



What's New

October really heralds the fall – the leaves changing color; cooler evenings; gourd decorations everywhere; and don't forget those candy corn pumpkins!

We have just a few more clients to move from our Classic Hosting environment – a pioneer offering 11 years ago – to the Azure hosting platform that is fully integrated with the Microsoft 365 suite and provides modern accessibility and security! This will be the culmination of 18 months of work, so we're very excited!

As we begin the fourth quarter of 2022, watch for upcoming webinars to prepare for year-end. Please be careful as our youngsters head out for trick-or-treating! - *Catherine Wendt*



It Worked Yesterday...

On a recent call with a client, we were recapping the changes they've implemented including the move to the Azure cloud and SharePoint for file shares. The goal was to move everything from their on-premise network to the modern cloud architecture, and they are well along that path. For their team members, this has been a process and has impacted their day-to-day work.

Although there are many benefits for the entire company, some of the staff want to know why there are changes. Questions like 'Why fix it if it isn't broken,' or comments like 'It worked yesterday...' are tough so he asked for some ways he could respond; and he is not alone, BTW.

I immediately thought about a car, one of my favorite comparisons. You know

it needs gas to run, but you also know that's not all it needs. The engine and parts wear down as they age and become dirty even if you don't put on a lot of miles; the battery can fail; and the whole car is subject to extreme temperatures and weather. Hopefully, you're keeping up with some maintenance, but even if you are, one day it may not start. It started yesterday, but even though the gas tank is full, it won't start today. Well, how old is the car? Did you take care of it? Did something finally wear out enough that it no longer works? Is it a small part or a crack in the engine block?

Consider a computer – it is also made up of physical parts. These can wear down; computers can overheat which is very rough on the components; power supplies can fail; laptops can

Continued pg.2

In this Issue

It Worked Yesterday.....	1
Book Review.....	2
Replacing Old Telephones.....	3
Shiny New Gadget	3
S100C v24.2 is Coming.....	4
Microsoft 365 Focus.....	5
How Did They Do It?.....	6
Events Calendar	6

October 2022

(continued from page 1)

be tossed around during travel. It worked yesterday, but today, the drives won't spin, the power supply won't charge the laptop, or you get the Blue Screen Of Death (BSOD)!

How about software – sometimes it's the age of the software itself; how old is the code? Older software may not run on new equipment at all, or may be so slow it's unusable. It ran fine on the old computer (which doesn't work) but not on the new one! Maybe you have a new software program that's running just fine for everyone else but not for you; how old is your computer? How much memory does it have? Newer software is written for the latest operating systems, often with more memory than in the past; it may not be backwards compatible.

Cell phones are a great example – no one would expect an old flip phone to do all the things the Smart Phones can do these days. You might be able to make a call, but even that might not connect to the latest cell phone towers. No one expects an old Blackberry to work today – even if it worked yesterday.

So what about the phrase 'If it isn't broken, don't fix it'? I would ask, why wait until it breaks? If you wait for the aging server to 'break,' you'll have an unexpected work interruption, and you'll have to scramble, maybe even pay top dollar to find replacement equipment, or make a hurried move to the cloud. This is stressful for all your team members and can be very expensive. You wouldn't wait for your car to stop running to replace it. Of course you'll want to get as many miles out of it as possible, but at some point, you begin the process of buying a new one.

Screens, workstations, power supplies, backup units, laptops, phones, and even software which runs on these systems will stop working – even if they worked yesterday. Try to 'embrace' that you will need to replace, upgrade, and maintain the hardware and software. Learn the new tools and programs and incorporate them into your day with new routines. Need help? Give us a call and we'll help you with a plan, an implementation, and any training you need! - CMW

Cathy & Larry Sightings



Catherine and Chris are headed to the Empower event focused on Managed Service Providers. Later in the month, Catherine is performing three pieces with the Alleluia Orchestra in the Greater Phoenix area.

Larry has been earning brownie points helping his 96-year old Aunt after her successful surgery and selling the house after decades in her home!

"If you want something you've never had, you must be willing to do something you've never done."

— Thomas Jefferson

Reset by Johnny C. Taylor, Jr.

During the Global Leadership Summit (GLS) in August, I heard Mr. Taylor speak – a powerful message, insightful and a call to action. Based on that experience, I dove into his latest book.

This book is focused on Human Resources and makes the argument to put the 'Human' back in the title. No surprise he feels companies should have a CHRO to maximize operational efficiency and drive talent acquisition. Most of us probably think of HR as the part of the company that fills out forms and updates health insurance benefits. He's asking his industry to sit at the table for strategy, culture, training, and investing for the bottom line.



In the opening 'Message to Leaders' he highlights three (3) key principles:

Book Nook

Culture Comes First; Data is your greatest friend; and Be 'Extra.' Whether in crisis such as 2020 or not, these principles can be lived out in our approach to Human Resources. While we're all revisiting how we work, Mr. Taylor is inviting us to revisit how we hire and retain our employees.

I have many takeaways as I read through the book. Warning, though: I almost put the book down mid-way through. I take issue with several of his proposals to change how and who we hire. They're interesting points, but in my opinion, life offers us choices, and choices have consequences. He then shares that his mom who was a nurse had to learn to embrace technology, refused to cooperate/learn, and admits that is on the employee, not the employer; appreciate his honesty. Recommended! - CMW



Teams Voice—Replacing Old Phone Systems

Several years ago we decided to admit that our old phones were old! We were ready to move to Voice over IP (VoIP) and take advantage of the many improved ways to connect with people.

For years now we've been using Go To Meeting, and more recently Teams, for our remote training calls. The calls are routed over the internet, so we purchased several microphone/speaker devices and ultimately landed on the Jabra units. We can be on calls all day and never touch a phone at all but that doesn't cover the rest of our phone needs.

Our first VoIP solution had inconsistent quality of sound from our cell phones and was clunky. When we jumped 'all-in' for Microsoft 365, we rolled out Teams Voice (which is different than just Teams). This is their VoIP solution that routes all calls through the internet.

There were quite a few things to wrap our heads around. Do we have phone numbers? Yes. Can people have a direct phone number and an extension? Yes. Do we need new phones? Maybe...

We chose to purchase hand sets for our Customer Support desk and two other desks. For the rest of us, everything is handled through our cell phones. When we're expecting bad weather, Customer Support can actually unplug the phone and take it home and plug it in to answer calls as usual!

From our cell phones, we can make outbound calls that display from the office number. The office can transfer calls to our cell phones whether we're at a desk

in the office or working remotely; it's seamless!

To use a VoIP service you have to have internet. Recently AT&T had an IL-specific outage and our office phones were negatively impacted. Liz jumped in the car and headed home. Her home internet was just fine and she could accept all incoming calls and send them to us as needed.

The traditional phone processes are all available— voice mail boxes; after hours messages; holiday messages with pre-set days; after hour emergency calls which can be sent to specific on call people, and the message is even transcribed in our ticketing system!

I was heading back to my home office and joined a meeting on my cell phone with my ear buds in. As I walked into my home office, I pushed a button and the call was transferred to my Teams meeting through my computer—it was beautiful!

If you're ready to make a change in your phone system, we definitely recommend taking a look at Teams Voice. These are separate licenses, work with hand units and/or cell phones, and have all the features a business needs. Let's talk! - CMW

Your Desktop is NOT a Filing Cabinet...

Computers have physical limits with regard to space. There are only so many pictures, folders, and documents that will fit on the drives. And until recently, unless you specifically added backup software to your computer, the files weren't backed up. Most companies have a policy in place that all files are to be saved on the server so they're backed up.

Enter M365 SharePoint and OneDrive—if you're using our Managed M365 service, we include backups of these files as well as your email. For OneDrive, you have the opportunity to have a local copy of the files and this uses your drive space.

Consider keeping these files in SharePoint rather than filling up your local drive space. This will also speed up the syncing of files. We can help! —CMW

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



HyperX Cloud Alpha

The HyperX Cloud Alpha is a pair of gaming headphones that offer one thing above all: a fantastic battery life. HyperX claims that these headphones offer 300 hours of battery life. That means you can use these headphones for just over 12 days straight without a charge, although we would really recommend a break in there somewhere!

Other than how long they'll last, these headphones also feature a powerful crisp sound and a truly excellent microphone quality. The dual-chamber driver system separates the bass from the mids and highs, allowing them to be tuned individually for reduced distortion.

It comes with the Gaming headset, detachable headset cable, detachable mic, PC extension cable, quick start guide, and a 2-year warranty for just under \$100. Too early to Christmas shop?



CONSTRUCTION CORNER



Equipment Module – Setup

Last month we reviewed the various ways the Equipment Module can be used. Most contractors have a shop and equipment that they own and use to run their jobs. Maybe it's a truck, an electric saw, a forklift, or something similar. You may have a Shop manager who maintains the shop, loads the trucks, and maybe even a mechanic to repair equipment. With the Equipment module, you can track these costs by equipment, as well as general costs of running the shop.

Another benefit is the ability to charge pieces of equipment to jobs at a cost recovery rate. After all, if you didn't own the equipment, you'd have the cost of renting it. Recovering and reporting the cost of company-owned equipment takes on greater importance for T&M work.

So let's say you're interested in rolling out this module. What's involved? In a nutshell, it takes a little planning. We've had a few clients decide to add this module (it's not very expensive at all) and not realize that there were things to create and setup. As they begin to run that week's payroll, they're hitting one error after another! This can create some frustration, so planning ahead is definitely recommended.

When the module is turned on, the Indirect Cost range becomes available.

IL State Mandate Beginning November 1st (re-run)

Companies with 5+ IL-based employees, in business at least 2 years, must offer their own retirement program or facilitate the state retirement program, Illinois Secure Choice. The deadlines are staggered based on number of EEs – insane!

In payroll specifically, these fields are 'missing' in a variety of screens. When the module becomes active, these required fields are blank until you fill in the details. Let's go back to the first steps you'll need to take, then we'll touch on the rest of them.

“Let's say you're interested in rolling out this module. What's involved? In a nutshell, it takes a little planning.”

From the 1-8 General Ledger Setup screen, the Equip/Shop Expense fields will identify the range of the general ledger numbers available for this module. On the Dedicated Accounts tab, you'll identify the Equipment Assets, Depreciation, and Loans control accounts. On the Posting Accounts tab, you'll identify the Equipment Job Cost, Repair, and Revenue accounts.

It's time to think through the Indirect Cost general ledger numbers that need to be created in the 1-7 General Ledger Accounts screen. We recommend that you mirror your direct and overhead payroll account names and number groupings. For instance, if 5400 is Direct Labor and 6400 is Overhead Labor, create 5600 for Shop Labor. Follow the pattern for other payroll-related expenses. Consider what other expenses you'll have for the shop. This might include Rent, Repairs and Maintenance, Equipment Depreciation, Fuel, Safety Expenses, and Cell Phones (for PM's and Shop staff). Create these accounts within the new number range. Remember to leave room between numbers so other items can easily be added.

In the payroll module, take a look at the 5-3-3 Employee Positions screen. The Equip/Shop Wages fields are now available. Add the new Shop Labor account and Save. Then head to the 5-3-1

screen to address the pay calcs. Each of the expense calcs now has the Shop Expense field to fill in. In the steps above you would have created Shop Payroll Taxes, Shop Workers Comp, Shop Benefits, and similar accounts.

Then there's the opportunity to setup the pieces of equipment themselves and one for the general Shop. All of this is done in the 8-3 Equipment screen. We usually recommend a lower two-digit Shop number. You can create Types to help group different types of equipment for reporting and ease of look up. You might consider a numbering convention such as all trucks in the 100 number range. This is also where you can indicate cost recovery rates by the hour or day.

This is a great module and definitely worth the time for a thoughtful setup. There are many things to consider, some more important than others. Having a little assistance during the setup can help you get off on the right foot. Let us know if you'd like some help! -CMW

S100C v24.2 is Coming

As Sage Third Party Developers for S100C, we receive early release notes prior to Sage making them available to all. This version is targeted for October.

It's 36 pages so I can't cover everything here; stay tuned for more and consider reading through the release notes. As with other recent updates, this is not compatible with Sage Estimating version 20.1 and earlier.

The biggest change seems to be for payroll – they have a new payroll closing process that will allow you to keep the prior year's records in the 5-2-2 screen until you specifically archive them. This will change the yearend process. We'll be sure to get more info out to you and include this change in our Closing the Year webinar in early December. More to come on this one! -CMW

M365 Education Station

What is Zero Trust?

Zero Trust is the principle of maintaining strict access controls and not trusting anyone, by default, not even those inside the network. Basically, Zero Trust assumes that no document, link, email, or other data source is trustworthy or safe to open.

There are 3 Key Components:

1. User/Application Authentication
2. Device Authentication
3. Trust

This approach assumes each request is from a threat. Users have multiple devices in multiple locations, not all of which are owned or managed by the company. Since you can't lock down the devices, the focus is on the user or application authentication, and security policies for the data.

For instance, Microsoft security allows a user to access files they need, but can block downloading the data to a device. As an example, in our F.I.T. System, the cell phone can see the job list and cost codes, but none of the data ends up on the cell phone.

The few things we've shared here are the tip of the iceberg. Azure Active Directory, security configurations with automation through Blueprints, sign-in with Conditional Access, MDM, and various forms of authentication all work together to make the user and/or device prove they are who they say they are. Then there's monitoring and refining of policies.

Users can find these measures very difficult when trying to work, so phasing in the changes is key to a successful rollout.

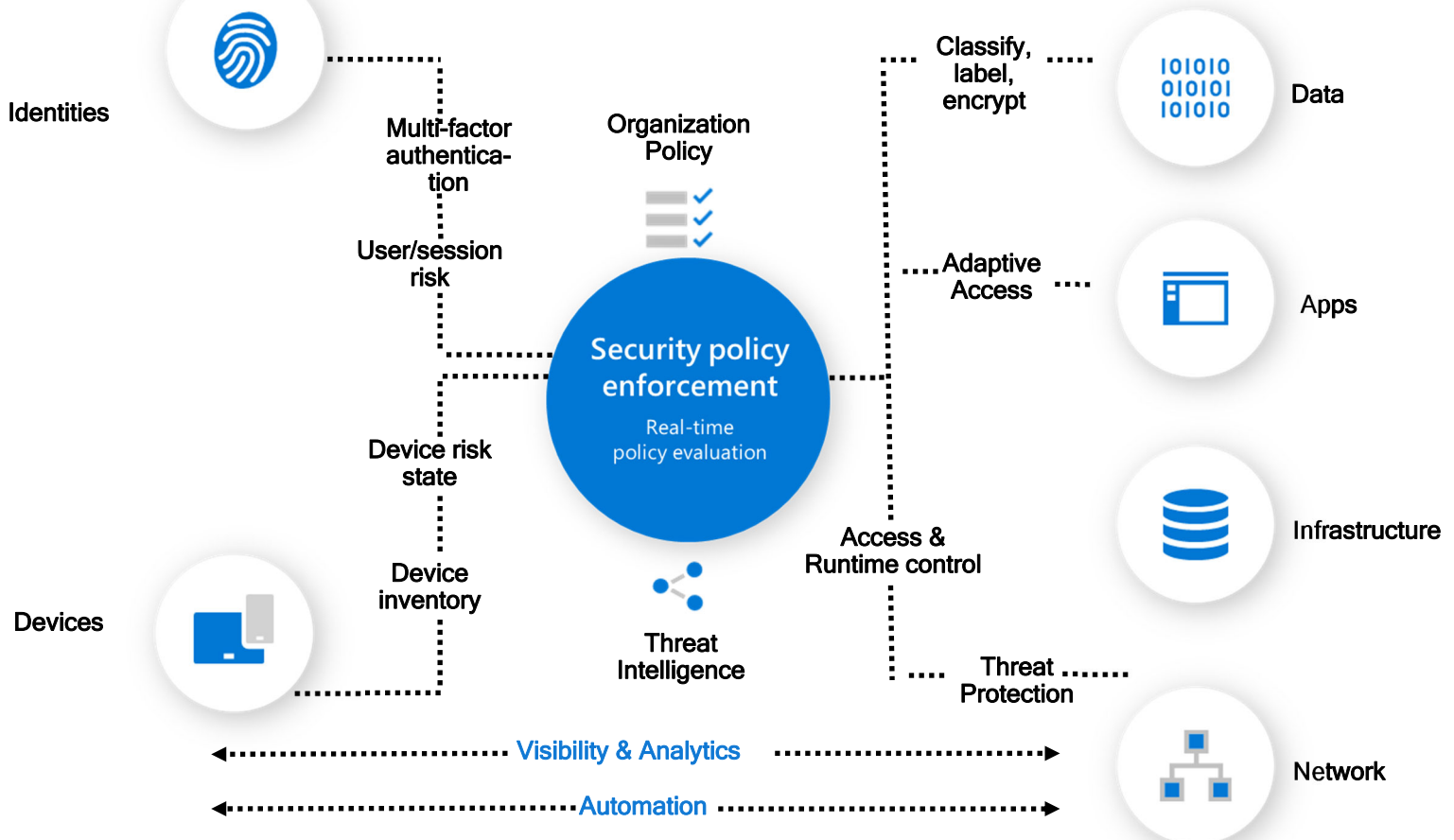


Tip of the Month

Did you know?

Azure Active Directory manages users, service accounts, and devices. User sign-in to any device can be configured with conditional access. This includes permissions and the ability to enforce them, even when accessing data in cloud environments outside your network. With M365 licenses, users can sign-in and have MFA on up to 5 devices, securely, even if you don't own them all.

Microsoft Zero Trust



How Did They Do It? Westin Homes

Despite a lingering pandemic, building material price increases, and soaring inflation rates, 2021 proved a successful year for Westin. Emphasis on a few key areas enabled this success: customer satisfaction, attention to detail, working together as a team, and problem solving.

Westin fosters a collaborative environment. All employees, including office staff, are encouraged to walk the building and provide feedback, which the architects take into consideration. Company founder and owner Jason Golan is still personally involved in designing every Westin home with the company's architectural team.

The Westin team pulled together to help a customer in a unique situation. A couple wanted a home built, but the husband is a Marine who was stationed in Afghanistan. Westin worked their schedules around the couple's availability and

used video meetings to include everyone in the decisions throughout the process.

Syscon's team collaborated with Westin to streamline processes in a more robust cloud-based environment. Syscon also created some data import steps to improve Westin's accounting processes. These efficiencies help fuel Westin's success. —BK/CMW



Jason Golan, Owner

Fast Facts

- Location:** Sugar Land, TX
- Specialty:** Home Builder
- Founded:** 1994
- Affiliations:** Greater Houston Builders Assoc; Texas Assoc of Builders; National Assoc of Home Builders; Fort Bend & Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce; Houston Assoc of Realtors; and more!

[Read more at www.syscon-inc.com/how-did-they-do-it](http://www.syscon-inc.com/how-did-they-do-it)

Are you interested in having your story featured? Let's talk!

Upcoming Events

2022-2023 Theme

Event: Field Time Collection the Easy Way, webinar

Date: Thursday, Oct 20th

Time: 1:00 p.m. Central

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

Team Momentum

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How We Work



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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.

