

Insider Tips to Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier and More Profitably

Tech Talk With Lisa

Education, Focus, and Building Teams That Outperform

I recently attended a conference where I had the opportunity to hear Nick Saban, American sportscaster and the Alabama Crimson Tide Football Team Coach from 2007-2024, speak.

Like many, I knew his success as a coach but hearing him talk about leadership and performance in person was more impactful than I thought it would be.

His message was not about football. It was about focus, discipline, and what it takes to build teams that consistently perform at a high level.

One statement stayed with me.

“Focus on what you want, not what you don’t have.”

In business, it is easy to focus on constraints. Limited budgets, staffing challenges, aging systems and competing priorities are among the struggles every business faces.

Those challenges are real. But when teams stay focused on what they lack, progress slows and performance declines.

High-performing teams take a different approach. They focus on outcomes. They focus on ownership. They focus on what they can control.

Cont. On Page 3



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.**

THREE BUSINESS SCAMS

Your Team Might Fall For This Week



Most cyber incidents don’t begin with obvious warning signs or dramatic system failures. They begin with something that looks like it belongs in a normal workday. A quick text about a small charge. A notification that a document was shared. An email that appears to come from a trusted contact asking for a simple update.

Today’s scams are designed to blend in, not stand out. They rely on timing, context and the assumption that if something looks routine, it’s probably safe. As you read through these examples, consider one honest question: **Would everyone on your team recognize the risk before reacting?**

Scam #1: The toll road (or parking fee) text

A text arrives: “You have an unpaid toll balance of \$6.99. Pay within 12 hours.”

It names a real toll system, the amount feels harmless and clicking the link feels efficient. The problem is that the link leads to a convincing payment page built to capture card details or personal information.

Guardrail that helps: Legitimate toll agencies don’t demand payment via text. Businesses should set the rule: No payments through links. Employees must go directly to the official site or app to pay.

Scam #2 ‘Your file is ready’

An employee gets an email saying a document was shared through a familiar platform. The branding looks correct.

The format matches other notifications they’ve received before.

They click, log in and move on. Except that login page may be harvesting credentials, giving an attacker access to your cloud environment.

Guardrail that helps: If a file wasn’t expected, don’t click the email link. Log into the platform directly. Real files will be there. Restrict external sharing and enable login alerts for extra protection.

Scam #3 The email that’s written too well

Phishing emails aren’t sloppy anymore. They’re polished, specific and aligned with real vendors or internal roles. They sound calm and professional, often requesting payment updates or credential verification.

Because they mirror everyday communication, they prompt action before doubt surfaces.

Guardrail that helps: Any request involving credentials, payments or sensitive data gets verified through a second channel. Hover over the sender’s addresses. Treat urgency itself as a warning sign.

What This Comes Down To

The risk isn’t careless employees. It’s systems that assume everyone will always slow down under pressure. If a single rushed click could interrupt your operations, the answer isn’t better instincts. It’s a stronger framework that helps your team make the right call every time.

UNLOCK YOUR INNER STRENGTH

with **Jesse Israel**

Renowned Keynote Speaker and Leadership Coach to Elite Performers



Photo courtesy of www.jesseisrael.com

Sometimes, it takes a series of quiet moments to relearn how to be bold and brash and take up space.

That's how it happened for Jesse Israel, founder of *The Big Quiet* movement and keynote speaker at Gartner's IAM summit last December.

He shared how, at 14, he was the unapologetic ringleader of his class, but threats of expulsion and external pressure forced him to make himself smaller. By college, Israel was terrified of public speaking and commanding a room as he once did.

Israel knew he wasn't living as his full self, noting, "Maybe some of you can relate to this feeling of knowing that you've got more power inside of you, more potential to live up to."

"Every person has an enormous well of power and potential," Israel said.

"We all have unique gifts, abilities and strengths we are meant to be putting into our work, our families and our communities. But what I've seen from working with thousands of leaders is that most of us [have access to] a tiny fraction of what's available inside, which limits our impact on the world outside."

"The leaders, teams and organizations that were thriving were not making more noise," Israel noted. "They had learned to effectively be quiet."

The Power of Quiet

"What blocks us from being able to access what's within and live up to our potential is noise," Israel said. He identified three types of noise: in the world, in our heads and in our bodies.

Israel developed a three-step process to quiet the noise.

Step 1: Make space

Creating moments of quiet amid the chaos gives you an advantage. "Getting quiet when everybody else was loud gave me an edge," Israel said. "When you practice making space, you gain the advantage that few people have," Israel added.

Step 2: Choose Connection

Israel said reconnecting with others helped him rediscover himself. "As human beings, when the noise in our heads gets louder and we start overthinking, our tendency is to push away [from others] and isolate ourselves, keeping us from the thing we actually need and want most — people.

When you notice yourself isolated, the act of courage is to take a step towards connection."

"If you really want to cut through the noise in your life and expand what's possible, you must assign meaning to what you do. It's got to be about something greater than yourself," Israel said.

Step 3: Share Your Genius

For Israel, reclaiming his strengths meant embracing the qualities that once got him into trouble.

"What I've seen consistently is that when leaders, organizations and teams take the time to get clear about what their own genius is, on an individual basis, and then map out responsibilities based on the genius of those individuals, they become unstoppable," Israel said.

"Oftentimes, stepping into the 'Zone of Genius' gets uncomfortable. As a result, we oftentimes shy away. But on the other side of fear and discomfort is our full potential. These small acts of courage are required for us to become the person we're meant to be," Israel said.

"You don't have to change who you are to become more powerful. You simply have to claim who you've always been."

Your Kid's Gaming Rig Could Survive a Cyberattack.

CAN YOUR OFFICE?



Remember blowing into Nintendo cartridges to make them work? Once upon a time, that was our version of IT support.

Cartridge wouldn't load? Blow on it. Still wouldn't load? Blow harder.

If that failed, you smacked the console and hoped for the best.

We thought we were pretty good at technology.

But your kid has never had to fix anything by hitting it. Their setup is a finely tuned machine: solid-state drive, 32 gigs of RAM, a processor powerful enough to render a short film, mesh Wi-Fi with no dead zones, real-time performance monitoring and multi-factor authentication on every account.

It's optimized, tuned and maintained.

Now think about your office. There's a workstation from 2019 that takes four minutes to boot, a printer that jams every Tuesday, shared folders named "New New Final FINAL" and software that doesn't talk to each other. Then there's the Wi-Fi that mysteriously dies in the conference room and the laptop with a "Restart to update" notification that's been dismissed every morning for three weeks.

Gamers optimize. Businesses tolerate. That gap is more expensive than most people realize.

Why Gamers Win This Comparison

It's not about budget. A solid gaming PC costs about the same as a business workstation. Business internet is often faster than residential. The tools to monitor and secure a network aren't out of reach.

The difference is attention.

Gamers update everything immediately: operating systems, drivers, firmware, patches. Outdated software means lag, and lag means losing. Meanwhile, every postponed update on your office laptops represents a known vulnerability with a fix that hasn't been installed.

Gamers back up their progress religiously. Lose a 200-hour save once and you never forget. Many businesses, however, don't regularly verify that backups are running properly. When a gamer loses data, it's frustration. When a business loses data, it's client records, financial history and possibly the ability to operate.

Gamers also monitor performance in real time. CPU temperature. Network speed. System load. They notice a small dip and investigate before it turns into a crash. Most businesses discover issues when someone says, "The internet's slow today." That's not monitoring. That's reacting.

...continued on page 4

SHINY NEW GADGET OF THE MONTH

Dell UltraSharp 52" 6K USB-C Display

Named a standout in Windows Central's Best of CES 2026, this 52" 6K display is built for users who live in multiple windows.

Run dashboards, remote sessions, ticket queues and documentation side by side without constant tab switching. A single USB-C cable delivers power, video and data, keeping your desk clean. If you're building a true command center, this is the screen that anchors it.



Spring is the perfect time to work smarter

Is your team fully using tools like Microsoft 365 and AI? Or just scratching the surface?

Our Digital Workplace Efficiency Training Series helps employees:

- ✓ Save time
- ✓ Reduce email overload
- ✓ Use AI to simplify daily tasks
- 📅 Now booking May sessions—limited availability!
- 👉 Set up a meeting to get started

Set Up A Meeting



FREE REPORT

What Every Small-Business Owner Must Know About Protecting and Preserving Their Company's Critical Data and Computer Systems

This report outlines in plain, nontechnical language the common mistakes that many small-business owners make with their computer networks that cost them thousands in lost sales, productivity and computer repair bills. By the end of the report, you'll have an easy, proven way to reduce the financial expense and frustration caused by these oversights.

Download your **FREE** copy today at:
www.cstsupport.com/protect
 or call our office at (877) 954-4100.

PROTECT YOUR NETWORK

"What Every Business Owner Must Know About Protecting and Preserving Their Network"



Don't Trust Your Company's Critical Data and Operations To Just Anyone!

CARTOON OF THE MONTH



"Great education. Now let's talk about your 15 years of experience."

...continued from page 3

Your kid would never run their setup that way. And their setup isn't responsible for payroll.

How this happens

No one designs a messy office network on purpose.

Business technology grows gradually. A tool gets added to solve a problem. Another platform comes in for accounting. Then CRM. Then file sharing. Then payroll. Then security layered on top.

Each decision makes sense in the moment. Over time, though, technology stops being designed and starts being accumulated. Accumulation creates friction.

Gaming rigs are built intentionally for performance. Business systems often evolve for convenience. One is strategic. The other is incremental. And incremental systems eventually become expensive systems.

Back when we were blowing on cartridges, we didn't know better. Today, the tools and knowledge exist. The question isn't whether improvement is possible. It's whether anyone is actively paying attention.

The cost nobody calculates

The biggest cost rarely shows up as a dramatic outage. It appears in small, daily inefficiencies everyone has learned to accept.

It's the five minutes waiting for a slow login. Searching for a misplaced file. Re-entering data into systems that don't sync. Restarting the same machine twice a week. Creating workarounds because "that's just how it works here."

Individually, those interruptions feel minor, but that five-minute glitch often costs far more than five minutes. It can take over 20 minutes to fully regain focus after being disrupted. Multiply that across your team, week after week. What feels normal becomes expensive.

In gaming, lag is unacceptable. In business, lag becomes routine. And routine inefficiency quietly drains productivity.

The better question

When asked about their technology, most business owners say, "It works fine." But working and working efficiently aren't the same thing.

Ask yourself the following: Are your tools integrated or simply coexisting? Are your systems streamlined or stacked on top of one another? Are your processes supported by technology or constantly working around it? Is anyone watching your network proactively, before something fails?

Hardware will always evolve. What drives real productivity today is integration, automation, security and thoughtful system design.

None of that improves by accident.

Passionate
NOT
Pushy
WITH LISA BROWN

Jerry Manor



On Passionate Not Pushy, Lisa sits down with Jerry Manor of SeaComm Credit Union to explore communication, financial literacy, and leading through education...not pressure. Drawing on his background in radio and decades of teaching, Jerry shares how purpose-driven communication can build trust across generations, even in semi-retirement.



Better communication starts here! Empower your team and improve every customer interaction.

Our easy-to-use phone system lets you:

- Connect from anywhere, on multiple devices
- Instantly see team availability
- Keep contacts current and organized
- Never miss a call again

Contact Michelle at 877-954-4100
And Explore What's Possible



Scan to Schedule a Demo!

Spring is the perfect time to work smarter

Is your team fully using tools like Microsoft 365 and AI? Or just scratching the surface?

Our Digital Workplace Efficiency Training Series helps employees:

- ✓ Save time
- ✓ Reduce email overload
- ✓ Use AI to simplify daily tasks

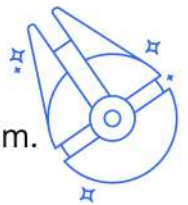
 **17** Now booking May sessions—limited availability!

 Set up a meeting to get started

Set Up A Meeting



STRENGTHEN YOUR FORCE FIELD WITH MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION (MFA).



Secure your systems, you must... hmm.

Passwords alone? Strong, they are not.

MFA, enable you will. Stop attackers, it does.

- ✓ Email, protect it must be
- ✓ Financial systems, lock them down
- ✓ Remote access, guarded it should be

No exceptions... only security.

May the 4th be with you... protected, you will be.

HOTEL WI-FI: A MONTH ON THE ROAD GOT ME THINKING

Over the past month, I spent a lot of time in hotels. I went from Southwest Florida to Northern New York, down to Dallas, and then back across New York State for conferences. That meant a lot of check-ins, a lot of different networks, and plenty of moments where connecting to hotel Wi-Fi would have been the easy choice.

In my line of work, that is usually a hard no.

As a cybersecurity company, we advise clients to avoid public Wi-Fi whenever possible. It is simply not designed with security in mind.

But being on the road that much got me thinking. Most people connect without a second thought. And in many cases, they do not have another option.

So, if you are going to use hotel Wi-Fi, you should at least know what is happening behind the scenes and how to protect yourself.

Hotel Wi-Fi is built for convenience. Not privacy.

At a minimum, networks can log browsing activity and recognize your device every time you connect. Your phone broadcasts a unique identifier, which allows networks to track usage patterns during your stay.

There is also a more immediate risk. Not every network you see is legitimate.

At several hotels, I saw multiple networks with similar names. Some were clearly official. Others were close enough to cause confusion. That is exactly how attackers operate. They rely on people connecting quickly without verifying.

Here are a few simple steps that make a real difference.

Start with the basics

1. Confirm the correct Wi-Fi network
Before you connect, ask the front desk for the exact network name. Do not rely on what “looks right.”

Be careful how you log in

2. Skip social sign-in options
If you see options like “Sign in with Google” or social media, avoid them.

Use:

- Room number and last name
- Or a simple email address

It limits how much information you are sharing.

Use your hotspot when it matters

3. Switch to your phone for anything sensitive

If you are accessing:

- Banking
- Business systems
- Email



Use your mobile hotspot instead.

iPhone:

Settings > Personal Hotspot > Turn on “Allow Others to Join”

Android:

Settings > Connections > Mobile Hotspot and Tethering > Mobile Hotspot

Make your device harder to track

4. Turn on MAC address randomization

This prevents networks from consistently identifying your device.

iPhone:

Settings > Wi-Fi > Tap the network > Turn on “Private WiFi Address” by choose Fixed or Rotating

Android:

Settings > Wi-Fi > Tap the network > Advanced > Set MAC address type to Randomized

Add a layer of privacy

5. Use a private DNS

This helps limit what the network can see.

iPhone:

Settings > Wi-Fi > Tap the “i” next to the network > Configure DNS > Manual > Add 1.1.1.1

Android:

Settings > Connections > More Connection Settings > Private DNS > Enter: 1.1.1.1

Pay attention to red flags

6. Watch the login process

You should see a clear terms and conditions page when connecting.

If nothing appears, disconnect and confirm the network. That is often a sign something is off.

After a month on the road, here is my takeaway.

Avoid hotel Wi-Fi when you can.

When you cannot, be intentional about how you use it.

Small steps like these do not take much time, but they significantly reduce your risk and help keep your information where it belongs.

Happy Travels!

Lisa

Passionate NOT Pushy



<BOOK>
<OF THE>
<MONTH>



What I'm Reading

Fans First by Jesse Cole

This month, I'm reading *Fans First* by Jesse Cole, a practical and energetic book on creating unforgettable experiences and building loyal customers.

I recently attended a conference where Jesse was the keynote speaker. Hearing him speak in person and walk through his business approach made the message even more impactful.

One line from the book stood out: *"Whatever is normal, do the exact opposite."*

The takeaway is simple. Stop focusing on transactions and start focusing on creating real connections. When you shift your mindset from gaining customers to creating fans, everything changes.

What stood out to me is how relevant this is across industries. People are not just looking for a service. They are looking for an experience, for trust, and for a reason to come back.

A quick read with a message that challenges you to think differently about how you serve others. My goal is simple....turn every CST client into a fan.

Not Every Path Starts with College

As we head into the end of the 2026 school year, I find myself thinking about graduation season.

Caps and gowns. Celebrations. Big decisions.

For high school seniors, this is the moment where everyone seems to ask the same question.

"What's next?"

For many, the expected answer is college.

I want to offer a different perspective.

I spent 11 years as an adjunct instructor at the college level. I have had the opportunity to teach hundreds of students. Some were focused, engaged, and ready to learn. Others were there because they felt like they had to be.

You could tell the difference immediately.

The students who wanted to be there showed up differently. They asked questions. They paid attention. They connected what they were learning to where they wanted to go.

The others struggled.

Not because they were not capable. But because they had no interest in being there in the first place.

They were following a path that was chosen for them.

That is where I think we need to pause. As parents, mentors, and leaders, we want the best for the next generation. We want them to succeed. We want them to have opportunities. But sometimes, in trying to guide them, we unintentionally push them into a direction that is not theirs.

College is a great path. For the right person. But it is not the only path. And more importantly, it is not the right path for everyone.

Over the years, I have seen students sit through classes with zero engagement. No interest in the material. No connection to the outcome. Just going through the motions because it was the next step someone told them to take.

That is not a recipe for success. That is a recipe for frustration, wasted time, and often, unnecessary debt.

Instead, I would encourage a different conversation.

Start with this question.

"What do you enjoy?"

Not what sounds impressive. Not what others expect. Not what fits a traditional mold. What actually interests you. What kind of work would you be proud to do every day. What kind of life do you want to build. We need to give young adults the space to figure that out. Because when someone is aligned with what they care about, everything changes. Effort increases. Focus improves. Ownership follows. That is where growth happens.

We also need to be honest about something else.

There is a growing demand for skilled trades and blue-collar professions. These roles are essential. They are well-paying. And they offer real opportunities for long-term success.

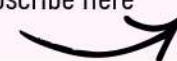
Yet, they are often overlooked in favor of a more traditional path. That needs to change. Encouraging someone to pursue a trade, a certification, or hands-on experience is not settling. It is choosing a path that fits. And that is the goal. This is not about lowering expectations. It is about aligning expectations with purpose.

As someone who has spent over a decade in the classroom, I can tell you this. The students who succeed are not always the ones who follow the expected path. They are the ones who find something they care about and commit to it.

So as graduation season approaches, I would encourage parents to shift the conversation. Guide. Support. Ask questions. But do not force a path. Help them find their own. Because when someone is passionate about what they do, you do not have to push them.

And that is where real success begins.

Subscribe Here



Lisa