

CST TECHNOLOGY TIMES

Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier And More Profitably

"passionate NOT pushy"

By Lisa Brown, CEO & Founder

Opportunity is everywhere! Are you grabbing it or letting it pass by? As we enter the second month of 2024, CST has been busy getting our clients ready for the year. That has involved deploying new cyber security protocol, getting everyone converted to using secure email and we are starting the process of our VOIP offering.

As you know, we are passionate (there's that word again) about education which put Shawn and I in New Orleans, LA where we got to spend three days with cyber security experts and about 300 of our peers. It was an amazing opportunity and we brought home some great ideas. We have already implemented some new standards that you will enjoy as we move forward. One such standard is our team members have created processes to ensure we keep track of the small, daily requests from our clients. We needed a better way to ensure nothing falls through the cracks and we are confident each member of the team has a solution that will work for them. How are you keeping track of the little things you must do in a day?

I am so excited to announce that every team member at CST has earned the World-Class Customer eXperience (CX) Certification. This training was led by The DiJulius Group, whose consulting clients include Starbucks, Lexus, Ritz-Carlton, KeyBank, Nordstrom, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police

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CST Group Inc.

This monthly publication is provided courtesy of Shawn & Lisa Brown, Owners.



OUR MISSION:

CST Group Inc. is a PROACTIVE technology management firm that specializes in helping compliance-driven industries to SECURE, PROTECT and MANAGE their technology.



SHOW SOME LOVE TO YOUR BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

Wintertime can feel like a wonderland. There's hot cocoa, cozy fireside conversations, glistening white snowfall...ice storms, power outages and tons of employee sick days. You can't predict the future, but a business continuity plan – BCP for short – ensures that unexpected events don't slow you down because, in business, every minute counts – literally. Downtime costs SMBs \$137 to \$427 per minute, according to a 2020 IBM report. Although the loss is smaller, extreme downtime is the ultimate undoing for many SMBs.

This month, while you're rushing out to buy flowers or before you settle in for a cozy Netflix series, don't forget to show your BCP some love too.

What Is A Business Continuity Plan?

It's just like it sounds – a plan to keep your business continuously running in the

case of an unplanned event like a natural disaster, cyber-attack or human error. A BCP outlines processes and procedures your company will follow during a crisis. It considers operations, assets, human resources, technology and safety; in other words, it keeps necessary functions in your organization running until the disaster is handled.

Isn't A Disaster Recovery Plan The Same Thing?

Disaster recovery plans focus solely on restoring your IT systems. It's one – albeit critical – component of your BCP. If a winter storm knocks out your Internet, a disaster recovery plan restores data access and any IT services you may have lost.

Why A BCP Is Important

Let's say your office suffers a major fire

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incident. Do you know where and how your employees would work? Would they be able to handle customer calls? Where would your executive team meet to make critical, time-sensitive decisions? In addition to providing a plan for restoring your IT systems, a BCP is a practical framework for your entire company's resiliency and financial sustainability.

Additionally, people want to know you have it together. If you hesitate or flounder in response to an emergency, you'll lose the trust of your team and customers, and that's incredibly hard to get back.

What Your BCP Needs

A few basic elements make up a solid BCP framework for every business, no matter your industry.

- **Your company's critical functions.** What are the must-do activities in your business? This could be anything from order fulfillment to customer support. Knowing what's absolutely critical to your company helps you prioritize during a disruptive emergency. Assess the likelihood and impact of these risks to understand what you're preparing for.
- **Risk assessment.** What types of crises could disrupt your business? These could range from natural disasters, like floods or earthquakes, to cyber-attacks or a key employee leaving unexpectedly. But don't linger too long on this step because you can't possibly think through every scenario – focus on recovery.
- **Recovery strategies.** For each critical function and process, develop strategies to recover during a disruption. This might include alternative methods of operation, using different locations, employing backup systems, etc. Pro Tip: ditch wordy manuals and use flow charts and checklists to communicate plans to your team.
- **Data backup and recovery.** Check (and double-check) that all your critical company data is regularly backed up and can be restored quickly. Decide on off-site storage and cloud backups and establish protocols for data recovery.
- **Communication plan.** This includes how you'll communicate with employees, customers and stakeholders during a crisis. Who says what and through which channels? Include contact lists, communication templates and dissemination methods (e.g., e-mail, social media, website updates).
- **Alternative operations.** If your main office isn't usable or accessible, where will your team work? Do you have relationships with alternate suppliers if your primary ones are unavailable?
- **Review schedule.** Your business will evolve, and so should your continuity plan. Create a schedule to run drills and update your plan regularly. Also, distribute it to everyone who needs to know, so everyone knows their role during a crisis.

Is A BCP Right For Your Business?

There is absolutely no company – big or small – that's not at risk of a disaster. According to a 2022 threat report by ConnectWise, nearly two in three midsize businesses experienced a ransomware attack in the last 18 months. One in five victims spent \$250,000 or more to recover. The odds are not in your favor when it comes to business risk.

Remember, the goal of a BCP is to minimize disruption to your business and help you get back to normal operations as fast as possible. Get with your team and review your BCP today. If you don't have one, consider this your sign to get it done. Give us a call – 877-954-4100.

Join Lisa for a 30-minute LIVE webinar on:

"FREE UP COMING WEBINAR"

"FTC Safeguards Rule - New Requirements from the FTC. What do they mean and What do you have to do?"

**Wednesday, February 14, 2024
at 10:00 am**

During This Seminar You'll Discover:

- What is FTC Safeguards Rule? Who Does It Affect?
- A Simple List of The Actions You Need To Take NOW!
- Nine Elements to Implement!

**For The Full Details And To Register, Go Online To:
www.cstsupport.com/webinar**



RESISTANCE TO RESILIENCE:

Learning To Live Without Limits



More than half of us will have given up on our New Year's resolutions by December (and some of us already have). According to a 2020 Ipsos survey, 55% of respondents quit their resolutions before year's end. Of those, one in 10 gave up in less than a month.

Our resolutions are often things we care deeply about – health, finances and relationships – so, why is it so hard to keep them? Speaker, author and self-proclaimed “most noticeable student” in school Nick Vujicic says it's about aligning our hearts, minds and actions to stay resilient in the face of inevitable resistance.

Growing Through Resistance

Born without arms or legs due to a condition called phocomelia syndrome, Vujicic faced a lot of resistance early in his life. When he was born in 1982, Australian law prohibited disabled students from attending mainstream schools – until his mother had the law changed. Once in school, Vujicic faced relentless bullying. It got so bad that, at age 10, he tried to end his life. He survived and decided never to let himself or others impose limits on him again.

Today, Vujicic speaks to audiences worldwide, reminding us that when we hit walls of resistance, “You don't go through it; you grow through it.” Because without resistance, he adds, there's no resilience.

Heart-Mind-Action Alignment

Trouble usually arises when we get stuck in what Vujicic calls “the battle of the mind” –

when we're handcuffed between our emotions and minds, ruminating over what people say or think about us, true or otherwise. You allow yourself or others to limit your beliefs about what you can or cannot achieve. But when crap hits the fan, positivity isn't enough, Vujicic says. When faced with resistance, heart-mind-action alignment is critical to unlocking your resilience. To realign your heart and mind to produce meaningful action, Vujicic suggests writing down the words Faith, Family, Friends, Fitness, Finance and Fun to create a “Grid of Happiness.” Next, write down 10 short-term goals to achieve over the next 45 days that align with your happiness grid. Why? Vujicic says that achieving your dreams without short-term goals is like paddling a life raft with one paddle in the open ocean. “You see no islands, and you get tired quickly because you don't see progress.”

Once you reframe your mindset, the next step in achieving your goals is investing in the skills and knowledge to reach them. Then, set aside the time, like three hours every Saturday, to work toward it. This will get you to your goals much faster, and you will have more resilience in the face of resistance.

For example, if you want to write a book, set a goal to invest in a coach or read a how-to book. Then, spend three hours every week working toward small goals, like writing the outline, and then the first chapter.

Even if you've failed once, twice or many times before, learn from it and move on because Vujicic reminds us, “As long as you're breathing, your story isn't over.”

SHINY NEW GADGET OF THE MONTH

Rocketbook Reusable Smart Notebook

Dreaming big requires a lot of brainstorming. And brainstorming often results in a lot of crumpled-up paper in the wastebasket. Sometimes, our best ideas get lost in stacks of desk clutter or, worse, left in a pocket only to end up in the washing machine. The Rocketbook reusable smart notebook tackles this problem, blending the satisfaction of handwriting with the convenience of digital storage.

Write your thoughts, scan them and then erase the pages for reuse. This cycle keeps your notes organized and searchable on your device while conserving paper. By offering a reusable alternative to traditional notebooks, Rocketbook stands out as a practical, eco-friendly solution for capturing and organizing your bursts of creativity!



FREE REPORT DOWNLOAD:

The Business Owner's Guide To IT Support Services And Fees



You'll Learn:

- The three most common ways IT companies charge for their services and the pros and cons of each approach.
- How to make sure you know exactly what you're getting to avoid disappointment, frustration and added costs later on that you didn't anticipate.

Claim your **FREE** copy today at www.cstsupport.com/itbuyersguide

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Department and many more. To become certified, companies must go through three months of training and show that they've deployed the strategies in their business. Only a small percentage of those who go through the training actually earn their certification because of the transformation it requires. I am incredibly proud of my team and appreciate their passion for ensuring a positive customer experience.

I want to thank those clients that responded to my FREE third-party risk assessment. I had five scans available, and you all scooped them up within 30 minutes of my email. We will be offering this third-party risk assessment as part of the ongoing compliance requirements. If you are looking for quarterly/yearly penetration testing, please reach out. The purpose of this testing is to simulate what would happen if a hacker were to get into your network. It identifies any gaps, what information could be stolen, and provides us with an opportunity to recommend how to fix those gaps. If you are in a compliance-based industry, you should be getting this scan and you should want to know the results before a hacker discovers how to get in. Remember, information is key, and it is significantly cheaper to get this scan than it would be to eradicate the damage a hacker could cause. You also do NOT have to be a client for us to perform this scan so give us a call to get yours scheduled.

A huge thank you to Jerry Manor who joined me for my first webinar of 2024. Jerry is the Communications Manager at SeaComm Federal Credit Union and presented a ton of information on how to protect your bank accounts. Remember, I host one 30-minute webinar each month with important information. You should be getting emails on this so please take 30 minutes to learn. You will always get a few valuable takeaways.

As we move into February and celebrate the month of "love", please know that CST appreciates all of you and we understand that technology can sometimes be frustrating. Just know that we always have your back so please keep us in the loop on everything in your world that involves technology.

As Always,
"passionate NOT pushy"
Lisa



OLD MALWARE, NEW TRICKS

An old malware scam is reemerging with dangerous new tricks, causing significant problems for anyone who uses a web browser – i.e., nearly all of us. Hackers using the "update your browser" scam found new ways to hide malicious files, making it harder for security experts to locate and remove them. We'll see more of this scam, so you need to be on the lookout.

What Is The Fake Browser Update Scam?

A website gets hacked by cybercriminals, who make a few changes. Namely, hackers use JavaScript requests to covertly replace the existing website content with a deceptive prompt for a browser update. For example, if you use Chrome, you'll see a page asking you to update your Chrome browser. Click on the update button, and you'll download malware on your device. Hackers know that users are told in security training to only click on links on trusted sites. They take advantage of that training by hosting their scam on a legitimate site, luring you into their trick.

But this time, the scam has a new tactic. Instead of hosting harmful files on the compromised site as they've done in the past, they've developed a way to store files on cloud services or even cryptocurrency blockchain. This makes it a lot harder for cyber security experts to find and remove.

The first scam of this kind, ClearFake, was uncovered in October 2023. Since then, security experts at Proofpoint have identified four threat actor groups using the fake browser scam to attack victims.



We keep hearing it – cybercriminals are using the latest tech to find new ways to exploit users. This is just the latest example.

What Can You Do About It?

First, no browser targeted in this scam – Chrome, Firefox or Edge – will ever have a pop-up or show you a page stating your browser is out-of-date. To check your browser's status, go directly through your browser's settings menu. Also, make sure you're running very effective antivirus protection on all your devices. Antivirus will constantly run on your device, alerting you to suspicious activity.

Additionally, train your team on this new scam. Because it goes against usual training, you'll need to step in and talk to them about how to look for signs of the fake browser update scam.

We use browsers to do almost everything, so this won't be the last time you hear about scams like this. Be sure to keep your systems updated (via your settings, NOT pop-ups) and use a strong antivirus program.

February Kickoff

Happy February all! The craziness of the new year has hopefully passed you by with the first quarter of the year in full swing.

And what has CST been doing you ask? Well, as always, the beginning of the year is full of budgets and new goals. We like to set high standards for ourselves in the CST office.

We want 2024 to be our big year. We are dedicating more time for education. Education for all of you but also us. We love to learn and we love to teach. So keep a look out on our socials and in your emails. We have planned lots of online and in person events for this year and we hope you take advantage of these great educational opportunities.

CST also wants to attend more educational events. We are active chamber members and are looking forward to all the chamber sponsored events for 2024. If you see us, please say hello and snap a picture. We love meeting new people and seeing all our old friends. I also have some exciting news coming for our customers and the way we are managing invoices and payments. Trust me, you are going to love it! I will get you information as soon as I have it. Happy Valentine's Day!

—Jessica—