



What's New

It's been an educational month! Larry attended the Microsoft Fabric conference in Vegas and loved the breakout workshop; Cathy and Chris attended Darren Hardy's Business Master Class; Larry and I attended a Simple AI conference in San Antonio and had an opportunity to connect with my previous C12 Chair, Tim Holmes, his wife and some lovely guests.

This month, I'm presenting one of the breakout sessions at the CFMA Annual conference, so if you're attending, come say 'hi'! Our annual Paygroup Update webinar is May 9th.

Wishing all the great women out there a Happy Mother's Day. Your leadership is critical! - Catherine Wendt

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May 2024



Las Vegas Review-journal/TNS via Getty Images

MGM Hack: A Lesson for Small Business

During my two weeks on the road, I had the opportunity to read the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) from the hotel lobby. It had an excellent article about the MGM Hack, how it started, and the timeline as events unfolded. The whole thing started late on a Friday night, and according to the article, the following Thursday they were able to bring some 'normalcy' to their guests, followed by more weeks of Tech Team work in the background.

There are a few really good lessons for small business owners – you and me. There's also some interesting background about what's happening and who is engaged in this criminal behavior, so let's dig in.

How did it start? A person called the Tech Support department and said they had forgotten their password and were locked out. The caller provided

some personal information, which was correct, so the password was changed. Next, the REAL employee called to say they just received a notice that their password was changed – but it was too late. The hackers were in!

I'm going to pause here for a moment. The WSJ went on to say that this hacker group targeted a 'widely overlooked weakness in technology – the tech support systems that help people get into their online accounts when they're locked out.' We agree! We are constantly balancing how to meet your team's requests so they can get back to work while being vigilant to keep you secure. When someone calls and asks us to change their password, and we follow up with our primary contact person or take other steps to confirm who we're talking to and if this is OK (maybe they are no longer with you!), please know that

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we are protecting you!

Who are these hackers? I think the WSJ sums it up nicely – ‘They’re video gamers and braggarts and con artists and criminals.’ Turns out most are from English-speaking countries such as the US and the UK. Historically, hackers seemed to be focused on showing off, but this new generation seems to be motivated by status and money; and they’re ruthless! In addition to corporate extortion, they target teenagers with sextortion schemes; masquerade as FBI agents; have stolen source code to video games; and more.

How did they get enough personal info to impersonate the employee? Some sources are other data breaches which put sensitive info out for sale on the Dark Web; Facebook accounts; True People Search (*Syscon U*, Oct 2023 issue); and online profiles such as LinkedIn, to name a few. We highly recommend our Dark Web monitoring software which monitors the Dark Web for anything associated with your domain name. No matter how careful

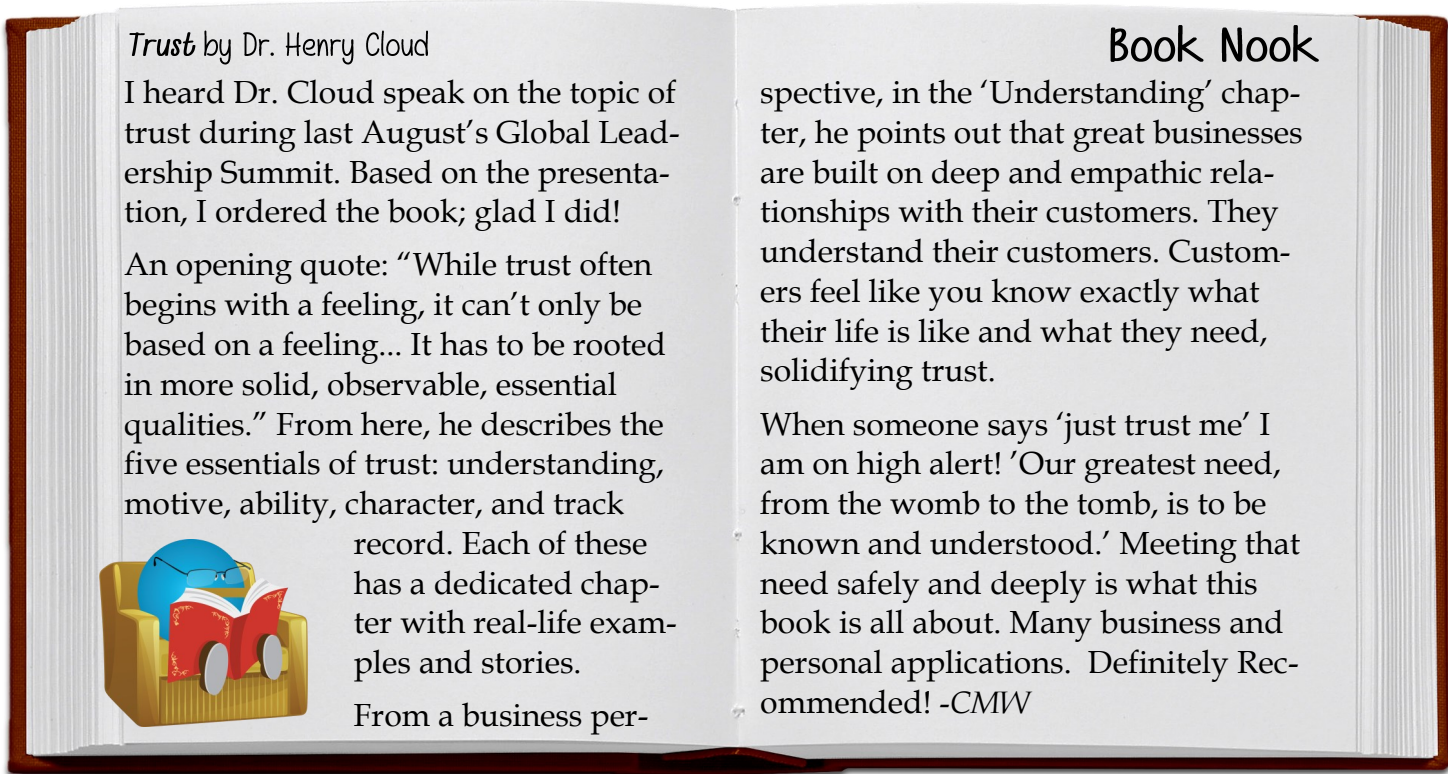
YOU are with your info, other businesses and friends may have exposed information about you or been compromised and had it stolen. Then there’s social engineering, where users are tricked by fake websites (that look VERY ‘good’), or to download malicious software.

Back to our timeline: By now, MGM had shut down its systems, its email, checked in guests with pen-and-paper, walked around with cash to help stranded slot players, and provided cocktails for those in long lines. All of this started late on a Friday. Early Tuesday morning, the criminals made their request; \$30 million dollars! And MGM was silent...

In the end, MGM chose to spend a LOT of money to rebuild their systems and servers (which were already down) rather than pay the extortion demand. Some of this expense they hope to recover through their cyber insurance. According to a negotiator group, the average ransom is nearly \$569,000!

To wrap up: Be sure to have MFA enforced for your teams. Help us keep you safe when password changes are requested (and stop sharing them!). Be sure you have truthfully completed your Cybersecurity Insurance questionnaire and be sure your coverage is in place, AND that you follow the requirements of the policy. Continue reminding your team about Social Engineering trickery (we have articles, blogs, videos, and our Special Edition newsletter that you can share). Reconsider how much personal data you provide on social media sites. If you don’t already have this with us, consider our Dark Web monitoring tool. Stay safe! - CMW

“And though she be but little, she is fierce.” – Shakespeare
Happy Mother’s Day!



Trust by Dr. Henry Cloud
I heard Dr. Cloud speak on the topic of trust during last August’s Global Leadership Summit. Based on the presentation, I ordered the book; glad I did!

An opening quote: “While trust often begins with a feeling, it can’t only be based on a feeling... It has to be rooted in more solid, observable, essential qualities.” From here, he describes the five essentials of trust: understanding, motive, ability, character, and track



record. Each of these has a dedicated chapter with real-life examples and stories.

From a business per-

Book Nook

spective, in the ‘Understanding’ chapter, he points out that great businesses are built on deep and empathic relationships with their customers. They understand their customers. Customers feel like you know exactly what their life is like and what they need, solidifying trust.

When someone says ‘just trust me’ I am on high alert! ‘Our greatest need, from the womb to the tomb, is to be known and understood.’ Meeting that need safely and deeply is what this book is all about. Many business and personal applications. Definitely Recommended! -CMW



Flashcards: Back in Vogue?

Larry attended the Microsoft Fabric conference. There was a heavy focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI), as you might imagine. In the hands-on breakout session, Larry was transported back to his early programming days when he was working at UOP and Allied Signal with the research scientists and some of the lesser-known programming languages. Many of the concepts and ideas in this event were very similar to those PhD research goals, but at that time, the tools just weren't there yet.

Lots to learn of course, and the modern tools are very exciting. So during the event, Microsoft provided a box of Flashcards! They have the question on one side and the answer on the other, just like we used in school to learn math, spelling, and a second language. Considering the complexity of these amazing systems, this was a nice 'retro' move on their part! -CMW

ChatGPT, Copilot, AI

The C12 Group May curriculum is featuring a section on using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in our businesses. In fact, Chris and I were part of a video interview on the topic – we shared it on LinkedIn, BTW. We discussed the history of AI in our business which has historically been with our programming team, and the exciting and latest step for the rest of our staff as we incorporate Copilot and other tools.

Similarly, Larry enrolled in a year-long class using ChatGPT for a variety of

business initiatives. Version 3.5 is available for free. The latest version 4 is updated and a paid-only offering.

Not to be left behind, Darren Hardy held a class on using ChatGPT, and in his Business Master Class in April, shared the platform he has built to help his clients with their businesses.

The accessibility for the 'typical' business user is wide open! As you consider the tools, platforms, and various teachers in this space, do your homework before engaging, and definitely before sending the check. This is in its infancy to the typical consumer. There are times and circumstances when these tools may not be within your business' values or ethics. As business leaders, we will need to stay engaged, even if it feels a little awkward, and set the bar and the tone for how these AI tools will be used in our businesses. Like the PC itself, internet access, and remote work, this is the beginning of a foundational shift at our offices and in how we run our businesses. -CMW

Camera Etiquette

We hold all our online meetings with cameras on! It shows we're engaged, listening, and giving you and each other our undivided attention. We also know that some of our clients don't have cameras available, such as those using a standard PC at the office (although we recommend purchasing a quality camera that's easy to use).

At a recent Robin Robins event, she ran a funny video poking fun at how some people have 'hidden' behind the no-camera excuse, and now that they're back in the office, their antics continued; it was very funny.

More recently, in the welcome packet for an online Business Master Class with Darren Hardy, there was a nicely done page about camera etiquette – and it was absolutely spot on! Whether it's in the office or on camera, it's business, so put your best foot forward! -CMW

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Anker MagGo Wireless Charging Station

Anker, a leader in tech accessories, presents the Anker MagGo Wireless Charging Station – a game-changer in charging convenience. Compatible with both iPhone and Android devices, its magnetic alignment ensures effortless charging every time.

Compact and portable at just 3.50 × 2.36 × 0.98 inches (89 × 60 × 25 mm) when folded, the Anker MagGo is perfect for on-the-go use. Despite its size, it delivers rapid charging speeds, guaranteeing minimal downtime.

Priced at \$109.99, the Anker MagGo offers exceptional value for its innovative features and performance. Simplify your charging routine and say hello to hassle-free power with the Anker MagGo Wireless Charging Station. Get them now at <https://www.anker.com/>



CONSTRUCTION CORNER



The POWER of Power BI

In April, we finally held a webinar on the Power of Power BI. We've been looking forward to sharing this for quite a while. Our clients have done some amazing things with this tool, and we knew it would be exciting to share some of these solutions and get those creative juices flowing for all those in attendance!

Power BI is an add-on tool and is part of the Power Apps in Microsoft 365, accessible using your existing M365 login. This tool can create some beautiful dashboards, and so much more!

One of the primary reasons we recommend this tool for our clients is that it opens up the availability of data to the field without having them log into the server or accounting/project management software. But, with this data connection, PM's have up-to-date info on their jobs; owners have KPI's at their fingertips; multiple sources can provide a consolidated report, pie chart, or other visuals; and there are some amazing drill-down options to dig into the details making up the dashboards.

Chris and I were attending a vendor event. We didn't have our computers on, so when I asked about a specific result for us, he pulled up his phone, launched Power BI, and went straight to our report, right on his phone!

This has been a game-changer, especially for our Sage 100 Contractor clients. We've built a wide variety of

CFMA Conference

If you're headed to Texas for this great event, please join me on **Tuesday morning** for the Small Business Discussion Forum. We're going to tackle multi-generational and downsized workforces using technology to meet the challenges! See you there!

reports pulling data directly from S100C. No need for additional S100C licenses, or logging into the server, or learning to navigate to the desired reports. Power BI reports can even include restrictions on who can see what information and how far they can drill down!

In some cases, we've pulled data from multiple sources to consolidate the 'story' right in Power BI. This may include SQL Server (Sage), Excel, Microsoft Lists, Salesforce, and about 150 more.

We have a private link to the recorded webinar; just let Liz know you're interested!

A couple of things we've built in Power BI, and these are just a few:

- Cost to Complete reports
- Work in Progress reports and many variations to meet specific needs
- Commission and Incentive reports
- Reports by last invoice date, last job cost date, and similar reports that are not possible in the Sage Report Writer
- Budget versus Actual by Job, Phase, and Cost Code
- Leadership KPI reports
- Company Revenue reports
- Top clients
- Employee Certification Tracking
- PTO Tracking
- Employee Home Location Map for efficient scheduling
- Minority Reporting
- Custom Audit reports to meet auditors' requests
- Win/Loss Ratio by Estimator
- Number of Bids Created
- Many Profit reports by different criteria

AND, Chris used Copilot to create the slide deck and images, including AI-

Save the Date
Thursday, May 9th 1:00
Central Time
Paygroup Updates
Webinar

generated 'people.' We want to take every opportunity to share how these tools can be used.

Some of the primary advantages over Excel include the automatic data refresh, consistency in calculation of results, and no more errors from manually modified Excel fields. There are amazing filtering options that save a great deal of time.

Like any new tool, there may be one or two reports you need right now. Why not dip your toe into the waters. We've found that when clients see how this tool can work for them, and how easy it is for their team to use, they often come back with a second request.

Are you intrigued? We'd be happy to send you the private link to this webinar; just let Liz know you're interested! - CMW

CFMA Annual Conference; We're hosting a Small Business Forum!—May 18-22, I will attend this national conference in Grapevine, TX. I'll provide a short presentation on the multi-generational workforce, the trend in smaller-sized office teams, and how Technology can help bridge these gaps. If you'll be attending the conference, let's visit or share a coffee/drink! - CMW



M365 Education Station

Teams: A Reminder and Another Change

Earlier this year, we ran an extensive article on the Teams Auto-Upgrade that's coming soon. We'd like to follow that up with their most recent deadline, and another new announcement about unbundling Teams—here we go!

What is Teams Classic?

- Teams Classic is a communication and collaboration platform from Microsoft, launched in 2017.
- It allows users to chat, call, video conference, share files, and work on projects with their colleagues and external partners.
- It integrates with other Microsoft products such as Office 365, SharePoint, OneDrive, and Outlook, as well as third-party apps and services.
- It has been widely used by organizations of different sizes and sectors, especially during the COVID pandemic.

Why is Teams Classic Ending?

- Microsoft announced an extension of Teams Classic, originally targeted for a March 31st end-of-life, now extended through July 1, 2024.
- This means Teams Classic will no longer be supported, updated, or available for download after that date.
- Users who have Teams Classic installed on their devices will be automatically upgraded to new Teams, which is the next generation of the platform—automatically!
- The end-of-life of Teams Classic is part of Microsoft's vision to create a unified and modern experience for its users across devices and platforms.

What is the New Teams?

- It's designed to be faster, more secure, and more reliable.
- It has new features and some changes. We have an extensive list of these in our March 2024 newsletter!

Teams Unbundling—What and Why?

What Microsoft says: Teams is one of the most widely used communication and collaboration tools in the world, with over 145 million DAILY active users. Until now, Teams has only been available as part of the Microsoft 365 subscription, which also includes Office, Outlook, and OneDrive, to name a few. Microsoft has announced that it will soon offer Teams as a standalone product, meaning that users will be able to purchase and use Teams without having to buy the whole M365 bundle.

The unbundling will take place in stages, starting from July 2024. Existing subscribers will be able to continue using Teams as part of their subscription, but they'll have the option to switch to standalone if they prefer. New customers will be able to choose between the M365 bundle or the standalone Teams when they sign up. The transition should be complete by the end of the year, 12/31/2024.

Now the Rest of the Story: Based on the timing of this announcement, it seems this is a result of some challenges in the EU to avoid anti-trust scrutiny or litigation. This is to address the growing regulatory focus and complaints filed by its rival, Slack. I'm reminded of when the answer to the telephone monopolies was the creation of the 'Baby Bells' which didn't go that well for consumers; hopefully those lessons have been learned.

For now, prices, renewals, Teams-only purchases are a little foggy, even for us, a Microsoft Solution Provider! I'm confident there will be more details to come, so we'll keep you posted.

- *CMW and Copilot*



How Did They Do It? Roper Electrical

In an exclusive interview with Syscon, Rob Roper, the owner of Roper Electrical, shared insights into his company's journey and the factors driving its success.

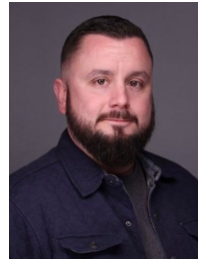
His venture into the electrical business began with his acceptance into the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) after high school. Following a decade of experience working for other contractors, he took the bold step to establish his own venture, Roper Electrical.

He attributes his company's success to his dedicated team. By recruiting individuals who share his vision and values, he ensures that the right people are in the right roles, contributing to the company's growth and reputation.

Financial challenges, particularly in managing cash flow while awaiting payments, were significant hurdles for Roper Electrical. Implementing better financial tracking systems, such as Sage 100 Contractor, has allowed the company to navigate these challenges more effectively, paving the way for future success.

Transitioning from traditional pen-and-paper methods to utilizing technology was a significant shift for Roper Electrical. However, he

recognized the transformative potential of technology, especially after integrating Syscon's products and services into his business operations. The Syscon FIT System, in particular, has streamlined processes, enhancing efficiency and productivity.



Rob Roper
Owner

The highlight of his day is any moment spent with his family, underscoring the importance of work-life balance and personal fulfillment beyond business success.

As Roper Electrical continues to grow and evolve, he remains committed to delivering excellence in electrical services while prioritizing the well-being of his team and customers. With a keen eye on innovation and a solid foundation built on integrity and expertise, Roper Electrical is poised for even greater achievements in the future. -RB

Fast Facts

Location: Holbrook, MA

Specialty: Electrical Construction

Founded: 2022

Affiliations: IBEW Local 103 and NECA

[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

Event: Updating Pay Groups in Sage 100 Contractor, webinar

Date: Thursday, May 9th

Time: 1 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

Event: CMFA's Annual Conference & Exhibition, Break Out presentation by Cathy!

Date: May 18 – 22

Location: Grapevine, TX

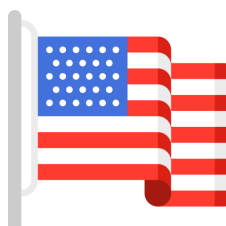
More Info: www.cfma.org/annual

Event: Ditch Paper Timecards, webinar

Date: Thursday, May 16th

Time: 11 a.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events



Take Note:

Syscon will be closed Monday, May 27, 2024 for Memorial Day

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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.

