CST Tech News

What's New

"It takes a village" is something we have all heard in reference to raising our children. The more help you have, the better right? I have learned this same analogy applies when it comes to running a successful small business. We will certainly take all the help we can get.

So, Shawn and I are members of a technology peer/accountability group that meets each week (yup, one full hour every week and YES, we not only make the time but we enjoy the crap out of it). This is the place where we can discuss the challenges of technology, running an IT business, new risks, software we should implement, security measures we need to take and any other topic we feel could help us grow. Because we all run technology businesses, we have like-minded goals, problems and stresses. We hold each other accountable for goals we set, and our group leader is not afraid to call us out if something isn't adding up. The entire group is not afraid to dole out ideas, suggestions, comments and recommendations like

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This monthly publication provided courtesy of Shawn & Lisa Brown, Owners of CST Group Inc.

Our Mission:

CST Group Inc.

To provide outstanding technology services to our customers allowing them to focus on their business.

3 Questions You Should Ask Any IT "Expert" Before Letting Them Touch Your Computer Network

There are seemingly countless IT services providers to choose from these days, and it can be challenging to tell one from another. However, not all IT service providers are created equal. Some offer independent services, while others are part of larger firms. Some are new to the field, while others have been around for years. There are also companies that put out slick marketing to grab your attention but make it hard to tell if they really live up to the hype.

Well, we're here to help you cut through the clutter. You want to hire someone who knows what they're doing and will take care of your business the right way. To do that, there are a few questions you should ask every IT expert before you let them anywhere near your network – to ensure you'll be in good hands.

1. **What's Your IT Experience?**
Education, certifications and hands-on

experience are all important. You want to know your "expert" is actually an expert. It's all too easy for someone to pass themselves off as an expert when they really have limited experience, so you should never hire an individual or a company without vetting them first. After all, this person (or team) will be handling EXTREMELY sensitive hardware and data essential to the operation of your business. This isn't the time to take risks or give someone the benefit of the doubt.

When you work with an IT services company, or MSP, you can generally expect that the people you work with are educated and experienced, but you should **always** ask. It's okay to dive in and ask them about their certifications, how long they've been doing their job and how familiar they are with your industry. And if you aren't sure what

certain certifications are, feel free to ask follow-up questions. There's a very good chance they'll be more than happy to answer all of your questions, especially if they're a true professional who knows what they're doing!

2. What's Your IT Approach?
There are different approaches to IT and network security. You have the old-fashioned **break-fix** approach and you have the modern **proactive** approach. The break-fix approach used to be the staple of the IT industry – it was the business model of just about every IT support firm in the 1990s and early 2000s. This approach is pretty straightforward: something breaks, so you hire someone to come in and fix it. If many things break or something complicated breaks, you could be looking at a pretty hefty bill – not to mention the costs associated with downtime.

Today, most MSPs take a proactive approach (and if they don't, look elsewhere). They don't wait for something to break – they're already on it, monitoring your network 24/7, looking for outside threats or internal issues. They use advanced software that can identify trouble *before* it strikes. That way, they can go to work, proactively protecting your business so you avoid those hefty bills and long downtimes. These are companies that are willing to collaborate with you

and your business to make sure you're protected, your IT needs are met and you're getting your dollars' worth.

3. What's Your GUARANTEED Response Time?
This question often gets overlooked, but it's one that can make or break your business – and it can make or break your relationship with your IT services provider. You need to know that you won't be left in the dark when something goes wrong within your network. If you're experiencing a cyber-attack, or a power surge has taken out part of your server, the cost to your business can be catastrophic if your IT services provider can't get to you right away. The longer you have to wait, the worse it can get.

> **"If you're working with an IT company that doesn't have your full confidence, you may need to rethink that relationship."**

You need to work with someone who can give you a guaranteed response time in writing. It should be built into their business model or, better yet, the contract they want you to sign when you hire their services. They should be doing everything they can to instill confidence that they'll be there for you when you need them. If you're working with an IT company that doesn't have your full confidence, you may need to rethink that relationship.

candy on Halloween.

One of those recommendations was to read "*The Pumpkin Plan*" by Mike Michalowicz. If you haven't read it, you need to put it on your list ASAP. What do pumpkins have in common with running a small business you ask? It isn't so much about a pumpkin but more about planting the right seed and focusing all your attention on nurturing that seed. It references growing an award-winning monster pumpkin and what professional pumpkin growers (yes, that is a thing) do to ensure they give their pumpkins the best chance at growing to an unusually ridiculous size (like 2,350 lbs.).

This is what CST is trying to do! Scale our business so that we can provide the highest level of service and ensure our clients get the best service humanly possible.

With this in mind, we took the opportunity in 2020 to implement new changes to our service level and how our clients can get help in the most efficient way. We sent out emails with ways you can get help and we tried to keep you in the loop on all the changes to our business model. If you are not getting our emails, please call our office and talk to Brie. She will ensure we have the correct email for you.

In the next few months, we will be implementing even more ways to improve our service so be looking for some emails that will contain amazing technology tips, tricks and yes, processes that will make growing our relationship with YOU, our client, easier and more efficient.

In a time when challenges are abundant, we want to focus on the things we do best and focus all our attention, money and time on getting that 100% right. We need your help to do that so be sure to mention any concerns or suggestions you may have during your Quarterly Business Review (QBR).

PS, if you don't have a group of peers that will help guide you and support your growth, make it a priority in 2021. Everyone needs a Village!

Making & Keeping Customer Connections In A Digital Era

Make the value that you give your customers so high it doesn't matter what the price is. Based on the experiences your brand consistently delivers, your customers should have no idea what your competition charges. You don't need to raise your prices. You need to bring value and better service. This includes employee training – and be sure they understand how to build and keep relationships.

3 Strategies To Dominate The Relationship Economy
- Use technology to allow employees to focus on what's most important: building relationships that result in higher customer loyalty.
- Build a culture that creates emotional connections with your employees.
- Create relationship-building training for new and existing employees.

Things That CAN Be Trained:
- Authenticity
- Insatiable curiosity
- Incredible empathy
- Great listening skills

The 1 Thing That CANNOT Be Trained:
- The ability to love people

Let's focus on what can be trained and what these traits look like.

Authenticity:
- You love what you do, and it's obvious.
- You're transparent – if you have bad news, don't hold it back.
- You are as committed to the success of your customer as they are.
- You know your clients' top three goals for the year.
- Your customer should not be able to imagine a world without your business in it.

Insatiable Curiosity:
- You're dying to learn about others.
- You want to know about both familiar and unfamiliar subjects.
- You're willing to meet as strangers but leave as friends.

Incredible Empathy:
- You look at things from the customer's perspective.
- You put yourself in your customer's shoes.
- You listen and think from the other person's point of view, allowing their message to become much clearer.
- You're wary of empathy fatigue and able to reset yourself.

Great Listening:
- You give them fierce attention.
- You ask a question and then more questions.
- You don't defend questions and instead explore new ones.
- You bounce questions back.
- You fight the urge to reply before you finish listening.

Every employee should possess these four traits, and you should be willing to train your team to deliver on these traits. When you successfully bring these four elements together, you are set up for success and have the foundation to build and maintain strong relationships with your customers.
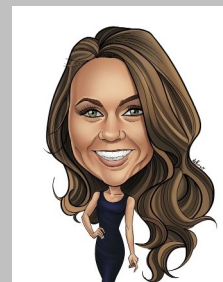
Leah Tobak is a Project Manager with Petra Coach. With a background in public relations and marketing, she's done a lot of work building relationships with customers and prospective customers. Outside of the corporate landscape, Leah is an international model and is known for her work in front of the camera.

Get More Free Tips, Tools and Services at Our Website: www.cstsupport.com
or give us a call at 877.954.4100

◼ The Scientific Reason Your Employees Value Opinions Over Facts

The research is clear: people have a habit of putting more value on opinion rather than fact. It's because it's easy! This is discussed in Daniel Kahneman's best-selling book, *Thinking, Fast And Slow*, and in numerous research papers. Accepting opinions requires less thinking than evaluating facts.

Data-driven companies need to take this into account when it comes to their teams. According to Kahneman, some people are "type 1" thinkers or fast thinkers, and opinions mean more to them. Others are "type 2" or slow thinkers – they take their time and evaluate what they hear.

Michael Schrage, research fellow at MIT Sloan School's Center for Digital Business, says you can't just switch between the two types of thinking automatically. It's more fundamental – you have to change people's mindsets over time. His suggestion is to incentivize analytical, fact-based thinking and recognize employees who take this approach. *Inc., Oct. 29, 2015*

◼ 3 Simple Yet Effective Ways To Boost Employee Morale

1. Focus On Mental Health. Whether it's your own mental health or the mental health of anyone on your team, make sure everyone has the time and space they need to take a break and refocus their energy. Make sure anxiety and stress are recognized and addressed in a positive way.

2. Be With Your Team. Simply being present and available for everyone on your team goes a long way. Have regular one-on-one chats just to see how things are going and to ask if they need anything. When they do need something, do what you can to help (and be sure to follow up).

3. Recognize Your Employees. Recognize their work and reward them. Everyone should be aware of the effort individuals and teams put into their work. At the same time, make sure they have ownership over their work and give credit where credit is due. *Inc., Nov. 4, 2020*
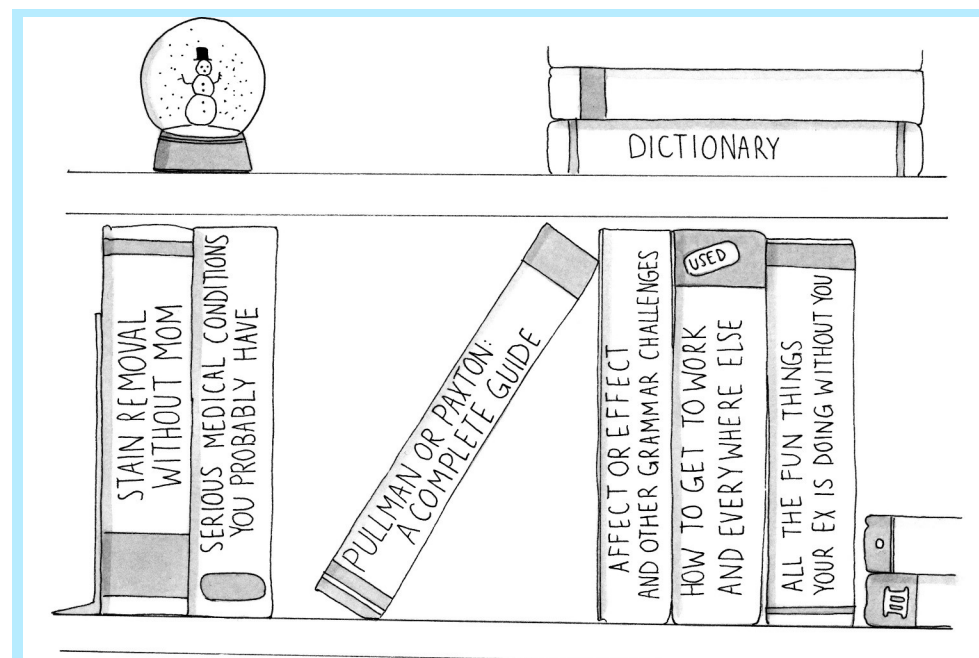
Do you feel *LUCKY?*

March is the month of luck and I am sure we could all use a little of it.

With all the talk of Leprechauns, rainbows and gold coins you must be feeling that positive vibe in the air. Have you been thinking about trying something new? Why not now? This is the perfect time to take a few chances.

I am here to give you that push towards greatness. Wonderful things don't happen by sitting back and watching the world go by.

Everyone should take that jump of faith at least once in their lifetime whether it be for love, a career or checking off something on your bucket list.

Sometimes all you need is 30 seconds of insane courage to get you going. Just literally 30 seconds of jolting bravery. Go ahead and do something crazy and we want to know about it so when you get the nerve and are feeling lucky, be sure to share it with us.

Maybe you will inspire others and I know we could all use some inspiration!

Jessica

*Send us a photo on our social media of your pet dressed for St. Patrick's Day. You'll be entered to win a little something from us.

Use #theluckofCST and tag CST in your post.