

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.

With only two months left in 2025, many of us are looking at the goals we set back in January and wondering where the time went. I know how the year can get ahead of us, so I want to remind you to take a step back right now.

I say this with intentional urgency because I often forget to pause and recognize what Shawn, our team, and I have accomplished. I'm focused on finishing strong, pushing toward our goals, and reminding the team how close we are to meeting them. Every January, Shawn and I lay out clear goals and communicate them to the team. I've said it before, and I'll keep saying it — you can't expect your team to work toward something if they don't know what it is.

Every business or organization has goals. But too often, those goals are never communicated. Then, when results fall short, frustration follows. For many of us, the goals are financial, to grow revenue, reduce costs, or expand services. But unless you share those goals clearly, they stay out of reach. Communicate your goals and watch what happens. It really is amazing.

continued on page 5



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.

WORRIED ABOUT AI THREATS?

HERE'S WHAT'S ACTUALLY WORTH WORRYING ABOUT

AI is rapidly advancing – and bringing with it a whole new way to do business. While it's exciting to see, it can also be alarming when you consider that attackers have just as much access to AI tools as you do. Here are a few monsters lurking in the dark that we want to shine the light on.

Doppelgängers In Your Video Chats – Watch Out For Deepfakes

AI-generated deepfakes have become scarily accurate, and threat actors are using that to their advantage in social engineering attacks against businesses.

For example, there was a recent incident observed by a security vendor where an employee of a cryptocurrency foundation joined a Zoom meeting with several deepfakes of known senior leadership within their company.

The deepfakes told the employee to download a Zoom extension to access the Zoom microphone, paving the way for a North Korean intrusion.

Creepy Crawlies In Your Inbox – Stay Wary Of Phishing E-mails

Phishing e-mails have been a problem for years, but now that attackers can use AI to write e-mails for them, most of the obvious tells of a suspicious e-mail, like bad grammar or spelling errors, aren't a good way to spot them anymore.

Threat actors are also integrating AI tools into their phishing kits as a way to take landing pages or e-mails and translate them into other languages. This can help threat actors scale their phishing campaigns.

continued on page 2...

...continued from cover

Skeleton AI Tools – More Malicious Software Than Substance

Attackers are riding on the popularity of AI as a way to trick people into downloading malware. We frequently see threat actors tailoring their lures and customizing their attacks to take advantage of popular current events or even seasonal fads like Black Friday.

So, attackers using things like malicious “AI video generator” websites or fake malware-laden AI tools doesn’t come as a surprise. In this case, fake AI “tools” are built with just enough legitimate software to make them look legitimate to the unsuspecting user – but underneath the surface, they’re chock-full of malware.

For instance, a TikTok account was reportedly posting videos of ways to install



“cracked software” to bypass licensing or activation requirements for apps like ChatGPT through a PowerShell command. But, in reality, the account was operating a malware distribution campaign, which was later exposed by researchers.

Security awareness training is key for businesses here too. A reliable way to protect your business is to ask your MSP to vet any new AI tools you’re interested in before you download them.

Ready To Chase The AI Ghosts Out Of Your Business?

AI threats don’t have to keep you up at night. From deepfakes to phishing to malicious “AI tools,” attackers are getting smarter, but the right defenses will keep your business one step ahead.

Protect your team from the scary side of AI ... before it becomes a real problem.

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
- A common billing model that puts ALL THE RISK on you, the customer, when buying IT services; you’ll learn what it is and why you need to avoid agreeing to it
- Exclusions, hidden fees and other “gotcha” clauses IT companies put in their contracts that you DON’T want to agree to
- 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



Get your **FREE** copy today: www.cstsupport.com/itbuyersguide

CARTOON OF THE MONTH



4 'MAGIC' STRATEGIES TO BECOMING A BUSINESS LEGEND



Former NBA player Earvin “Magic” Johnson Jr. is known for his strong work ethic. Here are four strategies Magic used to build his empire that will help you achieve your goals and dreams in your business.

1. Refuse To Lose

When Magic left basketball for business, many assumed his fame made it easy. The truth was different. He struggled, made mistakes and faced rejection. “I could get the meetings,” he said, “but people didn’t take me seriously.” He used his own money at first, but when he sought outside funding for growth, banks turned him down for three years.

Eventually, he secured a loan and invested wisely, launching his career to the next level. Ironically, the banks that once rejected him now seek his business and he often declines. Magic’s takeaway: success isn’t about name recognition; it’s about showing a solid strategy, clear ROI and value creation.

2. Rivals Make You Better

Magic’s rivalry with Larry Bird is one of basketball’s most famous. “I disliked the Celtics and Larry because you have to in order to beat them,” he said. But Bird’s relentless work ethic pushed Magic to match him. “I knew Larry was taking 1,000 shots a day, so I had to take 1,000 shots a day. He got better, so I had to get better.”

The same applies to business. Competitors force you to sharpen your skills, innovate and work harder. They can keep you awake at night but that pressure can elevate your performance.

3. Elevate Your Game

“It takes the same amount of time to do a million-dollar deal as a billion-dollar deal,” Magic often says. For him, every opportunity must align with his brand, values and long-term goals. He uses a clear set of criteria: if a deal doesn’t check enough boxes, it isn’t worth pursuing.

Aligned values, shared revenue goals and a commitment to giving back are his markers for success. He teaches that clarity on what fits your company ensures stronger partnerships and sustainable growth.

4. Don’t Let Good Enough Be Enough

Magic believes in constant evaluation and improvement. Every new business begins with a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). He doesn’t stop there—he runs SWOTs on his executive team and even on himself. “I want to be a better man, husband, father, grandfather and CEO,” he said. He constantly asks, “Can this team take me where I want to go tomorrow?” That mindset ensures that both he and his businesses are always evolving, never settling.

The Bigger Picture

Magic Johnson’s transition from NBA superstar to successful entrepreneur was not smooth or guaranteed. He faced rejection, adapted and pushed himself the way he once did on the court. His story is a reminder that perseverance, competition, discipline and self-reflection can help anyone elevate their game—whether in sports, business or life.

SHINY NEW GADGET OF THE MONTH

LeafyPod AI-Powered Planter

LeafyPod is an intelligent planter designed to simplify plant care using real-time environmental monitoring. Powered by AI, it tracks soil moisture, sunlight exposure and watering cycles to maintain peak plant health all without the guesswork.

Perfect for office lobbies, clinics or workspaces seeking to improve air quality and add a touch of natural calm, LeafyPod blends smart technology with biophilic design. Its sleek, minimalist look makes it as stylish as it is functional.



CLIENT SPOTLIGHT:

Martin & Dukett LLC

This month, we’re proud to feature Martin & Dukett, LLC in our Client Spotlight. Their expert team provides comprehensive tax and accounting services for individuals and businesses, from retirement and estate planning to business advisory, payroll, and QuickBooks support.

We admire their commitment to accuracy, integrity, and personalized service, helping clients make informed financial decisions with confidence. Martin & Dukett LLC is a valued partner, and we’re proud to highlight them this month.

Ready to get expert tax and accounting guidance?
Call (518) 359-2955

4 HABITS

EVERY WORKPLACE NEEDS



Most cyberattacks don't happen because of some elite hacker. They happen because of sloppy everyday habits – like an employee clicking a bad link, skipping an update or reusing a password that's already been stolen in another breach.

The good news? Small changes in your daily routines can add up to big protection.

Here are four cybersecurity habits every workplace needs to adopt:

1. Communication

Cybersecurity should be part of the conversation, not just something IT worries about. Talk with your team regularly about the risks they might face and how to avoid them.

For example:

- A short reminder in a staff meeting about how to spot a phishing e-mail.
- Sharing news of a recent scam in your industry so people are on alert.

When security becomes a normal part of the discussion, it feels less like “extra work” and more like second nature.

2. Compliance

Every business has rules to follow,

whether it's HIPAA for health care, PCI for credit card payments or simply protecting sensitive customer information. Compliance isn't just about avoiding fines, it's about protecting trust.

Even if you're not in a highly regulated industry, your customers still expect you to safeguard their data. Falling short can damage your reputation just as much as it can hurt your bottom line.

Make sure to:

- Review your policies regularly to ensure they match current regulations.
- Keep records of training and system updates.
- Make compliance a shared responsibility, not just an IT checkbox.

3. Continuity

If your systems go down tomorrow, how quickly can your business get back up and running? Continuity is all about being prepared.

Always:

- Make sure backups are running automatically and tested regularly.
- Have a plan in place for what to do if ransomware locks up your files.

- Practice your recovery steps before you need them.

4. Culture

At the end of the day, your people are your first line of defense. Building a culture of security means making good cyber habits part of everyday work.

Some ways to make that happen are:

- Encourage strong, unique passwords (or, even better, password managers).
- Require MFA (multifactor authentication) on all accounts that support it.
- Recognize employees who catch phishing attempts. This reinforces good habits and makes security a team win.

When security feels like a team effort, everyone gets better at it.

Security Is Everyone's Job

Keeping your business safe isn't just about software or hardware – it's about people. By building strong habits around communication, compliance, continuity and culture, you're not just avoiding threats, you're creating a workplace that takes security seriously every day.

Now is the perfect time to reflect on the year. What went well? What failed miserably? Where can your workflows improve? And most importantly, how can you keep your people, your clients, and for some of you, your entire community, happy? Projects are wrapping up, budgets are being finalized, and everyone is working to ensure their people, plans, and technology are ready for the year ahead.

Whether you're managing a town office or running a growing business, the challenges are similar. You need reliable systems, trusted partners, and the confidence that your technology will perform when it matters most. That's why we take pride in being more than just your IT provider — we aim to be your one trusted technology partner.

As you plan your year-end, take a close look at your budget and determine if any of your technology needs improvement or replacement. With Windows 11 now in place, it's a good

time to identify other pain points. Is there anything else you'd like to accomplish before the year ends?

When you keep CST in the loop and communicate your goals, we can help you get there. Our job is to help you reach yours.

November also reminds us to pause and be thankful. Thankful for the clients and communities we serve, for the teamwork that keeps operations running smoothly, and for the opportunity to make a real difference through technology.

As the year winds down, this is the time to finish strong. Review your projects, check your systems, and make sure your IT plan sets you up for success in 2026. If you're unsure where to start, give us a call so we can help assess where you stand and what to prioritize before year-end.

I want to say thank you for allowing CST to be your trusted technology

advisor. We take pride in our continued efforts to keep your technology secure, compliant and functioning at its best and I appreciate you very much.

Let's end the year strong – Happy Thanksgiving!

Passionate NOT Pushy,

Lisa

BE THANKFUL
BE
Grateful
&
BE BLESSED

BIG REWARDS

For Your Referrals

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

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.

- 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



Exciting Collaboration Alert!

Lisa is teaming up with Devan Robinson of Developing With Devan - A powerhouse coach who helps women step boldly into their purpose and leadership. They'll be recording a special "On The Road" episode together at the Elevate event this November.

Stay tuned—this episode is going to inspire and ignite!



November

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS - 11/2/25

ELECTION DAY - 11/4/25

VETERANS DAY - 11/11/25 - OFFICE CLOSED

THANKSGIVING DAY - 11/27/25 - OFFICE CLOSED



OUR PHONE SOLUTION IS YOUR SOLUTION

Looking for a Better Phone System?

Or maybe your current phones are driving you crazy?

Want more flexibility to take calls from anywhere?

Stay connected whether you're at your desk, on the road, or working from home.

Our easy-to-use phone system lets you:

- Make and receive calls from your computer, mobile phone, or web browser.
- See who is available, on a call, or away.
- Sync your contacts so everything stays up to date.
- Use multiple devices for one user- so your calls follow you wherever you go!

Simple. Flexible. Reliable.

Just a phone system that works- wherever you do.

Contact Michelle at 877-954-4100 to book a demo!





PASSIONATE NOT PUSHY: THE VALUE OF MENTORSHIP

Who do you turn to when you need honest feedback?

No matter what your title is or experience levels, everyone needs people who will tell them the truth. A good mentor doesn't flatter you. They challenge you. They help you think differently, stay accountable, and grow into the person and leader you're meant to be.

I am fortunate to have a few mentors I rely on consistently. Some have been part of my life for over 30 years, and I can honestly say we have grown up together. Mady and Paul Davis are now retired, but their impact on my life, my team, and the success of CST is, in part, because of their guidance. They ran successful businesses, and I trust them to provide honest feedback, sometimes to a fault. They know me so well that they often know what I am thinking before I even say it. They love my ideas yet will shoot them down in a heartbeat without hesitation. Their guidance is invaluable, and I thank God for them every day.

Shawn and I also have an accountability group made up of peers who do exactly what we do. They are competitors, but because they are in different regions of the world, we are friends and colleagues who share all aspects of our businesses. We meet weekly to discuss goals, projects, problems, and every other part of our operations, and they too have no problem offering direct and honest feedback.

I can't forget my team at CST. Yes, they are employees, but I rely on their expertise, their knowledge of our business, and their understanding of our clients to help guide the direction

of this company. They deserve a say in its growth because I depend on them to help get us there. Their opinions matter and are considered in every decision Shawn and I make.

And finally, I can't forget to mention the most important mentor I have — my husband and business partner, Shawn. People often tell us that working with a spouse would be a monstrous task, but for us, it simply works. We've known each other since we were teenagers, and there is no one I trust more. He is my guiding force in both life and business, and he will always be my primary mentor.

My point is this -- mentorship matters both personally and professionally. As a business owner, I've leaned on all these people to help me see what I can't. They've helped me make better decisions, navigate challenges, and stay focused on what truly matters. Personally, they have reminded me to slow down, check my blind spots, and stay grounded in my purpose. Great mentors don't hand you answers. They ask the questions that make you stop and think. They see potential in you before you see it in yourself. And over time, you realize mentorship isn't one-sided. When you share your lessons with someone else, you grow too.

If you're lucky enough to have a mentor, or two, take a moment this month to thank them. And if you haven't stepped into that role yourself, consider it. Be the voice of reason, encouragement, and truth for someone else.

Growth is not a solo journey. It's built through connection, conversation, and the courage to listen and to be



honest. That's where true mentorship lives.

As we reflect on trust and thankfulness this month, remember that mentorship is built on both, trusting someone enough to guide you, and being thankful for the wisdom they share. I am confident you have wisdom to share.

I wish you a Happy Thanksgiving.

Passionate NOT Pushy,

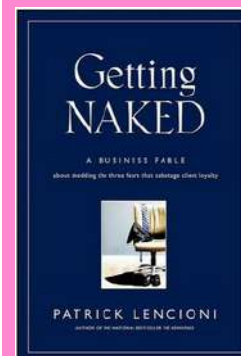
Lisa

WHAT I'M READING....

Getting NAKED by Patrick Lencioni

This month's pick challenges how we think about professional relationships. In *Getting Naked*, Patrick Lencioni shows how trust and humility—not polish or perfection—build stronger client connections. His lesson is clear: drop the fear of being wrong or looking weak, and focus instead on serving with honesty and care.

It's a message that resonates deeply with how we approach our work at CST. When we show up transparently, listen first, and lead with integrity, we earn more than business—we earn trust. This book is a reminder that authenticity is not only good leadership, it's good business.



**<BOOK>
<OF THE>
<MONTH>**

Your IT Dream Team Without the Payroll Headache



Every winning team has strong players who know how to read the court, anticipate the next move, and deliver under pressure. That's what CST Group and IT for Local Government bring to your organization — your all-star IT team, without the overhead.

We handle the plays: cybersecurity defense, data backups, compliance, and proactive tech strategy — so you can stay focused on running the business (or the town) while we keep your systems in championship shape. Ready to bench the tech stress and start winning?
Call us today
let's put a powerhouse IT team on your side of the court.



Cyber Safety Tips Before A Trip

To avoid the stress of lost devices, stolen data or a security breach that could ruin your trip, make cybersecurity a priority by taking a few simple steps before, during and after your journey.

Before You Leave...



1. Update All Devices

Software updates often include patches for security vulnerabilities.

2. Back Up Important Data

If your laptop containing vital client presentations is stolen, a cloud-based or other secure backup will allow you to get your data back without significant disruption.

3. Secure Your Devices

Never leave your device unattended and always sign out. Remember, your computer should be password protected! If you don't have a password now to login to your computer, create one!

Stay Cyber Safe This Holiday Season: Protect Your Business and Employees from Holiday Scams

As the holidays approach, many of us are thinking about shopping deals, year-end tasks, and family celebrations. Unfortunately, cybercriminals are thinking about the same thing — but for very different reasons.

The holiday season is one of the busiest times of year for online scams, phishing attacks, and fake websites. At CST Group Inc., we want to help you and your team stay secure during this high-risk season. Whether you're managing business payments, ordering supplies, or shopping online, a few proactive steps can make all the difference.

1. Beware of "Too Good to Be True" Deals

Cybercriminals often set up fake websites or send phishing emails that mimic major retailers and brands. These scams use limited-time offers or deep discounts to get users to click links or enter credit card information.

Tip: Always go directly to the retailer's official website instead of clicking links from emails or ads. Check for HTTPS in the address bar and look closely for misspellings or unusual URLs.

2. Watch for Gift Card and Invoice Scams

Businesses and government offices often see an increase in fraudulent payment requests during the holidays. Common scams include fake invoices, "urgent" payment demands, or requests to buy gift cards for employees or clients.

Tip: Always verify any unusual payment request through a trusted contact method — not by replying to the original email.

3. Use Strong, Unique Passwords

Reusing passwords across shopping sites or vendor accounts puts your business and personal data at risk. If one account is compromised, cybercriminals can gain access to others.

Tip: Use a password manager to create and store strong, unique passwords. Enable multifactor authentication (MFA) wherever possible.

4. Keep Devices and Software Updated

Outdated browsers, apps, or operating systems can leave your devices vulnerable to malware. Before the busy season hits, take a few minutes to ensure your updates are current.

Tip: Set your system to update automatically and remind employees to do the same on their work and personal devices.

5. Educate Your Team

Cybersecurity awareness isn't just for IT — it's for everyone. A well-informed employee can be your first line of defense against a phishing attack.

Tip: Before the holidays, remind your staff to be cautious with emails, verify links, and report anything suspicious to your IT team.

Cybercriminals thrive on distraction — and the holidays are full of them. By staying alert and following safe online practices, you can enjoy the season without falling victim to costly scams.

CST Group Inc. is committed to helping our clients stay secure year-round. If you'd like help strengthening your cybersecurity strategy or providing awareness training for your team, contact Jessica today at jessica@cstsupport.com.