



What's New

Happy Birthday United States of America! A long weekend, the fireworks displays, and grilling, of course! Hope you have some fun plans for your R&R time.

We are very excited to share that Matt has been promoted to Lead Systems Engineer. This new role is well-deserved and reflects Matt's commitment to serving our customers' IT needs through designing and managing projects as well as providing leadership and mentoring within the team. Way to go Matt!

Our migration of clients who use our Hosting platform to our Azure hosing platform is firmly underway. We anticipate wrapping up this project in early Fall. Very exciting for all!

- Catherine Wendt



It's A Crazy World Right Now

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July 2022

Things are tough right now. Gas prices are nuts with no end in sight; inflation is here and it's clear that the 'correction' efforts started too late, so it will be a while before things improve; housing prices are crazy, and now loan interest rates make house purchases even harder; the supply chain issues have not been resolved two-plus years after the pandemic shut things down, and now we have further interruptions due to the war in the Ukraine; critical industries have work force shortages; many of our clients have more work than they can get done, stunting their growth potential. Have you gone out to eat lately? It's not uncommon to see a bill for \$40 for two people to have breakfast! So you decide to pull out the recipe book and cook at home, but even a chicken, let alone a steak, is

several times more expensive than a year ago – really crazy!

Interestingly enough, many businesses have been careful to build up cash over the last few years, a critical factor to successfully navigate an inflation problem. As a result, many clients have invested in tools and software to streamline operations since they can't find the people to get the work done the 'old' way. Outsourcing tasks and using Temp services are growing trends across the country.

We've seen several creative approaches companies have taken to help their teams manage these crazy price increases. Moving server-bound applications to hosted environments such as the Azure cloud allows remote access from home, the library, or the

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coffee shop. This has reduced drive times as well as provided savings on gas. We've even seen increased engagement by team members since they have access to data without making the drive. Some have provided gas gift cards to help offset the additional fuel costs. Even the IRS has increased the business mileage rate beginning July 1st (update on page 4). Consider buying lunch for those who come into the office; a nice treat and an offset to the cost of gas.

Using Teams video is one way we at Syscon stay connected. Our team works across states and time zones, so each day we launch a group Teams meeting. People can log in throughout the day, just like stopping by someone's office or meeting in the kitchen area. Most of us keep the sound off while we engage the video. We still use Teams chat for quick updates or requests, but we can also see the person on this group video meeting. For me, I sign out for my client calls and meetings, then I can sign back in when I'm ready.

We've seen some clients take on Inventory to stay ahead of supply chain issues. There are many things to consider including software; sales tax rules in your state; having someone dedicated

to accepting things into inventory and allocating out of inventory; setting up parts to track quantities on hand; valuation methods; planning ahead for hard counts at year end; and an asset such as inventory has income tax implications. This might sound daunting, but the alternative might be delays in delivering promised work, price increases that weren't built into your original expected costs, wasted time finding vendors with parts, as well as unhappy clients when deadlines are missed.

If you've built up your cash, have you considered options to put it to work, safely? Some clients have brought their banker into the discussion. If you have a Line of Credit (LOC), can you sweep cash between the operating and the LOC to limit interest expense and still cover expenses when they come in? Some other options include keeping the majority of cash in an interest-bearing account and funding a smaller account to cover AP checks or payroll. This also limits exposure to fraud since these smaller accounts have less cash at risk at any one time. Then the primary account does not accept or send other electronic payments from outside, again limiting the risk. Be careful though — this might mean more fees, and at a minimum, increases the bookkeeping

tasks with more reconciliation time with more check stock and activity to stay on top of.

Things are a little crazy right now. When I look back over the last 35 years in business, we've seen the roller coaster rides of inflation, recession, and other unrest. The Stockdale paradox can be helpful to keep in mind. This was shared with me in Jim Collins' book *Good to Great* and has come in handy during many a storm. 'Retain faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, and at the same time, confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.' Then there's Robin Robins' reminder — 'Never give up!' - CMW

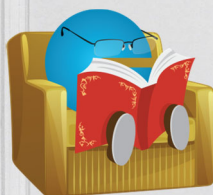
"The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government."

— Thomas Jefferson

The Focus Project by Erik Qualman (Equalman)

Erik was a featured speaker at the CFMA Annual Conference in Atlanta GA. He was engaging and clearly loves his topic. You might know him by his signature bright green glasses. He shared the story of how this became associated with him and how he eventually embraced it as his brand.

The heart of his presentation for a room full of Construction Financial professionals was about focus. We are all pulled in many directions, both at work and at home; how do we get more done with the same 24/7 everyone has?



In this book, Erik proposes that more focused time blocks actually makes us more productive. To test his research, he decided to take one area of focus each

month, implement it whole heartedly, and test the results, then grade himself on the efforts. Some of the monthly focus topics included Energy Management, Health, Learning, Creativity, Empathy, Giving, and Gratitude to name a few. Each chapter talks about his experiences and some of the research supporting his actions. Happy to report that he quoted other authors I've reviewed here such as James Clear, Darren Hardy, Chip and Dan Heath, and some selections from the Bible.

In the opening section, he lists '99 Notes for a Focused Life.' Some are proverbs, some are quotes by names you'll recognize. This list alone could be a 'focus for the day' project. I like the balance of applying these focus areas to work and on a personal level. Recommended! - CMW

Book Nook



Facial Recognition Co vs IL

As reported in the *Daily Herald* in May 2022, Clearview AI, a facial recognition startup company, agreed to restrict what it can do with its billions of images that were pulled from social media and other places on the internet.

Clearview agreed to stop selling its database to Illinois state government and local police departments for five years. The American Civil Liberties Union and others brought a lawsuit alleging violations of an Illinois digital privacy law. The Privacy Act allows consumers to sue companies that don't request permission before harvesting faces and fingerprint data. This was not the first lawsuit. Facebook agreed to pay \$650 million in a settlement when sued under the same Illinois law.

In the meantime, the New York-based company will continue offering services to federal agencies including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agencies, as well as other government contractors outside Illinois. — CMW

Data Breaches In The News

The first one from ID Agent involves Private Client Services, a company that provides Financial Services. In May 2022, the company disclosed a data breach that they are blaming on an unauthorized party gaining access to sensitive consumer information through a compromised employee email account (makes you wonder if they're using MFA). The company had to send data breach letters to over 22,000 impacted people! Compromised information included names, Social Security numbers,

driver's license numbers, and state identification number. This was rated as 'Severe' on the Risk to Business scale.

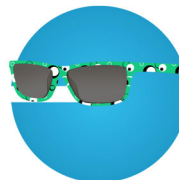
Also in the financial sector, OnDeck Capital disclosed that they had experienced a data breach after an unauthorized party gained access to the company's computer network and transferred sensitive data to a private cloud storage account. OnDeck says they first detected suspicious activity on March 10th, and immediately shut down access to all affected devices. But three days later, they determined the attackers had copied sensitive data to a private cloud. OnDeck's team of investigators gained control over the cloud storage account, recovered the data, and shut down access. It's unclear what type of data was copied. This was also rated 'Severe' by ID Agent. — CMW

Marcus Lemonis Attacked!

I had the privilege to hear Marcus Lemonis speak to an audience of Managed Service Providers in April. You may know him as the CEO of Camping World or from his hit series *The Profit*. He was right in the middle of our group instead of on the stage, took questions, shared some great business thoughts, and challenged a few of us, nicely of course!

At one point in his time with us, he said he had a new appreciation for the kind of work we do. He was recently hacked! First of all, he felt embarrassed; then he felt violated; then he realized no one was sure what had been compromised. In the days and weeks that followed the news, he dealt with lawyers, insurance companies, and the Fed. He had to send communications to his clients. He watched his team putting in crazy hours and feeling angry, guilty, and exhausted.

Here's a man who invests in keeping his IT systems safe and secure, yet he was hacked! As IT professionals, we were moved to step up our message to our clients. Basics like MFA, strong passwords (not shared!), Microsoft and other patches, and so on. Be safe! - CMW



Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Power Pod Recharger

With Power Pod you never have to worry about your battery running low, or being stuck and not able to make a call in an emergency. The perfect size to stick on a backpack, key ring, purse, or in a briefcase, ready to provide hours of instant power.

This gadget is rechargeable with a built-in micro high velocity charger that delivers instant power that lasts for hours. It's compatible with all leading mobile devices including iPhone, Samsung, LG, Motorola, Google, ZTE, Sony, and more.

It plugs right into your device and releases power to give it enough of a charge for a couple of hours of use. It comes with a key ring and USB cable to recharge the Power Pod after use. It's 2" x 0.5" x 1.5" with a weight of 0.6lbs and fits on a key ring. The charge will last about 3 months and has over 500 charge cycles! It goes for \$19.95 each, but if you buy more than one, there are discounts available.

Check out powerpodshop.com



CONSTRUCTION CORNER



Carpenters Union – Vacation

Many unions have added a Vacation benefit in their efforts to help union members set aside money for time off or slow seasons. The idea is to have a 'bucket' of funds the member can draw on for vacation time.

In order to provide after-tax funds to their members, the benefit has to be taxed then sent to the union. For some unions, this is a deduction similar to their Working Assessment; a rate per hour taken out of their pay.

For other unions including the Chicago Carpenters as of this summer, it's an Add/Deduct. When we read the wording from the union, it sounded like a regular Employer benefit paid in on their behalf. Seeing the confusion, the Chicago Carpenters Union provided an FAQ sheet about the new Vacation benefit. It is added to the wage, taxed, then deducted and sent to the union.

What's the difference to the Construction companies? Quite a bit. By adding it to the gross earnings, the Employer now has to pay matching FICA and Medicare. Be sure to share this with your Estimators since the total cost needs to include these additional taxes as well as the vacation 'add.' Use the Add/Deduct feature in the pay calcs rather than adding it to the wage. Usually, it is not subject to the Reg/OT/DT rules, just one amount per hour worked. — CMW

IRS Raises Mileage Rate for Final Half of 2022

Effective July 1st through Dec 31st, the standard rate for the business use of employees' vehicles will be 62.5 cents per mile – the highest rate the IRS has ever published – up 4 cents compared to the first half of 2022. (Stephen Miller, CEBS)

Sage 100 Contractor v24

First, not all third party software that integrates with S100C is compatible with this new release. Check with your vendors before you start. AND, if you're using Sage Estimating version 20.1 or earlier, and you're using the integration feature, do NOT upgrade to v24 yet; these are not compatible.

*Are you a CFMA member?
Lots of regional conferences coming up including the Midwest and Southwest regions. We'll be at both!*

Nick Names for Employees – It's always been confusing when someone's legal name isn't what they're known by. This is especially true in employee lists and dispatch. There is now a Nick Name field!

A quick update – new tax tables are available for AL, IL, Maryland state and counties, and UT.

If someone does not have access to the 1-3 Journal Transaction screen, they cannot drill down from their AP entry, for example, to see the journal that was created. In version 24, a user can be given permission to see JE's created from a source module for which they have rights.

It's always been a pain to copy the contact info from a client screen into the new job screen. I understand why it's setup this way, but it's a pain none-the-less. With this release, you can import the Client contact info right into the new job screen instead of using copy-paste.

This next one I'm not very excited about. Right now, people think they're 'changing' a saved record, but what's really happening is Sage voids the original and re-creates the new one with

your changes. The biggest problem with this is crossing posting periods. It voids the original in the original posting period, then creates the replacement. The prior period could be closed; the user might save it to a different period; messy! Unfortunately, they've expanded this 'feature.' So you don't have to void and re-create, Sage will void for you if you need to change the GL, Cost Code, Description or other fields even if you've paid the AP invoice already – proceed with caution!!

This one is a long time in coming. They've added security features that allow you to restrict access to an individual employee record. In the past, it was all or nothing. This new security authorization will allow you to limit specific users' access to specific people in payroll so they can still do their job.

Sage has updated the Employee Pay stubs to show Direct Deposit allocations by account. So when someone has their net check deposited across more than one account, they'll be able to see how much for each account. This should be interesting; many clients have custom pay stub forms, so we'll have to see how this plays out.

They've added the ability to run a Job Cost Summary Report by Date, rather than just posting period.

There's more, but I'm out of space. I'll give you the rest next month. Feel free to call if you have questions. Don't be in a rush for this upgrade. Plan ahead! CMW

Joke of the Month

Where do astronauts hang out?

The space bar!

M365 Education Station

Why Power BI?

Microsoft Power BI combines data from various sources into beautiful and functional dashboards. The flexibility to present the data in unique formats is amazing.

Supports Scale

Organizations can perform petabyte-scale analytics with instant response times, exploring, and analyzing trillions of rows of data interactively extracting insights on the fly.

Eliminates the Need for Multiple Tools

Establishes a common, cost-effective analytics platform that provides seamless collaboration across the data with drill downs.

Improves Decision-Making

A single platform that intelligently reacts to data changes and applies them globally ensures that business users have the latest info and gain insights fast.

Enhances Security

Provides a single, centralized security model with end-to-end visibility, control, and operational reporting capabilities to safeguard against security, privacy, governance, regulatory, and compliance concerns.

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No Need to be a Programmer

Features self-service functionality and provides business users with access to consumable dashboards and reports.

Removes the Data Integration Barrier

Whether cloud-based or on-premise, Power BI integrates data with built-in or custom data connectors, creating a single, accurate view of critical business insights.

Provides Data Speed

Backed by Azure, Power BI enables companies to analyze and extract insights from large datasets with instant response times. The refresh times are truly amazing.

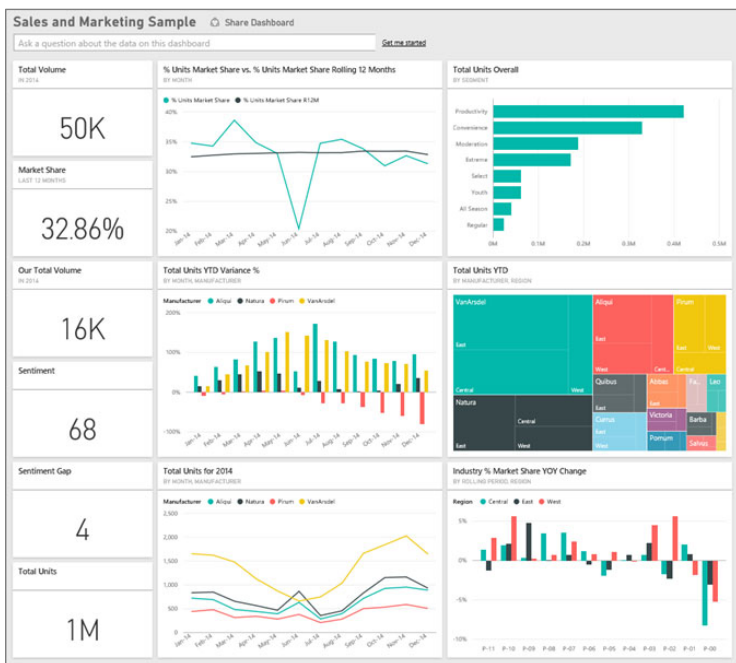


Tip of the Month

Did you know?

You can connect Power BI to Teams and embed reports in your Teams channels and/or chats. Click on the three dots on the left panel of Teams. This brings up a search box of apps. Type 'Power BI' in the new search bar. Click to select Power BI, then look at the purple Add button. There is a drop-down arrow with two options: Add to a team, or Add to a chat. Select where you'd like to add Power BI and then click the Add button. Congratulations! You have now added Power BI to Teams!

Sample Power BI Dashboard



95%

of organizations have deployed big data initiatives on a department or company level.

Power BI Users

Non-Power BI Users

52%

vs.

33%

Likelihood that users maintain ongoing, company-wide data initiatives.



Microsoft

Partner

How Did They Do It? Wellen Construction

It's all about the teamwork. Teamwork was how Wellen Construction kept everyone safe during the pandemic. The team needed to collectively develop policies for everyone to follow, according to Julie Dooley, Office Manager. Some of the staff collaborated on creating the procedures to keep Wellen staff, clients, and partners safe on-site. Another team member made a brief survey affirming health status with a quick QR scan before starting work. Another team member found hand sanitizer when it was nearly impossible to find. Everyone pivoted together so they could continue working. "It's a terrific place to work and we have some great team members. We've been very fortunate," Julie said.

Teamwork is also the reason Wellen grew its staff 161.54% in the last 5 years. Wellen started as a high-end residential builder, then started offering commercial work. Wellen settled into a niche of

building medical offices. As this newer venture has exploded, they've also continued with high-end residential building.

The Wellen team is excited to implement Syscon's Field Integrated Time (F.I.T.) System to make collecting field time easier for their growing field staff. F.I.T. supports the team-wide goal of being paperless. "Throughout it all, Syscon has been terrific," Julie says. They've also been hosting Sage 100 Contractor with Syscon since 2014. -BK



Charles Gadbois,
Owner, President

Fast Facts

Location: Marlborough, MA

Specialty: Home and Commercial Builder

Founded: 1984

Affiliations: U.S. Green Building Council; Nat'l Assoc of Home Builders, MA Dental Society; Wellen Cares Initiative

 **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: FIT System Features Update & New Modules, webinar

Date: Thursday, July 21

Time: 1 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events



Featured Articles

Catherine was featured in
the **Women In Tech**
profile in the June 10th
edition of the **Association**
of **Telecom, Mobility &**
IT Management
Professionals, AOTMP
Insights, online

I'm featured in this month's
Women in Tech
AOTMP

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.

