



What's New

The whole company met in Oak Brook IL for our annual State of the Company and had a wonderful weekend. We reviewed last year and its focus on Integration, then shared the roadmap for the coming year with our new theme, Reputation. Great food, good information, then some fun at Putt-shack. Congrats to Daniel for coming in first place!

September is your last chance to upgrade or replace Windows 10 computers. The techs are rolling out the Windows 11 Session Hosts in the hosting environment this month. Lots of communications on both of these topics. If you have questions, please let Liz or Danica know **and we'll get on a call to talk it through!** - *Catherine Wendt*



Doing the Mundane to Win the Long Game

I've always been accused of being a **rule follower. Sometimes it's meant to insult me, other times it's meant to encourage me.** More than once, it has saved me! When it comes to business, having and staying within the rules may not bring the flashy results, but with 39 years under our belts, I have solid evidence that it brings lasting impact.

As we look across our successful clients, we see lots of patterns. One of them is that these clients, their staff, those in leadership, do the mundane, weekly, monthly, and annually. They surround themselves with others who believe in doing the consistent, sometimes boring tasks that ultimately create a solid foundation for success. Maybe that means growth; maybe it means profit (no margin, no mission!); **maybe it's community impact; maybe it's a contribution to your industry.**

We've built up some pretty boring routines at Syscon. Larry reminded me of many years ago when he and I had **'words' about turning in his time,** which was late. Back then, all of our work was T&M, which means to do any billing, we had to have the time spent and the description detail to create and send out the invoices. This one delay caused a domino set of frustrations and problems. After we **'spoke,' it was agreed that turning in time, on time, was a hard and fast routine** that when followed, brought many benefits to the company and reduced frustration for our clients. We have been consistent with this discipline every since! For you, it might be getting the invoices out weekly for service calls, T&M Jobs, or the monthly progress bills that have specific due dates if you want to be

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included on the draw request.

What are some mundane tasks at your office? What would you risk if **your team (and you) wasn't following them?** Some that come to mind are matching receipts to the credit card statements; completing new hire paperwork, on time, correctly; filing (electronically or paper) AP invoices; balancing the bank statements each month; reviewing the Work in Progress each week, or at least each month.

Why do these matter? Credit Card fraud can be expensive and subscriptions no longer in use need to be cancelled. A client mentioned a friend whose construction office was visited for an I-9 audit when the owner was out of town and they had to produce **the documentation. Then there's a sales tax audit when they request copies of invoices to show you've paid sales tax at the time of purchase.** How many of your AP payments are ACH these days, payments you never see since you no longer sign these checks? Not to mention check fraud where the payee has been changed,

or the dollar amount altered and the check cashed.

Last month, we were named to the Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies list for the second year in a row; yes, very exciting. When we shared the news with our teams, I reminded them that to qualify the first time, we had to show a three-year history of growth, so this announcement covers a four year history! It seems like a **one-year success, but it's actually** several years of consistent effort, routines, and faithful (not fast) follow through with clients, team members, and our vendors.

So where are some places you could focus? What are some routines and mundane tasks that could help **maintain your company's health, its growth, its culture, its success?** Consider which of these would be your responsibility (we always advocate for the owner to do the bank reconciliation!). Which can you/should you delegate then verify?

What about on a personal note? It's tempting to let a few small things fall through the cracks. Rarely is there an

Cathy & Larry Sightings



Catherine presented at our Annual State of the Company in IL. She starts the Fall season as the new director of the Upscale Singers.

After a successful 99th birthday for Aunt Toni and the Annual Syscon event, Larry and some friends are heading to Prague and Istanbul.

immediate impact. But over time, these decisions, good and bad, add up. Consider your health, your personal finances, family relationships. Think about what mundane routines could have a long term impact on these areas. Are you in?? -CMW

“Your life and your leadership is the sum total of all the small decisions you make.”

- Craig Groeschel

Co-Intelligence by Ethan Mollick

Chris loves this book! Mr. Mollick is a professor at Wharton. He's been researching the emergence of AI, presenting in various publications. He's fascinated with how AI is impacting businesses and is very interested in its impact to education, especially college.

Historically, when new technology comes out, we can install it, learn how it works, then use it. We learn certain steps or key strokes and know exactly what the outcome will be. AI **doesn't work like this at all! Give AI the exact same input or request twice in a row and you**



will NOT get the same answer. It's as if you're working with an alien mind.

Mr. Mollick has four rules for working with AI. Principle 1: Always invite AI to

Book Nook

the table; 2: Be the human in the loop; 3: Treat AI like a person (but tell it what kind of person it is); 4: Assume this is the worst AI you'll ever use.

We've encouraged our teams and clients to use AI in email drafts, procedures, documentation, contract review, and more. You can do the original draft and ask for ideas, or ask it to make the draft and take it from there.

What's this about the 'worst AI'? He shares his research giving older AI versions the same instructions with stunningly improved results, including creative pictures. We can delegate and automate the mundane tasks AND bring our unique human traits to managing and **curating AI's creative output.** Read the rest of this article on our website Book Review blog! Highly Recommended! - CMW



Hackers in our own Backyard!

Target #1: A Telecom company
Lane broke into the company's systems and demanded \$200,000 to stay quiet — then dropped his demand to \$75,000 when they refused.

Target #2: PowerSchool, an educational software giant.
Lane stole records of about 60 million students and 10 million teachers. He then ex-filtrated the data to servers in Ukraine. Then he demanded a ransom of \$2.85 million in Bitcoin or he would publish or sell the stolen data.

The kicker: He was caught in part because he used some of his ransom Bitcoin to buy himself sneakers and designer clothes, a digital paper trail that law enforcement easily traced. Now, Lane faces up to 17 years in federal prison!

Why this matters! **Cybercrime isn't always sophisticated. This wasn't a nation-state attack.** It was a teenager exploiting stolen credentials, weak security practices, and taking advantage of people who underestimated who could be behind these.

Simple mistakes = Massive Consequences

Credential reuse, unsecured cloud services, and unmonitored exfiltration paths (data exiting your environment) remain the easiest entry points for bad actors, regardless of their age.

Takeaways for Leaders: **Don't think of hackers as someone else's problem or responsibility.** Secure third-party connections at every level. Monitor your data (or let us do it). Limit privilege and enforce zero trust. Have an incident

response plan and test it regularly. Sometimes, the person rolling the dice **with your business isn't a cybercrime syndicate in Russia, it's a teenager in your own backyard.** -CMW

AI—Some Specific Things to Know

During a recent industry webinar by a leading anti-virus vendor, some very interesting data was shared regarding AI and how it's being used. Most of the focus was on things Managed Service Providers should know and do (that's us). There were some interesting takeaways that we thought we'd share with you, too.

The most common time of day for bad actors to attack is the middle of the night! They love 1:00 to 5:00 am when no one is working. These people are more efficient than ever. They can get in an environment, do their damage, and get out before anyone receives any alerts or **notices anything is 'off.'** They're patient—getting into the environment whenever — then waiting for a middle-of-the-night window. They launch their payload, gather what they want, and get out before the lights go on at the office and anyone can notice something is wrong.

Someone, probably several someones, is using AI at your company. Thinking back to the pandemic, people got creative, opening personal DropBox accounts just to make things happen, without thinking about access or security. Everyone made choices just to get by. The same thing is happening with AI which means you have to consider security risks for the **various things people are trying.** If you're not directing what they should do, or asking what they are doing, the company could be at risk, intentionally or unintentionally. Consider guidelines for Zero Trust, Cloud, ChatGPT, Copilot and others.

At a minimum, companies should have Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) in place as a first line of defense.

Hackers are using AI, too, including Agentics which can scale and perform tasks, and tools that require minimal **intervention once they're in the environment.** -CMW

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Smart Bird Feeder PRO

The Bird Buddy elevates the concept of a bird feeder with its Smart Bird Feeder, which not only feeds birds but also records their visits with a camera. You can view the camera activity on your cell phone, receive alerts when visitors arrive, and identify the bird species using AI. Images are stunning! They offer individual and family memberships and various bird seed options. Our gift has been running for over a year. It took a while for the birds to find it, but now they gather every morning, waiting for us to refill it.

It requires a 2.4 GHz Wi-Fi connection and allows up to ten people to connect. Without the solar roof, the camera lasts up to a month, but with it, charging is rarely needed. They offer a 90-day return policy, and the solar model costs **about \$200.** There's a non-solar version, and they have special promotions on their website. There are several add-ons to extend the perch, provide water, and more.

You can see live action at your Bird Buddy and others shared by the community, including one in Hawaii. The company, based in New York, is an official Audubon Partner, supporting bird protection. -CMW and Copilot



Construction Corner



OBBBA

What does this stand for? I'm seeing it EVERYWHERE! It's the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, and it's a hot topic on many fronts. We're going to focus on the over-time portion for this article. All of this data was compiled from updates presented by various CPA firms.

In the news, it's heralded as no tax on overtime. To be specific, it's related to Federal withholding on the overtime portion of pay (the half of the time-and-a-half). And it's not 'no Federal withholding' like our calcs for retirement contributions. Rather, it provides an eligible employee, with eligible overtime, a deduction of up to \$12,500 from their federal taxable income, or \$25,000 for those filing jointly.

A couple of other specifics: This applies to overtime under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and again, the overtime portion of the overtime pay, just like the determination of applying Workers Comp insurance. AND, overtime earned under state-specific laws does not qualify.

There's more— The deduction begins to phase out for individuals earning more than \$150,000 annually or \$300,000 for joint filers. That may seem like a lot, but for those in the unions, especially steel workers, operators, and those on the highest pay scales, this is something for them to be clear about.

As employers, we'll be responsible to track and report qualified overtime compensation. Sounds like this will be included on the W-2 forms, most likely in Box 14, although this isn't a final decision yet.

To be clear, this is a deduction on the individual's tax return, not a calculation during payroll processing. If an employee has a lot of overtime and would like to adjust their Federal withholding, they can complete and

updated W-4 form, sign it and turn it in.

From the employer's side, we'll have to see what kind of reporting the software companies can put in place to provide the overtime portion wages. It seems they have a start on this since there's similar logic for the WC reports, but we'll need more than that, and we'll need to know how and where to include the amount on their tax returns. How much of a deduction they will or will not have is not something we can know, since that will be part of their personal 1040 annual tax filing. - CMW

"It provides an eligible employee, with eligible overtime, a deduction of up to \$12,500 from their federal taxable income..."

Section 179 Changes in 2025

Also as part of the OBBBA, there are changes to Section 179 and bonus depreciation. The goal is to accelerate deductions for business asset purchases. In a nut shell, bonus depreciation returns to a full 100% for assets placed in service and acquired after January 19, 2025.

This Act increased the Section 179 limit and introduced a higher phase-out threshold based on total qualified fixed asset purchases. And, bonus depreciation has been permanently set at 100%!

Some additional details include a limit increase from \$1 million to \$2.5 million; the phase-out threshold tied to total qualified purchases was also raised from \$2.5 million to \$4 million with a complete phase-out at \$6.5 million. Both changes are effective for assets put in service in tax years beginning on or after

January 1, 2025. - CMW

Sage Hosting—What it is, and isn't

Back in the Spring at the CFMA conference, Sage announced that it would add its own hosting option for S100C. There weren't any specifics available yet, so we waited for the TUG conference to ask again.

At this year's TUG conference, I spoke with Kyle Watt and his right hand man on the project, Phil.

A bit of history: There is the Swizznet (since rebranded) hosting offering and one from Aktion (another business partner). Up until now, these were the 'Sage' offerings but Sage didn't have anything to do with them. The new offering is going to be offered and managed by Sage.

This is in response to smaller clients who want to make one payment for the monthly subscription and the hosting, both to Sage directly. In response, they will offer a plain-vanilla hosting designed for a company with two to three users. There will not be any opportunity to install other applications (third party add-ons), or any additional SQL solutions (Sage Paperless, Timberscan). The initial roll out is expected to be 'rough' with two log in steps. The hosting will be in Azure, no session hosts, with no M365 Office support, either (printing to Excel and Word). This option will be extremely limited and will not serve our clients' needs. We're disappointed that Sage has decided to compete against us for hosting, but our offering is much more robust for our clientele. -CMW



M365 Education Station

Microsoft 365 People and File Search

These two new apps are part of your Microsoft 365 tenant. I first noticed them on August 18th when they automatically appeared on my task bar. I was watching for them because Chris thought they were great tools and was excited to have our teams start using them.

These are considered productivity apps. They're designed to help you learn about a person before meeting them, or finding that document you know you created and can't remember where you saved it! They're both part of your existing Microsoft tools, along with Teams and OneDrive.

People Search

The People companion is designed to help you learn about your organization's contacts and pull up relevant and important information on individuals for conversations, meetings, or other communications, according to Shilpa Patel, a Product Manager on the Microsoft 365 team.

- **Access profile cards and organizational charts:** Let's say you're in a meeting and can't minimize your screen. By clicking on the People companion, you can look at someone's profile card to find contextual info such as their role, contact information, and even place on the organizational chart.
- **Send messages with minimal context-switching:** If this is true, I think this will be great! The People companion allows you to send a Teams message while working on a document or while you're in a meeting. That means you don't have to leave what you're doing and open Teams (this is where I find three other messages and easily get pulled away from what I was doing!).
- **Search for people by more than just name:** In People, you can find a contact by searching for job title, department, location, and project. Or if it's a new team member, get some background before engaging.

File Search

File Search helps find the file you need to open or to share! Our company has been around a while and we have some really nice file structure, but every now and then, it's difficult to remember where a specific document was saved. This is designed to help find it.

- **Find files without a file name:** The File Search companion provides easy access to all your Microsoft 365 files. The most recently opened files will be on the homepage. You can re-find other files through the search box. If you can't remember the file's name, search for it by contents or use the people and file-type filter options to locate the right one.
- **Preview before sharing:** In File Search, you can preview a file before sharing it to make sure you're sending the right document or presentation.

Summary

These apps can be pinned to your taskbar for ease of access. The goal is to use your own Microsoft Tenant for focused searches, for people and for files. We're still testing these new apps, so stay tuned!



How Did They Do It? Associates in Building & Design

Dad and his wife were on vacation. When they returned and headed to work, Dad **found the company's door locked with a note** that they were out of business! Out of concern for the client projects in progress, families impacted by this unexpected event, they started the business in 1990. This was a rough way to kick off a business since the projects were in various phases of completion and of payment, but Dad just **couldn't leave these people in such a bind.**

With Dad's construction background and his wife an excellent designer, they were a strong team. They knew they needed good bookkeeping so they bought Master Builder and hired a bookkeeper. Starting out of a home office, they added a Project Manager and started looking for office space. They found a space in mid-town Fort Collins and grew the business. In 1994, they built the **building they're in right now!**

In 2008, Heather was working as a teacher and her sister Alison was an office manager for a family practice. Dad asked if they were interested in the business with the goal of ownership, explaining the many benefits. Heather and Alison decided on a trial period with Heather and her family



Alison Johnson, Heather Schreiner

moving from back East. The two sisters started working together.

With these strong relationships, they've been able to walk alongside their clients during difficulties. One client did an addition in 2015. After a serious health event, changes were needed. ABD was able to pivot and still stay in budget.

Their favorite Syscon resource? The FIT System, especially time entry! They also commented on the lifeline for S100C support. Nice to have the hosted cloud and no more on-prem server. Heather and Alison **couldn't be happier!** They love their clients, the work they do, and doing it with their best friend!- CMW

Fast Facts

Location: Fort Collins, CO
Specialty: Boutique Design/Build
Founded: 1990



Read more at www.syscon-inc.com/how-did-they-do-it

Are you interested in having your story featured? Let's talk!

The Road(map) to all things FIT (webinar)

When: Thurs Sept 18th

Time: 11:00 am Central

Catch up on new features, updated screens, add-on modules, and of course, what's next! All FIT users and those thinking about it should attend!

Maximize Your Windows 11 and M365 Efficiency (webinar)

When: Thurs Oct 9th

Time: 11:00 am Central

We have tips and tricks to share, ones you can use right away and every day to maximize your efficiency on the computer!

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