

What's New

Owning a small business certainly comes with lots of challenges but one thing I have learned in the last 23 years is to use the resources you have. For Shawn and me, that includes our children. Both Sam and Evin along with our daughter-in-law, Alicia, are also self-employed. They own and operate two businesses in Southwest Florida, Isles Remodeling and Isles Permitting. We were lucky enough to have them home in June where we not only got time with our grandchildren, but we had an opportunity to talk business. One topic of discussion was how we manage the day-to-day tasks and the importance of having clearly defined processes and procedures – repeatable tasks that everyone can do. Once these standards are in place, you can set the expectations with your customers and clients.

You see, Shawn and I set the rules as business owners, and honestly it is one of the few advantages a self-employed person gets. In the first 10 years of business, I bent over backwards for every client. I changed plans, rearranged schedules, and was constantly late for family activities. I ran my whole world around my customer and guess what, when the tables were turned, and I needed a client, they were happily on vacation or spending time with their family and the issue that pulled me away to begin with was no longer that high of a priority. Yes, I am crazy about customer service but there are now

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CST Group Inc.

Our Mission:

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



Get The IT Help You Deserve 5 Questions You Should Hear 'Yes' To

As a business owner, you likely carefully vet every employee you hire to work for your business. You inspect their resumé and ask detailed questions during their interview to ensure they are the best fit. This is critical to growing your business and making it as successful as possible, but you shouldn't solely reserve this practice for potential new hires. You also need to carefully assess any third parties you work with, especially when it comes to your IT needs.

When most business owners attempt to hire an in-house IT team or an MSP, they let the third party's representative or salesperson do most of the talking since they're the experts in the field. In some cases, the owner wants the representative to convince them to do business with their organization. In others, the owner is too afraid to ask questions for fear of sounding uninformed. Failing to ask any questions when hiring an IT

expert can put your business in a bad position and make you and your business vulnerable to cybercriminals. An excellent salesperson can sell milk to a cow, so asking relevant questions is crucial to ensuring you get the best IT services for your business needs.

If you're wondering what questions you should ask when deciding which IT expert to hire, don't worry! We're here to help. Here are some simple yes-or-no questions you can ask any IT expert to determine if they offer the best possible support. If they answer no to any of these questions, it might be best to look elsewhere. It's not worth the risk of experiencing a devastating and expensive network disaster.

Do They Answer Their Phones "Live" And Respond To Support Issues Within An Hour?

One of the most frustrating situations you can experience is needing your IT

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expert's help and being unable to reach them promptly. If you are concerned about your network security or another IT need, you should get the assistance you need as soon as possible. It is a huge red flag if the IT expert answers no to this question because that means they work at their own pace instead of being readily available and responsive to your needs.

Do They Insist On Doing Regular Test Restores Of Your Backups To Ensure Data Is Not Corrupt And You're Covered If Disaster Strikes?

Imagine that severe weather knocks out your network and your data appears corrupted when it comes back up. Ideally, you call your IT team, or they already know about the issue. They'll restore your corrupt or lost data, and everything will proceed as usual. But what happens if the backup fails or your IT team isn't regularly backing up your data? Some experts may be able to recover your data, but in many cases, you'll be out of luck, and your business might be in trouble because of it.

Will They Give You Written Documentation Detailing Your Software Licenses, Network Passwords And Hardware Information?

"Failing to ask any questions when hiring an IT expert can put your business in a bad position and make you and your business vulnerable to cybercriminals."

This is vital information, and there's a reason the IT expert might not want to hand over this information willingly. It keeps them in control of your network and, in many ways, makes them irreplaceable. If they possess all the information and you want to go in a different direction, you'll likely have to reset everything, which will take time and could cost additional money.

Do They Tell You What They Are Doing In An Easy-To-Understand Manner?

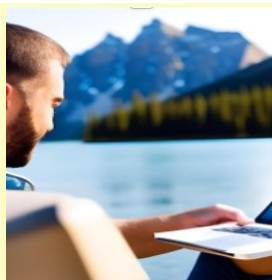
There's no question about it: cyber security and IT services can get incredibly complicated, and some experts prefer to talk using industry jargon, which is difficult for many business owners to understand. It's essential to know and fully understand everything the experts are doing to help your business and keep it protected.

Do They Proactively Offer Upgrades And Improvements To Your Services?

The IT landscape is ever-evolving. New technologies and developments are introduced daily, and dependable IT experts stay up-to-date with changes in the industry so they can offer improved services to their clients. You shouldn't have to wait until disaster strikes to see these improvements implemented in your business.

CST has first hand experience with new clients who have experienced bad IT companies. These few questions will ensure you are hiring the IT company that best fits your organization.

We would be happy to do a FREE technology assessment. Give us a call at 877-954-4100.



FREE 30-MINUTE WEBINAR
Join Lisa for a 30-Minute LIVE Webinar on
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Wednesday, July 19th at 10am



You will learn: vital information on safely traveling with your technology during the summer, connecting to public access WiFi, and implementing security measures before leaving the office.

Who should attend:

Small Business Owners who have portable technology including laptops and tablets. How do you keep your information safe when you and your employees leave the office.

Secure your place by registering now at www.cstsupport.com/webinar

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boundaries that I have colored in a bright shade of RED. No more gray areas of working for my clients but instead, we work together to accomplish clearly defined goals.

I know this may seem harsh, but it is reality. Work is not what your world should spin around. It should be those things you LOVE and hold dear, family being number one for me. Ask anyone who has lost a loved one, experienced an illness or faced a tragedy what priority “work” took on, I am confident it was at the bottom.

Ultimately, isn't that the goal; to not be tied to work to the point that it consumes your life? As we celebrate July 4th, independence is defined as “the quality or state of being independent”. That is what you should be working towards in your own day-to-day life, and you should be able to do that all while making your clients and customers happy. It should not be one or the other.

So, what processes and procedures do you have in place that make your company run smoother? Is your team informed and educated on what your expectations are? What kind of culture have you set? If you set clear guidelines on what you expect from your team and more importantly your clients, you will experience a whole new way of doing business. Operations without defined processes often result in chaos and when we see a client struggling with those processes it spills over on us and vice versa. My point is, if we all have clearly defined processes and procedures and we communicate them correctly, it will make for a significantly more efficient partnership.

Customer service is very important to my team and I. Although we struggle sometimes, it is not because of lack of effort but more about the circumstance. If you are expecting perfection, you will forever be disappointed. There is no such thing by even the highest standards. So, set your boundaries, create processes and procedures, tell EVERYONE and live a happy, love-filled life.

Happy Independence Day Everyone!

As Always “*Passionate NOT Pushy*”

Lisa



3 Questions Every Leader Should Ask On Monday Morning

What is the first thing you do on a Monday morning? Do you dive straight into responding to e-mails or use your first minutes of the week more strategically?

My colleagues and I at ghSMART have collected data on 3,052 leaders and their teams over a decade. We reached a surprising conclusion about what predicts team success with the statistical help of professors and research team collaborators at the University of Chicago, UCLA and Columbia University.

In that study, we isolated three things that matter most. Leaders with teams rated as “strong” at these three things (by professional evaluators using structured in-depth interviews with high inter-rater reliability) were 20 times more likely to report successful outcomes than teams that were not strong at all three things. Think of this pattern like a triathlon – you must be great at swimming, biking and running to win.

Following the research implications, consider reflecting on these three questions every Monday morning.

Do We Have The Right Priorities?

Only 24% of leaders are strong at prioritizing, and 90% of the time, when they struggle with this leadership skill, it's because they lack the analytical skills and decisiveness to narrow their team's priorities down from a long list to a short list. When you have too many priorities, you don't really have any priorities, and energy gets wasted.

Do We Have The Right People?

Only 14% of leaders are skilled at hiring and developing talented teams. This is the most common weakness we observe in leaders and their teams. Flawed hiring methods yield a 50% hiring mistake rate vs. research-based



methods that produce a 90% hiring success rate (e.g., having a consistent set of criteria to rate candidates; unbiased, structured, past-oriented interviews; reference validation; etc.).

Do We Have The Right Relationships?

About 47% of leaders achieve good relationships with people within and outside their teams. “Trust” typically gets a lot of attention as a variable that predicts or even defines relationship quality, but our database suggests that 91% of leaders behave in a trustworthy fashion. Therefore, while important, it is not rare for a leader to build trust. Instead, the “special sauce” in building successful relationships in a professional context is to create relationships that are focused on achieving win-win results. Mutually beneficial results matter when forming and maintaining productive professional relationships, not just feelings of trust or empathy.

If you want to build a team that runs at full power for the good of your teammates and the constituents you serve, consider spending a few moments on Monday morning asking these three essential questions.



Dr. Geoff Smart is chairman & founder of ghSMART, a leadership consulting firm that exists to help leaders amplify their positive impact on the world. Dr. Smart and his firm have published multiple New York Times bestsellers. He stays active in his community and has advised many government officials.

**Win-Win Solutions
Grow Your Business And Keep
Your Employees Happy**

Business owners are well aware of the ever-evolving nature of the workplace. As time passes and new generations enter the workplace, priorities shift, causing business owners and managers to adapt to fit the needs of their teams. Two decades ago, most employees focused primarily on improving productivity, making as much money as possible and helping their businesses find success. But now we've entered a time where work-life balance and personal time are top priorities.

This has left many business leaders wondering how to keep their employees happy while maintaining a profitable business. It starts by developing flexibility tactics to benefit you and your employees.




- Set baselines for yourself. It's great that you want to be flexible and help your employees, but don't compromise your standards for their sake. You know your business and what is necessary for it to thrive.
- Listen to what your employees say about you, the workplace and the business. Hold one-on-one meetings with your employees to see what they need in order to do their jobs better.
- Offer paid time off or unpaid time off to your employees so they don't feel burnout and frustration. Sometimes all your employees need is a little break from work to perform at their best.

Summer is here! Looking for some fun ideas to spend those long summer days? Look no further.... Here is your Summer Bucket List for 2023.

1. Watch fireworks
 - Luckily July 4th takes care of this one.
2. Water balloon fight
 - Maybe some water guns too.
3. Go hiking
 - Between nature trails and the mountains you should have plenty of choices.
4. Beach day
 - Or pool day-Don't forget the sunscreen!
5. Day at the playground
 - Bring the bikes or scooters
6. Drive in movie
 - Go to the actual drive in or setup your own outside theater at your house.
7. Visit the farmers market
 - Make sure to try all the fresh baked goods too!
8. Make popsicles
 - Try mixing fruit with yogurt for a creamy option.
 - Adult popsicles also count!
9. Picnic lunch
 - Make some homemade sub sandwiches or pick up some KFC.
10. Backyard BBQ
 - Summer is the perfect time to have friends and family over to enjoy some nice BBQ.
 - Seafood boil is also a great option for a large crowd.

Enjoy and Happy July 4th
Jessica



MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
					1	2
 3	 4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	 16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						