Syscon U

What's New

Microsoft has another new pricing structure change. We have **most of the details and we'll** share them you via email and an upcoming webinar. Please watch for these updates!

We're getting ready for our mid-year State of the Company update. March is when we review **how we're doing compared to** our annual goals, share the suc**cesses so far, and what's** planned for the coming months. This includes the Consulting, Networking, Programming, Finance, and Marketing teams.

Several of us have some vendor **events to attend, so we'll be** traveling to Texas, Las Vegas, Berlin (!), and Washington DC over the next few months.

- Catherine Wendt

In this Issue

March 2025

Rocks, Pebbles, and Sand

I recently saw a recording of a **women's college sports coach talking** to her athlete students. She was addressing the common believe that **if we just get past 'X' then it will be** easier; this semester, this test, this class, this year, etc. Her point to the **students was that it doesn't get** **easier. You get better at doing 'hard'!**

Darren Hardy had expanded on this, reminding us that the first time we were behind the wheel of a car, the amount of things we had to remember, the amount of information coming at us, was overwhelming and we wondered how we would ever be able to get on that highway, navigate to unknown places, keep our hands at 10 and 2, shift gears (if you remember those days), all while staying within the speed limit! Over time, we got more comfortable processing all that data,

we built new neural pathways to process and automate some of the tasks. Nowadays, you probably sip your hot coffee, listen to the radio, and referee the kids in the back seat!

I've heard the Rocks and Sand analogy in several different presentations and books. The idea is that when you have a bucket or container, and you put the large rocks in first, then the medium rocks, then the small rocks, then ultimately pour in the sand, you can get a lot in the bucket. If you fill it with sand first (the small things), you cannot get the various size rocks in there at all. There are some great videos that really bring home this model.

Translated to our lives—business and personal—planning for the rocks, the important tasks, the bigger, high priority things, then

blocking time for the medium tasks and priorities, ensures the most important things get done, the most important people get our **time. Then there's room for the 'sand' of our life. Conversely, if we** fill our time and schedules with the **small things, we find we don't** have room for the larger, more important items at all.

Taking this to the next level, many of our clients use the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) model of management in their businesses. Examples of these methodologies include Traction and Scaling Up. These are structures to help a business grow and stay on track with its goals, from the leadership team to those on the front lines. The quarterly goals, the bigger items that move a business forward towards its one-year, three-year, and longer-term goals are the quarterly Rocks. The idea is to schedule these most-important tasks and goals so that as the day-to-day engulfs us, we have priority time reserved to move these critical items forward.

Add in quarterly check-in meetings, regular meeting structures and rhythms, along with documentation, clear job descriptions, right people in the right seats, and you have a very focused company, all rowing in the same direction.

This might seem overwhelming, but the various YouTube videos of the Rocks and Sand being added to a terrarium is a great visual for team members. Making this a regular topic of discussion in team planning meetings can lead to small wins that reinforce the concept. The goal is to make it a habit; celebrating successes along the way can bring this home!

One other thought on this. I've heard that a lion, no matter how hungry, will not go after a mouse. It takes more calories to catch the mouse than the mouse will provide the lion. A lion that is focused on its prey will ignore the flies around its eyes, and just about anything else that might be an annoyance.

It's planning on a meal and all focus is on the hunt! How could we apply this in our work day? What about turning off notifications during a focused hour on a project? What about turning off the phone ringer? What other ways could we limit the distractions and stay focused on the 'hunt'?

Last thought: Maybe we could use this at home? What about turning off work alerts and email notifications during family time, dinner with your spouse, school visits? Seems like that would be a great **way to show our family that we're** with them, not just in body, but whole souled! - *CMW*

> *"In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity."*
> — Richard Baxter

Book Nook

The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Several years ago, my friend Paul recommended the *Bonhoeffer* book by Eric Metaxas. **At over 500 pages, it's a time commitment,** but fascinating. More recently, the Bonhoeffer documentary came out. So when I came across this book by the same author/translator, I decided to dig in.

In this book, Bonhoeffer tackles the subject **of what he calls 'cheap grace' compared to 'costly grace.' Although grace is available to** all, handing it out like candy waters it down, cheapens it, diminishing the gift and more importantly, the cost associated with the gift to begin with.

In Part II, each chapter walks through part of Matthew 5, the Sermon on the Mount. The quotes are from the King James, so the wording is in the older style. The author has translated the German writings into English, more British in style and spelling.

Referring to Matthew 7, he tackles members of the congregation who need to be disciplined for their actions, the primary goal of these steps, and the responsibility of the con-**gregation's leadership. There are many re**minders that those leaders carry a heavier responsibility to get it right!

Part II covers the Messengers, those who go out in the world to share the good news. The focus here is Matthew 9 & 10. Part IV covers entering into community. This is more of a study book. Recommended! -*CMW*

Tech Talk

Windows 10 — RIP

In October 2025, that's seven months from now, Windows 10 will officially be **end of life. Feels like 'yesterday' when** we were replacing Windows 7 machines to move to Windows 10!

Originally released in July 2015 (ten years ago!), it was reported to be running on over 1.3 billion devices as of 2021.

This October, Windows 10 will be end of life, which means Microsoft will cease support, updates, and security patches for this operating system. That makes Win 10 computers a security risk, making them more vulnerable, and frankly a target, for attacks! New software and even hardware may not be compatible with Windows 10. And without support, resolving technical issues will become more challenging.

If you're running any computers with Windows 10, it's time to upgrade or replace them. Before upgrading, take a look at the specs of the computer and **its age. If it's more than 4 years old, it** may not be a candidate for an upgrade. And if you do it anyway, you may be VERY unhappy working on that **computer! Not sure? We'll be happy to** take a look with you.

Last thought: Just like the Windows 7 end of life, the whole world (literally) is in the same position and will need to move from Windows 10. Back then, we had supply chain issues and computer **shortages. Plan ahead and let's get** replacements ordered now! - *CMW*

Microsoft Price Increase

Beginning April 1st, Microsoft has some price changes for all renewing and new **M365 licenses. Also, there's a price** increase for Power BI and Teams Voice. **No, this is not an April Fool's joke!**

Before I share the details, we have some great news for our clients with Managed M365 licenses! Our clients with Managed M365 Premium, Standard, Basic, E3, and Managed Teams Voice licenses, we will NOT pass along the price increase in 2025. When **these licenses renew in 2025, we'll leave** them as an annual commitment with **monthly payments, and we'll cover the** 5% license increase through Dec 31st.

Now the details from Microsoft for renewals starting April 1st:

- All M365 license with an annual commitment and monthly payments will have a 5% price increase from Microsoft. Our clients with a la carte licenses will be charged the new price as the licenses renew.

- Power BI licenses will increase from $10 to $14/month/license

- Teams Phones/Voice with calling plan will increase from $15 to $17

On your monthly invoice from us, we list your M365 licenses and their renewal dates. After April 1st, if you **have licenses renewing, you'll receive a** 5% increase. For clients with our Managed M365 and Managed Teams licenses, we will not pass on the increase in 2025! For all Power BI and Teams Phones licenses, the price will increase at renewal.

One last thought: If you'd like to pay for the M365 license up front for the whole year, you can avoid the price increase. So instead of paying monthly, you would pay for the whole year, up **front. If you're interested, give us a call.** *-CMW (video available on our website)*

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:

Breville Joule Turbo Sous Vide Immersion Circulator

Larry loves to cook. In particular he loves meat — beef, chicken, fish, pork. However, despite years of experience, Larry says he seems to overcook chicken and certain cuts of beef and pork!

Larry found the Sous Vide cooking method which maintains a precise target temperature in a water bath. The food in secured in a plastic bag and immersed in the water to cook to exactly the right temperature.

This is a brilliant bit of engineering that can turn a soup pot into a Sous Vide bath. The Breville Joule Turbo Sous Vide Immersion circulator has no controls on the device. It is completely controlled by a user-friendly app on your phone. Dial in the exact food temp you want, how long to hold it at that temp, and even be notified by your phone at various stages of the cooking process.

Cook meat hours before serving, then throw it on the grill for a one minute sear; perfect. The latest version of this tool is about $245. **But you won't mind as you cook** your $30 steak to perfection each time! This is a practical and fun gadget that can make your day! - *LAW/CMW*

Construction Corner

S100C Copy-Paste Grids

As soon as we saw a few of these calls come in and did some testing ourselves, we actually turned around a short video blog update. Since not everyone has the **time to listen to those, thought we'd** recap in this newsletter.

For quite a few clients, over the years, they have workflows that pull data into **Excel, then it's pasted into specific S100C** grids; or data is pulled out in a query from S100C and the data is copied up to an online portal, or something similar. **We've actually automated quite a few of** these, saving time and increasing accuracy.

We first noticed this for ourselves in the late Fall. Ryan uses a special calculator Larry created when putting together hardware quotes, then pastes the results **into the S100C screen. He said it wasn't** lining up correctly, so I suggested he get with Larry and find out if there was some corruption in the template. Since **that's a busy season, they didn't get to it** right away. Then client calls started coming in that the copy-**paste wasn't ending up in the right columns. That's** when we put it together.

We noticed a common denominator was that these clients (and Syscon) had upgraded to the latest version. Larry started testing the various data entry **screens and found that they're not all** following the same rules when pasting into them from an Excel source. Some **haven't been changed, and others have;** this created frustration all around!

Sage probably doesn't see this as a bug, so we don't expect it to be 'fixed' any time soon. They're probably responding to user requests to improve the copy-paste feature to/from Excel, and unknowingly created this mis-match of data entry screens.

Next Steps: IF this sounds familiar, **we're suggesting you change your** templates, or reach out for us to make changes to your special forms/queries.

You're not going crazy, there really was a change, it's just inconsistent. Need help? Just let us know! - *CMW*

Accrued Vacation — New State Rules and Tracking

We have a client in Minnesota who has some new rules for accruing sick and vacation time. Beginning in 2023 Based on the state rules, they are using the very nice Vacation and Sick accrual features in the 5-2-1 screen. For the Vacation section (which was renamed to match the state program), they have a rate per hour worked. There is a maximum amount that can be accrued in a year, and an Annual limit.

> *"You're not going crazy, there really was a change, it's just inconsistent."*

This is year two under the new program, so some people had carry forward hours, which is allowed. When computing payroll for January checks, the hourly rate was not accruing. We checked the Maximum and the Annual **limit, but it wouldn't accrue.**

We decided to reach out to Sage support and I chose to ask for the escalation right **away (we're S100C Business Partners** and we know most of the higher level support people over there). I explained what we had tried, what we were experiencing, and showed my Sage person the data. She was stumped too!

There's a white paper that says if the Carry Forward field is zero'd out, the accruals will work, but I was skeptical. Sure enough, when we tested, this does not work!

The Sage support team kicked this around for a few days and came back **with something that works! Since it's not**

what we expected, we thought we'd share it with you here. Flip the Maximum and Annual Limit amounts! As soon as we did this, the hourly rate started to populate. - *CMW*

Paycalc Change — Non-Standard Accounts

There are times when a Pay Calc Expense account needs to have a number that is not within the range of the name of the field. For instance, in the 5-3-1 screen, the Job Expense usually has an account in that range. There are times when this field might need a liability account or an overhead account. Until now, this was not an issue.

With the version 26.x release, you have **to choose Options, then 'Allow use of** non-**standard accounts' in order to use** an account outside the range of the field. Otherwise, it will not accept your selection. When you type a different number, it will just clear that field. **Didn't see this in the release notes!** Thanks Sue!

One warning: this plays havoc with fully **burdened job costs, so you'll want to** think these selections through! — CMW

The CFMA 2024 National Conference is in Florida, May 17-21 and we're presenting The POWER of Power BI at one of the breakout sessions!

Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat

On January 15th, Microsoft announced 'Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat' as a new product. This might sound strange to many of you for a variety of reasons, but we won't go into the background because none of it matters now! Basically, forget about the past!

This new product is basically taking the free version of Copilot and putting it into the Office.com portal. This free version was previously available for all M365 users by going to Copilot.Microsoft.com, but now they've moved it right into the M365 portal.

Side note—The Microsoft 365 portal is now m365.cloud.microsoft. We're pretty sure they'll start redirecting Office.com to this new location in the coming months.

Going forward, everyone will see the Copilot option in the M365 portal. If you have the full paid version, you'll see the 'Work/Web' toggle at the top of the page (see screen shots below).

The full paid version is still the only way to get Copilot in Teams and all the Microsoft Apps. It's also the only way for Copilot to have access to all your company data directly, with the same security rights already in place. Copilot chat generates answers based on web content.

The full article announcing all of this has a handy chart for feature comparison. You can find it by searching for ***Copilot for all: Introducing Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat | Microsoft 365 Blog***.
*—CLW*
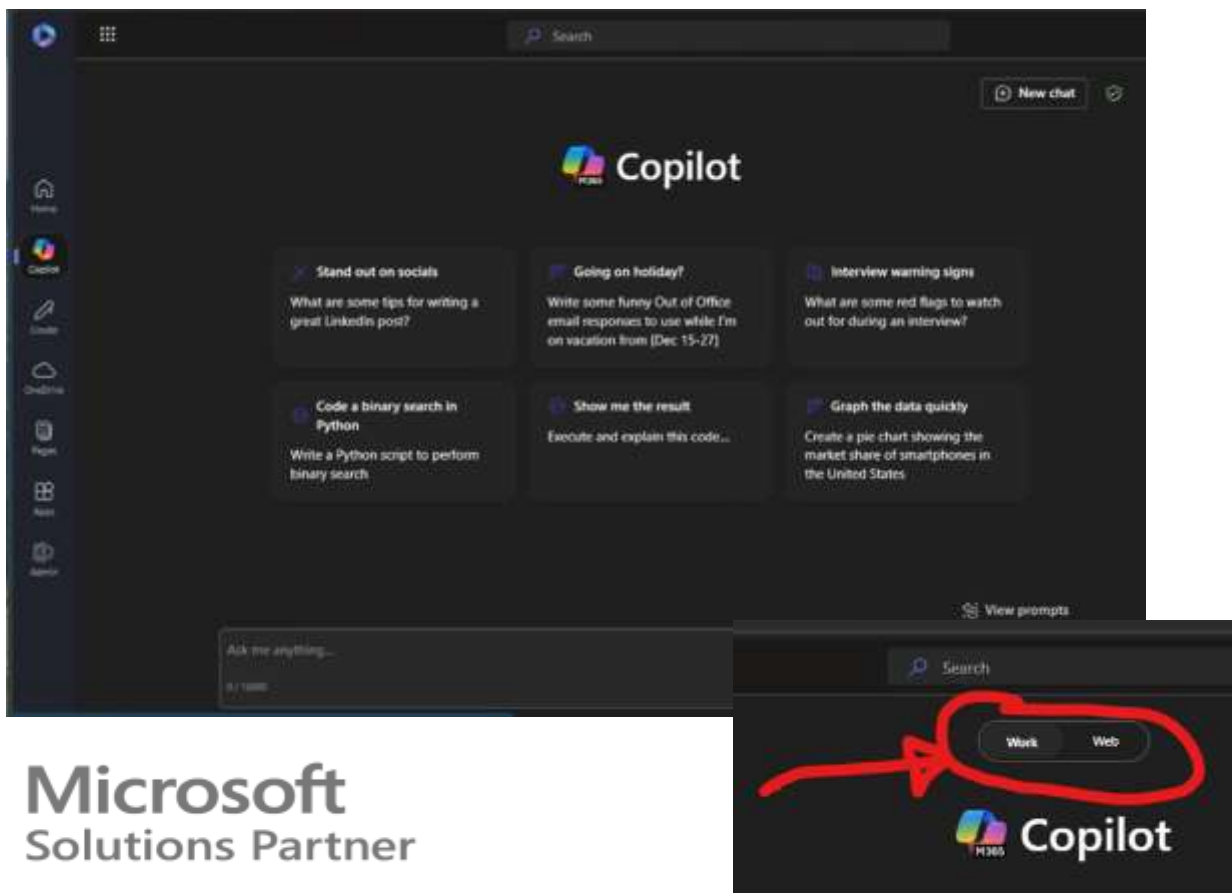
How Did They Do It?
(Could This Be You?)

A couple of years ago we got the idea **to share our clients' stories with our clients! As we've watched the years go** by, our clients have grit and fortitude in the face of success, challenges, market fluctuations, supply chain issues, labor shortages, COVID, and the list goes on! Running a construction business is not for the feint of heart!

Sometimes it's helpful to know we're not alone. Leadership and running a business can feel lonely sometimes. Knowing others share similar struggles can help us clear our heads and start the creative juices flowing.

Our clients come from all walks of life! Some started their business; others are taking over as a second or third generation; some have purchased a company and are making it their own; some have field experience, others business **experience; in all cases, they're committed!**

What about you? Do you have a story we can celebrate? Do you have an experience or story that would provide
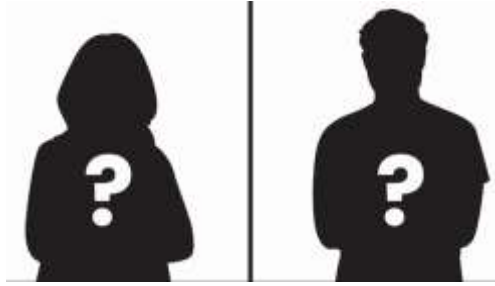
Your Name
Title

encouragement to others in a similar situation?

If you're willing to invest a short 20 minute conversation with Catherine Wendt to share some of your experience, we would like to feature you here — How Did They Do It? We never know how our story can provide someone just the encouragement they need at the right moment in time. **We're all on a journey! We can't wait** to hear your story!! - *CMW*

Fast Facts
Location: Where are you?
Specialty: **What's your thing?**
Founded: How long? Any affiliations?

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: Ditch Paper Timesheets, webinar

Date: Thursday, April 3rd

Time: 11:00 a.m. CST

Register: www.sysconinc.com/events

Presentations

CFMA Charlotte Chapter Meeting:

Chris is presenting *AI in Your Business, Microsoft Copilot*

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.