



What's New

Larry's mom could make the entire month of January about her because it was her birthday. **This month is Larry's, and we have many friends with birthdays this month – Cheers!**

We're getting ready for our mid-year State of the Company update. March is when we review how we're doing compared to our annual goals, share the successes so far, and what's going to happen in the coming months. The Arizona team is looking forward to welcoming the IL team to the Valley of the Sun, this time. Pack the sunscreen!

Glad to hear all of you are safe and sound after some truly difficult weather. Stay safe!

- Catherine Wendt

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March 2022

STREAMLINED STANDARDIZED BULLET PROOF



Our Theme For 2022

As I look at the opportunities and challenges facing our team in the coming year, I have a couple of things to share with you. Some of them might **echo with what you're facing, as well. Each year since 2008 we've had a company-wide theme and this year is no exception. We chose 'Streamlined, Standardized, Bullet Proof,' one of Chris's mantras for the last few years as we rolled out our Azure hosting environment and moved our long-time Hosted Exchange offering to Microsoft 365. As I've mentioned in previous articles, this is truly a foundational shift in technology, so we're not surprised to see other IT companies resisting the changes, and still others 'dabbling' but not taking advantage of the power of automation, security enhancements, and integrations.**

One of the discussions I hear across industries is the tight labor market. Across our clients and in our own IT industry, talent is difficult to find, and

when you do, it's more expensive than ever. Before the pandemic, the IT industry was at about 2% unemployment at a time when business IT needs were growing exponentially; now it's worse! Even clients who are Union signatory find it difficult to hire, even through the union hall. I'll bet you have similar stories.

Typical ideas from experts include **things like 'golden handcuffs' to incentivize team members to stay on board. We've seen this work and we've seen it backfire. There are books, trainings, and LinkedIn feeds that tell you how to retain staff, yet we're all struggling. During an exit interview at Syscon, I've been told how blessed they felt for working at Syscon; hope I know how hard they worked for us, giving us their best; but they just want to try something different – kind words to hear, but still an exit.**

In IT, the typical length of employment

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is 18 months. We've had many team members stay well beyond this, some shorter, and some right on the mark. One of our team members asked how we were going to get people to stay longer than our industry trend. As we continued the discussion, I suggested a different line of thought — rather than focusing on how to change an industry trend, what if we re-focused our efforts on building processes and systems that worked in alignment with the 18-month expectation?

We've always been heavy on documentation and have the many years of notes and details to prove it! We were early adopters of automation tools and platforms. One example was our managed services platform which was very new technology when we signed up in 2007. These automation tools allowed us to streamline our computer support, push critical updates sooner and with less client interruption, and reduce regular maintenance time. Back in the late 1990's, we were very focused on writing custom integration software that pulled important and complex reports to cut down on tedious data reporting, pulling data directly from the source, automatically and

accurately. Our electronic time collection journey started in 2015, saving a great deal of time in the field and office while increasing accuracy. In this example, we are leveraging the power of the Cloud, taking advantage of the explosion of personal devices and the Internet of Things (IoT) services.

This continued focus will allow us to provide excellent customer service to our clients through answering our phones 'live' and having techs available to take requests during the regular workday, while maintaining and securing the systems we host for our clients. With streamlined, standardized, and bullet proof systems, we can provide consistent experiences and more quickly roll out additional resources, update users, maintain existing systems, and incorporate new tools when they meet a need or are stable.

With this history and company-wide focus — documentation, automation, leveraging the Cloud services — we will continue, even re-affirm our focus on automation. So rather than bemoan our industry's short employment cycle, or coerce team members to stay beyond what they want, we will stay the course and find ways to make all our team members successful, better

educated than when they joined us, and when they move on, an amazing contributor to the industry we love and the clients they will serve. — CMW

Did You Know? We don't have sales quotas! We only recommend and sell solutions when they meet your need and solve a problem. There's no 'sales incentive' when we make a recommendation!

Cathy & Larry Sightings



Catherine co-hosted the Microsoft price increase webinar with Chris.

Larry performed a piece for two horns and piano through the Chandler Chamber Series.

"Do your best, no matter how modest the task is."

— Dick Capen

Get Different: Marketing That Can't Be Ignored!

At the annual Keap (CRM) event, Mike Michalowicz was one of the speakers and shared his latest book with everyone. He's written several books all geared toward his personal mission to 'eradicate entrepreneurial poverty.'

After stating his case to be bold with marketing and to be creative, he also shared some formulas: Does it Differentiate? Does it Attract? Does it Direct? D-A-D for short. Throughout the book



he asks if DAD would approve your ideas. He also has specific and incremental steps to work through the

by Mike Michalowicz

Book Nook

creative process, get ideas flowing, then take baby steps to move forward.

He makes a good argument for testing and tracking the results of all marketing efforts, making little tweaks, and knowing when to say 'it didn't work.' The worksheets are in the back of the book and available online at no charge.

He's quite energetic in person and in the book. He has great examples from all types of industries, some really creative efforts, successes and failures. It's a little wordy, but it's born out of his passion to help. Definitely worth reading; let the ideas flow! -CMW



Geek Squad Scam

Larry is the one that received this email scam. It was to his personal gmail account from another gmail account.

The Subject is 'Your annual Internet security maintenance' followed by an official-looking account number. Then 'Hi' with a poor mail merge showing the email address instead of a name.

After thanking him for 'entrusting the security of your computer to...' there is an insert in the color green that says 'Geek Squad' as if they can insert whatever name(s) they want. It goes on to say that the annual service will automatically renew and gives a dollar amount of \$389.57 USD, then says that if you weren't aware of the renewal or are unhappy with their product, 'we'll give you a complete' and then the message ends. There's an official-looking summary of the renewal, Geek Squad, 3 years, method payment, activation date, total, and a license key. Then there are a couple of phone numbers to call.

We were wondering how this scam makes any money. After doing a little research, there are pods of people that take these calls and they are relentless **about getting the person who's calling to sign up for services and provide payment; it's a scam. They have a pretty good conversion rate, enough that they fund the local pods, then a 'cut' for the boss of the pod and the hackers running the scam.**

Don't call, don't click anything, just

DELETE! If you want/need any type of security for your computer systems, **give us a call and we'll walk you through your options!** - CMW

Office.com Has a New Look

Microsoft is updating the 'look' of Office.com and the Office app for Windows. Clients on the Standard version started seeing the changes in February. The rest of the license levels should be fully rolled out by the end of February 2022.

There are some new features designed to help you quickly take action steps such as jumping into an upcoming meeting; adding a To-Do task; collaborate on content by Sharing via Teams or booking a time with them. These logistics can be viewed as a list or cards for different visual layouts. There are custom content filters, too.

We've commented several times on the excellent search features in Office.com and they continue to make improvements. With this release, you can filter by document, activity, and time, including specific filters like documents you are @mentioned in.

In addition to the Recommended Actions on the home page, use the triple dot menu to find content actions on any of the content lists within **Office.com. There's even Convert to PDF, Share to Teams, and others!** — CMW

Azure Hosting, Aatrix Updates

For those of you in our Azure hosting environment running Sage 100 Contractor, we have added a daily auto update for the Aatrix reports. Users in this environment do not have sufficient rights to download executables (security!) yet you need these up-to-date. **So, we've written a routine that updates these at regular intervals. This is part of our automation focus to Standardize, Streamline, and Bulletproof** our platforms. - CMW

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Hajimari
Flying Nova

It's a bird ... it's a plane ... it's not Superman flying through the air; it's a Hajimari Flying Orb!

One part ball, one part boomerang, one part flashing LED lights, the Hajimari Flying Nova is a high tech spinner. The metallic blue orb floats and glides through the air, lighting up with its RGB (red, green, blue) LED lights when in use. Approximately 3.7 inches x 3.7 inches, it weighs just under 1 oz. It has a built-in micro USB port and comes with a charging cable. Charge it for 25 minutes for about 10 minutes of flying fun.

Toss it around the office or the **backyard. It's motion-activated and drop-resistant. There's an optional add-on, the Hajimari Wand. The battery-operated wand controls the Flying Nova. The wand uses magnets to draw the flying orb to it. While the orb is in the air, press the wand's button to control the orb.**

Learn more at <https://support.buyhajimari.com/hc/en-us>



Construction Corner



Sage Licenses – You’ll Probably Hear From Them Soon

For the last 18 months or so, Sage has been telling the Business Partners (we’re one of them) that they will soon stop offering perpetual licenses (buying them outright) and move to a subscription-only model. I think we’re here.

Sage has offered subscription pricing for a while now, and we have some new clients who have taken advantage of this option. It’s a low threshold investment to move to Sage 100 Contractor and take advantage of its many features.

Now they have a new idea, and they’ve rolled out a new campaign to all of their clients, which means to all of our clients. In fact, one of our clients has already received the first email from Sage making this request. So here’s what you can expect, what they’re trying to accomplish, and how this impacts future licenses and modules you may need.

Sage will be contacting all those who have purchased their licenses. They would like to ask you to consider moving your existing, purchased licenses to a subscription model. And, here’s what’s important, they are incentivizing the Business Partners (those who sell Sage software) to encourage you to make this change. A reminder that perpetual (owned) licenses have annual support renewals, and you need them! On a side note, we recommend asking for the Silver level to

save a few dollars, but definitely renew these each year. When you have subscription licenses, the support is included with the monthly fee, including new releases and tax table updates.

In a recent Business Partner web meeting, they shared their campaign which starts in March with some targeted focusing on annual support

“Each evening, Sage makes a copy...BUT, you still need...to have a true backup disaster recovery solution.”

expirations. They plan to contact all clients with perpetual licenses and offer this move. They have even pitched this to TUG (The User Group) to encourage TUG to support this option. Based on this info, it sounds like Sage will reach out to you, and if you have a Business Partner other than us, you may be contacted by them as well, since there are some financial incentives for them.

So what if you choose to stay with your perpetual licenses? How does this impact you? We have been assured that you can continue to buy additional licenses as you grow and need them; you’ll be able to buy additional modules such as Equipment, Estimating, Service, and Inventory, as well.

Bottom Line: You will be ‘encouraged’ to consider moving your perpetual licenses to recurring; you can absolutely leave them as they are! – CMW

Sage Backup Alerts

In the early months of each new year, we receive a new round of inquiries about a Sage message that comes up when logging into the archives, so we thought we’d recap what this is and

Save the Date
Thursday, May 12th
1:00 Central Time
Union Paygroups
Webinar

how it works.

Each evening, Sage makes a copy of your current dataset. Often this copy is saved on a different drive letter, usually to the same server that has the software and data. If everyone is logged out (and they should be), it also runs the very important Tune-Up, too.

These nightly copies are great and serve a purpose. When an archive is created, there are no more changes – it’s an archive, a moment in time. So the nightly copy routine does not need to run. When you log into an archive and see the warning that the Sage backup has not run, that’s OK because there were no changes, nothing new to ‘copy’ to the server.

BUT, you still need the server to have a true backup in place, a backup disaster recovery solution. This would be for the whole server. Having a Sage copy is good, but if the server failed or was compromised, your ‘live’ data and the copy would both be impacted. You need a full image-based backup solution in place with an off-site backup, as well. Not sure what you have? Call and we’ll talk it through. - CMW

Call Syscon

‘If you need help with Sage or anything related to IT, call Syscon and you will never call anyone else.’

-John Mullin, Owner,
Midwest Heavy Construction

Joke of the Month

What do computers eat for a snack?

Microchips!

M365 Education Station



Microsoft

Partner

OneDrive



OneDrive is like My Documents, but instead of being stored on a single machine, OneDrive allows users to access, edit, and share files from any device at any location. Most M365 business plans include OneDrive.

No need to email attachments or keep track of external drives to share files. Attach the file or send a link to files that need to be shared via email or text—see below for more details on the different security options for sharing links.

OneDrive – Files on Demand

Access OneDrive files without the need to download or store all the files on the device accessing the files.




This blue cloud icon means the file is only available online. The file won't download unless it's opened.



When you open an online-only file, it downloads it to your device and becomes locally available, meaning it can be opened any-time, Internet access or not.



Right-click on a file in OneDrive and select the Always Keep on this Device from the menu. This saves it to the device so it is always available.

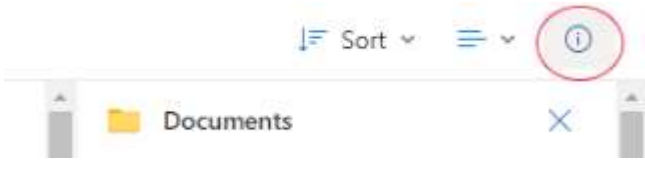


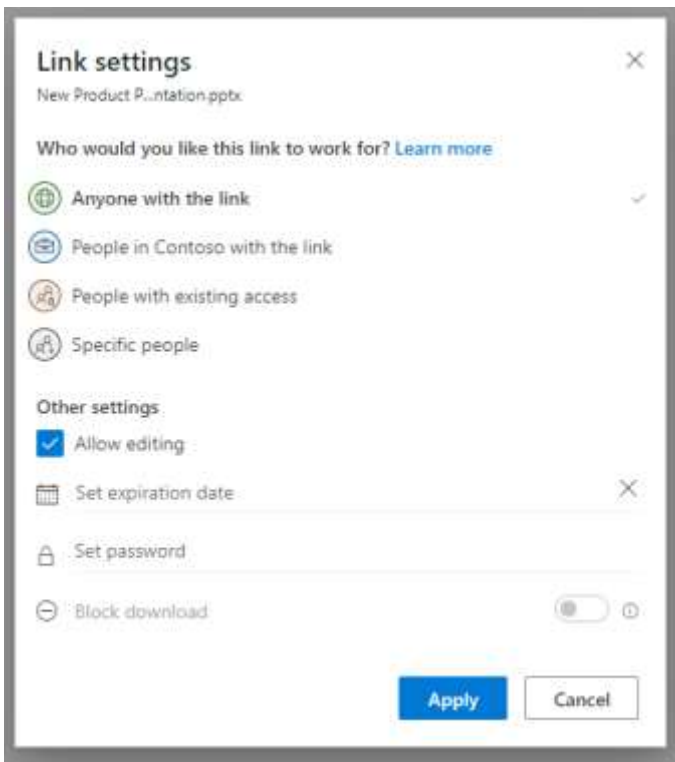
Tip of the Month

Did you know?

The Web version of OneDrive has an Activity Feed that provides a snapshot view of recent activity. It shows a recent activity log, including file naming, deleting, moving, restoring, sharing, comments, and edits.

To open, click the blue 'i' circle icon in the upper right corner. This will open on the right side of your OneDrive root view on the web.





The organization can set controls at a high level to restrict file sharing access. For example, you can block sharing OneDrive files under specific circumstances.

Anyone with the link—whoever gets the link gets the file; can send inside or outside the organization

People in organization with the link—only those in the organization can receive and open the file; includes forwarding link to anyone in the organization

People with existing access—doesn't change permissions; use to send to someone who already has access

Specific people—access only for the people selected; if forwarded, only those with access can use the link

Allow editing—uncheck to let people view, copy, or download the files without signing into an M365 account; files can also be forwarded to others

Set password—set password and send separately to limit another user's access; have to have the password

Block download—uncheck to allow people to download the files onto their devices

How Did They Do It?

JJ Costa Company

Handshakes, hard work, and honesty. **That's how brothers Joe and Jay saw their father run the company before they took it over, and it's how they run it, also.** The company has grown significantly – mostly through referrals. **“Good work will come to you if you're honest with people,” Joe said.** Their jobs are high-end residential and commercial projects for restaurants and the archdiocese. Most of their clientele have been with them for many years and are now not just clients but friends.

This personable approach has served their company well – JJ Costa keeps growing. Until about two years ago, they did not advertise. Joe has leaned into modern practices, including networking via several business organization as well as updating their website to showcase their work and full capabilities. **“I'm not afraid to use technology to benefit us,” Joe said.**

The company progressed from doing estimating in a spiral-bound notebook to computer-based solutions like Excel and Sage 100 Contractor. Implementing Sage properly was a challenge. It was supposed to make the work go faster and smoother, but without proper training, it was a huge learning curve until Syscon came along. Once Cathy came aboard to help Joe and his team, things started to fall into place. **“We couldn't be any happier with the support and personal training that Syscon provides,” Shonda said, Office Manager.** — BK



Joe Costa,
Co-Owner

Fast Facts

Location: Metairie LA
Specialty: **General Contractor**
Founded: 1952
Affiliations: New Orleans Chamber, AIA

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, March 17th

Time: 1 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events



Event: ASA Chicago Expo

Date: Tuesday, March 8th

Location: Oak Brook, IL

More Info: www.asachicago.org

Featured Articles

Daily Herald
Suburban Business
newspaper:

*How to Get Your Arms
Around the Azure Change*

Construction Financial
Management
Association
Connection
Café

*Leadership –
What's
Changed*



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.

