

CST TECHNOLOGY TIMES

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

"passionate NOT pushy"

By Lisa Brown, CEO & Founder

Are you living in a state of overwhelm? I was recently told by a colleague that if I wasn't living in overwhelm, then I wasn't growing. So, here I am, feeling like my hair is on fire. It's fine, everything is fine!

As I write this newsletter, it is the day before the local premiere of my Amazon Documentary "Cybercrime: Fallout". To say my anxiety is at an all-time high is an understatement. I mean, I never thought I would get the chance to collaborate on a #1 Amazon bestselling book much less a movie – but here I am, living my best life and taking every opportunity I get to grow both personally and professionally. We are planning on hosting a couple of more premieres so be watching your inbox for locations and dates. This is my personal invite to each of you. It is an important movie especially for small business owners, CEO's and CFO's.

I know it may seem early to you, but it is time to start talking about budgets and contracts. I hate to state the obvious but September marks the end of the 3rd quarter which means we will have three months remaining to talk about system upgrades, network equipment upgrades, replacements and discuss the overall 2025 budget for any new compliance requirements.

Let's talk about budgets first. If you are a client and I have prepared a budget for you in the past, trust that I am working on it now. I do quite a few of them so please remind me if you have a deadline that I need to meet that is earlier than October 1st. That is the deadline I have given myself. If you are not a client, please talk to your current IT provider, they should be able to do a budget for you.

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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.



HACKERS ARE TARGETING SMALL CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES AND OTHER INVOICE-HEAVY BUSINESSES

From 2023 to 2024, attacks on construction companies doubled, making up 6% of Kroll's total incident response cases, according to the 2024 Cyber Threat Landscape report from risk-advisory firm Kroll. Experts at Kroll note that the uptick could be driven by how work is carried out in the industry: employees work with numerous vendors, work remotely via mobile devices and operate in high-pressure environments where urgency can sometimes trump security protocols. All of these factors make the construction industry ripe for a cyber-attack.

Ripe For Hackers

Business e-mail compromise (BEC) – fake e-mails designed to trick employees into giving away money or sensitive information – made up 76% of attacks on construction companies, according to

Kroll. These e-mails look like document-signing platforms or invoices to socially engineer users into giving away information.

These tactics are having a higher success rate in smaller construction companies for a few reasons:

- **They deal with a lot of suppliers and vendors.** Construction companies work with many suppliers and vendors, and each vendor can be a weak spot that hackers can exploit. For example, if a hacker gets control of a vendor's e-mail, they can send fake invoices that look real, tricking businesses into sending money to the hacker's account instead. Multiply that by the number of vendors you work

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with, and that's a lot of potential entry points for a hacker.

- They use frequent mobile sign-ins. As truly remote workers, construction employees rely on mobile devices to sign into accounts and communicate from anywhere. This mobile accessibility, while convenient, also increases the risk because mobile devices are typically less secure than desktops or laptops.
- They work in a high-stakes, high-pressure environment. In industries where delays can be costly, such as construction or health care, employees may rush to process invoices or approve transactions without thoroughly verifying their legitimacy. This urgency is precisely what attackers count on to get around standard security checks.

Your Industry Could Be Next

Construction companies are not the only ones experiencing more attacks. Small manufacturing companies, higher education institutions and health care providers that lack the robust security infrastructure of larger industry players are also examples of industries seeing a rise in cyber-attacks. These industries, like construction, deal with numerous vendors

and urgent invoices, making them prime targets for business e-mail compromise and invoice fraud.

How To Protect Against BEC And Invoice Fraud

1. Use Multifactor Authentication (MFA)

Accounts that use MFA are 99% less likely to be attacked, according to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. MFA requires multiple forms of verification before granting access to sensitive information. Even if hackers obtain log-in details, they can't access accounts without the second credential, typically a mobile device or a biometric scan.

2. Always Verify Supplier Information

One of the simplest yet most effective measures is to verify the authenticity of invoices and supplier information. Establish a protocol where employees are required to double-check the details of any financial transactions directly with the supplier through a known and trusted communication channel, such as a phone call.

3. Keep Employees Trained On Common Attacks

Employee training is a vital component of a comprehensive cyber security strategy. Regular training sessions on recognizing social engineering and phishing attempts and understanding the importance of following

verification protocols can empower employees to act as the first line of defense. The Information Systems Audit and Control Association recommends cyber security awareness training every four to six months. After six months, employees start to forget what they have learned.

4. Maintain Strong Cyber Security Practices

Cybercriminals regularly exploit outdated software to gain entry into systems. Small businesses can close these security gaps by keeping software up-to-date. Investing in robust antivirus and anti-malware solutions can help detect and stop attacks before they get into your systems.

You're A Target, But You Don't Need To Be A Victim

Hackers are increasingly targeting small, invoice-heavy industries like construction, manufacturing and health care due to their inherent vulnerabilities. By understanding the reasons behind these attacks and implementing robust cyber security measures, small business leaders can protect their organizations from becoming easy targets. Utilizing MFA, maintaining strong cyber security practices, verifying supplier information and training employees are essential to stopping attacks.

UPCOMING FREE WEBINAR

"Budgets and Contracts: Essential Tips and Technology Musts"

Wednesday, September 11, 2024
at 9:00 am

Plan for 2025 NOW! Having a Technology Budget is a MUST, but what should you include? Please DO NOT sign contracts without knowing this!!! If I recommend any webinar in our series, THIS ONE IS IT!

In this webinar you will learn:

- Allocating time for budgets and what should be included
- Do NOT sign contracts without knowing these 3 things!
- Crucial reminders you should never overlook
- Key Contract Do's and Dont's

For complete information and registration, visit us online at:
www.cstsupport.com/webinar

CARTOON OF THE MONTH



"Tech support says your anti-virus software did not catch the problem since it is not a virus. It's a bacterium."

DONALD MILLER

EXPLAINS HOW TO TALK ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS SO CUSTOMERS WILL LISTEN



It's really, really hard to grab people's attention today. Customers are busy and inundated with choices, making it hard for businesses to stand out. Donald Miller empathizes. He knew people loved his book *Building A StoryBrand* – after all, he sold millions of copies. But when Miller decided to tour and fill 700 theater seats for a speaking engagement, half remained empty. “I learned that I'm good at writing the 300 pages but not very good at writing the sentence that makes you want to read the 300 pages. It's two different skill sets,” Miller explained to business leaders at a recent industry conference.

Do you know how to communicate the value of your products or services so customers buy again and again? Most of us don't. That's because we prioritize creativity and cleverness over clarity. Miller argues that no dollar spent on branding, color palettes, logos or website redesigns will help if you aren't clear about your message. Why? Because human brains are hardwired for two things:

- 1 Survive And Thrive**
- 2 Conserve Calories**

We don't have time or energy to process unnecessary information; we only buy what helps us get ahead. “If you confuse people about how you can help them survive, you'll lose,” Miller says.

Tell A Story

“The first thing we have to understand is that people buy products only after reading words or hearing words that make them want to bother to buy those products,” Miller explains.

Let's say you meet two people at a cocktail party who do the same thing for a living. You ask person A, “What do you do?” They say, “I'm an at-home chef.” So, you ask questions about where they went to school, their favorite recipes, etc. Then, you meet person B and ask the same thing. They respond, “You know how most families don't eat together anymore? And when they do, they don't eat healthy? I'm an at-home chef.”

Who does more business? Person B, because they told a story about how they solved a problem. Humans love stories; it's why we binge-watch good television. Good stories have the same core structure, and Miller explains how you can use it to tell the story of why your business is the one customers should choose.

Identify your hero's (customer's) problem and talk about it a lot. When someone asks, “What do you do?” don't tell them. Start by describing the problem. Spend 75% of your time talking about your customer's problem because that triggers the purchase.

Introduce them to the guide (you). The key to being a guide is to listen: “I'm sorry you're going through that. It sounds very stressful.” Then, be competent: “I feel your pain, and I know how to get you out of this hole.”

Give them a plan. This is an active call to action, like “Buy now” or “Schedule a call.” You must challenge the hero to take the action that leads to success.

Remember, the story you're telling is not about you. It's about your customer, the hero. Once you have your message, distill it into short, simple and repeatable sound bites. “It works every single time,” Miller says, “because the human brain cannot ignore a story.”

SHINY NEW GADGET OF THE MONTH

Pocket Projector

Take movie night to your backyard, park, campsite or wherever adventure takes you. The ELEPHAS 2024 Mini Projector offers impressive features in a compact, smartphone-sized device at an affordable price. The projector has 1080p HD resolution for clear and detailed images, uses a heat dissipation system to reduce fan noise and has a built-in hi-fi speaker that offers excellent sound quality without external speakers. It also includes USB, HDMI and AV ports and is compatible with laptops, PCs, TV boxes and smartphones. You can even connect it directly to your Amazon Fire Stick or Roku Streaming Stick.

With a carry bag and mini tripod, the ELEPHAS Mini Projector is high-quality, portable viewing so you can take family movie night anywhere.



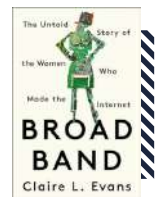
BROAD BAND

By Claire L. Evans

In tech, there are stories we hear all too often: a major company got hacked, Meta is dealing with yet another lawsuit or Google implementing some new security

measure. However, there's one story we don't hear enough: pioneering women in tech. Much like *Hidden Figures* and *Rise of the Rocket Girls*, *Broad Band* by Claire L. Evans uncovers the pivotal yet overlooked contributions of female pioneers who shaped the Internet.

Evans vividly narrates the achievements of visionaries like Grace Hopper and Elizabeth “Jake” Feinler, showcasing their revolutionary work in computing and online networks. Evans sheds light on these hidden figures, inspiring a new generation to recognize and celebrate the women behind technological advancements. *Broad Band* is an essential, enlightening read that helps redefine the true history of technology.



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If not, give me a call and I will assist with what should be included in your 2025 technology budget. I know I don't like surprises, so knowing the anticipated costs should give you some piece of mind. Did you know that your annual spend on technology should be between 4% and 25% of your annual revenue?

As a reminder, most of you will need to upgrade at least one computer (or twenty) because of the Windows 10 end of life date of October 2025. This simply means that if you are currently using Windows 10 and your computer does not meet the minimum specifications to handle Windows 11, you will need to replace that computer. We have a few options for you so please reach out to discuss. For some of you, this cost may not be what you were expecting so please evaluate now to relieve some of the stress next year.

Along with budgets, I like to discuss contracts. I talk to business owners every day who have locked themselves into \$hitty (dollar sign intentional) contracts where they are spending thousands of dollars and getting terrible service or worse yet, no service at all. So here are some tips for you as you approach end-of-year and end-of-contract terms.

1. When you begin working with someone new, do NOT sign a long-term contract without an "out" clause! I mean, would you marry someone after only meeting them a couple of times? One-year contracts are great because they give you an opportunity to get to know each other, see if you are a good fit for each other and to see if you both will step up to the plate to make the relationship work. Yes, I know it sounds like dating, but guess what, it is!
2. If they insist on a longer-term contract, like three years, make sure there is an "out" clause if they do not meet their promised obligations. Also, make sure there is some benefit for YOU to lock in for three years. Are you getting locked in pricing (with a possible % of increase year over year)? Is there transparency with potential changes year over year? We are looking for transparency here because the contract MUST benefit both of you.
3. Most importantly, make sure you understand what you are getting. So many of you are signing contracts with no real understanding, especially when it comes to technology. If you are going to start working with someone outside of your expertise, please make sure someone you know, and trust is evaluating the contract that understands the lingo.

I will be hosting MY MOST IMPORTANT WEBINAR of the YEAR – BUDGETS AND CONTRACTS on September 11th at 9am. My webinar series is always the 2nd Wednesday of every month, is only 30 minutes long (surely you can spare 30 minutes) and is always FREE. This one is important, and you can register here: www.cstsupport.com/webinar/

As Always,

"passionate NOT pushy"

Lisa

VPNS ARE NOT AN INVISIBILITY CLOAK




(Don't Use Them Like One)

A virtual private network (VPN) is essential for modern office work to create a secure, encrypted connection between your device and a remote server, allowing you to work from anywhere while protecting sensitive data. VPNs are also gaining popularity for personal browsing by routing Internet traffic through a remote server to mask your IP address. It's like a gated tunnel only you can enter, which is handy for accessing region-restricted streaming services or content and protecting data when using public WiFi.


However, some people confuse VPNs with an invisibility cloak, believing that anything they do online while using a VPN is hidden. That is not the case. Some VPN services log your data (which can be leaked, hacked or sold), and there are other ways cybercriminals can track you online. Understand what VPNs do and don't do so you aren't putting yourself at unnecessary risk.

What VPNs Do (And Don't Do)

VPNs are excellent for enhancing privacy and security. **They DO:**

-  Hide your IP address, making it harder for websites and advertisers to track your online activities.
-  Encrypt your Internet traffic, safeguarding sensitive information like passwords and business communications.
-  Allow access to geo-restricted content, which can be beneficial for business research or accessing region-specific services.

Despite these advantages, VPNs have limitations. **They DON'T:**

-  Make you completely anonymous. While your IP address is hidden, websites can still track you using cookies and other tracking methods.



Protect you from malware or phishing attacks. A VPN cannot filter malicious content, so you still need robust antivirus software and cyber security practices.



Prevent all data logging. Some VPN providers may log your data, so choose one with a strict no-logs policy.

Warning: Avoid Free VPNs!

Free VPNs are dangerous. Many free services log your data and sell it, undermining the very privacy you're trying to protect. Free VPNs may also have weaker encryption standards, exposing you to more risks. Always opt for reputable VPN providers with clear privacy policies and transparency about how they use your information.

How To Use A VPN Responsibly

- **Choose A Reputable Provider:** Look for VPN services with strong privacy policies, good reviews and transparency about their data-handling practices.
- **Enable Kill Switch:** This feature ensures your Internet connection is severed if the VPN connection drops, so your data won't be leaked.
- **Update Regularly:** Keep your VPN software updated to benefit from the latest security improvements.
- **Combine With Other Security Steps:** To maximize protection, use a VPN with antivirus software, firewalls and good cyber security hygiene.

Understanding VPN capabilities and limitations ensures you use them effectively and responsibly, protecting your data without relying on a false sense of invisibility.

DON'T FORGET TO CHANGE NEW-HIRE PASSWORDS

To keep things simple, employers often create easy, temporary passwords for new hires to log in to accounts or devices during their first few days. However, a Specops analysis of millions of passwords found that 120,000 used common words related to new employees, meaning the new-hire passwords were never changed. Hackers know this and use these simple password structures in dictionary and brute force attacks. The most

passwords on new accounts are user, temp, welcome, change, guest, starter, logon and onboard. Look familiar? Prevent this mistake by forcing change at log-in (if possible), using a service like First Day Password or an authenticator app or making a new-hire password REALLY hard.



THE SEASON OF FRED

It is September and Fred is back baby!!

Our loveable, under-fed, seasonal worker is awake and back at the office for another year with us. His fifth year to be exact! Most of our clients have been introduced to Fred but newer clients have not had the pleasure. So, to catch you up to speed Fred wakes from his slumber in September and likes to check up on our clients.

Fred will join our Account Manager, Carrie, on her onsite visits and sometimes can be seen dropping her girls off to school in the mornings. No worries, of course, he is a professional. If you get a visit from Carrie and see him tagging along make sure to take a picture, or slap a company sticker on him to mark the occasion.



=Jessica=

Important Dates in September

2nd- Labor Day (CST Office CLOSED)

5th- National Pizza Day/ Saranac Lake Business Expo

11th - FREE Webinar with Lisa

29th - National Coffee Day



Tech Humor...

The Smartphone Got
Into A Fight With
The Tablet. It Was A
Touchy Subject



FREE WEBINAR

A MUST WATCH!

Budgets and Contracts - Essential Tips and Technology Musts!

Join Lisa for a 30-minute LIVE webinar on:

Wednesday
Sep 11th, 2024
at 9:00 am



- Allocating time for budgets and what should be included
- Do NOT sign contracts without knowing these 3 things!
- Crucial reminders you should never overlook
- Key Contract Do's and Don'ts

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

Q & A with Carrie

your friendly Account Manager



Dear Carrie,

How do I know if my computer is up to date??

Sincerely,
Wanna Be Secure

Dear Wanna Be Secure,

That is a great question that probably a lot of people might not know about. Microsoft pushes Windows updates and Security Patches weekly and if your not checking for them each week or have your computer set to automatically update, then you leave your computer open to vulnerabilities.

To check to see if your computer is up-to-date, type "Check for Updates" in your search bar at the bottom left corner of your task bar. When it appears, click it and click the box "Check for Updates". This will initiate a scan and Microsoft will install pertinent updates to your computer.

If you need help, give me a call!

Carrie

TURNING DOWN THE VOLUME ON STRESS: Why Leaders Are Choosing Mindfulness Over Hustle

Meditation and mindfulness practices have been studied in a range of contexts – from college students to hardened marines (who showed faster stress recovery with mindfulness-based mind fitness training). Leaders who meditate think more clearly, stay calm in chaos and make smarter decisions. You don't need a mountain retreat to channel the Zen; meditation apps like Headspace, Calm and Insight Timer provide pocket-sized guided sessions to ease into this practice anywhere, anytime.

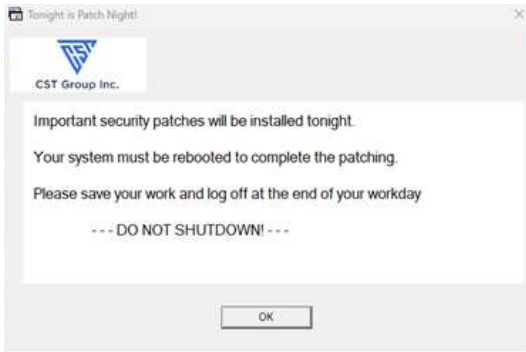
Want to meditate without interruptions? Just hit "Do Not Disturb" on your phone. On Android, swipe down and tap "Do Not Disturb." Apple folks, find it under "Settings" > "Focus" > "Do Not Disturb." Customize it to keep those calls and notifications quiet. This way, you can meditate peacefully and stay sharp for those big business moves.



Security Corner

Part of CST's security protocol is our management of Windows security patches. I am hoping to clarify how the process works and what your part in this security process is and how necessary it is to ensure we keep you up-to-date and secure.

Wednesday morning everyone will see a white notification box on your screen (see below screenshot).



As the notification states, you need to, at the end of your workday Wednesday, save your work, LOG OUT and leave your computer on and connected to internet. The simplest way to achieve this is to just restart your computer at the end of your workday and walk away. This will accomplish the log out and your computer will be ready to do patches and do a restart that is needed for security updates Wednesday evening after hours.

If your computer user does NOT have a password, please add one to enhance security measures.

If you follow those simple steps, you will not encounter any issues when you log into your system next.

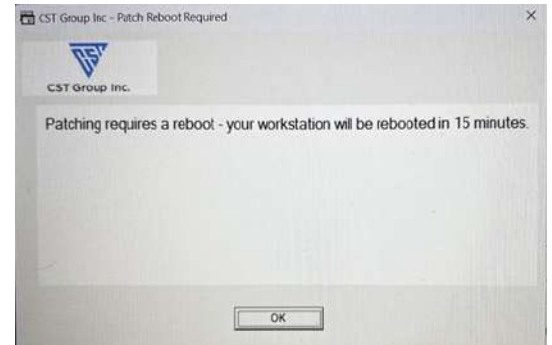
*****NOTE*** If your system is not on and connected to the internet so this process can complete on Wednesday evening, then you are going to experience the following.**

When your system is turned back on and connected to the internet, our software is going to run the updates AND FORCE a restart of your system with a notification giving you 15 minutes to save your work. Then it restarts!

This can be very disruptive to those who do not follow the process and ignore the warning. All work they/you have done that was not saved will be lost!

We understand the struggles, but our job as your security team is to ensure every computer is updated, patched and scanned. We need your cooperation in this. Please simply restart your system Wednesday at end of day!

Dedicated to your Security,
The CST Tech Team



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 24/7/365 peace of mind

Full Details Here:

<https://www.cstsupport.com/about-us/referral-program/>

or call us at 1-877-954-4100