Syscon U

What's New

Well, our two-year project is now complete. The Hinsdale office is completely closed after more than 25 years in that building. Emptying the final cabinets was a journey down memory lane, stirring lots of different emotions.

One of our top initiatives for the next 10 months is to make Remote Work work! We've been practicing and planning, now it's here.

Liz has been promoted to Project Coordinator and Danica has taken Liz's previous position as IT Coordinator. Great work ladies!

Perhaps you know someone who will be alone; why not consider inviting them to join you this Thanksgiving!- *Catherine Wendt*

In this Issue

November 2024

Cyber Security: Part of our Full Service IT Offerings

In our August newsletter, we shared our history as a Full Service IT company. In fact, we started as a Networking company servicing the Construction and Non-Profit industry. As technology changed and the Construction industry realized the potential efficiencies of embracing technology, our services expanded to Accounting and Project Management software, custom reports, and Business Consulting.

When it comes to Construction and Technology, you won't find another company with the depth and breadth of knowledge and services as Syscon! We love this stuff! There have been a LOT of changes in the last few decades, and in that August article, we touched on a few of them. Along with these amazing tools and efficiencies, there have been some bad actors, some 'snake oil' salesmen, those who exploit others for their own gain, often using the same tools you and I use every day.

Cyber Security is not new. I remember the techs going to each and every computer pretty regularly to update anti-virus software and DAT files; anti-spam software to filter out the noise; and of course the firewall. All of these solutions and more have 'grown up'' over the years, trying to stay ahead of the bad actors. A while back, we ran an article on some of the structural changes to anti-virus, resulting in Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR), the next generation of that tool. Well there have been many changes in Cyber Security, some obvious — notices that an email came from an address you don't use, country blocks that are updated when you travel, and so on — and some in the background.

We'd like to share some of the 'background' security measures. Any good IT Company should have cyber security tools in place for their clients as part of their general services. We take this VERY seriously and have selected some amazing

Continued pg.2

tools, updating and upgrading them as the landscape changes.

SentinelOne is a very well-known name in security and we absolutely use this tool. We also have visibility to the computers and servers we support, allowing us to set warnings and push security and product updates. When it comes to our Microsoft 365 accounts, there is yet another level of security configurations available including some automation for consistent roll outs. For clients taking advantage of M365 Premium licenses, the security configurations are quite robust, and InTune is available to make all of this happen.

We have a tool that helps with the automation of these tools including our managed endpoints (computers), SentinelOne, and M365 licenses. There are many aspects to monitor across these services not to mention so many devices. This automation and reporting allows us to stay on top of what's happening, highlight odd behaviors or activity, and reduce the possibility of human error when onboarding/offboarding users and equipment.

For quite a few years now, we've provided Dark Web monitoring. This is an available add-on for any of our clients. For our Fully Managed and Fully Hosted clients, it's included in the packaged support. This tool monitors company domain names for activity on the Dark Web and provides reporting and alerts when data has been exposed or is for sale. This includes passwords, answers to security questions, Social Security numbers, and more. Sometimes the user has accidentally exposed this information; sometimes a vendor has been compromised and the person's data was on that vendor's platform. Either way, these reports are helpful and allow you to be pro-active in changing passwords, blocking information, requesting replacement accounts, and similar.

Web filtering, which is DNS-related, has built in protection against known bad actors on specific sites and inappropriate content. In some instances, you visit a site, malware is installed on your computer without your knowledge, and at a future moment, the 'package' is launched. These known bad actors are blocked with this tool.

The next step in this journey is the MDR security tool, Managed Detection and Response. This is an add-on product that monitors for suspicious activity and responds to threats in real time. This third-party service is around-the-clock monitoring for abnormal behavior, able to take immediate action including isolation and locking of the account or device. Our partner is excellent, well respected, and rated very highly. Several of our clients have rolled out this additional layer of security. For those in high-risk industries or with government contracts, this may be a smart investment. In the future, this could become a required one!

This is not the full menu, but gives you a taste of some of the all-important Cyber Security services that are part of our full service IT offerings. We would welcome a chance to talk about this with you in more detail! - *CMW*

> *"The struggle of today is not altogether for today—it is for a vast future, also."*
>
> — Abraham Lincoln

Self-Talk for Success, John Mason

I've heard this before—the person we talk to the most is ourselves! So what are the messages, what are the encouragements, what type of 'talk' do we use to ourselves? Mr. Mason makes the point that we often speak to ourselves (usually not out loud!) in a manner we would never use with others. We're more likely to scold or condemn than to encourage and build ourselves up. In Chapter 1 he shares a quote from Khalil Gibran, "My enemy said to me, 'Love your enemy.' And I obeyed him and loved myself."

In this short, pocket-size book, there are many nice little quotes. Sharing these with ourselves throughout the year or with others on our teams could bring some much needed encouragement! A

Book Nook

reminder many leaders could tape on the mirror: "You don't inspire others by being perfect. You inspire others by how you deal with your imperfections." In another section he reminds us, "Never be afraid to try something new. Remember, amateurs built the ark; professionals built the Titanic."

I highlighted this one, too; "Stay away from negative people. They have a problem for every solution." How about this one; "If you don't like where you are, move. You are not a house." There are so many more! In business and our personal life, these are applicable.

I'll leave you with this; "Knowing when to walk away is wisdom. Being able to is courage. Walking away with your head held high is dignity." Encouragement, quotes, wisdom—grab this book! *CMW*

TECH TALK

Drop Box Phishing Scheme

Larry found this one. The bad actor put a file on DropBox then seems to have waited or forced DropBox to send a 'reminder' that there was a file waiting for Larry. The email came from no-reply@dropbox.com because it was a prompt.

In the body of the reminder, it said 'In case you missed it,' followed by our client's name, BUT the email address was not his regular email. That small difference would have been easy to miss.

It was the 'in case you missed it' comment that caused Larry to look a little deeper. Please share this with your teams as a reminder to be diligent when deciding whether to open an attachment or click on a link. ALWAYS err on the side of caution, and if you're not sure, pick up the phone! –*CMW*

OneNote Changes

We know there are a few of you that love OneNote and have been using it for quite a while. Microsoft is making a change and we thought you should be aware of what will happen next.

Turns out there are two versions: OneNote for Windows 10 and OneNote for Windows. The first one is going to be end of life pretty soon. You can tell the difference because the one that's going away does not have a 'File' menu; the new one does.

If you're using OneNote, make sure the OneNote files are synced so you don't lose any data. If you're not sure, let's get on a short call and take a look.

The upgrade process will automatically happen, in the background, so there aren't any special steps (other than checking on the sync). If you want to upgrade right away, OneNote for Windows is available to download from the Microsoft Store, or we can give you a hand. Looks like the target end-of-life is October 2025, but you should check on the file sync right away. - *CMW*

Smart Car Security—Really!

This is just the kind of thing I tend to tune-out; more scare tactics. BUT, this one came from one of our vendors who handles Dark Web monitoring, so when Dan came across the article, we thought we'd share what they're saying.

More and more of us have smart cars equipped with various connectivity features. These connect with a wide range of networks and devices, making them vulnerable. They also collect and share a lot of data, making them attractive to bad actors. Just think about someone seeing everywhere you drive via your GPS! If there really was a breach, there could be safety risks if they had unauthorized control of the vehicle.

Dan mentioned bad actors using wi-fi jammers, picking up vehicle key frequencies (remember *Gone in 60 Seconds*?). Some high value car owners are storing their keys in faraday bags (they block electronic signals) as a precaution.

There were a couple of recommended steps. First, keep the vehicle's software up-to-date to protect against known vulnerabilities. Next, only connect your vehicle to secure and trusted sources. Also, if you're using any third-party services or apps, make sure THEY have strong security in place. And lastly, make sure the car is physically secure, locked and in the garage! - *CMW*

CONSTRUCTION CORNER

S100C Data Cleanup—We Have Options!

We do quite a bit of data fixes and cleanup for Sage 100 Contractor. We know the product extremely well, and we have specific tools, along with years of experience, allowing us to do some pretty cool things. Like what? Glad you asked!

More than once, we've had a client with hundreds of PO's in status 1-Open (for a variety of reasons). To clean up reports, these really needed to be updated. Using our tools, we were able to choose some specific parameters and automatically move them to status 4-Closed. It was a combination of dates, job status, and last activity. HUGE time saver.

Another client forgot to update the new hourly rates from the 5-2-1 screen before generating that week's payroll, so all the pay stubs would have shown the old rate. Even the body of the payroll records had the wrong rate. There were over 400 records! We were able to get all the specific fields updated using our tools and the payroll went out on time!

From time-to-time there are Vendor Audit errors, Client Audit errors, that come up when running the monthly Closing process. We can fix these right away—no long wait time, holding new entries to get the data back, and so on. - *CMW*

Payroll Records: You May NOT Need to Void

If the 5-2-2 records have been posted to the wrong posting period, or to the wrong checking account (or both!), no need to void! Log on with Exclusive Access, go to the 5-2-2, screen, select Options, and follow the prompts.

Change Orders

The Change Order module is pretty powerful. At its most basic, Change Orders are entered for the jobs, and when Approved, will impact the Contract, the Budget, and even Subcontracts if you have them.

It's also a great way to manage allowances and contingencies. An internal change order gives excellent tracking of what funds have been allocated and to where, even when there is no impact to the contract itself. All of this flows through to Budget reports, Budget to Actual job costs, Work in Progress, and more.

For those of you who issue Subcontracts, Change Orders direct to the Subs, increasing or decreasing their contract,

> *'In some cases, Change Orders are invoiced individually. The Invoice Date field needs to be blank before you start.'*

can be managed here. You can even select a sub and leave the status as 2-Open for their line item, moving it to Approved when the CO is approved, or when you finalize who will do the additional work. You can even print Subcontract Change Orders and send them.

In many cases, the Change Orders are brought into the 3-7 Progress Billing screen, either to Append to the contract, or even by Cost Code. Use the Update, Change Orders to select which option.

In some cases, Change Orders are invoiced individually. This can be done right from the 6-4-1 Change Order screen. The Invoice Date field needs to be blank before you start. Choose the Invoice button in the lower left of the

screen. This takes you to the 3-2 screen with all the appropriate defaults. Update any descriptions as you wish, check your posting period and Save/Post.

The Change Order setup is important. Use the Prime Tab for as much or as little detail to present to the customer. There are Note fields available at the end of every row, or use the Yellow Note Pad for the Scope of Work and other details.

On the Budget and Subcontract tab, enter the expected costs. The descriptions and breakdowns can be more or less detailed than what is shared with the client. These details will flow through to the Budget reports, Over/Under Billing, Budget to Actual reports, and Job Status reports. As mentioned earlier, budget line items can impact Subcontracts, too.

Once the two tabs are complete, the summary in the section across the bottom will tell you the Budget, the Contract, and the expected Gross Profit if things go as planned. As in many other screens in S100C, print the Change Order and send it, attach more details or the signed agreement with the paperclip, and even update the Client PO# field to track the GC's Change Order number assignment.

There are Change Order Lists by job, by vendor, with status to help with tracking and follow up. These can include details and notes, or not. There's also a great Prime Contract Audit by Job. —*CMW*

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.

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
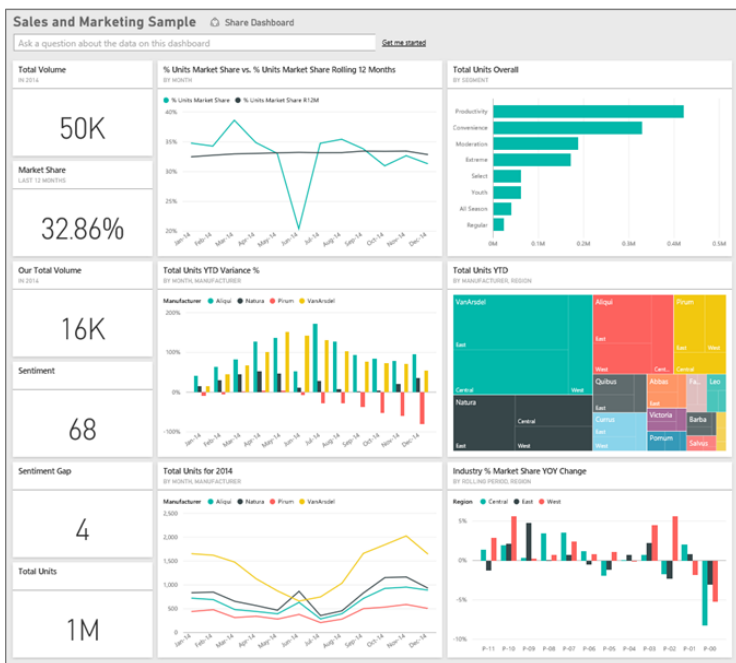
If you missed our webinar, the *POWER of Power BI*, or you'd like to see it again, we have a private link available for you!

Power BI Users

52%

vs.

Non-Power BI Users

33%

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

Microsoft | **Partner**

How Did They Do It?
Polhemus Savery DaSilva

Mike Merrill has been with Polhemus Savery DaSilva (PSD) for two years as the Director of Finance and Business Operations. They are a residential contractor focused on the New England coast, creating unique and carefully crafted homes. They are a fully integrated architecture and construction firm, highly engaged in the Cape Cod community.

Their work often starts with feasibility research, a write-up of what can be done. One of their strengths is their knowledge of and ability to navigate the permit process, conservation, and zoning, all things unique on the coast. Providing this initial service helps with the design phase, as well as the construction.

Like other construction companies, attracting and retaining staff is a big focus, specifically those qualified in architecture and construction project management. It's ex-pensive to live in the New England area, limiting the talent pool.

Technology is critical, an important part of managing the projects, saving time, allowing consistency and efficiency organization-wide. Technology is always changing, and AI is a new opportunity.

Mike Merrill, Director of Finance

Syscon's custom Cost to Complete program has been an essential tool. The Syscon team has been great, talking through ideas, brainstorming unique needs. PSD is deeply involved in their community, from awards to the PSD Fund for Working Families. Syscon is honored to partner with them.-*CMW*

Fast Facts
Location: East Harwich, MA
Specialty: Residential Design and Build, focused on the New England coast
Founded: 1996

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: Closing the Year in Sage 100 Contractor, webinar

Date: Thursday, December 5

Time: 11:00 a.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events; free to clients, small fee for guests

Event: How to Prepare 1099 data, webinar

Date: Thursday, January 8

Time: 11:30 a.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

Event: Cyber Security—Syscon Style, webinar

Date: Thursday, December 12

Time: 11:00 a.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

Event: Ditch the Paper Timecards, webinar

Date: Thursday, January 16

Time: 1:00 p.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events