



What's New

Happy New Year! This is a time to reflect on the successes in 2025 and the goals/plans for 2026. We continue to look for opportunities to Streamline, Standardize, and make our systems Bullet Proof as we serve our clients and teams.

We have a small increase to our hourly rates for 2026! A few of the Microsoft price increases from last Spring have kicked in. We sent a letter to those impacted, so call with any questions.

We look back on our many challenges and blessings in 2025 and give thanks. We're excited to see what's in store for 2026, starting with a wedding next month! Wishing you, your teams, and your family many blessings in 2026! - Catherine Wendt



As we begin our 40th year...

In this Issue

As we begin our 40th.....	1
Book Review.....	2
Automated Patch and Reboots.....	3
Shiny New Gadget	3
S100C v27.3, OT, and more.....	4
Microsoft 365 Focus.....	5
How Did They Do It?.....	6
Events Calendar	6

January 2026

As we begin our 40th year in business, I find myself pulling out the calculator to see if that's the right number! I remember being in the car with Larry, a baby on the way, \$600 in savings, and an opportunity in front of us. We chose to go for it! The path we've taken is very different from where we started. If you had told me back then that I would have a couple hundred YouTube videos on Technology and Construction Accounting topics, I would NOT have believed you.

Many of our clients are family businesses of various sizes. Working with your spouse has many unique challenges. Over the years, we've been able to support other couples that are in business together. Adding the next generation has its own hurdles in a family business. When growing up, Larry was always expected to be the first on the job site and the last one to leave. It's important our next

generation learn their craft and earn the respect of peers and clients, especially if they're making the family business their career. Even if they just join for a summer job, it's a great opportunity to learn what it takes to be in business and how to contribute.

When we started, computers were new in construction offices and weren't considered a very important tool. In many offices, only one computer had internet access. One contractor referred to the computer as an expensive paperweight! After all, why would you need a computer to run a construction company? Well, that's certainly changed!

Some new technologies that came on the scene are already gone! Think about when fax machines came into our offices; we would wait by the fax to get the signed document. At first, these were not legally binding (the

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case law hadn't caught up with technology), so we would then send the signed originals by FedEx. Today, I know of only a few clients that still send/receive faxes, and it's all electronic instead of an actual fax machine, anyway!

As our IT services grew in the 90's, everything was done on-site. Hiring techs included drive-time considerations to get to client offices as well as our own. It was pretty common to have at least one tech at a client for the full day since we had to touch every computer for maintenance and troubleshooting. New equipment setup was a minimum of 4 hours per computer, and our trunk bags had all kinds of testers, dock and drives, cables, cans of air, a labeler, and more!

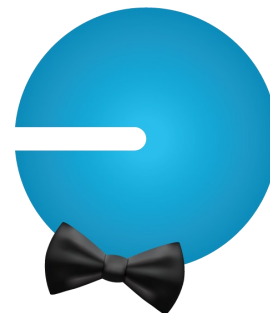
Other than phone questions, a great deal of our consulting support was done on-site, as well. To get all the payroll closings done on time, we had to consider client locations, driving routes, and snow storms. We couldn't have someone log in and 'fix' an audit error, so we had to be

sure everything was in good order before we arrived. These were long days with lots of driving. This year, I can sit in the comfort of Phoenix Arizona and close payroll for six or more clients across the United States without leaving my desk!

After more than 25 years in the Hinsdale building, we closed that office just over a year ago. This step was almost two years in the making. We took the opportunity to celebrate the many ups and downs in that building and to say 'good bye' as well.

Although we're a technology company that supports the Construction industry, Syscon is so much more; we are Change Agents! We help clients navigate technology changes, hardware changes, software changes, and growth! Since implementing change is one of our primary jobs, we bring our experience and expertise to each implementation, each project, helping our clients be successful while helping their teams survive and thrive with the change!

We have been blessed with amazing clients, living in an amazing and fast-paced technology moment. I'm not sure we can even guess what solutions we'll see in ten years (or even five!), but we're excited to be a part of this journey with you! - CMW



"Learn from yesterday, live for today, look to tomorrow, rest this afternoon."

— Charles M Schulz

The Sacredness of Secular Work by Jordan Raynor

I heard Mr. Raynor speak at the C12 Currents conference. I could tell that some of what he was sharing was making a few people uncomfortable, which means he probably had a few good things for us to consider about our regular work. A good portion of my life involves work. We've always considered our business decisions, for our clients, our team members, and our vendors, to be our opportunity to bring solutions, support, and some joy to all. There's a whole school of thought that when it comes to work, there's nothing 'sacred' about it unless you're

preaching. This book questions that premise and provides some great things to consider.

The focus is on the Old and New Testament Scriptures,



Book Nook

but I would say others of faith will find these questions and discussion points thought-provoking. About 99% of our life is spent living, working, sleeping, with very little left over to share our faith and beliefs with others. How can you make a contribution?

There's a section where he challenges us to consider how we can bring a piece of Heaven to Earth. There are some challenging questions and interesting arguments both for the questions themselves as well as the steps he's suggesting.

Many of us take the command to 'make disciples' seriously, but how does that fit in our post-Christian world short of leaving flyers in the break room? We have individual gifts. How do we use these to serve others through our work? Recommended! - CMW



Client Portal—Have You Checked It Out?

In August 2025, we announced the official release of our Client Portal! We had it in beta testing with a few specific clients and released it for all clients in August.

Many of our primary contacts at our clients were interested in having a way to check on open ticket requests. We have a very friendly portal that allows clients with specific permissions to access tickets and check on their status. We added the link to our ticket signatures.

If you've had a chance to check it out, we'd love to hear your feedback! - CMW

Automated Patch Management and Reboots

As part of our IT Managed Services, we provide automated patch management with other tools and updates to keep your computers safe. For many of these updates, they happen in the background and you never know, but we see them light up on our dashboards in green when they install!

Some updates require a reboot. These are often related to security updates and are very important. On Friday afternoons, these updates will flash a warning allowing you about 30 minutes to save what you're working on, then the computer reboots, installs what is needed, and you're ready to get back to work.

These important updates are the reason we ask you to leave computers on (logged off) so they can install and run, then reboot. In some cases, the computer was

off and the important updates were not able to be installed. When a device hasn't rebooted in 40 or 50 days, and we get on a call with you, we then have to wait through the reboot and install to make sure everything is updated before we can work on any troubleshooting.

So, we have a script that runs and anyone with a managed computer will receive a pop-up reminder after 7 days saying the computer is due for a reboot. The reminder can be closed, then it will keep popping up until you reboot. Even with this in place, we still see some computers with red on our dashboards, waiting for the reboot. Some patches require a reboot to finalize, not just a power down/power up. If you receive this prompt, please take a few minutes and reboot or give us a call and we can help. -CMW

Cybersecurity and Contractors

We speak and write on this topic quite a bit, so when a vendor in our space presented on this topic, we made sure to attend. Here are some of the highlights.

Construction was the most affected industry by ransomware in 2023. Only 38% of construction companies have a comprehensive cybersecurity strategy. Over 70% of companies reported experiencing an attack in the last year.

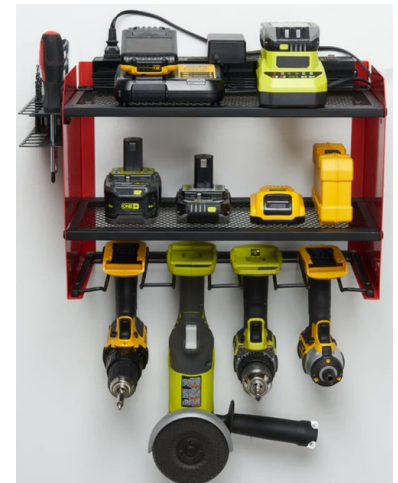
One of the challenges in construction is the high employee turnover rates which increases vulnerability. Phishing attacks, weak passwords, outdated software, inadequate data backups, and social engineering led the list of common vulnerabilities, and we concur!

Data breaches can lead to financial loss, project delays, and can negatively impact employee morale.

Be sure to get the basics right! Implement strong passwords with enforced MFA; use our managed services to stay up on security patches and maintenance; keep employees informed with our short videos; don't share passwords! - CMW



Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Wall Mount Tool Charging Station

We love all the cordless tools, but our garage and tool cabinet are a little crazy, and we often have to recharge when we reach for a tool that's been sitting for a while.

This Sharper image charging station is wall-mounted and features a surge-protected power strip with 8 outlets, plugs into a standard AC outlet with a 6-foot power cord, includes a drill bit rack with 4 hooks for added storage, and supports up to 33 lbs per level for secure tool placement.

The unit is 16.9" L x 8.86" W x 11.8" H and weighs 7.78 lbs. It has a one-year limited replacement warranty, as well.

The charging station lists at \$139.99, but there were some discounts available on the Sharper image website. If your family members received some cool tools for Christmas, it might be time to purchase this charging station and get organized in the New Year!



CONSTRUCTION CORNER



S100C v 27.3, OBBBA, and OT Wages – What a Mess!

This has been a hot topic for months! In the CPA world, questions swirl around a variety of issues. Turns out some states have overtime laws that are different from the FLSA rules, so which one wins? Some employers include PTO in their 40-hour threshold or pay overtime for working holidays or weekends. Some employees may not qualify for the deduction. Taking this deduction can impact a person's Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) which may impact other means-tested benefits. The software doesn't calculate the 'half' of the time-and-a-half for the current year, and it's unclear which rules to apply anyway.

Well, ready or not, S100C version 27.3 has been released and Sage says they're ready, so here are a few things to know.

The calculation of the federal overtime deduction follows the rule of overtime after 40 hours of work, so the amount reported may be less than the employee is expecting.

Version 27.3 will calculate the qualified premium-only portion based on the federally mandated rules.

For 2025, the amount of federal overtime will be reported on the W-2s in Box 14 with the code OBBBTT.

LOTS of changes in various states. Things to look for include new rules for vacation and sick time; new requirements for retirement plan offerings; updated rates for Paid Family Leave, Disability, and State Unemployment; and more!

Looks like in the future, it may be moved.

Now the fun part – we need a report that calculates the overtime portion only of the time-and-a-half. In this update, you'll start in the 5-2-2 screen with Administrator rights AND Exclusive Access! Looks like we'll see

'Version 27.3 will calculate the qualified premium-only portion based on the federally mandated rules.'

two new fields (just like we did when the ACA came out), one for Federal Overtime Hours, and one for Federal Qualified Overtime Comp. These fields will be updated from the timecard information for checks dated 2025 through 2028, payroll type 1-Regular, weekly or bi-weekly checks, where the Salary field is blank.

The Release Notes say you'll be able to override these calculated amounts, and piece pay on overtime will be excluded.

As expected, calculating this amount does NOT change the Federal Wages for reporting purposes. This deduction is part of a person's personal tax return and the possibility of a lower Federal Withholding amount due includes other factors that we as employers cannot determine. So if someone makes a lot of overtime and thinks they'll qualify for the deduction and wants to lower their withholding, they can submit an updated W-4 but that's the only option.

As I write this, all the info just came out so we've not been able to test yet. Keep an eye on our regular email updates and we'll share news as we learn it! -CMW

Departmental Financials: We Have a Special Tool

Many of our clients use Departments in Sage 100 Contractor, as do we, and several of you are adding them in 2026. This is a great way to pull financials for specific departments to track profitability on those jobs or service work. Sometimes different departments have different gross margin goals, or one type of work might be a feeder for other types of jobs.

The Departmental Income Statements in the 2-3 screen are great. When you choose the one that displays the selected period on the left and year-to-date on the right, it also includes the percentage calculations.

We often get the question, 'Is there a report that would let me combine some but not all of the departments?' Several clients have a couple of departments in one geographic location, and in another location, similar departments. They'd like to look at the whole location, as well as the individual departments. Well, not in S100C, but we have a custom report that pulls the data right from S100C and lets you select which departments to combine. It's a separate icon on the desktop. Choose the departments to include and the reports are presented in Excel, ready for review and sharing. Interested? Let the office know and we'll provide some additional details. -CMW



M365 Education Station

Microsoft 365 Copilot Business—A New Option

Quite a few of our clients have the Copilot licenses. These were originally available as an annual subscription paid in full for the year, then they were offered as an annual subscription paid each month (slightly higher cost). Those who are working with Copilot love it! We have it for each of our team members for their individual work, as well as our meetings.

More recently, Microsoft announced Microsoft 365 Copilot Business. If you have an M365 Business License (Basic, Standard, Premium) and less than 300 users, you can now add Copilot for \$21/user/month (with an annual commitment), a savings of \$9/month/user! The focus of this product is to provide AI tools for small- and medium-sized businesses to fit their needs and budgets, as announced in November and available December 1st.



Microsoft 365 Copilot Business

- Created for small business
- Available for up to 300 Users
- Requires a Microsoft 365 Business license as a prerequisite (Business Basic, Business Standard, Business Premium)

Microsoft (and others) Taps Nuclear Power to Fuel Growing AI Demand

In an article by author Caroline Crosdale on the *Global Finance* website last year, Microsoft as well as Amazon are looking for power for their data centers. Rumor had it that Microsoft was buying a nuclear plant, but that's not the case. Microsoft signed a deal with Constellation Energy, the owner of Three Mile Island (now renamed Crane Clean Energy Center), to restart one of the dormant reactors so Microsoft can buy its electricity, a 20 year deal. The goal for the refurbishment project is to have clean energy ready for consumption starting in 2028.

Microsoft has signed deals with other power companies in other locations to meet similar energy needs. These plants are considered to produce clean energy because they don't emit greenhouse gases. Big tech has led the surge in electricity demands for data centers, energy needed to expand technologies like artificial intelligence and cloud computing. "Nuclear energy... has become a popular option for technology companies with uninterrupted power needs and climate pledges," according to Reuters.

Other data center operators are looking at small modular reactors (SMRs). One deal involves a nuclear fusion startup backed by Sam Altman, OpenAI CEO. No news on where these would be built, but it's reported that the SMRs would generate up to 15 megawatts of power and operate for over a decade without refueling.

All the big players have the same need—power! Microsoft, Google Meta Platforms, and Amazon Web Services. This should be exciting to watch!



How Did They Do It? Reliance Specialty Products

The company founder always wanted to be in business for himself. After working for a competitor, he decided to start out on his own. He started out selling solvents to clean metal machines, replacing ozone-depleting solvents, expanding the client base and the markets served. With a focus on great customer service, they make sure real people are helping their customers, answering phones, all with the motto that you can 'rely on Reliance'!

Laurie couldn't say enough about the great team at Reliance, dedicated people who care and you can count on, willing to roll with the changes as they come up. As the team and company has grown, every decision to grow has been intentional and well thought-out as they expanded, including the approval process, capacity considerations, and impact to overhead responsibilities.

They found themselves refurbishing used equipment, but felt they could design something better, so they designed their own equipment. This was a very different path, requiring a different type of capital investment. Manufacturing is powerful

and satisfying as you see the high-quality equipment in use.

Reliance serves a lot of industries since metals in manufacturing need to be cleaned. By diversifying their industry base, they serve several industries with their core products. A challenge has been finding sales people who enjoy gaining and sharing the technical knowledge with customers and prospects. Often those who love the technical aren't interested in the sales and people side of the role. At Reliance, it is very important to know the product and how to use it while interacting with clients and logging activities on the computer.

Laurie shared her appreciation for Syscon's commitment to support Reliance. The team relies on them tremendously for support and help when things aren't working, allowing them to get back to the work they love. - CMW



Laurie Lamantia,
Sales Director

Fast Facts

Location: Carol Stream, IL
Specialty: Vapor Degreasing Solvents and Equipment
Founded: 2004



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: How to Prepare for 1099's at Yearend, webinar

Date: Thursday, January 8

Time: 11:00 a.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

Event: Electronic Field Time You'll Love, webinar

Date: Thursday, January 29

Time: 11:00 a.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

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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

