



What's New

June was always a time of graduations, confirmations, and birthdays (four of my siblings). This June, we celebrated our granddaughter's HS Graduation, nephew's Master's, and my sister earning her PhD.

On the business front, we're deep into our AVD App server upgrades. This is a fallout from the Windows 10 end-of-life. We're working through the list, so if we haven't contacted you yet, it's coming!

June is also a time to remember the Father's in our lives, including those men who have mentored so many young people over the years, regardless of family ties. We need your wisdom and leadership; Happy Father's Day! - Catherine Wendt

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June 2026



Looking for Alternative Computers

The price of laptops has risen sharply. This has been frustrating for everyone, but especially those that are hiring right now. Even in our construction industry, computers are a necessary tool to get work done!

Some clients are looking at lower-end computers, but those are often home models that won't get the job done or would need upgrades anyway. Some are so resource-poor that your tools won't even run at a speed that is usable. One of our clients came across some less-expensive Mac computers and asked us about them. We have lots of reasons NOT to add Mac computers to a Windows PC-based business client, although it was a good question!

Bottom Line: We do not recommend mixing Macs into your company Windows infrastructure.

From an IT perspective, security tools, automations, and security policies are not applied the same way to Macs and Windows devices, so you end up with two distinct IT tech stacks to manage all of the devices (more ongoing costs). There has certainly been some improvement in this space, but the tools that do overlap usually require at least a one-time implementation of the Mac portion of the tools. If you opt out of those tools, you often end up with devices tied to people's personal Apple accounts that they may refuse to unlock or wipe (we've seen this happen on a few devices and it was a BIG problem).

From an end user perspective, getting used to a Mac can be a pretty big hurdle



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for most users. Some of your team may have a personal Mac, perhaps for graphic arts software or school requirements, but for people that haven't worked on one, it can be really tough to get used to. Having a mix of Mac and Windows computers also makes training users more difficult, maintaining procedures more tedious, and it makes it much harder for our techs to quickly answer questions when you need support.

There are some good reasons to get a Mac for a business case, but they are usually related to creative roles involving high graphic processing. There is a significant gap in the business-related software solutions for the Mac computer line. Outside of creative roles, we would strongly recommend staying with one cohesive system.

From a cost perspective, the price of computers has been skyrocketing due to all the AI build outs causing memory shortages, and new plants

take a long time to build and get to production. Add to that the growing request to purchase devices with 5g connectivity, and we've seen an even higher jump and even longer lead times.

So what are some options? Next time you need a computer, we can provide a wider array of options for Windows devices that have a range of prices. We can include a little info about each so you can decide which combination of costs per feature makes the most sense for you and the role you just hired. A reminder that if we provide a quote and specs and you choose to purchase elsewhere, we'll just bill you for our time to gather all the details.

To wrap this up, for more of an apples-to-apples (pun intended!) comparison, for a business-class Mac, you would want to get the Air and avoid the base model. That means a Mac would start at around \$1,500, which puts us right back to the cost range of a Windows unit! - CLW/CMW

Cathy & Larry Sightings



Catherine and Larry celebrated their granddaughter's High School graduation in IL. This was paired with a trip to Chicago to see their son and daughter-in-law's new home. Then off to Washington DC for the National Archive, Mount Vernon, the Capitol, and more!

"For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong."

— H.L. Mencken

Choose Your Attitude, Change Your Life by Deborah Smith Pegues

The rest of this title is '...in 30 days.' The book is structured into 30 chapters, one for each day of the month. Each chapter starts with the word Choose! After all, our attitude is definitely a choice.

The opening preface starts with a story that represents how many people view their world. A young girl felt her teacher had disrespected her, so she gave it back and was sent home from school! Although young, her answer when asked 'what happened' echoed what she'd heard her grandmother say. Our programming starts young, so any changes we actually want will need to be intentional.

I did some of this reading on a plane. My seat-neighbor asked about the



Book Nook

book and then offered that she chose to change her attitude and has never looked back. She said it has turned her life around. This seems so obvious, so why a book? Because it's hard!

I'll let you know upfront, the author references Scripture and includes a short Prayer at the end of each chapter, asking for help to re-align our attitude with that day's topic. These include Choose to Let Go of Anger; Choose to Live Passionately; Choose to Value Others; Choose to Be Pleasant; Choose to be Patient; Choose Flexibility; and more! Appendix 1 is 'Famous Attitude Quotes' and you might want to keep a few of those handy. This book is a short read and a great reminder of the power we already have in choosing how we behave and how we respond to the world around us. Recommended! - CMW



Sonicwall is Joining the Pack

To 'align with modern, cloud-based service models' Sonicwall advanced protection services for their firewalls is moving from an annual renewal to a monthly subscription model. This is definitely the trend when it comes to billing.

The good news is that you don't have the annual renewal quotes from us that have to be signed by the expiration date. The other 'win' is that it's not a large once-a-year payment, but a considerably smaller monthly payment, making it more manageable for most businesses.

With no looming expiration date, you don't risk having the service expire, reducing service interruptions. All the features are the same and the pricing is based on which unit you have in place, just as before. If there's a price change, they'll let us know one month ahead of the change so we can give you the update.

As your next expiration comes up on the calendar, we'll send a quote to move to the monthly subscription (rather than the annual renewal). Sonicwall is committed to making this a smooth experience for all! - CMW

A 'Simple' Hardware Problem Becomes an Urgent Risk

Most of the calls we get about hardware issues are related to performance; things are running slowly, a lag in displays, things like that. Every now and again,

the issue can be traced back to the health of the physical device such as disk health or overall device health. Sometimes the unit is past its warranty and the likelihood of issues is higher, which is one reason we recommend having a budget to replace aging equipment.

Then there are more urgent physical issues! One big example is a failing battery. This can cause the battery to expand which you can absolutely notice when you look at a laptop. This is a safety risk and needs to be immediately addressed! It's pretty rare but when it happens, it's important to turn the device off and call right away.

When this happened to my laptop, I thought it was just buckling because of the location. Turns out that's where the battery was located on my laptop, so we handled it right away. Not sure? Give us a call and send a picture! -CMW

Do You Have Our Number?

On a recent call with a client, we were asked to make sure all Syscon team members called from the same phone number so their staff would be sure to take the incoming call. Very reasonable request, since we're all inundated with 'Potential Spam' calls and numbers calling that aren't familiar or in our phone books.

Turns out, we DO all call from the same number! We would encourage you and your key team members to put our phone number and company name in their cell phones and address books. Our office number is 630-850-9039, a number we've had for literally decades! Regardless of our physical location, when we call over Teams, that is the number that will show up on your phone. Any questions, let us know! -CMW

Microsoft Price Increase is Coming

July 1st we're expecting a price increase from Microsoft. We think it will go into effect at your annual renewal, and many of our clients renewed in late February. Stay tuned for more updates as we have them! - CMW

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Ferrolfluid Music Mate

What do you get a Dad or music-lover who has everything? Something fun, and this might be it!

This amazing device responds to sound. Whether it's talking or an instrument, the black ferrolfluid responds in different shapes and at different speeds depending on what it detects.

We had it out on the piano during a choral rehearsal at the house. I thought the pianist would find it interesting and it quickly became the talk of the room. Lots of requests to 'take a picture.'

At 6.77" H x 2.12" D x 4.17" W, it's easy to keep nearby. Flick the switch on the back and it will respond to the sounds in the room. Our unit can be recharged and it looks like there are other models with batteries that can be replaced. Prices seem to be in the \$190-range (maybe the kids could go in on it together?) with supplies in stock. - CMW



CONSTRUCTION CORNER



Different Risks – Stay Vigilant

There are some amazing new technologies and AI solutions out there. They are definitely reducing the grudge-work and time to get things turned around and out the door. However, we are not the only one using these amazing tools; the bad actors have them, as well.

We recently reported on the growing fraud with regard to receipts turned in for reimbursement. We've all heard the stories about 'whitewashed' checks where the payee name has been changed, or the amount has been changed. The frequency of these reports has increased, while the services detecting them have also stepped up to the plate.

Most banks have Positive Pay services, and in some cases, the banks are requiring that you use them. Basically, you tell the bank specific information about the issued check such as payee name, amount, and date, and when checks are presented, the bank matches the details to either confirm or flag the transaction.

I've also heard stories where someone on their team released one of these flagged warnings in error. The bank's position is that you clicked the button, and they'll push back about having any responsibility with regard to fraud.

Lest you think the 'easy' solution is to pay everything via ACH, there is now a Positive Pay service for ACH files. Turns out our bad actors are getting pretty clever and have been known to intercept these, as well. The other issue with ACH-only is internal, since you no longer see and sign checks; files are just uploaded with the payment information.

I don't think there's a magic bullet, here. We live in a world with all kinds of people, some here at home, some abroad. Take appropriate precautions; follow security recommendations; stay on top of your bank reconciliations; put in safeguards for separation of duties (whoever signs the checks or creates the file, someone else does the bank rec and approves the action). It's like double-checking the locks on the house and the car. – CMW

“Most banks have Positive Pay services, and in some cases, the banks are requiring that you use them.”

Aatrix Made Some Changes

Especially during the month following a quarter end, we would get quite a few calls asking us to install the latest Aatrix report updates. This felt frustrating to our Controllers and was an interruption for everyone. Since our focus has been Automation, we came up with a script that ran updates each evening across all our Sage servers so it would be complete by the time you logged in the next morning.

Looks like Aatrix heard the complaints as well and must have some similar 'automation geeks' on their teams. Aatrix has a new feature that runs a scheduled task in Windows every hour, a new routine for them.

Matt took the time to compare the scripts to what we had in place and after a call with Aatrix support for some verification and clarification,

we're all set this with new routine. - CMW

Subcontracts and Hold Payment Needs

Do you use Subcontracts, the 6-7 module? This is a great way to track the subcontract value, by vendor, by job, to be sure you are only billed up to the approved contract value, no matter how many invoices they send.

Then as the job continues, you can have change orders against these subcontractors (up and down) to reflect changes in scope. There are some great Audit reports, detailed and summary, to help manage the subs on your job.

Sometimes, you may want to wait to make the payment to the sub. Maybe you're waiting for a punch list to be completed, or some other lingering issue. Use the Hold Payment box on their subcontract to ensure they are not selected to pay nor any checks cut. You can even check the Hot List button which will keep the issue front and center in the Project Work Space, or the Document Control reporting (if you have that module).

When you're ready, uncheck the box in the subcontract screen and everything will flow as usual. Create a query or report for additional tracking or again, use the Hot List feature. - CMW

Our next webinar about Electronic Field Time FULLY integrated with Sage 100 Contractor is Wednesday July 1st at 11:00 am Central.

Come check it out!

M365 Education Station

Changes in Microsoft Defender Allow-List Feature



Microsoft Defender is Microsoft's integrated security solution designed to help prevent, detect, investigate, and respond to cyber threats across devices, identities, email collaboration tools, and cloud apps. The goal is to provide a unified view for endpoint protection (your computers, laptops, etc.), threat and vulnerability management, endpoint detection and response (EDR), with automation to investigate and respond to incidents. The ultimate goal is better protection against phishing, malware, ransomware, and other threats as they evolve.

As with any security solution, there are times when something or someone is restricted and they need to be allowed through to the end user. When it comes to trusted senders (be careful with this one), trusted domains, or other items you'd like on the 'approved' list, they can be added to the 'Allow-List.' A good example is a trusted vendor that is incorrectly flagged or filtered so you're missing messages.

Defender has a new change to this 'allow-list.' When there has been no activity associated with the 'allowed' item for about 45 days, the entry may be removed from the list. This improves security hygiene by making sure exceptions do not remain in place indefinitely. Keeping the list clean means it's easier to manage these exceptions. The downside is that the previously 'allowed' items may not get through in the future. The techs are actually happy about this change. It's easier to review the list, rather than assume that prior items are still appropriate to release.—Tech Stand Up/Copilot

Become an Expert!

We took Chris's two-part webinar and pulled out the very practical tips and tricks, then packaged them in short segments, available on our website.

Check it out! →



M365 Desktop App / Copilot

- Copilot Key or Win+C
- Search across M365



How Did They Do It? Whatever It Takes Electrical

In the 1990's, John Rolls was making good money as a union electrician, but the tech crash brought a slow down of work. With young kids in daycare, John started a barbeque sauce business as a hobby to make ends meet. It was going well, so he went to the Small Business Administration about a loan to build the BBQ business. Turns out that's a high-risk situation, but if he was willing to start an Electrical contracting company, they would loan the money. The union has lots of rules about who can work, owners' roles, and more. After some digging, he put the company in his wife's name, made a few personal financial sacrifices, and things took off.

With a \$50K line of credit and a large loan from his 401k, along with home equity, the financing was in place. John walked away from a very nice salary back then, rolled the dice, and the roller coaster ride started.

There are a couple of things John shared that have contributed to his success over the years. John has a good skillset and a strong work ethic. As an apprentice, he remembers a great journeyman training him and what he was told about learning how to do work independently, not relying on a Tool Buddy. To young people

today, he would remind them that you need to get along with others, even if they're in a bad mood; you need to learn what they know!



One of the biggest challenges in the last year has a familiar ring; labor shortages! WITEC has work but it's short skilled labor. For his great crew members, he knows the value of paying extra and providing overtime. Employees aren't worried about work/life balance, they worry about money. There's a real hunger for well paying jobs. In the trade school, John used to have 75 people. This year he has 220! Some of these are Dean's List graduates, choosing to start over as an Electrician even when conditions aren't weather-friendly.

When you build a business, sometimes you don't get a check; sometimes earnings go back into the company for equipment. Belief in God has given John the strength to get up every morning and go get it. He's thrilled to have the kids involved in the business now, too! - CMW

Fast Facts

Location: Raytown, MO
Specialty: Commercial Electrical, Plumbing
Founded: 2003

[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!

Upcoming Events

Event: Think You Can Build Your Own App?

Date: Wednesday, June 17th

Time: 11:00 a.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

Event: Sales & Use Tax – Modern ERP Options

Date: Wednesday, June 24th

Time: 11:00 a.m. CST

Register: www.syscon-inc.com/events

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

