



## What's New

Our pilot program to provide clients with access to our ticketing platform has gone well and has been well-received. The test group was able to see open tickets and track their progress, as well as create new requests.

We'll roll this out to more clients in the coming weeks. Don't worry — we still take calls and email!

I've been blessed with many amazing father figures in my life, not all of whom were fathers themselves. My thanks to Larry for his gifts to our children and those we've mentored over the years. My thanks to the many wonderful men who have cared for and nurtured me, my family, and our staff over the years. Happy Father's Day! - *Catherine Wendt*

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## June 2025



## CFMA Annual Conference CFO 4.0 is Here (Ready?)

Chris and I recently attended the Construction Financial Managers Association (CFMA) Annual Conference in Florida at the Gaylord Palms. According to the CFMA team, there were over 1,700 people in attendance, with over 600 of them as first-time attendees; pretty exciting. In addition to many great breakout sessions (we often choose different ones to get everything in), Chris presented (I helped) on the POWER of Power BI.

Given the audience, the breakout sessions were very heavy on Work in Progress, Insurance, Bonding, Banking, and other construction-specific topics. There were also some great Key Note presentations about the state of the CFMA, this last year's growth and initiatives, a guest speaker on the multi-generational workforce (something we've presented on a few times, as well), workplace culture, and the

always anticipated Economic Forecast by Dr. Basu — yes, fascinating, funny, insightful, and all with a Denzel Washington theme!

There was an underlying theme, as well — Artificial Intelligence, AI. In almost every session, something was mentioned related to AI, Machine Learning, Large Language Models, Copilot, ChatGPT, and more. The vendors even jumped on this bandwagon, telling us about their future AI integrations and current Copilot tools.

Although this generated some great discussions, some wake-up calls, and security concerns, we were FLOORED to hear so many inaccurate statements from some of the presenters, some of which were outside consultants and educators.

As Chris shared with our Santex group in Argentina and the CFMA Charlotte

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chapter, AI is not a hero, it's not a villain, it's a tool. And like any other tool put into a human's hand, it can be used for good and for bad. We live in an amazing time! The growing use of AI-driven tools in Construction is here! Our industry is one of the slowest adopters of technology in general, but it's happening. BIM, Project Management tools, Design, Safety, predictive maintenance, drones, uploading contracts to review contract details, and so on. In your offices, Copilot and ChatGPT are in use – whether you know about it or not, whether you have policies in place or not!

Quite a few years ago, as computers became standard in our construction environments, no one knew what to do with IT, so it often fell to the CFO or Controller. The CPA firms tried to push their way into managing our IT, often incorporating questions into their audits, requiring responses (which had nothing to do with providing our financials and tax returns). Also, IT often involves fixed assets, software to run our accounting, so it was natural for IT to fall to the Finance; but we were ill-equipped.

The overall theme at this year's conference was a look at Tech, software and hardware, managing this landscape, security, and now AI and the cloud. These should not be considered as 'dumped' on the CFO or Controller any longer. The new CFO role is now ready for CFO 4.0 and this is our chance to embrace having technology under our umbrella, a chance to drive tech at our companies, helping them move forward thoughtfully and safely.

I get it – we were just at a conference where there was a LOT of confusion about these tools, managing them, keeping data safe, social engineering, bank fraud, and more. It would be natural to keep our head in the sand and just focus on the WIP reports, financials, and the CPA requests – but we got this!

If you're buying this argument, and you're willing to step into this, maybe you're not sure where to start? Our newsletters are a good start; join our webinars on these topics; consider joining CFMA or an industry-specific group. I just presented to the FCIA (Firestop Contractors) at their

annual meeting. Many groups invite tech-related speakers to help with education. Call us! We would welcome a call to talk about any of these topics with you – this would be a 'no judgement' zone!

At the conference, one of the speakers gave a nice list of things to consider regarding AI Readiness, which is one aspect of the new CFO 4.0 mindset. 1) Opportunity Discovery; 2) Data Management; 3) IT Infrastructure and Cyber Security; 4) Risk, Privacy, and Governance; 5) Adoption. Ready to talk??? - CMW

*"The budget is the statement of priorities, not just a collection of numbers."*

— Condoleezza Rice

### ***The Gift of Anxiety*** By Diante Fuchs,

Most people don't consider anxiety a gift! In the opening chapters, Ms. Fuchs makes the case that anxiety is an emotion – not a diagnosis. Emotions are a result of something else. When we get angry, something has triggered the anger. When we feel anxious, it's usually in response to the need for safety. When we feel anxiety, the body is sending us an alert; something needs attention. When we ignore it, our brain and body increase the alert level!

In general, our culture is more prone to follow the unspoken rule for dealing with perceived negative emotions; suppress them, distract yourself. Ms. Fuchs is asking us to take a different route and lean into what we're feeling. She has the



## **Book Nook**

E.A.S.E. method (Empower, Accept, Shift, Engage) and walks through the steps.

She starts with a nice summary of the neuroscience and the physical responses when we feel anxiety. She also makes a distinction between anxiety and stuck anxiety, along with how it gets 'stuck.' In the Shift chapter, she reminds us that 'what we resist always persists.' In one of the wrap-up chapters, it says 'anxiety will keep ringing the alarm until you make changes that help you feel safe.' Each chapter ends with a few suggestions for reflection or journaling.

Mid-book, there are some practical details and suggestions, a few client stories, and some thoughtful ways to address anxiety. She is also an advocate for getting professional help; we don't have to take this journey alone! Recommended - CMW



## Chrome Vulnerability: Patched

The bad news: Google, the most popular browser in the world, released an emergency update for the Chrome browser to patch a vulnerability, CVE-2025-4664. Chrome updates automatically, but if a user doesn't close the browser, the patch version will not update and has to be done manually. The patch, available for Windows and Macs, has been 'pushed' for all Syscon managed devices. If yours are not managed by us, close the browser to allow the patch update, or give us a call so we can check with you.

So what was the risk, the exposure? Turns out there was an insufficient policy enforcement which handles resource requests. Typically, when a user visits a website related to sensitive information, the URL can include a secret code as proof that the user is legitimate. With this vulnerability, a bad actor can trick your browser into sending a secret code to a malicious website by embedding an image. The threat actor can then harvest the full URLs allowing them to steal private info without the victim's knowledge, giving them unauthorized access to a user's email account.

According to our Advanced Security partner, they have not seen the exploitation of this vulnerability in the environments they manage; a silver lining, I guess! - CMW

## More Social Engineering!

Larry was the recipient on this one. The subject line said 'Attention Required! Financial Statement | SecureMail | Review

Copy' and included the day and time sent. The 'sender' said it was from 'DirectNotify-Center, glenn@lec.com.

Good news – before opening the email, the banner says 'You don't often get email from glenn@lec.com...' reminding us that we don't know this sender. Since he was curious, Larry checked out lec.com just to see what it was. He said it was empty, just a filler and not well done.

The message said 'Hello lawendt' which is odd, then indicated there was an updated financial statement for 'Syscon-inc' covering '6months.' It said this version included necessary revisions and corrections and just 'click the link' to view the messages.

The final paragraph had a nice title section, 'Why did I receive this email?' which looked very official. It went on to say the email filtering service is provided by Electrical & Computer Resources, LLC (which isn't true for us and is not a company we've ever heard of).

Warn your team members! I doubt your typical employees would take the time to read all the way down to find that fake company name, but hopefully a few other things would jump out at them and they would be suspicious. At a minimum, share the reminder NOT to click on any of these links! If anyone is unsure, call our office before taking any additional steps and we'll check it out! – CMW

## Windows 11, Ready or Not!

Many of you have already had a call with us to review your computers, which are candidates for the upgrade, and which will need to be replaced. A reminder that the WHOLE WORLD has this problem, so prices will go up and inventory will go down in the coming weeks.

For our managed clients, computers that have been identified as candidates for the Windows 11 upgrade from Windows 10 will have this pushed out sometime in August. Stay tuned for updates and call with questions! - CMW



## Shiny New Gadget



**Air Doctor**

The AirDoctor comes in four (4) different sizes to match the size of your room. The smaller unit circulates air in a 285 sq ft room four times per hour, or a 570 sq ft room two times per hour, priced at \$399. The largest unit circulates air in a 1,043 sq ft room four times per hour and is super quiet, just 30 dB on the lowest speed, priced at \$999

For those of you checking everything on your phones, they have an AirDoctor App as part of the 'Smart' upgrade that keeps you informed of indoor air quality and filter change alerts, local weather, AQI and allergy monitoring, allowing you to control the app from anywhere.

A Newsweek 2024 Readers' Choice recipient, they include UltraHEPA filters, dual action carbon / gas trap / voc filters, an auto-mode and AirQuality sensor, Change filter alert, Quiet performance, and the units are a sealed system.

As an allergy sufferer, we added one to my home office and bedroom. It's interesting to see them go from calm quiet blue, to yellow, and then red when things change in the house! - CMW



## Construction Corner



### Sage 100 Contractor, Sage 300CRE, Sage Intacct – Fact versus Fiction

At the CFMA annual conference, Glen West from Sage provided some very clear updates on these products during the Sage lunch presentation. We welcome his transparency and wanted to share what he said.

We've found vendors, other Sage Business Partners, and anyone who loves to share their opinion have been mis-stating the status of these products, so beware when engaging with others. More than one company said they were 'very upset' because they had been told by a Sage representative that their product was sunseting and they had to move to Intacct, and they are NOT happy.

The easy one first. **Sage 300CRE** (the old Timberline) is NOT going away. They have a very large install base for this product and they do not have any intention of sunseting the product. However, they warned that due to the older nature of the code, new features will be very limited and may take longer to release. They are committed to the SCM integration, as well as ADP, and Sage Copilot.

When the cost of support came up, Glen re-stated that the older code is more difficult to maintain, so they do not expect these costs to go down.

**Sage Intacct Construction** continues to be built and features added. This is the long-time Intacct product which Sage chose as the platform to build a Construction edition (additional fee). This is a fully SaaS-based software (you log in through a browser). We were given a long list of integration partners including Penta for payroll, Zone 220 for Property Management, Operix for work orders and service, with hooks now available to Lumber, Miter, Criterion, Workforce Go, and ADP. They will

continue the model of having outside third party products (that you buy) for specific modules.

**Sage Construction Management**, SCM, their newest purchase for project management was also discussed. We co-hosted a demo of this last summer. This is an integrated add-on for Project Managers, again, SaaS-based so they don't have to log into the accounting software. This is to provide an option for those using ProCore, since this is a lower price point. As we learned in the demo, this is a complete workflow change since many of the project management and

*"More than one company said they were very upset' because they had been told...their product was sunseting..."*

accounting steps are done in SCM which is then available to be viewed for financials in the integrated Sage product.

Let's move to **Sage Estimating**. A few of the original Sage team had left Sage to develop their own web-based estimating software. They are now back with Sage and Sage has purchased their web-based product, making it the future direction of their estimating offerings. We'll watch and see how this unfolds and what happens to the current install base in the coming months and years.

Now let's talk about **Sage 100 Contractor**, S100C. Glen was very clear that this product is not going away either. They are committed to platform enhancements, continued and expanded integration with SCM, they have a targeted integration with ADP (?), enhanced support for third party integration efforts, and Sage Copilot.

The unexpected announcement was their goal of a SaaS-based version that you would access from a browser. It's

unclear if it would include all features, how third party applications will interface, and a myriad of other questions! Glen was forthcoming that this would only be for new subscriptions and they are not sure what it would look like for current users to migrate to the fully cloud version. There are many downstream concerns as we think about current integrations, reports, and more. Since we are Sage Business Partners, as well as Sage Third Party Developers, we expect to receive updates in the coming months. - CMW

### Copilot – An Idea You Might Want to Try!

We received two payments from a client which covered several invoices. We hadn't received a remittance advice, but we could tell it wasn't just the oldest invoices, so we were stuck on how to enter the payments.

I wondered if Copilot could help! So we entered (copied) the open invoice amounts into Excel, then entered the first payment amount we received. We then asked Copilot to determine what combination of numbers would add up to the first amount – and it worked! We had our answer and could make that entry.

We then tried it with the next payment amount. This did not work, but with the options it suggested, I could see a very specific adjustment that would make it all work. All that leg work allowed us to see the next obvious step and we got the entry wrapped up.

What low-risk issue is taking you time and Copilot could help? - CMW

Join us **Thursday June 12th at 11:00 Central** time for our Artificial Intelligence Webinar. **AI in Business!!**

# M365 Education Station

## Teams: Settings and Security Defaults

While attending the Microsoft Community Conference, there were a number of sessions about Teams, various setting options, and a wide variety of security offerings. As I took notes, I also reached out to our tech team with these questions. Here's a summary of what they do and why!

### Getting Started

In Teams, we can chat with each other, search, send a screen shot or even a document. When I want to add others, we can create a new 'Team' with those members. When a Team is created, an associated SharePoint site is also created.

### Some Basic Features

- **Enable Meeting Lobby:** When hosting a meeting with external guests, setting up the lobby allows you an opportunity to Admit them into the meeting. This is a great way to make sure only invited and authorized participants can attend. This includes AI note takers who look like another guest—you don't have to Admit these! For our clients, people in the organization automatically are allowed, and all outside addresses start in the lobby.
- **Manage Meeting Controls:** When you're presenting, you can set yourself as the sole presenter to maintain control. Similarly, you can assign the trainer as the presenter and everyone else as an attendee.
- **Meeting Passwords:** This is not on by default. However, there may be times when a meeting is confidential. Use the Meeting options, set a password for the meeting and share it only with those you've invited to join. They will be prompted for the password.
- **Meeting Chat:** In general, this is enabled and a great way to copy-paste text, email addresses, spelling of names, send a screen shot, and more. However, during a sensitive discussion, you may not want any data shared in the Chat. In the Meeting options, find "Chat" and disable the feature for the participants.
- **Participant Video:** For smaller meetings, we encourage, and when possible, require video to help people stay engaged, connected, and to look for any warnings that someone is distraught. However, in a very BIG group meeting, this could be a huge distraction. In the Meeting Options, under "Video" you have the option to turn off participant video which also helps with bandwidth.
- **Screen Sharing:** Similar to the Meeting Controls, this allows you to limit those who can share screens. You might want to be the only one to share, or only those designated as presenters.
- **Apply Watermarks:** I thought this one was interesting. The request is made to the IT group to enable watermarking for sensitive meetings. This applies the watermark to video feeds and shared screens.

### Some Other Things We Have Setup

- Attendance and Engagement is set to 'On'
- Allow Dial in, but cannot bypass the Lobby
- Chat is enabled by default
- Everyone can share their screen by default

### Copilot Considerations

- When recording meetings and engaging transcriptions, consider the topic and the type of data that will be shared; is this appropriate?
- Copilot will honor the person's Microsoft 365 Security permissions. If you've invited them to the meeting, they now have access to the results of this meeting and the content created.

- CMW



## How Did They Do It? Professional Restoration Services

Founded in 2007 in Richmond, Josh Kaplan wanted to bring professionalism to the residential restoration industry. Having started his career in this industry, he chose to start his own company with this focus, thus the name Professional Restoration Services (PRS)! Josh started adding people, stayed active as an estimator, and ran projects. In the beginning, it was restoration (rebuild) work; then he added roofing and siding, then a second location in Fredericksburg in 2019, more recently adding mitigation (drying and emergency response).

Jonathan knew Josh from his previous role assisting owners who plan to exit their business, even writing a book. Josh invited Jonathan to join PRS in June of 2024 as the COO, moving him to the CEO role the beginning of this year. With new lines of work, two locations, and more planned, Jonathan is excited to be on this journey full-time with Josh.

When disasters hit, homeowners are often navigating the insurance, permits, claims, and more while managing loss for themselves and their families. With solid experience of the process, PRS can walk beside these families, helping them

through the process since they do this all the time, allowing the families to have a true partner. PRS has a strong in-house team of carpenters and painters who care for the customers, using licensed trades for special skills. Having their own showroom means less trips all over town to choose flooring, cabinets, counters, etc.



Jonathan Brabrand  
CEO

Jonathan really appreciates the depth of knowledge and expertise across the Syscon team. Whether it's S100C software specifically, construction accounting, or reporting needs, Syscon has provided clear information in a format that's easy to understand and has been patient.

More recently PRS has launched a remodeling division with more locations on the road map, as well. — CMW

### Fast Facts

**Founded:** 2007

**Specialty:** Restoration/Rebuild

**Affiliations:** Restoration Industry Assoc



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!

Our offices will be closed Friday July 4th. We wish all of you a wonderful holiday.

Enjoy the fireworks and stay safe as we remember and celebrate the historic events that led to the birth of this country!

*'Liberty is meaningless where the right to utter one's thoughts and opinions has ceased to exist. That, of all rights, is the dread of tyrants. It is the right which they first of all strike down. They know its power.'*

Frederick Douglass

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This monthly publication provided courtesy of Catherine Wendt, President of Syscon Inc.

