Agent, *Wired*

Justice Dept. Conducts Cybercrime Crackdown

The U.S. Justice Department is getting serious about cybercrime. Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco told the Associated Press that they are taking more actions to combat ransomware and cybercrime. Those actions include more arrests, more ransom payment seizures, and more law enforcement operations. – *Associated Press*

FBI Warnings

Within the Managed Service Provider industry (MSP's), specific companies receive regular briefings from the FBI, trends they're seeing. We're not all invited to the party, but the FBI is interested in what we see within our client base, trends.

Recently, we received a warning from the FBI about an aggressive effort by sophisticated hackers. Receiving an email from the FBI is a little disconcerting ... After Chris's heart slowed down, he read through the information, then did a little searching of his own.

The email came from infrastructure that is owned by the FBI, but the emails were

fake and there was no signature file.

Seems a hacker had 'scraped' the emails from the American Registry for Internet Numbers (ARIN).

Please do your part in protecting your computers and your data. Did you know that according to Crowdstrike, over 80% of all cyberattacks involve credential use or misuse in the network? The vast majority of these attacks involve usernames and passwords. If you haven't already, use strong passwords and add MFA. Need help? Give us a call – CMW

Windows 11—Promising

Windows 11 officially launched in October 2021 in a phased roll out. A few of our techs couldn't resist, so they upgraded – the screen is absolutely stunning.

One of the primary changes you'll notice is that the Start menu is in the center. Many people really like the widgets that were part of Windows 10. Now you can access widgets directly from the Taskbar and personalize them. Teams is easier to access, right from the Taskbar.

The new OS has features called Snap Groups and Snap Layouts which are collections of apps from the Taskbar. These are easier than ever for switching between views. They've improved plugging/unplugging from a monitor without losing where you are.

We're NOT recommending this upgrade yet. Not all your business applications are ready for this release – proceed with Caution (more to come)! - CMW



Shawn Erickson, CFO at C.J. Erickson Plumbing, received the Contractor of the Year award from CFMA Chicago Chapter. Chris and Mary attended, Syscon sponsored!

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Mini Link Smartphone Printer

Who misses those vintage Polaroid cameras that printed pictures as soon as the shutter was released? The immediacy of printing photos on the spot is helpful in many circumstances – at a family holiday party or wedding; when something unusual happens at a construction job site; or perhaps this is handy for networking at industry conferences.

Fujifilm's Mini Link Smartphone Printer prints right from a smartphone via Bluetooth – no Polaroid camera needed. The pictures are about the size of a credit card, which is 2.13 x 3.4 inches. The special edition printer includes 20 films, decorative stickers, and a microfiber cloth. The mini printer is 8 x 6 x 4 inches.

Edit and print one frame of a video or individual pictures. The gadget also converts into a camera, so a smartphone is optional for this nifty gadget.

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



Construction Corner



TUG Event – Some Updates

I attended the annual TUG (The User Group) event in Las Vegas last month. They focus on Sage 300CRE, Sage Estimating, and our favorite, Sage 100 Contractor. Syscon often contributes articles to their monthly newsletter. Sage is a significant sponsor, so they took several of the keynote events. There were some other speakers and many breakout sessions based on construction topics, or product-specific solutions.

Some of the S100C attendees have been **around a long time**, so we've known them for years; it was nice to catch up with them. Nice to check in with several Sage representatives, CFMA leadership, CFMA members, and other vendors.

There were a couple of topics and themes that came up often, so I thought **I'd share them with you.**

Funeral Pay and other Non-Standard Pay – **I wasn't expecting this one, but it** came up in many breakout sessions. You can use the Absence field in the 5-2-2 screen to track non-standard paid time off. This field is part of the Sage reports (thanks COVID), so you can have a record of what was used, and by whom.

ProCore – We are receiving more inquiries about using ProCore and its integration with Sage 100 Contractor. **We've received mixed feedback from** our clients, so I approached their vendor booth. **We've agreed to have Syscon host**

a webinar and have ProCore present their solution, what it does, most common uses, limits, and an open Q&A. Please watch for some webinar dates, probably after the yearend rush.

Workers Comp Reporting – Turns out that quite a few S100C uses do not enter the standard 40 or 45 hours in the 5-2-2 payroll record for salaried employees. This is causing issues with Workers

'In the 6-3 screen, use the F7 key to limit who can see this field.'

Comp reports. The dollars are there, but **the hours don't 'add up' since no hours** were entered for the salaried employees. Go ahead and enter time in the 5-2-2 grid for your salaried personnel. Either enter as a lump or break out the days worked. Track Holiday, Sick, and Vacation time with the Pay types.

Exempt Staff – Many clients have Project Managers and other salaried staff who are on Certified Payroll jobs. Go ahead and check the boxes in their 5-2-1 **screen to show that they're exempt from** Certified Payroll and from Overtime. This will clean up your reports and still allow you to cost them to your jobs.

Hiding Gross Wage Info – **Many PM's** use the job cost reports to track costs and hours worked on their jobs. If they drill **down to the cost record, and it's a** payroll record, they can see the Gross Wage and determine what someone is being paid. In the 6-3 screen, use the F7 key to limit who can see this field. **They'll have the total cost, but not the** gross wage. – CMW

Sage Intacct – **The Real Story** **Over the last two years, we've sat in on** demos and discussions about Sage Intacct. Some were Sage people one-on-one with our team, others were Sage

presentations to their Business Partners (and we are one of them). We wanted to know more about the product and better **understand Sage's 'push' to the market.** During the recent TUG event, they provided more updates and several **presentations. So here's where they are and what's going on.**

Sage purchased Intacct a few years ago. This is a web-based accounting package that is highly rated and has many third party vendors who have written integrations for specific uses. So far so good. But, they did NOT have anything to meet the Construction industry needs, which is what Sage has been developing for several years now.

The technology has many possibilities and is very exciting. However, it is not ready for our specialty subcontractor clients. They are working on adding **Change Orders; then they'll work on** billing, specifically for Progress Bills; there is no payroll module. Third party add-on products with a construction focus are just starting to be released. Sage presented several paths to get to **Sage Intacct, and they said 'Path 3 isn't quite ready yet' and 'can't really do construction billing'; they're building it.**

We're excited to see this unfold, but it will be several years.

We'll continue to watch their progress and keep you posted.
- CMW



Syscon's Field Integrated

Time (F.I.T.) System is a Time Saver

'We save so much time! Syscon's F.I.T. System has really cut down on data entry for payroll!'

-Terri Dillon, Secretary
J.C. Dillon



Joke of the Month

Why are Christmas trees so bad at sewing?

They always drop their needles.

M365 Education Station

Visio—A Brief Overview

Visio is Microsoft’s tool for visual collaboration. In other words, it’s for making diagrams, flowcharts, office plans, and other organizational charts.

How Does Visio Work?



It’s a drag-and-drop drawing tool. Once it’s open, follow these 4 steps to make a visual masterpiece!

1. Select and open a template (or start from scratch!)
2. Select shapes from the left panel
3. Arrange and connect shapes
4. Add text to shapes and/or connectors

Web vs. Desktop



VS.



Web App:

- Opens from M365 online portal
- Included with M365 subscription
- Simplified version of the app
- Automatic updates

Desktop:

- Opens from a desktop app
- An add-on cost
- More shapes and templates than web
- Updates need to be installed

Visio in Excel



Visio is also an add-on in Excel! Diagrams, flowcharts, and other visuals can be created in Excel without opening the Visio app. If you’re using M365 and Office is up-to-date, no additional steps are needed to give it a try. The picture (below) shows where to find it.



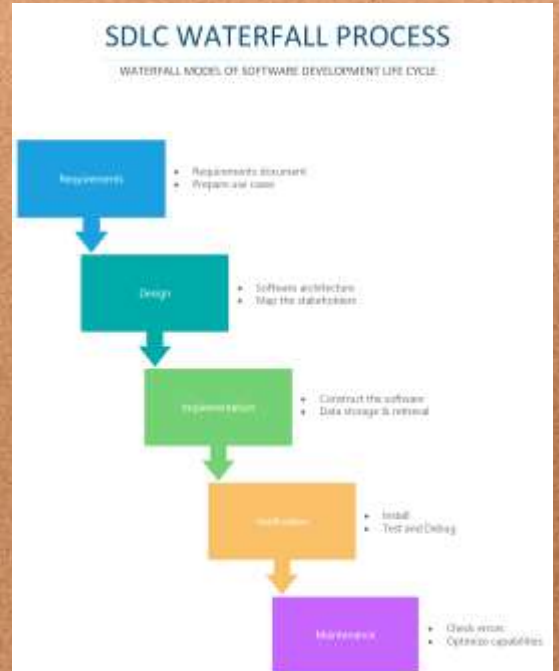
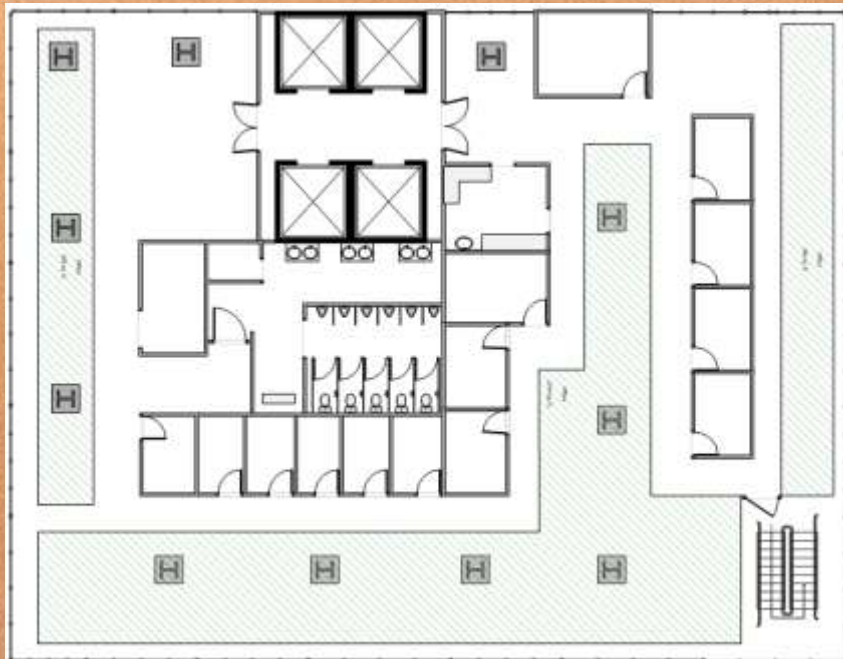
What Can I Make?



What data needs to be visualized? Here’s a list to jumpstart your imagination!

- Flowcharts
- Organizational charts
- Floor plans
- Network diagrams
- Outline a process and its steps, like sales
- Schedules
- Gantt chart

Visio Idea Board



How Did They Do It?

Duco Construction

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” - Helen Keller

The right partner makes all the difference. Nick discovered this when he was ready to select a business partner for his cement construction enterprise. He said he selected a partner, Eric, who is his true equal. **They value each other’s opinions and can critique each other’s ideas without letting ego get in the way. “We work really well together. We keep attitude and ego out of it,” Nick said. It helps that they’ve known each other for several years and both have experience in the field. Nick said they were ready to work for themselves instead of someone else.**

It’s not just their business relationship and expertise that sets them apart. Duco Construction has a unique offering for their customers – site, concrete, excavation, and demolition services. In fact, their services are in such high demand that their biggest challenge is managing

their growth.

As a young company, tracking everything in Quickbooks and spreadsheets worked great. But as the company kept growing, this tracking method was no longer sufficient. They use Sage 100 Contractor, which provides a centralized, holistic picture of their company. They can track their expenses, hours, and different facets of each job. Nick said that Syscon has **been a great partner as they’ve grown into Sage 100 Contractor.** - BK



Nick Panagakos & Family

Fast Facts

Location: New Lenox, IL
 Specialty: Cement Construction
 Founded: 2010
 Professional Affiliations: Chicago Concrete Contractors Association and American Concrete Institute

Proud Members



Proud Partners



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.



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 – **We’ll Review ALL the Steps!**, 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’s F.I.T. System is on the Hot Products of 2022 list!

Industry Tech Outlook magazine:

Syscon is one of the 10 Best Construction Tech Solution Providers of 2021.

