

Executive IT Insider

...The Exclusive Edge to Today's Technology

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December 2016



This monthly publication provided courtesy of Paul Riendeau, CEO of Southern New England Computer Services.

"Season's Greetings from the team! With the year winding down, now is the time to **tie up loose ends** and finish up strong. If you have any projects you are looking to roll out, don't forget about the **Section 179 Deductions** for the end of the year. **Equipment purchased in 2016** qualifies for the deduction. If you need more info, reach out to us! "



It was a typical morning at the offices of a small Midwestern online retailer. This company, whose name we cannot mention due to a non-disclosure agreement with our source (Gary Miller, GEM Strategy Management) owned a very successful online catalog offering a wide variety of women's apparel and accessories. They had a terrific reputation and brand, and every reason to be excited about their future.

Then, with a single click, the death spiral began...

An employee received an e-mail with a link to a benign-looking catalog. All it took was one click and the company's entire network was infected. The Cryptowall malware dug deep into the company's accounting system and customer files, including credit card and social security numbers.

Why Cyberthugs LOVE Your Business

Fifteen thousand customer accounts were locked up by the malware. A ransom demand soon followed, requiring \$50,000 for the key. Unfortunately, the company's backup systems had been down for the last three months. With no way to remove the virus without destroying crucial data, the company had its back against a wall.

They paid for the decryption key. But no luck - it didn't work. Business came to a grinding halt. The company owners couldn't afford to rebuild their entire network. Within six months, the company closed its doors, strangled by a lack of sales and cash flow.

Could this happen to you?

Hackers have discovered that small businesses make juicy targets. These criminals *love* going after small businesses because they're often the easiest to penetrate. IBM reports that

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over 62% of the 4,000 cyber-attacks that occur every day target small businesses.

Cyber-thieves filch information to rob bank accounts via wire transfers.

They steal customers'

personal identity information and resell it on black markets. They nab key information to file fraudulent tax returns, and commit health insurance or Medicare fraud – in *your* customers' names.

Most small businesses are easy prey because they fail to take precautions. But you don't have to be like most small businesses. Here's how you can prevent a shutdown that could destroy your fortunes.

Understand evolving threats –

Know what's at risk in your company. Stay on top of the different schemes hackers use to gain entry. Learn all you can about phishing, spoofing, social engineering, malware, systems hacking, pharming

and the latest scams so you can see them coming. Identify your

company's weak points and bolster them as needed.

Institute a dual signature policy –

Require that two people sign off on every transaction. At the very least, when in doubt, pick up the phone. Verify all fund transfers or requests for payment before releasing funds.

Ingrain a solid data security policy in your company's culture –

Yes, you need to define and document protocols...but that's not enough. In order for them to work, they must permeate every activity you and your team engages in. Your employees are the gatekeepers of critical data. Train them to see the warning signs, engage in safe practices and respond effectively to an attack. Examples include using complex passwords and keeping a "clean desk," where sensitive information isn't exposed.

Have – and practice – an incident response plan – Just like a fire drill, being ready for a breach gives your team an edge when faced with a crisis. When everyone knows exactly what to do, you're better able to nip a hack in the bud.

Why play Russian roulette with your company's data? – If you've been putting off cyber protection measures, thinking, "Oh, that would never happen here," you are putting your company's entire future in jeopardy. NOW is the time to call in an expert you can trust to verify that your data is safe in today's rapidly evolving battle against a host of online bad guys. When it comes to protecting your data – we've got you covered.

Through December, we're offering our *Security Assessment* at no cost to the first 10 companies to schedule an appointment. **Call us at 401-684-3036 or e-mail support@itsupportri.com**. We can only offer this valuable service to a limited amount of clients. Don't wait, contact us today!

Refer-a-Friend and Get Free Gifts!

We **love** having customers like you and, quite honestly, wish we had more like you! So instead of just wishing, we are doing an ongoing "**Refer-a-friend**" event.



Refer any company with 5 or more computers to our office to receive a **FREE** Computer Network Assessment (a \$300 value). Once we've completed our initial appointment with your referral, we'll send you a **\$25 Amazon gift card**. As an ongoing promotion, for **every referral** that you send, you will receive a \$25 gift card as your referrals complete the Network Assessment. Just a small "Thank You" for thinking of us.



As an added bonus, if they join and become a client of ours, **we will send you a \$250 Amazon Gift Card** for introducing your friend to us.

Simply call us at **401-684-3036** or e-mail us at news@snecsllc.com with your referral's name and contact information today!

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Technology Spotlight: Google Home

Google Home makes its debut as a direct contender against Amazon's Echo. Those looking to incorporate smart home features or a digital assistant will be looking closely at the key differences between the two.

The Google Home resembles a "decorative air-freshener". It's small form and customizable base makes it easier to blend in with different styles. On the inside it is backed by Google's massive knowledge base and intuitiveness (and Googleness).



Home is more like an assistant. You can ask follow-up questions and it easily understands your context. Also, those who use Google Calendar will be able to get a schedule breakdown and traffic report on the fly. Home starts to know you as you use it. It connects with YouTube and Chromecast, making integration easy if you already use them.

There are some downsides though. Home can only link to one account for now (so sharing is out). Also, the speaker is "okay" for music (compared to Echo). Lastly, there is limited third-party support for Home. If you already use smart-home devices, you may want to hold off.

At \$129, it is cheaper than Echo and shows a lot of potential.

4 Steps To Become A More Genuine Leader

Communication is a skill – one that needs to be practiced to be perfected in a leader. And the root of all effective communication is honesty.

Unfortunately, CEOs and business owners often think that means totally unfiltered "brutal honesty" – however insensitive or accusatory. It's no surprise that this method usually backfires and, over a sustained period of time, can lead to disheartened employees, high turnover and a lack of trust in management. But it doesn't have to be that way. When honest communication is positive and constructive, it helps leaders build and maintain strong, loyal teams.

Here are four steps to open up lines of communication and become the "honesty standard leader" for your team:

Show the "real you" – Do people see who you really are, or are you playing a role? The fact is, people can see through your "act" more easily than you think. And those around you deserve to know the real you – not just the image you want to present as "the boss." Admit that you're human and share vulnerabilities with your team. Be honest about who you are and what's going on in your life (the good and the bad), and your team will actually trust you more. They'll begin to share their own stories and become more cohesive.

Take time to listen – You're a leader. You've made it your business to do things the way you envision them in order to start your own company and make your dreams a reality. However, that doesn't mean you should block out advice from

others – especially when it's coming from your employees. Open yourself up to honest criticism and invite feedback about areas you may be overlooking. By trusting your employees with that kind of critique and seeking solutions that will benefit everyone, you'll begin to encourage higher levels of truth in the workplace and gather the best ideas.

Surround yourself with honest people – Are you surrounded with lots of "yes" men and women? If people are just telling you what they think you want to hear, there is no benefit – least of all to your business. Ask for regular "truth checks" with your team. Are they providing ideas freely – especially those that might differ from yours – or do they hesitate to voice their opinions? Surround yourself with people bold and truthful enough to disagree with you. Without dissenting opinions, you'll never exit your comfort zone, which will limit your personal and professional growth.

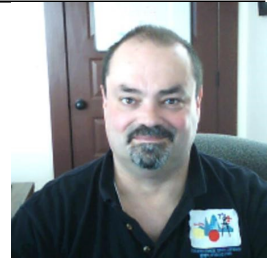
Accept your imperfections – You may be the one in charge, but you will never have all the answers. No one person can handle everything, and that includes you. Gather a team of truthful people who balance out your weaknesses with their strengths. Empower them to do what they do best, and play to everyone's strengths – including your own.

Don't hesitate to be vulnerable and open up in a genuine way with your employees. Genuine leaders don't need to be "brutal" – just honest. Try it. Your employees – and you – will notice the difference.



Andy Bailey can cut through organizational BS faster than a hot knife through butter, showing organizations the logjams thwarting their success and coaching them past the excuses. After all, as he tells his clients, 100% annual growth is only 2% growth every week. It's not easy. But possible. Andy learned how to build great organizations by building a great business, which he started in college then, grew into an Inc. 500 multi-million dollar national company that he successfully sold and exited. He founded Petra to pass on to other entrepreneurs, business owners and leaders the principles and practices he used to build his successful enterprise, which are rooted in the Rockefeller Habits methodology.

Expert of the Month: Roy Laurent of Clear River Technical Services Corporation



Our expert this month is not only in the spotlight, he may have even designed and wired it too! Roy Laurent of Clear River Technical Services Corporation is not only the owner, but an active engineer among his team. With a lifelong passion for all things electronic, he has used his talents to start his own business, develop a stellar reputation across the nation for his skills and gets to do what he loves on a day-to-day basis. He has also used his skills to have some fun being a roadie for a touring band, providing the lighting and sound designs as well as performing pyrotechnics.

Roy didn't always work for himself. After graduating college he worked as a Senior Technician and Engineer for a large corporation that specialized in advanced technology development. Years later, he left the corporate world to work in a new startup communications company. Unfortunately, that startup didn't quite make it. Rather than go back to corporate, Roy decided to do his own thing. That's when Clear River Technical Services Corporation was born. Now, with over a decade of experience under his belt, he went from being a subcontractor for an established company to eventually buying them out and expanding his own business.

"We come from both the electrical and mechanical point of view," says Laurent. "We do not have a 'job shop' mentality here. Every board that comes through here has its own solution, and that solution has to do with the customer's needs. It has to be a manufacture-able board; it can't just be something whipped together, and it needs to perform. That's clearly our advantage, we produce boards that perform at high-performance levels. That's our specialty. People come to us because they know the job is going to get done right the first time."

When we asked him about working with us at SNECS, he responded, "You guys are interested in what you are doing. I don't feel like you guys are just 'anybody' walking in here. When you like what you do, you're gonna do a good job. Your best attribute is the people that do the service love what they do."

You can contact Roy directly at 401-568-3419 ext. 1 or check them out online at www.crtscorp.com.

This new kid on the block is a Galaxy *and* iPhone slayer.

Eight years in the making, Google has bypassed its Android partners with the new Pixel phone. While it won't win any visual design awards, Pixel sports a rich feature set that raises the bar for smartphone performance. Foremost is its blistering speed. Google spent a lot of time "tuning the hell out of the platform," as one Google spokesperson said. Plus, its Snapdragon 821 chipset keeps its cool – literally – and avoids throttling better than the Snapdragon 820 featured in the Galaxy S7 and other premium smartphones. And Pixel's camera, call quality and battery life are all "top of class." Priced from \$649 to \$869, it's a premium phone – with premium pricing. -Forbes

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"Santa's outsourcing."

Double your sales team's productivity.

Give fitness trackers as rewards for hitting sales goals. They're one of the most popular gifts right now with both health and non-health conscious workers. And once an employee earns it, they'll likely start using it. With health care costs at less than a third of national averages for companies with wellness programs, you get a double win – more productivity, less cost. One way to get the most out of fitness trackers for your team is to set sleeping goals. The journal *Sleep* reports that people who get seven to eight hours of sleep per night stay home sick four to nine days less than those who get less than five or more than 10 hours per night.

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