



What's New

It's part of the ritual – we acknowledge the passing of a year with all its successes and heartaches while welcoming a new year with hope and optimism. It's our prayer that you have opportunities to win, to learn, and to grow in 2022.

We have completed our move from anti-virus to the EDR (Endpoint Detect and Response) and it's been fascinating. This new level of protection has already proven itself when compared to traditional AV.

We've wrapped up a year of celebration – 35 years in business. We've had fun pulling out the memories and sharing them with you. Hope you enjoyed our staff celebration pictures on LinkedIn! - Catherine Wendt



Foundational Shift: Part II – Why Azure? Why Now?

Let's recap Part I from our December 2021 newsletter. We are at a moment in time when there is a palpable shift in technology. We've seen several of these during our 35 years in business, and we're in one right now.

shared the first two steps businesses need to take right now to move forward. Your data is critical to running your business. It's also critical that you take control of the tools in use, the security, and that you safeguard these assets.

We're moving from a central server for all company data and programs to an on-demand, file storage access from anywhere with hosted cloud servers for server-specific programs, and Microsoft 365 to share documents. These products have been around for a while, but with all the R&D by Microsoft and the fallout from the pandemic, this change has accelerated and crystalized, along with our expectations of what technology should deliver and provide.

Last month I recapped some of the ways the business community has met the need to share and have access to documents, all accelerated by the pandemic, and not all in the long-term best interest of the company. I also

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. The rest of the details are in our December 2021 newsletter.

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. There are some 'gotchas' so be sure to include us when you're doing this planning. We have some great tools and checklists. Now let's continue.

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One of the most common questions I get when we talk about Step 2 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 the ‘Shares’ on your server; a way to organize the folders and to limit who has access to which folders.

Step 3 – Now we look at what’s left on the server, in many cases, it’s accounting software or estimating software. This software runs on a server operating system (OS) so these are not a candidate for the M365 offering. This software and the data is moved to Azure hosting. In the Azure environment, you can choose a Syscon Tenant (just a few users), or a Private Tenant that allows you to use one log in and password to access your Microsoft account and the Azure server – seamless! I often describe these as the difference between renting in a building with common areas, and renting a stand-alone house that includes maintenance.

We also know that many of you have server operating systems that will need to be upgraded this year such as Microsoft 2012 R2. Others have a 2016 OS but that is not optimized for SharePoint, OneDrive, and Teams, causing frustration for your staff. The great news is that the Azure hosting platform is fully optimized to take advantage of the M365 product line.

There are other security technology changes that make the Azure platform the right choice right now including Session Hosts and Windows Virtual Desktop (WVD, now named as AVD). To top it off, it’s extremely hard to get replacement servers, and the capital investment of hardware and software can be cost-prohibitive, making the Azure environment even *more* ideal.

Is this a lot of changes? Yes. Will it take some time to get used to? Yes. Like the milestones I mentioned at the start of this article, this is a technology shift and it’s not going away. We were headed this direction anyway; add the work changes and supply chain interruptions due to the pandemic, and all of this was accelerated. Many of our clients were already benefiting from our hosted services and had minimal technology interruptions when every-

one had to head home to work. Those hosted servers now need new operating systems and security, and Microsoft is ready with their Azure platform. All new clients are in our Azure hosting environment, and our long-time hosting clients will make this **move in the coming months. Let’s talk!**
- CMW

Cathy & Larry Sightings



Catherine attended her brother’s wedding and sang in a ladies’ trio for Christmas.

Larry played with several AZ-based orchestras for holiday concerts and the *Nutcracker*.

“Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let this new year find you a better man/woman.”

— Ben Franklin

Ideal Team Player by Patrick Lencioni

Bob Herrold, one of our techs (RIP), was at a Global Leadership Summit providing IT Support for our client who was a local Host site. He knew I liked this author and purchased the book as a gift to me; very thoughtful. In Lencioni-style, it’s a story of a construction company that needs to hire key players at various levels and there’s a sense of urgency. The founder/owner has a health issue needing immediate attention, and they just landed two large projects that were to start at the same time. They had to provide leadership and find field workers to execute. They had experienced some turnover in key positions and were struggling.



So they began the quest to find out what attributes their best PM’s and lead-

Book Nook

ers had so they could use them to find new staff members who would fit in well. As the story unfolds, they hit on three (3) critical areas – Humble, Hungry, and Smart. Then they realized there was a ‘sweet spot’ for these attributes. When one or more were missing, the person did not thrive, or others on their team walked. Like many great business truths, executing and sticking to what you’ve learned is tough; there’s a pressing need, so it’s tempting to compromise.

The book has a good story, then applies the concepts as they unfold, ultimately defining and applying Humble, Hungry, and Smart. The last section has some great interview questions to help uncover a candidate’s ‘fit’ with these important attributes. Strongly recommended, and a good story, too. -CMW



GoDaddy Breach

Web hosting provider GoDaddy was breached, impacting 1.2 million customers who use it for hosting websites on WordPress. An unknown person/s used a compromised password to access customer usernames and passwords. In some cases, the electronic certificate that authenticates websites (SSL) was exposed. If abused, a hacker can use the **SSL to impersonate a customer's website** or services. A total of 1.2 million GoDaddy WordPress users had their email addresses and customer numbers exposed in this breach. *-ID Agent*

VPNs: Why NOT to Use Them

When the pandemic first hit, many businesses scrambled to find a way for employees to access important data from home so they could keep working. For many of our clients, their hosted servers made that part easy. But it turns out some employees kept data and short cuts on local computers at the office (sometimes as expected, sometimes outside policy).

There are several ways to connect remotely to a computer; some are safer than others. A popular request is VPN, **and for some clients, this was 'OK' on an emergency basis, but we do not recommend it long-term or as a matter of policy. Here's why.**

For our Sage 100 Contractor clients, you cannot and should not run this software over a VPN. It is a database program. Running over a VPN is extremely slow and opens the data to corruption — **don't** do it!

For the rest of us, using a VPN to

remotely access a computer opens up security risks, especially when the **computer that's trying to connect is a personal/home computer that probably doesn't have the same level of maintenance or the same security tools in place as the office computers.**

Here are some additional reasons NOT to use a VPN:

- **VPN's are machine-dependent**, not by user, by machine
- These require additional licenses, (read 'more cost')
- **VPN's provide open access to the computer on the other end**
- **The security and safety of the home computer is in question; if it's been compromised, it can now spread the infection to your office and network**

What to do? Access to files can be shared **through SharePoint from any device, it's a better experience, they're backed up, and you already own the licenses.** Still need to remotely control a computer at the office? We have safer options to share; just call us. — *CMW*

Sonicwall Firewalls—Update

While 2021 has been the 'worst year for ransomware on record, there's still plenty to look forward to in 2022,' according to **Sonicwall. They continue: 'The cybersecurity industry is rising to meet today's challenges, introducing solutions that are more powerful and agile than ever.'**

Many of you have Sonicwall firewalls, **as do we. We're glad to hear and report that they continue to be vigilant. We'll** continue to install updates as they are released and made available. - *CMW*



The coveted Bull Dog award! Tech Dan Gosslin (left) with Vice President of Technology Services, Chris Wendt (right).

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



PEET Electric Shoe/Boot Dryer and Warmer

Walking around in wet shoes or boots is no fun. You feel the water squish around your shoes, your socks get wet, and your feet feel cold and wrinkly. The PEET Dryer removes the water from footwear.

The PEET dryer has a few models. The Original Dryer fits 1 pair of shoes (or boots) and uses a gentle convection with warm air to dry footwear overnight. The Advantage Dryer fits 2 pairs of footwear and takes 1 to 4 hours to dry. This second model has 2 dry methods — a heated air and fan or a no-heat setting. The Family Dryer is similar to the Advantage Dryer, except it accommodates 3 pairs of shoes instead of 2.

The dryer works best on hiking boots, running shoes, sport shoes, and boots. It plugs into any standard 110-120 volt outlet. **There's an optional add-on for drying gloves as well!**

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



Construction Corner



Retention – Let’s Clear This Up

I get a lot of questions about retention – how it works; releasing versus billing; impact to Over/Under billing (WIP); how to manage in Sage 100 Contractor.

First of all, retention is designed to give the owner or general contractor some leverage to make sure the subcontractor has an incentive to finish the job. If **you’ve been paid all but \$1,000 let’s say**, and they need you back to do a couple of days’ of punch list items, you might just walk away from the \$1,000. If you’re still owed 10%, or maybe 5% of the **contract value**, you’re more likely to be incentivized to come back and finish up so you can get the remaining money.

When you setup a job, you have a budget – the amount of money you expect to spend in order to fulfill the scope of work in the contract. When you use 25% of the budget, you expect to have finished 25% of the project. That means you’ve earned 25% of the contract, so you bill it. The GC/Owner accepts the invoice from you and books that you’ve completed 25% of the contract, then they ‘short pay’ you, less the retention, leaving an open balance on their books (they owe you) and on your books (you’ve earned it and it’s coming, but not yet).

Retention is presented in its own category on an aging report. When you present your AR to the bank as part of your borrowing base, they often exclude

Syscon Has Been Instrumental
‘Sage 100 Contractor is easy to learn and scalable. ... Syscon has been instrumental in that journey.’

-Jeff Spellman, Controller,
Maiuri/Maicom LLC

anything over 90 days (sometimes over 60 days). They’re interested in making sure they don’t extend credit against money you may never receive, and the older it gets, the harder it may be to collect. However, anything in the retention column is not held against you since it is not aging yet. Maintaining accurate information about your retention is critical if you secure your Line of Credit with the AR Aging.

‘...use the Options feature in the 3-5 screen to release retention.’

OK, let’s move on. In the Over/Under billing report or any project management report, your billing should reflect how much of the contract you’ve earned – this is not a cash conversation, it’s an ‘earned’ conversation. When the scope of work is complete, you’ve earned 100% of the contract and you should have billed 100% of the contract. That does not mean you’ve received 100% of the cash yet and often it’s the retention that’s still owed.

Each time you present the G702/703 style of billing, you show how much of the contract is complete, then you show how much they are holding back (retention) and the difference is how much they owe or have paid so far. At the end, everything is billed, so you can’t ‘bill’ retention – everything is already billed. However, you can release the retention. Releasing it moves it from the Retention column to the Current Due column. Let’s say you send the final progress bill and it’s for the retention balance. This moves the dollars from the Retention field to the Current Due field – it doesn’t change the Completed Contract amount. If you release it on the February progress bill, the due date for the retention is now March 31st if the terms are 30 days. On your aging report, the released retention begins to age. It’s

important to stay on top of your collection efforts so the retention doesn’t make it to the 90+ column, putting your borrowing base in jeopardy.

Retention provides a mechanism for a GC or Owner to hold back part of the payment for the work you truly have completed, so there is an incentive for you to finish the job. It is related to when you receive cash, NOT whether you’ve billed it. In Sage 100 Contractor, you’ll have several (or many) invoices that have retention. Rather than drill down to each one to release retention, use the Options feature in the 3-5 screen to release retention, either in full (down to 0%) or to reduce (10% down to 5%, for example). Using this feature also updates the Due Date as well as taking care of all the open invoices at the same time. Strongly recommended! – CMW

Posting Period vs Quarter Seems like I’m getting more questions about this lately. In payroll, the government wants to know when a paycheck is negotiable, and that’s the date of the check, which drives the quarterly reports. They don’t care when the work was performed.

Income statements are by Posting Periods which don’t have to match the date, although they can. When work is performed the last week of March and the check is dated April, it can be posted to March, but it’s a Quarter 2 check based on the check date. This helps with over/under billing, too. Just make a journal entry for the accrued payroll and reverse it next period. - CMW



Joke of the Month

What do you call a snowman with a 6-pack?
An abdominal snowman.

M365 Education Station



Microsoft

Partner

Microsoft 365 Roadmap



At any given time, Microsoft has either just released new features for some of their products or is planning new features. Below are some features from Microsoft's roadmap. Keep in mind this is a plan, not a guarantee; dates and details may change.

Teams



- **January 2022:** Pin chat messages to the top of a chat to highlight important conversations; in development
- **February 2022:** Chat with self; users can send themselves notes, messages, files, and images/videos; in development

SharePoint



- **January 2022:** Connected templates; when a new team is created in SharePoint from a default template, the associated channels and apps are connected automatically; in development

Word



- **January 2022:** Redesigned modern font selection; pin favorite fonts to find them quickly; easily view all the fonts used in a document, including notifications for missing and embedded fonts; see which fonts are available; in development



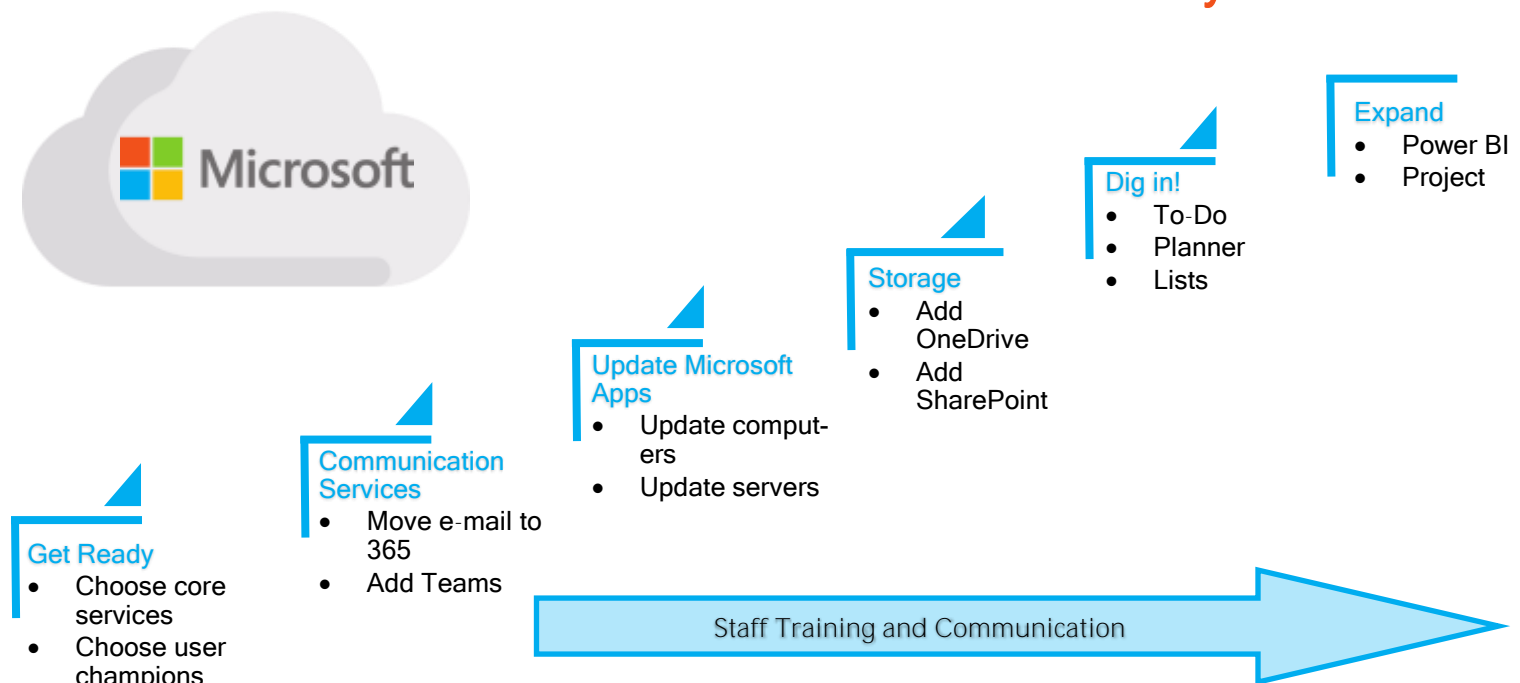
Fun Fact

Did you know?

There is a World Cup for Excel users called the Financial Modeling World Cup (FMWC) where participants solve real-life case studies by building financial models in Microsoft Excel. There's a \$20,000 prize fund for the top Excel wizards.

The FMWC is considered an esports (electronic sport). Competition is a series of stages with different challenges. Challenges occur monthly and competitors are whittled down as the challenges increase in difficulty to determine the top Excel users.

Where are You in YOUR M365 Journey?



How Did They Do It?

GAR Bennett

The month prior to the eruption of a global pandemic is not the most ideal time to complete a major merger, but of course neither of the two family-owned companies could have predicted it when they merged. GAR Bennett Controller Carolyn Dukes described her experience as a “wild ride.” The company supports farmers growing food and other products with fertilizer and irrigation services, so the newly merged company had to figure out how to continue operating to keep the growers growing as well as adjusting to their newly expanded team.

“We learned a lot about technology,” Carolyn said. They learned to use video meeting applications like Teams and Zoom to get to know each other. They pivoted to a digital footprint instead of paper copies and rotated who could work from home and who needed to come in person. The digital approach meant doing things differently than planned, but that wasn’t all they learned.

“We’ve learned to appreciate each other a little more. We learned more about each other’s roles,” Carolyn said. “Now when we’re able to see each other, we realize how special and important everyone is.”



Controller Carolyn Dukes with Syscon’s Larry Wendt

At Syscon, Larry is the one they rely on. Carolyn said he takes the time to listen to them and really understand their processes to provide the support they need. She said she and her staff feel more comfortable and confident with Larry (and Syscon) helping them out. - BK

Fast Facts

Location: Reedley, CA
 Specialty: Water Conservation & Management
 Founded: 2020
 Professional Affiliations: Integrated Agri-business Professions & Agricultural Retailers

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, February 10th

Time: 1 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

Event: M365 – Ask Us Anything, webinar

Date: Thursday, February 24th

Time: 1 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

Featured Articles

Business Ledger newspaper:

Leadership – What’s Changed and What’s Next

Business Ledger newspaper:

Syscon Named to 10 Best Construction Tech Solution Providers



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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.

