

CST TECHNOLOGY TIMES

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

Tech Talk...

with Lisa Brown, CEO of CST Group Inc.

It was a typical Sunday morning when I received an unexpected call from my neighbor three doors down. She wanted to update Shawn and I about a break in at her home at 3am this morning. Luckily, she and her husband were not home but her Ring doorbell notified them, so she had a LIVE viewing of this person as he entered her car and gained access to the breezeway of her home feeling incredibly helpless. He had his face covered with a bandana and his hands were gloved but you could clearly see his clothing and backpack. She observed him talking to someone assuming this person was in his ear – as she listened to him speak, he got spooked and said, “I think someone is home” and left. She contacted the State Police while watching this happen, but they were 50 minutes out. When they arrived, she walked them through gaining access to her home and ensured her the house was empty and secure.

After I disconnected from our call, I went to our cameras to see if I could identify a vehicle or some other identify trait of this person stalking our neighborhood. What I found has sent a wave of fear through me which brings me to this article in assessing risk (more on that later). At 3:12 am, I watched someone enter my car (no, it was not locked), go through my glove box, center console and looked above visors. He stole some cash in the glove box which was the only thing taken from the car. He could have easily used my garage door opener to access my garage and then my home, so I thank God he did neither of those things. He proceeded to enter Shawn’s truck and do the same – just stealing a container of change from the center console. Seven minutes later he left our property on foot. No vehicle was spotted. We contacted the State Police and filed a report with no expectations of him being caught.

I mean there is so much worse going on

continued on page 4



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 who’s mission it to SECURE, PROTECT and MANAGE technology for Small to Medium Businesses like yours.

THE COMPLIANCE BLIND SPOT:

What You’re Missing Could Cost You Thousands



Many small business owners operate under the misconception that regulatory compliance is a concern solely for large corporations.

However, in 2025, this belief couldn’t be further from the truth. With tightening regulations across various sectors, small businesses are increasingly in the crosshairs of compliance enforcement agencies.

Why Compliance Matters More Than Ever

Regulatory bodies like the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Payment Card Industry Security Standards Council (PCI SSC) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) have intensified their focus on data protection and consumer privacy. Noncompliance isn’t just a legal issue – it’s a financial and reputational risk that cripples businesses.

Key Regulations Affecting Small Businesses

1. HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act)

If your business handles protected health information (PHI), you’re subject to HIPAA regulations. Recent updates emphasize:

- **Mandatory encryption** of electronic PHI.
- **Regular risk assessments** to identify vulnerabilities.
- **Employee training** on data privacy and security protocols.
- **Incident response plans** for potential data breaches.

Failure to comply can result in hefty fines. For instance, in 2024, the HHS imposed a \$1.5 million penalty on a small health care provider for inadequate data protection measures.

2. PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard)

Any business that processes credit card payments must adhere to PCI DSS requirements. Key mandates include:

- Secure storage of cardholder data.
- Regular network monitoring and testing.
- Implementation of firewalls and encryption protocols.

continued on page 2...

...continued from cover

- **Access control measures** to restrict data access.

Sources say noncompliance can lead to fines ranging from \$5,000 to \$100,000 per month, depending on the severity and duration of the violation.

3. FTC Safeguards Rule

Businesses that collect consumer financial information are required to:

- Develop a **written information security plan**.
- Designate a **qualified individual** to oversee security measures.
- Conduct **regular risk assessments**.
- Implement **multifactor authentication (MFA)**.

Violations can result in penalties up to \$100,000 per incident for businesses and \$10,000 for responsible individuals. Scary, huh!

Real-World Consequences Of Noncompliance

This is just talk. Consider the case of a small medical practice that suffered a ransomware attack due to outdated security protocols. Not only did they face a \$250,000 fine from the HHS, but they also lost patient trust, leading to a significant drop in clientele. You have to take responsibility for and control of your data!



Steps To Ensure Compliance

- 1 Conduct Comprehensive Risk Assessments:** Regularly evaluate your systems to identify and address vulnerabilities.
- 2 Implement Robust Security Measures:** Use encryption, firewalls and MFA to protect sensitive data.
- 3 Train Employees:** Ensure your staff understands compliance requirements and best practices.
- 4 Develop An Incident Response Plan:** Prepare for potential breaches with a clear action plan.

5 Partner With Compliance Experts: Engage professionals who can guide you through the complexities of regulatory requirements.

Don't Wait Until It's Too Late

Compliance isn't just a legal obligation – it's a critical component of your business's integrity and longevity. Ignoring these requirements can lead to devastating financial penalties and irreparable damage to your reputation.

Don't let a compliance blind spot jeopardize your success.

"I DIDN'T KNOW"

Unfortunately, That Excuse Doesn't Replenish Your Bank Account, Resolve A Data Breach Or Erase Any Fines And Lawsuits.

It's coming...

- That day a hacker steals critical data, rendering your office useless...
- That day when your bank account or credit card is compromised...
- That day when your customers' private lives are uprooted...



Cybercriminals and hackers are constantly inventing NEW ways to infiltrate your company, steal your assets and disrupt your life. The ONLY way to STOP THEM is this:

YOU MUST CONSTANTLY EDUCATE YOURSELF ON HOW TO PROTECT WHAT'S YOURS!

Now, for a limited time, we have the perfect way to help educate you on how to reduce your risk to help keep you safe! Simply sign up to receive our FREE "Cyber Security Tech Tip of the Week." We'll send these byte-sized quick-read tips to your e-mail inbox. Every tip is packed with a unique and up-to-date real-world solution that keeps you one step ahead of the bad guys. And because so few people know about these security secrets, every week you'll learn something new! As a BONUS, we will add you to our monthly print newsletter mailing that contains valuable articles, tips, tricks and technology information.

Get your FREE "Cyber Security Tech Tip of the Week" at:
www.cstsupport.com/newsletter-techtips-signup/

CARTOON OF THE MONTH



"Another unanimous vote! Man I love the herd mentality!"

JESSE COLE

ON HOW TO CREATE RAVING FANS



Jesse Cole built the iconic Savannah Bananas brand from nothing by doing things differently. The key to his success was his “fans first” mindset, which centers on creating an incredible experience for each individual fan.

“[Fans] aren’t buying because of the product,” Cole explained. “They’re buying it because of how we make them feel. That’s the differentiator.”

Here are his takeaways for businesses who want to create raving fans too.

Eliminate Friction.

Put yourself in the customer’s shoes and eliminate the friction they experience. Just like Walt Disney used to walk around Disneyland every day to find things to improve, businesses should go through the sales and onboarding process to look for friction points—and reduce them whenever possible.

Entertain Always.

The heart of entertainment is to provide enjoyment, according to Cole. “How do you map the journey for your customers, every step of the way, to provide enjoyment and make their lives better?” he said. Think about the little details; there are many stages of the experience of working with you, from first impressions to

onboarding. Try to make every stage remarkable. Those interactions set the tone when someone starts working with you.

Experiment Constantly.

And don’t just experiment—try the exact opposite of what’s normal. Not every experiment will work, but the ones that do have the opportunity to become groundbreaking successes. And people only remember the successes, not all the failures along the way.

Engage Deeply.

“Do for one, what you wish you could do for many,” Cole said. The Magic Castle Hotel in Hollywood is a master of this tactic as well; their CEO says the key is to “listen carefully, respond creatively.” By creating tailored experiences for individuals, you show your entire fan base that you care deeply for the people who support you.

Empower Action.

“Stop standing still, start standing up,” said Cole. “None of [the rest of it] matters if we don’t empower first ourselves, and then our team.” To this end, he advised businesses to not underestimate the power of a thank you—to your team, your mentors and your clients—when it comes to building raving fans.

SHINY NEW GADGET OF THE MONTH

Withings Omnia Smart Mirror

The Withings Omnia Smart Mirror is a concept health device that centralizes wellness tracking at home. It performs daily 360° health scans, measuring heart metrics (ECG, AFib, vascular age), body composition, sleep quality, activity, and nutrition. Integrated with the Withings ecosystem, it delivers personalized insights via an AI voice assistant and allows users to share data with clinicians through the Withings+ app. Features like 24-hour cardiologist reviews are included via Cardio Check-Up. Though not yet available for purchase, select features will launch in the Withings app later this year. Omnia was unveiled at CES 2025.



CLIENT SPOTLIGHT:

Bregg Winery

Located in Norfolk, NY, Bregg Winery is a unique family-run artisan winery crafting small-batch wines from local fruits and vegetables.

Cheers to local flavor and bold beginnings!



Would you like your company highlighted here in our "Client Spotlight"? Then give us a call today at 877-954-4100.

YOUR PHONE CAN BE TRACKED

And It's Easier Than You Think

Most of us carry our phones everywhere, trusting them with everything from passwords to private business conversations. But here's the sad truth: phone tracking is far more common – and easier – than most people realize.

Whether it's a jealous partner, a disgruntled employee or a cybercriminal targeting your business, anyone with the right tools can monitor your location, read your messages or even access sensitive business data without you ever knowing. And for business owners, that puts more than just your privacy at risk. It puts your operations, clients and bottom line in danger.

How Phone Tracking Works:

There are several ways someone might track your phone:

Spyware Apps: These can be installed to monitor calls, texts and app usage. Some can even activate your microphone or camera without your knowledge.

Phishing Links: Clicking a malicious link in an e-mail or SMS can silently download tracking software onto your phone.

Location Sharing: Apps with excessive permissions or with social platforms you forgot were still logged in might be sharing your location in the background.

Stalkerware: This spyware is designed to hide in plain sight, often disguised as harmless apps or settings tools.

These methods don't require advanced hacking skills – many are sold commercially under the guise of "monitoring software."

Why This A Big Deal For Business Owners

If you run a company, your phone likely contains more than just personal messages. Think: e-mails with confidential client data, saved passwords, banking access and employee records. A compromised phone can be an open door to your entire business.

The scarier part is the likelihood that you won't realize you're being tracked until it's too late, after an account is drained, a deal is leaked or customer trust is broken.

Consider this: a single data breach costs US small businesses an average of \$120,000 (Verizon Data Breach Investigations Report). If your device is the weak link, that breach could start in your pocket any time.

Signs Someone Might Be Tracking Your Phone

Most spyware tools are designed to operate quietly, but there are still signs to watch for:

- Battery drain that doesn't match usage
- Increased data usage or strange spikes
- The phone feels hot when idle
- Unexplained apps or icons
- Background noise during calls
- Frequent crashes/unresponsive screens

These symptoms don't guarantee your phone is compromised, but when paired alongside other unusual behavior, they're worth investigating.

How To Stop Phone Tracking

If you suspect someone is tracking your

phone, here's what to do:

- 1. Run A Security Scan:** Use a reputable mobile security app to detect and remove spyware or malware. These tools can also monitor your device in real time and alert you to new threats.
- 2. Check App Permissions:** Go through your app list and review permissions. Disable unnecessary access to location, microphone and camera – especially for apps you rarely use.
- 3. Update Your Phone:** Security updates often include patches for vulnerabilities that spyware might exploit. Make sure your phone is running the latest OS.
- 4. Perform A Factory Reset:** If spyware is confirmed and can't be removed easily, a factory reset is the most thorough option. Just make sure to back up critical data, complete the reset and then change all important passwords.
- 5. Set Up Security Controls:** Use biometric logins (like Face ID or fingerprint) and enable multi-factor authentication on business apps.

Don't Leave Your Phone – And Business – Exposed

Because you're a business owner, your phone is more than a personal device. It's a mobile command center, customer file cabinet and sometimes a virtual vault. That's why keeping it secure should be a priority.

Cybercriminals are opportunists, and a compromised mobile device gives them an easy way in – no firewall needed.



CST Group Inc.

YOU'RE INVITED!**TECH&CHILL***Passionate
NOT
Pushy*

A **Business After Hours** Experience
& Customer Appreciation Event
Hosted by **CST Group Inc.**

&
The Malone Chamber of Commerce

14TH AUGUST
5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

14923 ST RT 30 Malone**ACTIVITIES**

TECH & CHILL POKER CARD CRAWL
NETWORKING
GAMES
CYBER CRIME FALLOUT MOVIE NIGHT

SPECIAL GUESTS

Pig & Moo BBQ Food Truck
&
Mr. Ding-A-Ling of the Adirondacks

PRIZE DRAWINGS & AWARDS!!
SEE YOU THERE!

PRESEASON BUDGET HUDDLE: IS YOUR TECH READY FOR KICKOFF?

**Top 5 Cybersecurity Tips to Win This Fall:**

1. **Audit Your Roster** – Know every device, app, and user on your network. Shadow IT is your weakest link.
2. **Update & Patch** – Outdated systems are like busted cleats — they'll trip you up when it matters most.
3. **Run Phishing Drills** – Test your team before the bad guys do. Awareness training = stronger defense.
4. **Back Up Like a Boss** – Offsite, automatic, and tested. If you can't restore, you're not protected.
5. **Call the Coach** – **That's us.** We'll review your strategy and help build a real IT playbook for the fall season.

Just like a winning team wouldn't step onto the field without pads, a playbook, and a game plan — your business can't afford to start Q4 without a preseason check on your tech and cybersecurity strategy. Now's the time to tighten up your line, patch your blind spots, and make sure your IT isn't your weakest link.

Cybercriminals are calling plays year-round — and if your budget doesn't account for real protection, you're already down at the half.

Call our office today 877-954-4100 and schedule your "IT Game Plan" session before the budget buzzer sounds. Let's get your team ready to win.



Passion Is Not a Problem

Most of you know how *Passionate Not Pushy* came to be (and if you don't, check out the first episode of the *Passionate Not Pushy* podcast!). Lately, I've been hearing more people describe their careers using the word "passionate"—and it got me thinking about how often that word gets tossed around.

Let's take a moment with the definition. Passion is:

1. A strong and barely controllable emotion
2. An intense desire or enthusiasm for something

There are a few more definitions out there – some of which are not exactly suitable for this publication (wink) but when I reflect on my passion for CST, for this industry, and for our clients, those first two hit the mark. I live and breathe this work. My energy when I talk about what we do? It's real, it's deep, and I'll admit, it can be a lot for some people.

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend a conference featuring Jesse Cole, Founder of Fans First Entertainment, owner of the Savannah Bananas, and author of *Banana Ball*, *Fans First*, and *Find Your Yellow Tux*. If you think I get fired up about technology and service, spend five minutes with Jesse. His enthusiasm is electric. His focus? Fans. His framework? The Five E's. (You can read more about that in this month's page 3 article.)

That experience reminded me of something important: being passionate about what you do shouldn't be rare, and it definitely shouldn't be something you hide. Everyone deserves to find that thing that lights them up – the work, the mission, the goal – that gets your heart racing and your brain buzzing. We all need something worth getting excited about.

So I'll ask you: **What are you passionate about?** What's the thing that makes you lose track of time? That gives you purpose?

If you're open to sharing your story, I'd love to hear it. Send me an email at lbrown@cstsupport.com. Let's celebrate passion—loudly, proudly, and without apology.



WHAT I'M READING....

Mindset by Carol S. Dweck

Why do some people thrive on challenges while others avoid them? In *Mindset*, psychologist Carol Dweck reveals how our underlying beliefs about our abilities can shape every part of our lives—from business and leadership to parenting and learning.

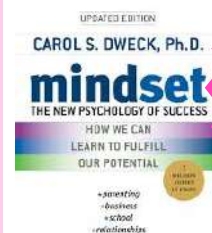
At the heart of the book is a simple but powerful idea: People either have a "fixed mindset" or a "growth mindset."

- A fixed mindset believes talent and intelligence are static—you either have it or you don't.
- A growth mindset sees abilities as qualities that can be developed through dedication and effort.

Dweck illustrates how adopting a growth mindset can lead to greater achievement, resilience, and innovation.

Whether you're leading a company, coaching a team, or trying to grow personally, *Mindset* offers practical strategies to shift your thinking—and unlock your potential.

Key takeaway:
"Becoming is better than being."
If you're ready to reframe failure as feedback and growth as a lifelong pursuit, this book is a must-read.



<BOOK>
<OF_THE>
<MONTH>

....Tech Talk Continued from Front Page

in our world but when something as little as this hits so close to home, literally, it puts things in perspective.

Which is why I think it is important to discuss **ASSESSING RISK!**

The above describes assessing risk when it comes to our homes. We all take precautions to secure our possessions but after this incident I know we took some risk. Most of us do the obvious with locking our doors (and you can be sure that from this point forward, our vehicles will also be locked), installing camera's, some of you may have a fence and gate surrounding your property and some may have a dog that would warn you of any intruder – all of these are **LEVELS** of protections based on the amount of risk you are willing to take. Shawn and I took risks in **NOT** locking our vehicles – not thinking anyone would ever enter our property without consent, in the middle of the night. You all have insurance on your vehicles, home and even yourselves – all of which decreases your risk!

So, why not your business and data? Risk Assessments will be required in the months to come, specifically to force you to look at the risk you all take in not ensuring proper cyber security precautions are in place. You will either need to be proactive in resolving the gaps or accept the risk with a formal document.

You all lock the doors at your business but may not have cameras to secure your buildings.

Some of you have no backup of your data assuming that because it is “in the cloud” you don’t need to have a backup – a wild misconception. Simply put, you are willing to accept the consequences of losing your data or having no camera footage if your building was to get broken in too.

Many of you have some level of our services, but not all of them which indicate you are willing to take on risk for those things we do not manage for you. And worse yet, some of you have **NO** managed services solution and low levels of security protecting your business.

My hope is that **TODAY**, you evaluate your level of risk. Take a look at all the security precautions in place and determine whether or not you are okay with the level of risk you are taking. Would I have been okay if this guy broke into my home? What would have happened if he encountered Shawn or I in the process? Was he armed? Could the outcome of this one night turned out significantly different? Heck yes! Am I willing to accept that risk – um....**NO!** So, new cameras are going up and vehicles will be locked at all times to lower the risk of this happening again.

Update: just before this newsletter went to print, we were notified that they caught the guy who was vandalizing our neighborhood. He is being charged with a multitude of breaking and entry, but was released with an appearance ticket.

Now, on a separate note, I want to remind you

of a few things you should be working on in the coming months:

1. Windows 10 is at End of Life (EoL) October 14th so please evaluate your inventory **NOW**. Computers are going to go up in cost the closer we get to that date – that whole supply and demand thing – so the sooner you get your replacements ordered the more savings you will see.

2. 2026 is approaching fast – evaluate your IT budget. Note: if you don’t have one, you should! If you need assistance with this, please reach out. I am only doing client budgets and 2026 projections if you contact me to do so.

3. For all clients, new MSA’s (Master Service Agreements) and SOW’s (Statement of Work) will be coming to you soon. This is simply a formality of the services we offer you and these documents are required during an audit. We are just getting everything in order for your account. If you have any questions about these documents, please reach out.

We appreciate you and wish you a very happy August.

As Always,

Dedicated To Your Security

Lisa

BIG REWARDS

For Your Referrals

We'll offer you **\$50** as a gesture of appreciation, once you introduce CST Group to a qualified colleague and they complete the initial appointment whether they become a client or not.

If your referral becomes a managed client, we'll provide you with a **\$500** bonus at the end of their first month of service.

SO, YOU MIGHT BE WONDERING – WHO MAKES AN IDEAL REFERRAL?

- Any business with 10 or more computers
- Needs help with its network, backup, compliancy, support, and security
- Wants 24x7x365 peace of mind

Full Details Here:

<https://www.cstsupport.com/about-us/referral-program/>
or call us at 1-877-954-4100

Digital Declutter: Get Organized with Technology This August

Last month we focused on your technology checkup and making sure everything is functioning at its best.

August is the perfect month to hit Refresh on your digital life. Whether you're preparing for a new school year, a busy fall season at work, or just want more calm in your day, the right tech tools can help you get organized and stay that way.

Technology isn't just for keeping up, it's for getting ahead. Here is your checklist to get it all done to be as efficient as possible.

1. Mastering Your Calendar

How many sticky notes do you have stuck to your desk? Who is still handwriting in planners and struggling with carrying them around? Now is the time to go digital. Google Calendar, Microsoft Outlook, or Apple Calendar can be on your computer and your phone. This allows you to always have your schedule on hand. Use these calendars to set reminders or set recurring tasks, and share events with family, classmates, or coworkers.

2. Create Smarter To-Do Lists

Time to ditch the paper list and try task management apps like Todoist, Trello, or Notion. These tools allow you to organize your lists and set due dates. Even better, many of these apps integrate with your calendar, email, and cloud storage.

3. Organize Your Digital Files (Before It's a Mess)

If your desktop looks like a cluttered closet, it's time to clean house. Use tools like Google Drive, Dropbox, or OneDrive to create folders by category (e.g., Finances, School, Projects) and automatically back up important files so they are always on hand.

*Bonus Tip: Use naming conventions like "2025_Taxes_Receipt" or "Math_HW_Week1" to make searching faster.

4. Declutter That Inbox

An overflowing inbox can slow your productivity. Unsubscribe from unwanted newsletters and using filters to sort emails automatically will make finding important emails quick and easy.

The takeaway today is that small tools can make a big impact on your day. Make technology work for you, not the other way around.



New Podcast Episode Alert!

This week on Passionate Not Pushy, Lisa sits down with her husband and CST Group Inc. co-owner, Shawn Brown! They're talking love, leadership, and what it really takes to build a business together. Don't miss this honest, behind-the-scenes conversation!

We hope you join us for this fun and uplifting episode! Don't forget to subscribe and like our podcast. Feel free to leave a review to let us know how we're doing.



Shawn
Brown

Listen Now On Spotify!



CONCERNED ABOUT THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF YOUR ONLINE IDENTITY?

YOU SHOULD BE!

If you've been following the latest news in cybersecurity, you know that attacks have only continued to grow in both size and sophistication. However, you might not be aware that small and mid-sized businesses like yours are the most targeted by Dark Web criminals. Would you be among the 60% of SMBs that would be bankrupted by the average cost of a data breach?

If you are reading this, you are eligible for a free and comprehensive Dark Web scan to identify how many of your credentials (DOB, SSN, User ID's and Passwords) have been compromised. To get your FREE Scan instantly, contact us today at 518-483-4100 or 941-249-3520 or email sara@cstsupport.com.

