Syscon U

What's New

Hard to believe we're heading into the final quarter of 2025! Love the cooler weather, the colors of fall, and my upcoming favorite, candy corn pumpkins!

We've been very busy with up-grades ahead of the Microsoft October deadline for Windows 10, for physical computers as well as our session hosts. If you have any Windows 10 machines, please give us a call right away.

We've had quite a few work an-niversaries on our teams in September. It was great to check in with them, and look back and look ahead with them. This is also our chance to review our Core Values and Trust Accelerators while we share feedback from fellow team members! - *Catherine Wendt*

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October 2025

Artificial Intelligence (AI)
Your Job, Your Future

Last month, I reviewed one of Chris's favorite books, *Co-Intelligence* by Ethan Mollick. **We hope you'll read our brief** review; we recommend this book! In short, unlike other technology shifts, **AI isn't about learning new software,** finding out how best to use it, then adding it to your tool belt. For most software, you enter the same commands or series of information and **you'll get the same result. When it comes to AI, that's not the case at all!** Enter the same thing three times and **you'll have three different responses. Rather than a series of 0's and 1's, AI is** all about stringing information together based on a VAST amount of data input by a VAST amount of resources.

The focus for technology efficiencies over the last decades has been to optimize and sometimes replace lower-level jobs. This has greatly increased accuracy, efficiency, safety, and the ability to perform more meaningful work. I still remember many years ago when the red train caboose was slated to go away and there was an uproar for those who would lose jobs. The counter argument was for those employees to learn how to maintain the new equipment and surrounding technology which would now open new jobs! Another example is the switchboard operators, often women, who were replaced with new telephone equipment. Can you imagine if we were still manually routing calls because some jobs were at **risk? I can't imagine that was very** fulfilling work, either.

Fast forward to the AI wave and it's a different conversation. Since these AI models are very useful in providing creative titles for articles, content for marketing, consolidation of large data models, summarizing large docu-

ments, analysis of medical images, troubleshooting programming code, drafting code to solve problems, and high-**level analysis, it's actually the** higher-knowledge worker jobs that **are 'at risk.'**

So what does this mean to our Construction Industry and related IT needs? **There's definitely an opportunity to go down the 'half empty'** road, taking the path of a scarcity mindset. But, this is also a chance to explore some new opportunities and re-think how to use this new technology to leverage our businesses.

Darren Hardy had a few things to say about this (as we would expect!). **He's not alone as he points out some** great possibilities for all of us. AI can **amplify an employee's existing skills!** Start with the human strategy which would be the first 30% of effort, add AI horsepower for another 40% of effort, then back to the human for refinement and the last 30% to bring it over the finish line!

By taking some of the time and tasks off the human, the human is availa-ble for more human connections! If AI was putting together marketing campaigns, reading and summarizing contracts, gathering research, and more, that would free up time to get in front of humans! Visiting job sites, visiting suppliers, meeting and participating with clients, engaging with employees, sending hand notes, making those personal phone calls, none of which can be replaced by AI. (Even as I type this last one, I know that the AI Deep Fakes can be pretty **good, but they're usually in the** hands of bad actors!)

Here are some other thoughts. There are new careers on their way! How about an AI Prompt Engineer or AI Query Writer. Think about the many **jobs we have now that weren't around even 50 years ago. We're just** at the beginning of the AI wave. There are many opportunities ahead. With the use of AI, many of us have been promoted from a member of the orchestra to the Conductor! Instead of doing the tasks that when combined make the magic happen, we have AI to do the tasks and we are orchestrating the end result!

A caution I'm hearing everywhere about where to apply AI. If you have broken systems with poor results, **applying AI means you'll magnify** what you have! We have to have good systems and structure in the first place. If you take a bad marketing campaign and apply AI to triple **the volume, you'll have triple the** bad results! We are tasked to find what works, then leverage AI to set it on fire!

In summary: Automate the ordinary; leverage the human factor for amazing results; step in to the Conduct the orchestra; consider new roles that require new expertise related to AI; perfect the old stuff that works then supercharge with AI. Invite AI **to the table and be sure you're pay-**ing attention! *-CMW*

> *"Failure is an event, not a person."*
> - **Zig Ziglar**

Book Nook

Stumbling Toward Utopia by Timothy Goeglein

I first met Tim at a Focus on the Family briefing. He was discussing the upcoming election at the time and providing context and background based on his extensive work in Washington, D.C. I had the opportunity to read his book, *The Man in the Middle*, which I highly recommend. More recently, I was able to attend his presentation at the Arizona Christian University to both students and faculty on the topic of his latest book.

This is a fascinating dive into the seeds plant-**ed in the early 1900's, how they hit critical mass in the 1960's, and the results we've been seeing** and wrestling with in the subsequent decades after a full generation of experiments.

One of the biggest takeaways for me is reading the motivations and reasons for some of the initial experiments with Education, Entertainment, Government spending programs, and the more recent Civility issues. Key leaders with well-known names who had their own agendas and knew that capturing the hearts and minds of our children would be their path towards taking that control.

The history of the word 'utopia' is interesting; the vision definitely wasn't reached. We have some serious fallout to deal with. At this point, we can look back with hindsight and reset. Our Founders rightly warned that we could not have freedom without virtue. There are some fascinating statistics and quotes. Definitely recommend this book! *- CMW*

Tech Talk

Sage, Power, Virtual Servers

For S100C users that log into the Sage Server, usually to launch the Sage Database Admin tool to run the Tune Up, Archive a prior Fiscal Year, or to Archive Payroll (coming in a few months!), the Sage tool that checks the power seems to be missing a few lines of code.

The Database Admin program does not correctly read the power plans on the **virtual machines (VM's) in the Azure hosting environment. Sometimes you'll** see a warning telling you about a power issue and asking you to take action.

Azure VM's in our hosting environment are ALWAYS configured with high performance, always on a power plan. **Answering 'Yes' or 'No' to the pop**-up notice doesn't actually do anything. We get this question from users with **Database Admin access. Don't worry, we've got you covered! Sage is mis**-reading the info; your environment is safe and fully powered! - *CMW*

A Friend's Personal Email, Compromised

Most of our clients have heeded our advice (constant recommendations?) to setup security on their work email. This includes business class managed services, multi-factor authentication which is enforced, and strong passwords. More **than once we've seen this combination** safeguard our clients!

Understandably so, many personal email accounts are not as well safeguarded. A **friend of ours, I'll call him Joe, called me** during the TUG conference asking for some help. His personal email was compromised! He had changed his password and purchased a new **computer, but still wasn't sure the bad** actors were out of his life.

We got on his computer, signed out all sessions, helped him look for email rules, and took other steps to secure his new computer and his personal email. In the meantime, money was fraudulently wired and the bad actors were wreaking havoc! **If you're going to use a personal email for** financial and even business transactions, consider setting up the business class **tools we've shared. Or, for this kind of** communication, keep it to the more secure business accounts. Either way, be sure to pick up the phone and call numbers known to you whenever money is involved! -*CMW*

Cyber Security—Is It Time to Share?

We provide in person and Teams webinar events on Cyber Security, specifically for **the Construction industry. We've** presented at Lunch and Learns for ASA **of Arizona, another group's annual** meeting in Scottsdale AZ, and this past Spring for the Firestoppers annual conference (FCIA) in San Antonio.

We welcome these opportunities to talk about the many aspects of Cyber Security in a construction office. There are often questions about an on premise server versus hosting; the Internet of Things; local firewalls and switches; protection of local computers; options to protect and backup email; and so much more!

Do you belong to an industry group that might be interested in this topic? We would welcome the opportunity to talk **with your association's Executive Director** and see if our topic would fit into a presentation or opportunity. -*CMW*

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:

The Fly Orb

This handheld drone illuminates, hovers, and glides before automatically returning to you. Neon LEDs display an intricate light show that automatically cycles during flight, making it fun day, dusk, or night. The extended battery life and fast charging technology will keep the fun going for hours!

Available in red or blue, it floats and spins, climbs and drops, and even returns to you. Boomerang is by far the most popular acrobatic trick, but the Fly Orb can perform over 100 different incredible flight tricks (they say). Toss at an angle and watch it return to you. Drop it and it bounces back up.

It's safe for children 6+ with a satisfaction guarantee, free 2-day shipping and 30 day refund policy. The list price is $69.99, but their website and other retailers had some very nice specials. Their website said they have inventory fully stocked in the USA. They have an auto-off feature when it detects a collision and are very sturdy. They had some videos on the website and it did look like fun, especially outside in the dark. –*CMW*

Construction Corner

The Road(map) to all Things FIT

Chris presented a webinar to all our FIT users sharing some of the core enhancements, new features on the roadmap, a review of existing add-on modules, and took questions at the end.

Everyone will be off the legacy pages and in the new My Day pages over the coming weeks. This opens up some pretty cool efficiencies for entering time and some very clean, optimized screens for our users and payroll admins.

Everyone seemed to learn something new (I picked up a tip, as well!). We **recorded this webinar, so if you weren't able to attend and you're a FIT user, or if you've been thinking about adding our** FIT System, email CustomerSupport@syscon-inc.com or give us a call and we can send you the **link. You'll be glad you checked it out!** *- CMW*

LCP Tracker

If you know what this is and have to provide these reports, then you probably have a stash of your favorite chocolate just to get through the frustrating and complicated compilation!

We've created an alternative that integrates with S100C. We have several clients using our LCP Tracker tool, saving them a lot of time and **frustration. There's an initial fee for the** tool and some T&M work to do the **mapping. Once that's done, you'll be so glad you made the change. We'd be** happy to show and tell you more about this option. Just give us a call or email CustomerSupport@syscon-inc.com and **we'll set up a time to talk!** *- CMW*

Washington State—Sales Tax Changes

Effective October 1st, the state of Washington is adding quite a few services to its list of items that are subject to Retail Sales tax, or if services are provided by companies outside the state, Use Tax.

In addition to the Sales tax, many of these services are also subject to the B&O (Business & Occupation) tax. Between the sales tax and B&O rates this is a substantial increase in the cost of business without adding any new services or experiencing any price **increases. It's time to take another look** at your overhead costs. Since these are services you as a business are purchasing, this will eat into your profit margin directly.

> *"Effective October 1st, the state of WA is adding quite a few services to its list of items subject to retail sales tax and B&O tax."*

One of the main focuses, what bumped it up on our radar, is the breadth of IT-related services that will now be subject to these additional taxes. This includes services that were previously excluded such as the DAS. These include network assessments, planning, design, migration services, network security services, system upgrades, and other network maintenance services involving technology infrastructure.

Also included is Remote Access Software (RAS) which is prewritten **software provided remotely. We've** requested a binding answer on whether our FIT System falls in this category or not.

Also added to the Retail Sales Tax list are data processing services including **check processing; image processing'** form, survey, and claims processing; payroll processing. In addition to the sales tax, these are subject to B&O tax.

For those of you in WA who use our services, we are not registered in this state, so you will need to identify and file the use tax when you file your sales tax returns. The breadth of these changes are significant and could be a burden on some of our construction clients. Get informed, do your research, and engage with your representatives and the state departments. As always, the auditors will know the codes better than you, and with these changes, some decisions will not be so black and white at first. *- CMW*

Insurance and Contractors

At the recent TUG Conference, one of the breakout sessions was a panel **discussion. There were GC's and Sub's** in the room discussing the various policies and challenges.

This laundry list might be worth bringing to your insurance broker to review. Which are overkill, which should you consider, how are your limits on the various policies, and more.

Professional Liability; General Liability; owners tend to carry Builders Risk which provides a cost savings down the chain, with higher deductibles; Inland Marine; Buyer Insurance; Subcontractor Default Insurance which is a type of co-op group that creates a pool to pay out claims; Vehicle; Pollution; Flood; Workers Comp; Contractor License Bonds or Surety; Disruption of Business (came up during COVID); Contractor Equipment insurance; Umbrella; Completed Operation Coverage.

Lots of discussion around risk management, **tracking COI's,** additional endorsements, exclusions, and more! - CMW

M365 Education Station

Unified Contacts in Teams and Outlook–Finally!!

We've been waiting for this for quite a while! Microsoft Entra ID users (that's most of our clients) can access and manage the same set of contacts across Microsoft Teams and Outlook! The new 'experience' is available to all Outlook users as of January this year, and was rolled out to Teams users wrapping up in April this year.

Previously, the contacts created in Teams were not accessible in Outlook and vice versa. The goal was to avoid the context switching and dual effort to upkeep contacts across two platforms. A user's contact list will now be associated with their Microsoft account instead of individual apps, making it available across Teams, Outlook, and Microsoft Graph APIs.

Introducing Research and Analyst in Microsoft

Researcher

Researcher helps tackle complex, multi-step research at work, delivering insights with great quality and accuracy. It combines OpenAI's deep research model with Microsoft 365 Copilot's advanced orchestration and search capabilities. Use Research to build a detailed strategy based on the context of all your work data and competitive data from the web; identify opportunities for a new product based on emerging trends and internal data; create a quarterly report detailing work to-date along with the latest analysis.

There are even third-party connectors to enhance capabilities and provide more insights, allowing it to integrate data from other sources such as Salesforce, ServiceNow, Confluence and others, directly into Microsoft 365 Copilot.

The example Microsoft shared was a request to Researcher to enter a new outdoor and adventure market using existing data on the company's business lines and adding external research to a broader market. Very interesting...

Analyst

Analyst thinks like a data scientist, going from raw data to insights. Built on OpenAI's o3-mini reasoning model and optimized to do advanced data analysis work, it uses chain-of-thought reasoning to work through problems iteratively, taking as many steps as necessary to refine and provide a high-quality answer, similar to human analytical thinking.

It can run Python to tackle complex data queries (not my everyday tool…) allowing you to view the code it's running and check its work (our programmers will like this!). An example was raw data scattered across multiple spreadsheets (we know about that!) with Analyst to forecast a new product and consider customer purchasing patterns, as well as revenue projections.

Summary

For the techies out there, I think this will be very exciting considering the depth and tools. I may need a little time to absorb this one. – *CMW*

How Did They Do It?
ACR Restoration & Construction

Mike Pohl and his friend Jim O'Callaghan started a carpet cleaning company in 1986. They added restoration and focused on mitigation only, complete removal, clean up, dry-out, and prep work, ready for construction. As a matter of integrity, they wanted to avoid any potential conflict of interest, only removing what was actually needed so as to not inflate any construction costs. In 2017, they decided it would be easier for their customers if ACR added construction services too, allowing them to have one trusted company to work with after a disaster.

Brian came from the insurance world, joining ACR 16 years ago. Starting in an entry level position, Brian has worked his way up to VP of Operations. Many employees have been with ACR for a long time which is unusual in this industry that experiences **a lot of turn over. ACR's success starts with** Mike and Jim. They provide the freedom and grant the ability for employees to make decisions in real-time based on their experience. The construction team is the newest team, and since their work is quite different, this addition was a big change.

There's been more growth in the last two-plus years than in the previous ten! This has brought changes for onboarding new team members, adding new systems, all to handle the growth. Originally, the divisions were very separate teams. Now there is a lot of cross training which has been very helpful.

One family experienced a substantial fire. During demolition there

Brian Brandenburg

was a small box with a little match inside. The team decided to set it aside. At the end of the job, the PM returned the little box. Turns out it was a special gift that her husband had given her so many years ago. The family was appreciative and the team was moved!

When ACR decided to add construction, working with Syscon and S100C to learn over/under billing, track costs and time, was so helpful. Syscon was a great resource to learn these new processes and tools, a big help.

ACR has received two Phoenix awards. In one case, a local restoration company brought ACR in to use their special techniques, saving a unique wood floor in an historic building! - *CMW*

Fast Facts
Location: Wheeling, IL
Specialty: Restoration & Construction
Founded: 1986

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

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

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!

EASY Electronic Field Time (webinar)

When: Thurs Oct 16th

Time: 12:00 pm Central

Whether you're still using paper timecards or you have electronic time that takes lots of maintenance, you'll want to hear about our FIT System!