

# Industry Tech Outlook

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*Insight On Emerging Technology*



10 MOST  
ADMIRABLE  
LEADERS  
2024



MOST ADMIRABLE  
LEADER 2024



An award certificate for Catherine Wendt, Founder of Syscon. The certificate features a gold seal award with five stars and the text "PREMIUM AWARD" at the top left. The title "Industry Tech Outlook" is prominently displayed in the upper right. Below the title, it reads "10 MOST ADMIRABLE LEADERS 2024" next to a gold award icon. A central hexagonal portrait shows Catherine Wendt. At the bottom right, the SYSCON logo is displayed, followed by her name and title: "Catherine Wendt, Founder, Syscon". The certificate is framed with geometric shapes in black and gold.

# CATHERINE WENDT

## FOUNDER, SYSCON

### Striving For Knowledge & Success

Catherine Wendt, the co-founder of Syscon, strongly focuses on empowering and building her team members to lead now and in the future. New team members meet for a 6-week book study and read through Patrick Lencioni's book, *5 Dysfunctions of a Team*. In each month's client newsletter, Catherine reviews a book on leadership and personal growth, which goes to all our clients and all Syscon team members. "For our VP of Technology Services, we found an amazing one-on-one coach. For a smaller employee group, we're on a 15-month journey with Initiative One to focus on growing as leaders and a team," she says. "Education and continuous learning and improvement is our core emphasis. We strive to enhance our knowledge with each passing day."

An essential focus for Catherine has been looking for ways to interact with her team members, even when they are physically separate. One was a 'Gallbladder pillow' as a recovery gift after gallbladder surgery; sending five kinds of chocolate chip cookies to their home office after a challenging project, bringing the whole team to Arizona for a weekend as part of their mid-year state of the company sending cards and reminders in the mail. Making these connections with her team members and even the clients has been instrumental.

#### Building the Company

Catherine shares that when they started the company in 1986, Larry Wendt was the President and headed the Sales and technical department while she was taking care of accounting, then provided consulting services. Over the years, Catherine has had the opportunity to lead some of the technical teams while increasing client-facing work. About ten years ago, Catherine took the official title of President, and the transition was underway.

With Larry moving to a new opportunity for his programming



Catherine Wendt  
Founder, Syscon

skills, it was clear that Catherine would need an outside board to brainstorm ideas and address the significant changes in front of the company. "We moved from a strict referral sales model to having marketing and structured sales; more and more of our technical work could be performed remotely, requiring a different support system for those team members; moving from a strictly time and material billing model to monthly recurring revenue was a change on many levels; and more," explains Catherine. "We sought two groups to help us work through and stay focused on these important changes. One was a local C12 Business Owner group made up of a variety of industries. They met one day a month in person to work on the business and support each other, along with a one-on-one meeting each month with the group's coach."

On the other hand, they joined a nationwide group that focused on marketing for managed service providers and other companies like them in the IT space. This second group had quarterly in-person meetings, weekly accountability calls, and a strong marketing focus. The dedication to these groups, willingness to be transparent, and consistent focus on these initiatives made all the difference, helping Syscon navigate and succeed.

#### Becoming A Leader

"When I started the transition to the role of President, I knew it would be a few years, but I had no idea how long or the extent of what needed to change. I would say there were successes along the way that we found encouraging and helped us grow to the next level," explains Catherine. "We would recommend checking out Traction by Gino Wickman to provide a structure and my advice to everyone is to own who you are! I'm a technical person who also does a lot of teaching. I'm often in front of business owners, and since most of our clients are in construction, most of them are men. As a female leader, I own it! I wear dresses, I expect considerate language when I'm in the room, and similar professional courtesies. I also understand when to bring others on our teams into conversations. I've never had to explain these guidelines, but by expecting the best and setting the example, I've had wonderful relationships with men and women at all levels of business."

She also strongly suggests leaders and budding entrepreneurs protect their leadership team, inviting new members slowly and attending conferences; hearing how others have found success and failure can be very valuable and enlightening. "When it comes to using technology to run a Construction company, you won't find another company with as much knowledge and experience as Syscon. We are here to standardize, streamline, and make processes bulletproof to bring efficiency and accuracy to our clients and their teams," says Catherine.

#### Offering Unique Solutions

Over 11 years ago, Syscon started providing boutique hosting to its clients. They offered Hosted Exchange when Microsoft changed the Server Operating System rules and built a field time collection app for construction clients, fully integrated with their accounting software. Syscon recently tested and then moved all its hosting clients to Azure and Exchange clients to Microsoft 365. With each of these changes, they have avoided the 'bleeding edge' while finding the right solutions for their clients, tested them themselves, and then rolled them out!

Technology changes, technology needs change, and they have been there for their contractor clients for decades, providing IT services. In addition to network, hosting, and local computer needs, they leverage the Azure cloud, Microsoft 365 tools, and their custom programs for field time collection and data analysis. Syscon's vendor relationships include HP, Microsoft CSP, Sage, Sonicwall, and custom tools and reporting, including Over/Under billing, Cost to Complete, Field Integrated Time collection, Indirect Cost allocation, and dozens of custom reports.

The most significant achievement for Syscon would be its continued automation. One of its primary client deliverables is automating its various systems for efficiency and accuracy. "Applying that to ourselves has been a huge game-changer. It's not



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a 'one and done' change. A commitment to automation impacts all our departments and demands ongoing evaluation to be sure we have the expected results and to modify or add when appropriate," elucidates Catherine. "One of our unique focuses is the integration of our Programming and Networking teams. With these two teams working together, our automation opportunities are more varied than ever and more far-reaching than either team could have done on their own! We are very focused on our employees, their growth, their teams, and their continued education. Hiring the right people to join these teams is a big focus. Continuing to get the word out there that we exist, and if you're a specialty subcontractor, you won't find a better company to partner with when it comes to your technology!"

For the days to come, Christopher Wendt, the VP of Technology Services, will continue building the departments, as mentioned earlier, moving to a Pod structure in 18 months. He is on track to leading the company and has the right people to help him grow into this role successfully. "For me, I hope to continue the education focus for our clients as well as our staff," adds Catherine. "There's room to hold more webinars and seminars on technology topics as well as construction office topics. I'd like to continue contributing articles to industry publications, as well, along with our regular short video updates."

Catherine concludes by emphasizing the importance of having other business owners available, hearing their stories, knowing one is not alone, and having them cheer on when things are tough, which cannot be overstated! "What we do is difficult, it can be risky, and we have the weight of our clients and employees with us all the time, running their businesses well and raising their families," she says. "Things can get tough. When they do, having cultivated these friendships is so important. Knowing I was not on an island allowed me to persevere." **ITO**