

BetterSMB TECH

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BridgeTower Media series of guides for small and midsize businesses

Capturing capable candidates

Strong presence on social media networks
deemed crucial for recruitment efforts

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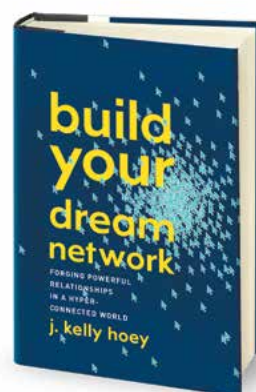


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Time to prioritize tech investments



Adam Reinebach
President and CEO
BridgeTower Media

Outside of mobile devices, which are near ubiquitous nowadays, the question of how to prioritize technology purchases continues to be a real challenge.

Sales is the lifeblood for any business, so CRM should get top billing. Without marketing, you're not going to find new customers, so your email platform & marketing automation are paramount. And what about cybersecurity? If you get hacked and your website goes down, you could lose money and possibly sensitive data.

All of those arguments are legitimate, but they don't answer the question of how you prioritize technology investments.

So as a former head of technology and now caretaker of a growing media business who has made my share of technology buys, let me offer some quick advice. As you consider new products and systems, you should always think about two things:

1. Will this investment help me grow my revenue?
2. Will it improve or fully resolve pain points that are distracting my attention from the things that matter?

The first one may seem obvious, but too often we don't invest the upfront time in assessing the dollar impact of CRM, or a marketing tool designed to drive leads.

The second bullet point, however, is the one I see countless business owners overlook. So many have their heads down running their business and doing all that comes with it, but they're tone deaf when it comes to identifying the roadblocks that get in the way.

As you read through this issue, I encourage you to keep that in mind. If you start with that lens, you're less likely to have buyer's remorse down the road.



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Attract employees with social media

Strong presence on network deemed crucial for recruitment effort

By Jason Whong

Using social media to recruit workers remains a growing practice among businesses. The most recent survey of members of the Society for Human Resource Management on that topic found that most organizations use it for recruitment.

The 2015 survey, which had a 5 percent margin of error, showed that 84 percent of organizations recruit through social media, though only 5 percent said it was their only recruitment tool.

Jeff Luttrell, a member of SHRM's special expertise panel, and senior director of talent acquisition at Alorica Inc., a business process outsourcing company based in Irvine, California, said using social media is an important part of the recruiter's toolkit.

"Every company now has openings, for the most part," said Luttrell as he was traveling for work. "I'm in Tulsa, Oklahoma right now and I can drive down the street and see a dozen places within five minutes that are hiring and pay rates are, for similar type roles, they're all pretty similar.

"You've got to differentiate yourself and social media is a way to do that — to show your company culture and sell it to a potential applicant — because no longer is it

the time where you can just put your notice out there and people come to you. You've actually got to sell why people need to come to you. And social media is amazing for that."

For Fallston Group, a global reputation management firm based in Baltimore, Maryland, social media is the first place the company turns when they know they need to hire someone, said Andrea Lynn, the marketing communications manager at the company. The company is active on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

"We of course put the posting up on our website, but rather than turn to a recruiter like a larger firm might do, we really try to push it amongst our networks. ... It's a free way to get exposure out there for your name."

Part of why your organization might want to use social media for recruiting is because it can help attract a candidate who isn't actively seeking a new job. The SHRM's survey found that 82 percent of organizations that recruit for social media do it to attract passive job candidates.

"I think it's a way to really help humanize your business," said Lynn. "We actually have had people reach out to us interested in working for us because they say 'wow, this looks like

such a fun team and it looks like such a cool place to work,' purely based off of social media posts."

If your company is just getting started with recruiting on social media, Luttrell doesn't recommend trying to use every channel at first.

"Focus in on one and do it really well," Luttrell advises. "Learn from it, learn from your mistakes and then if you need to add another or want to explore in others you can. Get really good at one because they're all going to be fairly similar after that."

When Alorica began using social media for recruitment, it started with Facebook. Each of the company's locations had a Facebook page, and employees were encouraged to like and share posts. Eventually, Alorica started becoming more sophisticated on the platform, using fee-based features like boosting posts and using some geotargeting (which lets you promote posts within a specified geographic area).

Lynn said Fallston group uses Facebook's new job posting tool.

"We've found that to be highly



Luttrell

effective," said Lynn. "It's a way that people can see the job description upfront. They can Facebook message us their application immediately and then we can share that posting into some of the employment groups that are available out on Facebook around Baltimore city and beyond."

The social media platforms you use to promote your workplace can vary based on the users of each platform and the kind of positions you're trying to recruit for.

For professional positions, LinkedIn is a good fit, Luttrell said.

"And the cool thing is, you can use a lot of the functionality for free," he said. "And then, of course, if you have the money in your budget, you can pay to do different things and have your ads out there."

Fallston Group has also seen success from using the free features of LinkedIn.

"We have seen a tremendous amount of response just by posting on our company page and then sharing onto our individual employee LinkedIn profiles without even having to pay for a promoted job," Lynn said.

One of the free techniques that Luttrell uses on LinkedIn and Facebook is joining groups. Using the example of needing to hire



someone with expertise in SAP software, Luttrell said he could go into a group that already exists about SAP on LinkedIn and mention that he's hiring, or he might find a post in the group from someone whose contract is ending and is looking for a new opportunity.

Alorica has also made use of Snapchat at its recruiting events.

"Any size company could buy a Snapchat filter for a day," Luttrell said, describing the technology that lets users apply special effects to their photos. "It's super-cost-effective and builds excitement. If you're trying to attract a certain audience that uses Snapchat, it's definitely a big plus, and there's all sorts of cool functions on Snapchat where other people can see that you've got an event happening at your location."

Now, the team at Alorica is looking more closely at how use Twitter for recruitment, Luttrell said.

Social media can give your organization a way to learn about potential job candidates based on what they have posted and shared.

"I think it should be standard due diligence for any company to look and see what's out there when it comes to an applicant's social media presence," said Lynn.

Often, the information gleaned from looking at an applicant's social media habits can provide clues about how that candidate might work as an employee, and how they would fit in to an organization.

"If you are hiring for a communications related position they should have a Twitter presence," Lynn said. "So it's usually a good indicator to

see even just how active they are on social media, period."

Lynn described some research she was doing on a person she recently hired, whose Instagram account suggested strong compatibility with the company.

"We're all foodies here at Fallston Group, and we noticed all of his fun food pictures that told us before we even interviewed him, 'this is somebody that we might get along with.' And that might seem like a silly example, but when you've got a small team, I think trying to find the right cultural fit is really important."



Lynn

In the SHRM survey, 36 percent of organizations disqualified a job candidate in the past year because of information they found in social media or an online search. And 39 percent of organizations allow candidates to explain any concerning information that the search turned up, according to the survey.

When Luttrell speaks to students, he cautions them about the things they post on social media, because some of the information they post could work against them when they're applying for jobs. It's not just posts about youthful indiscretions that can haunt an applicant: Lynn related information about someone interested in working for Fallston Group who misspelled the company's name.

"That gives you a good indication about their attention to detail," she

said. "Little things like that, I think, make a difference."

Some kinds of information your business finds about job candidates on social media or in online searches can't be used in making hiring decisions. Because of federal laws against discrimination, as well as any state or local laws that may apply to you, you'd have to disregard any such information you may encounter.

Alorica's team is well-trained on equal employment opportunity law and protected classes, so they know not to consider that information, Luttrell said.

In face-to-face job interviews, "you don't ask questions about their race or where they're from," Luttrell said. "Those are all protected. So why would you consider any of that when you saw them on social media? That doesn't matter. It can't be part of the hiring decision."

Fallston Group is an equal opportunity employer, so it's also not looking for that sort of information, Lynn said. "We're typically looking for red flags and just personality-based information."

Some of the capabilities for targeting messages on social media could get a company into trouble if they're used in an inappropriate way in recruiting, Luttrell said. "We're very careful that we don't put in something that could be seen as discriminatory or a disparate treatment to certain populations."

"Make sure that as you're setting up any of your targeted messaging on social media that you keep in mind all of those EEO rules and the protected groups."

Information you may encounter

When recruiting on social media, just as in an in-person interview, you may run into information that you can't use when making hiring decisions.

Federal

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enforces federal employment laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or employee on because of any of the following:

- race**
- color**
- religion**
- sex** (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation)

- national origin**
- age** (if 40 or older)
- disability**

- genetic information.**

Most employers with at least 15 employees (20 in age discrimination cases) are covered by EEOC laws.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

State and Local

There may be additional protected classes, such as veteran status, conviction history, previous compensation, at the state and local level, Luttrell advises. Check with your local governments or an attorney.

SMBs find ways to improve cyber security

By Chris Baryllick

Even if yours isn't the largest corporation on the planet, the threats to cyber security are out there, they're growing more advanced every day, they can't be ignored, but they can be defended against with the right approach.

This is the perspective of Curtis Dukes, the executive vice president and general manager of the Security Best practices and Automation Group for the Center for internet Security (www.cisecurity.org), a non-profit group that advises companies as to best approaches for cyber security. Dukes is also the former deputy national manager for National Security Systems, a division of the National Security Agency, which handles classified information about military and intelligence activities.

Dukes, who noted that not a day goes by without news of foreign actors as well as criminal organizations developing malware to snag business information and secrets, or in worst-case scenarios, encrypt it and hold it hostage via ransomware, said that this can be avoided through knowing your environment, learning about the situation at hand and realizing that there will come a point when your business is attacked.

"I think if you have those three things to protect and prepare for the eventuality, I think you'll actually be ahead of the game in that regard," said Dukes. "I think size and scale matters. If you're like a 20-person or less company, you might not be able to afford some of the cloud provider backup services. Then, you have to do a local backup (to an external hard drive). But, as you back up, make sure that that computer isn't connected to the network. So, physically disconnect it when you back it up. ... And that works."

Dukes also said that some of the greatest unrealized threats come from social media as well as an increasing presence of internet-connected devices and overall extremely easy access to the internet, which are becoming more and more ubiquitous in our daily lives.

"For small and medium enterprises, I think the bigger risk is still around the social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, where trust relationships can be exploited and if you're not careful, you can friend someone who's really not a friend and that gives them the access point to potentially attack you," said Dukes. "More and more, everything is internet-connected and that's been a mixture of a greater use of Wi-Fi and greater penetration of internet



service providers. ... Our mini-components, now, are internet-connected, from thermostats to smart coffee-pots to smart TVs, everything now is internet-facing and internet-connected and bad actors and adversaries are looking for an internet-accessible address to communicate with so they can download their telemetry."

Where Dukes praised Apple, Google, and Microsoft's recent work in keeping their security updated on the macOS, Windows, Android and iOS operating systems, he pointed out the weaknesses in legacy Windows

operating systems. Dukes noted that there remains a large number of computers in the wild running vintage operating systems such as Windows XP, Windows Vista and Windows 7. Those computers are no longer being supported with security updates by Microsoft and presented easy targets for bad actors looking to manipulate or steal data.

"The bottom line is the biggest problem with Microsoft is around their legacy products and unfortunately, they don't have a lot of control over that. Even though they 'end-

of-life' products, users are still using those products and once they end support for that, it's highly risky for them," cautioned Dukes. "Microsoft is actually trying very, very hard, but they're still hampered by a large install base using legacy products."

Dukes recommends that if users or companies had been holding off, to make the jump to Windows 10 or Windows 10 Server, as Microsoft has offered a steadier stream of new builds for the operating systems, as opposed to large-scale service packs or entirely new versions of the operating system that need to be purchased and installed on their own.

As daunting as cyber security for a small or medium size enterprise might be, it isn't impossible. Even if your company doesn't have the resources that a large company may have and even if the information technology staff is also helping out with business development, they can be in good shape.

"Even if they're spending \$50 a month on security, they're better than most," said Dukes, who advocated that this amount could still secure good advice and a good plan from non-profit security outfits like CIS. "Everything I've talked about is freely downloadable from our web site and they just basically have to download it and that's it."

3 simple tips for cyber security

Curtis Dukes, the executive vice president and general manager of the Security Best practices and Automation Group for the Center for internet Security, suggests small and mid-sized businesses keep this in mind when planning a cyber security strategy.

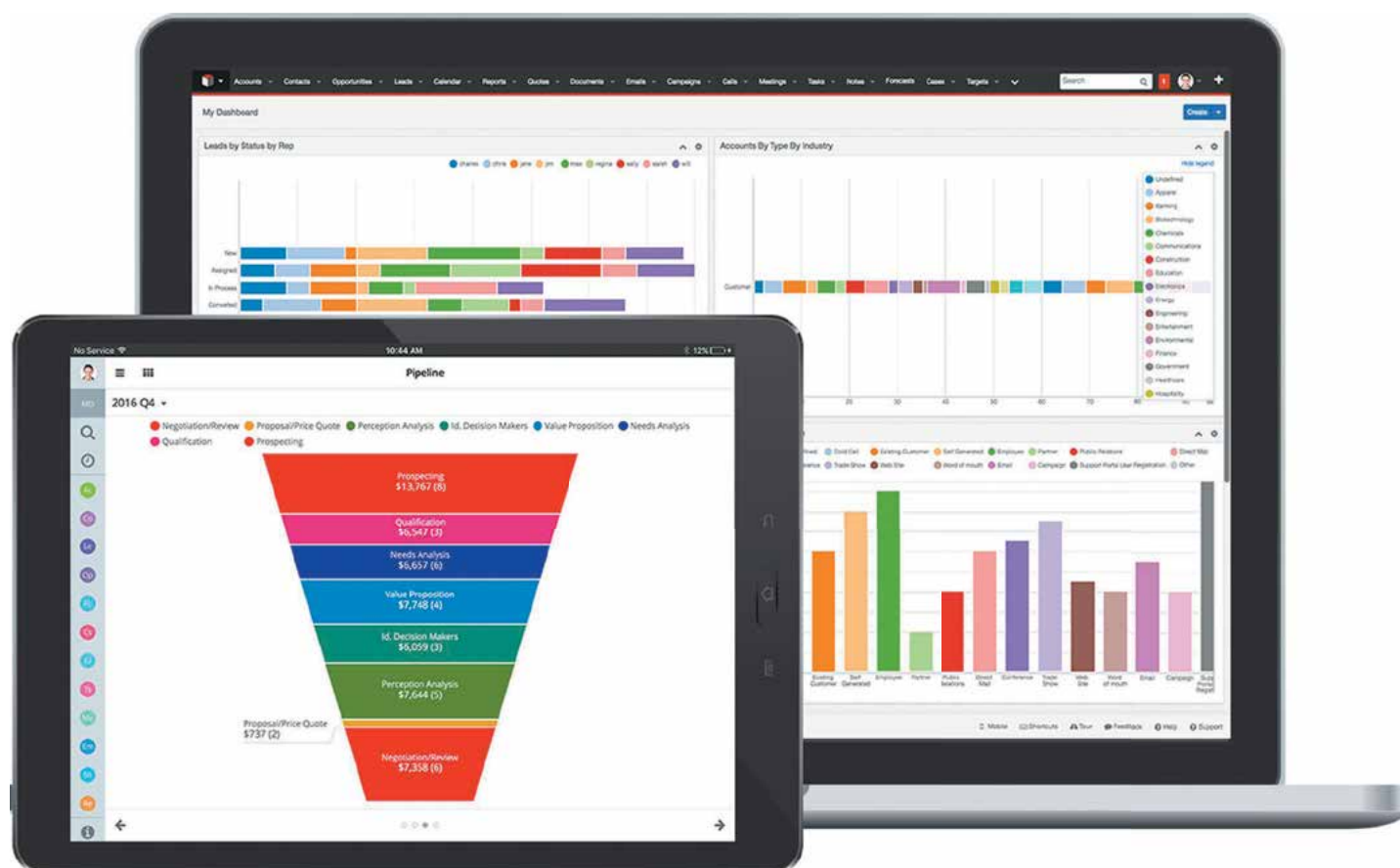
Know your environment: "That means to know what hardware and software actually has access to your enterprise. You need to protect those assets and ... base it off a secure baseline. We believe strongly in our CIS benchmarks." (<https://www.cisecurity.org/cis-benchmarks/>)

Education: "There's also an education piece and it's not only for small businesses, it's also for home users. I mean, ... constant education as to what the threat is and how they're attempting to exploit your networks."

Realize there's a threat: "Don't think you're not going to be attacked. You are, so you always have to be prepared. ... Depending on what your business cadence is, either daily or weekly backups of your important data. Equally important, have an instant response plan."

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ways to improve social media engagement

By Megan Dennis
ThriveHive

Social media is one of the most influential forces in the digital world today. Whether you love it or hate it, there is no escaping social media marketing if you want your brand to succeed. With over 1.82 billion social network users worldwide, you are sure to come across your ideal customers. Needless to say, you can't execute an effective marketing plan unless you make social media a priority.

There's a difference between making online brand profiles and boosting business through your online presence. Many brands strive to increase user engagement through their social media marketing strategies but it's not easy. The key is to create content that encourages one-on-one interaction instead of just cranking up the number of posts on social websites.

People don't like unnecessary flooding and they'll end up tuning you out. Furthermore, algorithms for social websites only show content to more people if it draws engagement initially. So, what is the secret behind engaging your audience and attracting new customers? Here are four ways that can help you boost your social media engagement levels with minimal or no investment at all:

1

Share visual content

Most people on social media platforms are only in for the visual content. You can't expect your social media strategy to generate results without having strong visual content. In fact, according to a recent research, using images in your posts can result in an 85 percent interaction rate on Facebook and can also increase chances for retweets up to 35 percent, according to Social Media Examiner.

While it may not be cost-effective to share an infographic every time, you can still share behind-the-scenes shots or pictures of team members to gather the interest of your audience.

Make sure that it is something that adds value and enjoyment to your audience's daily newsfeed.

Another great way to drive engagement on social media is through engaging videos. According to a survey by CoSchedule, Facebook users watch over 100 million hours of video every day. It is a great way to grab the attention of your fans and followers. You can share short and catchy videos related to entertainment, culture, customer responses regarding a certain product, shout-outs, demonstrations, and more.

The human brain processes visual content 60,000 times faster than plain text, according to Neil Patel. Videos are the only source of content that captures visuals, sound, and text all in one—making it the perfect medium to generate maximum engagement.

2

Create emotional content

Humans are emotional beings. We like to feel and express.

Social websites are the perfect platforms to share things we like with our family, friends and loved ones. This is the science behind social networking. You'll be shocked to know that among 1.6 million organic posts on various social networks like Twitter, Facebook, and Google+, 99 percent of posts receive almost zero engagement, according to VentureBeat.

The reason behind this is that most social media posts lack emotional appeal. People will only engage with your content if it connects with them. Most decisions are emotional, and you have to bank on them to achieve a successful social media marketing strategy. Use intelligent copy on your social media channels to get your followers excited and show them there is something useful and valuable in it. Remember, emotion drives action.

3

Highlight an offer

Interactive and gamified social media strategies have their



own share of perks, but you can even attract and engage customers in an old-fashioned way: make an offer they can't refuse! Talk about the coupons or discounts being offered by your brand. You can focus on your loyalty program or other offers such as free shipping or clearance items.

For example, take a look at Pura Vida Bracelet's Instagram bio. It is overflowing with happy photos, customer testimonials, questions, and charitable causes. With over 1 million followers on Instagram, they have surely hit jackpot with their social media marketing strategy.

4

Know when to post

Don't post without being mindful of the time. There are several factors that come into play while posting on social media, including your location, the topic of focus, your industry, and which social network you are publishing on. The best way to identify which time is ideal for posting is to study your brand's analytics. You can choose the integrated tool on Facebook or use another social analytics tool to get more personalized data about user behavior on your previous

posts. There are also online studies that guide you about the best time post on average. Look at these two infographics by Sumall about when to post and when not to post.

Piquing your followers' interest and earning social media engagement is a tough feat but think about it as a way to genuinely connect with them. Once you tweak your approach and make it about the people and offering them valuable content, you will see success. Know your audience and set achievable goals throughout your social media marketing plan.

There are many other ways to increase user engagement on your social media platforms such as holding contests, asking questions and guest blogging. The best way is to identify what works for your brand and track your metrics. By monitoring the numbers, you will have a direction to work towards. You can tweak your strategy based on the results and keep changing it until you achieve maximum social media engagement.

Megan Dennis is a blogger at PNC Digital, an Orlando-based digital marketing agency. She specializes in SEO and SEM techniques.

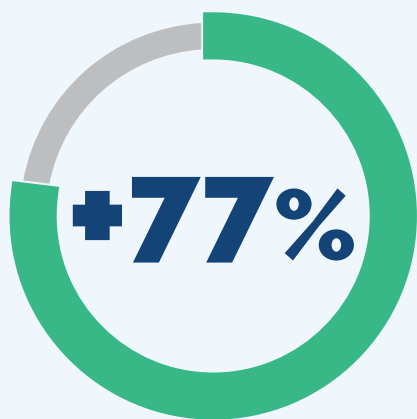


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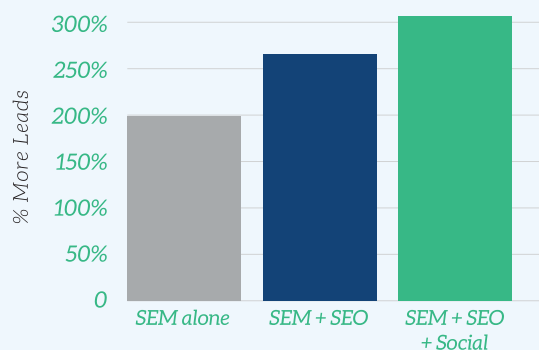
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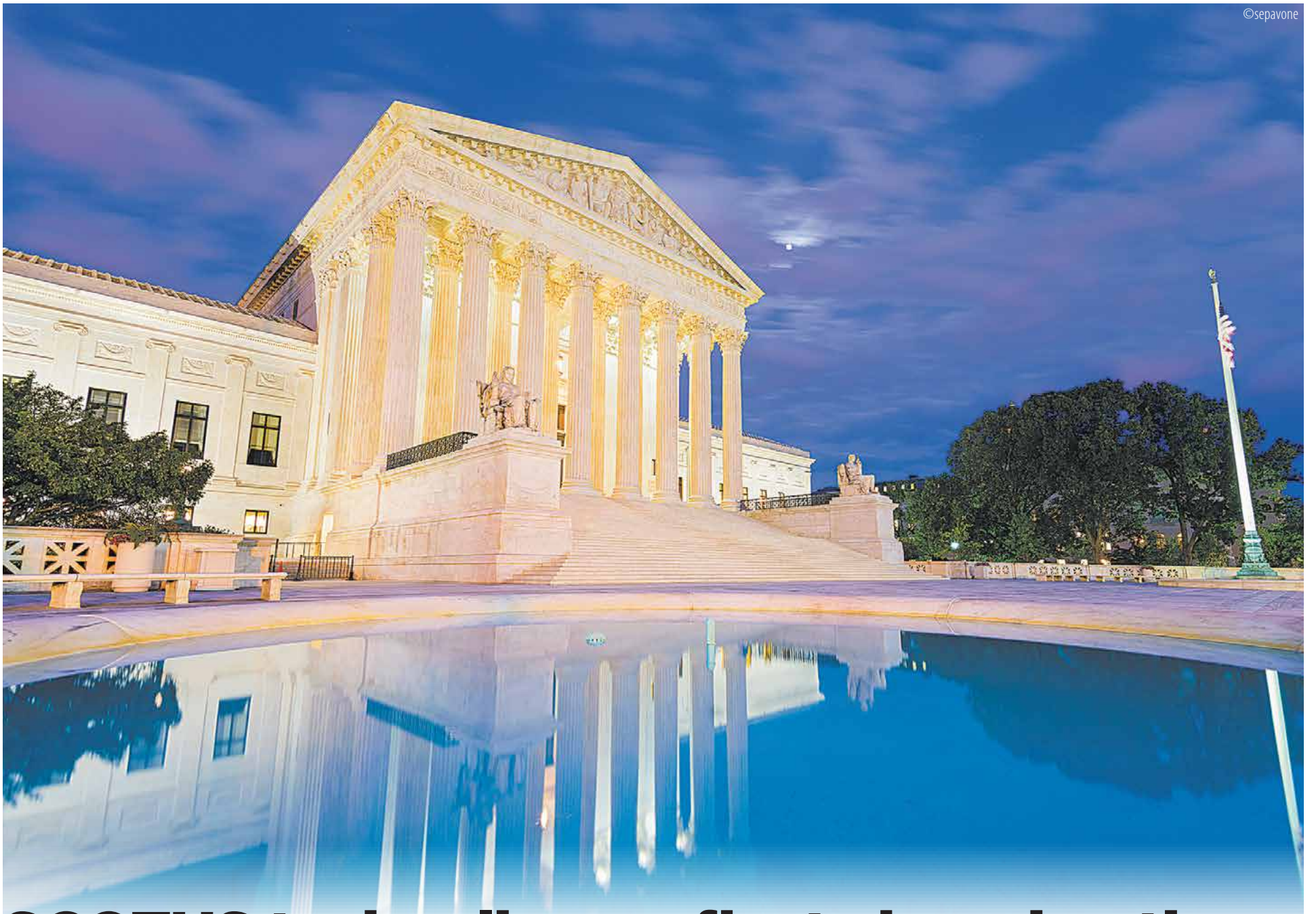
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SCOTUS tech rulings reflect changing times



by E. Christopher Murray
*BridgeTower Media
 Newswires*

In a pair of 5-4 decisions issued at the end of this year's term, the Supreme Court recognized that some long established legal principles were outdated because of technological advancements. The Court recognized the growth of our digital economy and reversed two long held legal doctrines.

In *South Dakota v. Wayfair, Inc.*, the Supreme Court overturned existing law that restricted state laws that internet sellers collect sales tax to only those companies that have a physical presence in a particular state. The Court initially noted that the concept of being physically present in a state has become outdated, recognizing that a website may leave cookies saved to the customer's hard drives, or customers may download the company's app onto their phones.

The Court also recognized that at the time of its prior decisions less than two percent of Americans had internet access. Today the number is approximately 89 percent. The Court

also stated that at the time of its previous decisions, it could not have envisioned that the world's largest retailer would be a remote seller, Amazon. The Court went on to explain that "the internet's prevalence and power have changed the dynamics of the national economy".

The Court also considered that at the time of its prior decision states were losing between \$694 million and \$3 billion per year in sales tax revenues as a result of the physical presence rule, but now estimates range from \$8 billion to \$33 billion per year. This changing reality required a change in the law. States can now require internet sellers to retain and forward sales tax on items that are sold to residents of a particular state whether or not the vendor has a physical location in the state.

In *Carpenter v. United States*, the Supreme Court rejected long standing principles that there was no expectation of privacy in an individual's information maintained by a third party so that a warrant was not required to obtain that information. Instead the Court held that a warrant was required to obtain location records from a wireless service

provider. Again, the Court recognized the changing reality caused by the growth of technology, determining that to allow the government to obtain detailed location records of an individual by obtaining their Cell Site Location Information ("CSLI") from their wireless carrier without a warrant would violate the Fourth Amendment.

In *Carpenter*, a robbery suspect's location was determined from his CSLI and placed him at the location of various robberies, including the robberies of cell phone retailers. The Supreme Court held that, although generally information maintained by a third party, such as a bank, did not require a warrant or a determination of probable cause, the information regarding the locations of an individual available to a cell phone service provider are so significant that the rules had to change.

The Court reasoned that people carried their cell phones everywhere, including 19 percent that have them in the shower. Thus, almost every move an individual makes can be tracked through CSLI. The Court analogized a cell phone to an appendage such as an arm or leg.

The Court also explained that there were 396 million cell phone service accounts in the United States, whose population is 326 million people. The Court recognized that cell sites, although usually mounted on a tower, can now be found on light posts, flag poles, church steeples, or the sides of buildings, so that the CSLI information regarding an individual's location is now very detailed and specific.

The Court reasoned that the advancement in digital technology making it possible to not only track an individual's location for a short period, but for years, dictated that a warrant would be required to obtain this information. The Court observed that cell phones have become such a pervasive part of daily life that carrying one "is indispensable to participation in modern society". As a result, the old rules did not make sense.

Both *Wayfair* and *Carpenter* reflect the growing impact of technology on previously settled legal principles. The Supreme Court has properly recognized that changing times sometimes requires a change in the law.

E. Christopher Murray is a partner with Ruskin Moscou Faltischek P.C.

In construction, drone use is taking off

by Josh Kulla

BridgeTower Media Newswires

PORTLAND, Ore. – Implementation of new Federal Aviation Administration regulations in 2016 really opened the doors for contractors to start employing drones on construction projects.

To be sure, before the Small UAS Rule took effect many people were using unmanned aerial systems, or drones, in construction. But the new regulations governing commercial use of UAS not only increased usage, but also led to proliferation of new businesses dedicated to aerial photography and video.

“Before that you had to have a private pilot’s license to fly a drone for commercial purposes and a Section 333 exemption from the FAA,” said Michael Carlini, a commercial pilot and flight instructor who also runs Eugene-based Southern Oregon Drone. “It took a lot of time, so what they found out what was happening was they were flooded with requests and you basically had to have a lawyer do it. In response to that they figured out they needed for it to be more streamlined and accessible.”

According to the FAA, introduction of the Small UAS Rule made business easier for commercial drone operators. Along with a new framework outlining how, where and when commercial operators can legally operate, the rules rolled out a new online system called Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability. It allows for nearly instant online approval for flight requests inside FAA-controlled airspace.

“This dramatically decreases the wait experienced using the previous authorization process and allows operators to quickly plan their flights,” the FAA stated. “Air traffic controllers also can see where planned drone operations will take place.”

Elijah Polsky is a co-owner of Rogue Survey & Photography in southern Oregon. The FAA regulations adopted in 2016 helped the business get off the ground, he said.

“It was absolutely huge,” he said. “It made it so people like me could get the Part 107 (commercial licensing), but on the other hand it came with a lot more strict rules.”

Joe Vaughn, founder and owner of Skyris Imaging of Portland, agreed and said the recent increase in the number of companies entering the drone field is already forcing inefficient operations to close down.

“What I’m finding is there are a lot fewer drone companies lasting these days, and that’s because their prices aren’t correct,” he said. “If they charge too little they won’t be in business too



A DJI Phantom lifts off the ground at the beginning of a mapping session, as Skyris Imaging founder and owner Joe Vaughn stands at the controls. (Josh Kulla / BridgeTower Media Newswires)

long. We’ve been in business now for six years, back before any of this.”

In 2012, Skyris built its own drones capable of carrying out the work they needed done. It ranges from simple snapshots showing construction progress to complex, three-dimensional models based upon hundreds or even thousands of separate images.

But business potential hasn’t stopped a number of parties from entering the field, Vaughn said.

“Now they buy (drones) and they get dusty and they aren’t used,” he said. “So I figure there’s about two more years of this kind of fad.”

When it comes to construction, unmanned aerial systems are used in every phase of the development process. It starts with the initial real estate listing and topographic surveying and moves to 3-D building modeling and progression photos and videos for investors. It’s also customary to produce a short video of the completed project for marketing and other uses.

“It is growing rapidly, exponentially, which is amazing,” Polsky said. “I’d say about 75 percent of what we do is construction-based.”

That growth also involves the local tech industry, with Portland startup Skyward recently finding success through the development of UAS operating systems that link with the LAANC system. Using Skyward software, drone operators can gain real time authorization for flights in controlled airspace throughout the National Airspace System.

Skyward was purchased last year by Verizon, but is still headquartered in Portland.

Those in the field who are using drones are plenty enthusiastic about their use and future potential.

“It’s been a big help,” said Martin Segura, an architect with Carleton Hart Architecture.

Carleton Hart requires the general contractors it works with to provide a continuous stream of photos from their respective job sites. Then drone imagery is fed into BIM or CAD software.

“It’s like the first line of defense,” Segura said. “The drone image might clue us in to something, and when we get down into the fine detail we might pick up something we missed before. Or, it can lead to the use of further technology.”

Many Skyris clients, however, come from the development and investment side.

“My background is commercial real estate and asset management,” said Vaughn. “So I can talk to them in a language they understand and help them determine at what level we’re going to bump up the per-square-foot price in our pro forma, etcetera. We help our clients get their decision makers to a ‘yes.’”

Vaughn and his firm, which has 16 unmanned aircraft of various sizes, also provides sophisticated 3-D modeling imagery they produce themselves.

“We’ll also do inspections, building envelope inspections, and we can get very high resolution cameras both on the thermal spectrum and the visible spectrum to take a look for leaks or potential water intrusion,” he said.

Rogue Survey & Photography does many of the same things, with a heavier focus on construction and surveying.

“We can do it from start to finish,” Polsky said. “During development, we’ll do a topo(graphic) survey, and then they get to building it and we can start taking photos and show progression so the investors and planners can see the information. And at the end we can do a marketing project.”

The latter is now commonplace, said Meaghan Morawski, a marketing specialist with Bremik Construction.

“We do use drone photography, but it’s mostly for progress shots,” she said. “It’s great for marketing and I think there are lot of uses for it. I think that everyone loves to see the progress that goes into the projects we do.”



Vaughn prepares a drone for a pre-programmed mapping flight covering a West Linn polo facility. (Josh Kulla / BridgeTower Media Newswires)



Players of Incandescent Workshop's Artemis Spaceship Bridge Simulator, shown here participating in a 2017 event, have different information on their displays, based on their role on a starship bridge. Gaming Nomads, a company in London, Ohio, uses the software to lead corporate training exercises. (Incandescent Workshop photo)

'A tremendous amount of fun'

Team grows with help from starship role-playing simulator

Coworkers must work together or die in the lonely vacuum of outer space

By Chris Baryllick

William Wallace's gaming experience company, Gaming Nomads (www.gamingnomads.com), is looking to build small and medium corporate office teamwork with one very simple message: work together, or you'll fail — and your starship maybe even explode in the middle of space.

It's not a subtle message, but it's effective and is carried out by Wallace's Ohio-based company through Artemis Spaceship Bridge Simulator, a networked video game in which each person is assigned a role such as captain, pilot, weapons, communications, science or engineer while the game itself is projected onto a large screen. Players must learn to communicate and command their starship, with mission goals such as wiping out alien invaders, rescuing stranded ships, dodging asteroids, space mines and space monsters and defending space stations.

"Artemis is the best team-building experience that we have ever come across," said Wallace. "It teaches effective communication and teamwork in a very organic setting. Most teams get so into the simulation that they don't realize that they are improving their team dynamic."

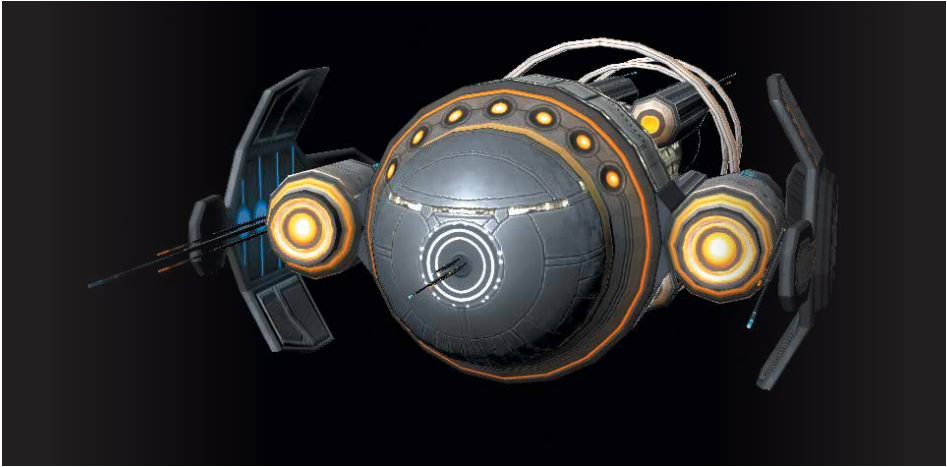
James Hsiao of Atlanta, Georgia, experienced one of Gaming Nomads' corporate training sessions with an internet development company. The company had a number of remote workers, all of whom were coming to Atlanta for a homecoming conference.

"It was a tremendous amount of fun," said Hsiao. "And it really allowed us to get a little more insight into people who were two or three levels above us as well."

Sitting down with fellow employees to pilot a ship and fight simulated space aliens helped smooth out working relationships, Hsiao said.

"Sometimes if there were cantankerous relationships between two people, ... just getting together and having fun and not having the tension of work specifically but more more having, 'Oh this is us versus the fictional adversary in the game,' It really brought the people together," said Hsiao.

Training with Artemis, according to Wallace, can show where a group of coworkers needed to improve.



A ship from Artemis Spaceship Bridge Simulator. (Incandescent Workshop photo)

"We had a crew of people who worked together as a successful software development team; they kept talking about how they were going to just rock the simulator since they were such a good team," said Wallace. "When the simulation started, they were so confident in their individual abilities that they didn't communicate as a team. They were out of power in 8 minutes and dead in 10. We restarted them in a new scenario and the now-humbled crew communicated much better and successfully completed the new scenario."

In a training scenario at a multi-day training event at a major media corporation, the crews included a vice president of the company that many people worked under, but no one really knew, Wallace said. After playing several scenarios together, several employees told Wallace how much they'd enjoyed getting to know him and that they had no idea he was so funny. This, in turn, changed their working dynamic for the better.

Wallace, 53, a software developer since 1982, holds a bachelor's degree in computer and Information sciences and executive certificate in agile methodologies — the use of short development cycles with a focus on continuous improvement — from the John Cook School of Business as well as other IT certifications.

Wallace in 2012 began using Artemis as part of agile project management, as a tool for teams to improve to improve their communication skills.

"Effective communication is also one of the central tenets of agile project



Players must communicate to survive a roleplaying scenario on the Artemis Spaceship Bridge Simulator. “Effective communication is also one of the central tenets of agile project management, so it just made sense to use Artemis as a tool for teams to improve their communication skills,” said William Wallace, owner of Gaming Nomads. (Incandescent Workshop photo)

management, so it just made sense to use Artemis as a tool for teams to improve their communication skills,” said Wallace.

For each training session, Gaming Nomads provides up to two full spaceship bridges, each consisting of a server computer, a 55-inch main screen, and a computer and a larger touchscreen for each position, adjusting the equipment to each venue’s space and needs as necessary.

For their first time out, new crews begin the game piloting a starship that’s been damaged by an enemy attack and is almost out of power. The crew must learn how to hail a nearby ship, bring power back online, repair their ship and get back underway. The scenario ends when the crew has successfully repaired their ship and fended off an enemy attack.

Over the course of a training session, Wallace said he introduces the participants to their roles, encourages people to change their bridge stations between games so they can experience different roles and responsibilities, then gradually increases the difficulty levels as they gain experience. In between games, crews generally conduct a review of their performance, often without encouragement.

Hsiao’s company, during its homecoming conference, also bought licenses for Artemis and installed it on their own computers, using the software after hours for additional team-building and blowing off steam.

“This was after hours, so there was alcohol involved. ... We had two different two different bridges set up and the really fun thing was that there was one ship where everybody was sober and another ship where the majority of people were not.

“I was essentially the captain of the drunk ship and trying to get them to all work together to achieve a goal in conflict with the other, sober ship. It was essentially like herding cats. There was at least one time where I essentially muscled somebody out of the way to take over their position on the bridge so I could get somewhere.”

Wallace said that while Artemis corporate training does arrive with a base price, which is front-loaded to cover setup and teardown labor as well as any

additional costs for travel for sites more than 100 miles away from central Ohio, there are reduced rates for special situations, such as non-profit organizations. Either way, your team can learn to work and communicate that much better while avoiding flashy, 3D-rendered deaths in outer space.

And how is that a bad thing?

Jason Whong contributed to this report.

5 stages of starship team development

William Wallace says there were roughly five stages of team development throughout an organization’s training session:

Forming: “What am I supposed to do?” “What information do I need to relay to others, when do I need to relay it, and to whom?” “Who gives me the information that I need?”

Storming: “Why didn’t you tell me we were almost out of power?” “Stop forgetting to raise the shields!” “What’s the beam frequency for

this target?”

Norming: Everybody starts to understand what they need to do and when they need to do it. The crew begins to work as a team.

Performing: Everybody starts working together at a high level. Crew members know what others need before they ask for it.)

Adjourning: “It’s over already? Wow! The time went so fast!” “We were just starting to kick butt!” “That was so cool when we...”



To be, or not to be, in the cloud

Businesses have options when choosing technology solutions

By April Chen

As cloud technology has grown, new options are available for businesses besides traditional locally-hosted information technology solutions. How should a business decide what cloud technologies to adopt, as well as when to keep or develop resources in-house?

Christopher Coleman, IT coordinator for Louisiana Tech University, says going with a cloud solution — in which resources such as computers, networks, storage, apps and data are controlled by another company — can save a business money.

“Cost-efficiency is the biggest benefit to using a cloud service because the company is providing productivity to many different vendors, thereby decreasing cost to maintain these services,” Coleman says.

There are some trade-offs when using cloud technologies. Control of data is of paramount concern for some organizations. By using a cloud service, a business relinquishes some power and control over its technology.

“Your data and productivity is living on someone else’s server, in a separate location that you cannot physically get to,” Coleman said. With an on-premises solution, a company has access to their day-to-day operations whenever they need it as long as those networks are properly maintained.

James Hwang, chief operating officer of NexusTek, a cloud technology, managed IT and cybersecurity consulting firm based in Denver, says a business must not rely just on cloud security, but must consider physical aspects of security when using these services, such as, “how is it encrypted, what levels of encryption are there and who has the roles and roles-based access.” A third issue to consider is what access specific

users have and who does the logging when the products or data are accessed.

Whether the cloud is more or less secure than a local IT department depends on what kind of security policies are in place. With either choice, malware and anti-virus software must be updated regularly to flesh out threats. Risk assessments must be performed often. New ways to break in to a company’s servers or use their connection for malicious intent are constantly evolving, so staying on top of security is of the utmost importance. Within the cloud services provided by Cisco, Microsoft, Google and others, there are entire departments set up to detect nefarious activities.

“NexusTek partners with organizations to assure security and recommends utilization of a cloud service and some kind of redundant service to ensure security” and maximum uptime and best recovery time, Hwang said.

Amassing a strong IT department locally takes more capital and manpower than many organizations can afford. Costs can include hiring a network administrator, buying the servers, storage and licensing for software. Cloud technology is a good option for companies that do not have the resources to provide themselves with the kind of security which may, according to Hwang, require more than 20 different IT specialists.

One of the largest benefits for using the cloud involves disaster recovery. When housing IT services locally, one of the most significant problems arises when there are geographic failures or natural disasters. This is when Hwang recommends a hybrid approach.

“In some cases you should have your production via the cloud and maybe your recovery time (or) point objective locally or with a different cloud service,” Hwang said. “You might not be cloud today for production, but you may need something on premises to recover very quickly because your recovery time objective may be much longer. In the event of a failure, the last



instance can be recovered as long as there is power.”

Coleman says Louisiana Tech utilizes both local IT and cloud solutions. “Some organizations use a hybrid of cloud technology and locally controlled IT technology to cut down on the cost of maintaining a large network and of obtaining the hard drives and other hardware necessary for such a task,” he said.

Local IT is used at Louisiana Tech for their more sensitive institutional data, but professors and instructors use the cloud for their instructional documents and to interact with students through a learning management system called MOODLE. With the cloud, their educators are able to interact with students outside the classroom.

For some businesses, such as those with sensitive documents such as governmental or national security institutions, use of cloud services may not be the most appropriate. For a price, secured cloud productivity solutions are available. Coleman advises businesses to obtain statements that show the cloud service is in compliance

with the regulatory bodies that govern the organization.

Other situations, where control and responsibility shouldn’t be outsourced, may be more appropriate for a local IT staff, Coleman said.

“If you have some other application that is critical for the preservation of life such as air traffic control or medical systems, the cloud may not be best,” he said. “You may need something with little downtime. In these cases, having an IT professional or department locally run may be a more practical option.”

A business should also consider accessibility of the cloud. For instance, if the company has a remote location without a reliable and high-speed internet connection, this can hinder access and data transfer. In this situation, local solutions may be the best bet.

There could be an expectation that using a cloud service means you won’t have someone focused on your support needs, but that doesn’t need to be the case. “In every single market that we go, we have a localized support model, both in field engineering and remote,” says Hwang.

Whether the organization chooses a cloud service, a local IT department or a combination of these ultimately depends on the type of business, the sensitivity of the data being accessed and the budget available.



Coleman



Hwang

Tech keeps remote workers engaged

by Lauren Eisenhauer

Best Employee Surveys

Telecommuting, working virtually, “WFH” (working from home) — whatever you choose to call it, it’s on the rise. UpWork confirms just that in their 2018 Future Workforce Report: more than one third (38 percent) of the more than 1,000 polled hiring managers anticipate running predominantly remote teams of employees within the next 10 years. In addition to the 3.9 million U.S. employees who currently work from home at least half of the time, many employees conduct business offsite while traveling or working in various office locations. The number of employees working remotely is up an incredible 115 percent since 2005. Many companies are opening their doors to allow remote workers in an effort to attract top talent when geography poses a barrier.

With such an influx of remote workers, employers must invest in new and innovative ways to encourage open communication, collaboration, and support employee engagement for their teams, inside the office and out. What is the impact on employee engagement for remote workers? The simple answer is that the more connected remote employees feel, the more likely it is that they’ll remain engaged. The more engaged they are, the more willing they are to give extra effort to see their employer succeed, stay for the long haul, and recommend purchases and even employment with loved ones. Fortunately, new software and advances in technology provide many options to solve the challenges faced by teams spread across the globe.

Introducing new tools works best when leaders and key influencers become early adopters. Rather than forcing the change, offer it gradually, and as a supplement to existing channels, such as email.

Convenient communication channels

When pondering employee engagement ideas and new technology, cover the basics first. Provide employees with equipment configured for easy communication via video conferencing. Conducting virtual face-to-face meetings can help remote employees and their office counterparts to feel more connected. WebEx and Zoom offer video conferencing solutions for teams of all sizes and have added some interesting features like the ability to broadcast instantaneously via your company Facebook page.

Email should never be the only means for communication for a remote employee. Setting up chat options like Slack, Skype for Business, or Google Hangouts supports the need for more casual discussion and collaboration among team members. Using the Slack interface, teams establish channels for conversation and discussions about products or projects. Think of it as a more sophisticated version of the chat room. Information can be easily communicated by topic in these channels and made searchable and accessible to everyone. Offering this easy-access communication avenue increases the likelihood employees in different locations will reach out to one another with questions and share information.

Tools for Collaboration

There’s hardly a project that doesn’t require teamwork in some form or another. Project management, collaboration, task management, and workflow programs help to alleviate common



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obstacles faced by teams when individuals need to work simultaneously on a project. Wrike is a leading cloud-based solution that allows teams to live edit documents, request proofing and approvals, and manage workloads through dashboards, reporting, and calendars. Another project management program, Trello, leverages highly visual boards for teams to stay in sync and track progress together.

Learning in the Workplace

Online learning platforms make training and continued education for employees easily accessible and trackable. Employers can customize learning paths and content for different groups. Employees can access the courses online, and at their own pace, without having to complete any in-person training.

For internal knowledge sharing, some companies use an internal wiki to share information, such as documented processes previously held by a select few individuals within the company. Often, multiple versions of the same documents exist and information updated by one department is never communicated to the next. A shared site like tried-and-true SharePoint for employees to house and update information benefits those in house and working elsewhere.

Your Social Presence Matters

If you’re not a retailer, establishing your company’s social media presence may be an afterthought, but it’s important because it can be viewed as a reflection of your employees, and indicative of the culture of your company. Through sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, employees, remote and otherwise, can engage with you and with each other. Last year, Facebook launched its Workplace in an effort to extend its success into the corporate world. This dedicated space feels familiar to traditional Facebook users,

and has been adopted by brands like Starbucks, Columbia Sportswear, and HelloFresh for internal news and discussion.

A Place for Recognition

Engaged remote employeeLastly, a little kudos can go a long way. Offering up recognition to employees, especially those working outside of the office, can boost employee engagement. Platforms like Bucketlist or Bonusly (used by Oracle and ZipRecruiter) are being used to increase performance motivation through gamification. Users (employees) can collect points, earn badges, and even redeem rewards like gift cards for performance. Peers and leadership recognize each other’s accomplishments and offer recognition and shout-outs.

These programs, unlike in-person team building or a face-to-face pat on the back, can be enjoyed by remote employees and their office counterparts alike. The more connected remote employees feel, the more likely it is that they’ll remain happy and engaged with their work. Offering solutions to include them and make collaboration and communication easier demonstrates that their engagement matters to you, which is ultimately a worthy investment in your business.

Learn More

It’s powerful to know what your employees think! You can identify problems like poor supervision, communication breakdown, and mounting plans to leave your company before expensive turnover affects your business.

Use this checklist for a quick read on your employee engagement. <http://blog.bestcompaniesgroup.com/checklist>

How 6 small business owners are using technology at work

By Constantina Kokenes

Kabbage

Kabbage asked small business owners how they use technology for their companies and where they see it growing by 2020. Here's what six had to say.



**Stacy Clements,
Milepost 42**

"The two technology tools I've implemented in the past year that have saved me the most time are:

- Integrated invoicing, payments and accounting system
- An online booking system

Setting up automated invoicing and having online payments automatically added into my accounting system has been a definite benefit – and impressed my accountant, who recently praised me for being extremely organized when I sent my records for review before filing my taxes.

Another time (and aggravation) saver for me is an online booking system I set up a few months ago. Now instead of having to email back and forth to find a good time for a phone call, the client can check my booking schedule and find a time that works for them. When they book an appointment with me, my calendar is automatically populated, so I know what I have on the schedule.

My prediction for small business and technology is that the need for cybersecurity will continue to increase and become even more important for small businesses, as they become more dependent on technology to run their businesses. In addition to the need for small businesses to find technology solutions that help streamline their processes, they also need to remember to update their business continuity plans to account for the potential disruption of the services they use."



**Steve Benson,
Badger Maps**

"We use Slack at Badger to always stay connected with the different teams and across our offices in Spain, San Francisco, Utah and the Philippines. It helps us to

quickly communicate important updates, share files and improve internal communication and employee engagement.

We organize all documents and spreadsheets for our projects in Google Drive and sort them by department and topic etc. It makes it very easy for the whole team to work together on projects even if they're not in the same office and stay on top of the progress. This helps us scale processes and work more efficiently.

The most important trend I see is what I call the 'Small Business-izing of Technology'. Cloud-based technology is bringing enterprise-class business software to small businesses, which 10 years ago was only available to large companies with big technology budgets.

In the past, the big tech companies like IBM, Oracle and SAP focused on high quality and high expense solutions to Fortune 500 companies. Today, even a small business with just a handful of people can get fantastic software to run their business. You can use Gusto for your payroll, Base CRM for your Sales Team, Hubspot for your Marketing and Google Apps for your collaboration and email. You don't need to buy a data center; you can run your technology assets in Amazon Web Services and consume a ton of services via the many APIs available today.

This lowers the barriers to entry of starting a company because it takes so much of the complexity and costs off the table and clears the way for small businesses to innovate. Because of this technology, we were enabled to start our company on our savings and a shoestring budget, and over just five years, grow into the #1 routing app for salespeople in the App Store."



**Adam Amrine,
Adro Solutions, LLC**

"The tools and apps available have helped me run and operate my business in a more efficient manner and wisely use the time that I have available. For example, I can send

professional invoices at a minimal fee and no upfront setup cost. I use a free CRM to manage my customers, contacts opportunities and deals. This is incredibly useful since I run my small business on the side, and time is a very important asset. Since I'm in the software development fields, there are free versions of Visual Studio for application development and Visual Studio Team Services (for source control).

I feel like technology is going to make the barrier to entry for a small business much lower. I can see the number of small businesses and freelancers growing over the next several years."



**Jessica Starks,
J.D. Scribes**

"Technology has been amazing for my business. Being that I specialize in digital marketing, tools and apps are pretty essential to what I do! Whether it be social

media apps like Facebook and Instagram, post scheduling tools or online tax software, these things really have made my life as a small business owner much easier and organized.

I believe that technology will become an even bigger asset to small business, especially when it comes to reaching customers that are a greater distance away. As technology advances, I think it will make it much easier for small businesses to connect with business owners from all over the world and make it easier for them to interact with their customers in a more positive and meaningful way.

Although I believe technology is a wonderful

asset, I would like to note that I do not believe that it will ever replace the value of genuine, real-life relationships and networking. I don't believe anything will ever be able to top that."



**Michelle Garrett,
Garrett Public Relations**

"Technology saves me time in my business. Here are some examples:

Buffer: When I schedule social media posts using Buffer, it saves me a lot of time. It also helps me by posting during times when I'm not at my computer, like overnight and on the weekends. This helps me grow my audience. Buffer has a free version, too.

Pablo: I use this to create images to go with social media and blog posts. It's a free tool. It works nicely with Buffer (Buffer created Pablo).

Wave: I use this for accounting. It has free versions.

MailChimp: I use this to send out a monthly electronic newsletter. It's free, up to 2,000 subscribers.

Grammarly: I use this to edit my writing. They have a free version (I use the paid version). There's also Hemingwayapp and ProWritingAid that are similar. Both also offer free versions.

As far as what I see for the future, I see more integration coming. So, for example, small businesses would be able to use a tool that would schedule meetings, handle invoices, provide CRM and more from one dashboard. There may be a few apps like this, but I see them becoming more sophisticated and easier to use."



**Anna Knezevic,
M&A Solutions Ltd.**

"One of the most helpful technologies to me is the GCP (Google Cloud Platform). I have it set up so that my regular desktop and my development environment (Jupyter)

for data are easily accessible for prototyping from any point in the world. I can deal with large datasets and choose any machine specification I want in order to run this. This enables me to fit technology to my needs, and I really can't explain to the fullest what a powerful thing this is.

Considering my level of technological sophistication, I think this is going to be an increasing trend; the more complicated stuff like AI and machine learning are going to become increasingly accessible to the wider layers of the population. Hopefully, they will change the way the news is consumed too, in order to give people more unbiased view. However, we are still a long way away from that."

This article is excerpted from "Tech Yourself Before You Wreck Yourself: How to Invest in Technology," available at <https://www.kabbage.com/greenhouse/article/how-to-invest-in-technology-for-your-small-business/>

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Book review:

Expert advice, stories in ‘Build Your Dream Network’

By Jason Whong

“If you think you are the smartest person in the room, you are truly an idiot.”

That’s some of the advice that J. Kelly Hoey teases from her fellow networking experts in “Build Your Dream Network,” available in paperback for the first time this year.

Hoey wants readers to know that successful networking is not just schmoozing with random strangers; rather, it’s about focusing on making powerful connections and thinking of networking as a way to solve a problem.

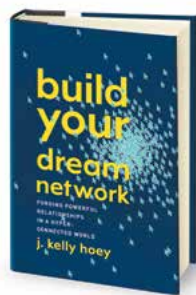
Using examples from her own career path, Hoey weaves a tale of how, at each phase of her career, she recognized that her existing network needed to grow in order to make the next phase possible.

Hoey describes her desire to move beyond being a partner in a law firm to a position where she could help other attorneys succeed. Her existing network wasn’t up to that task, so she needed to build an entirely new one, connecting with people on the management side of

Build Your Dream Network

Forging Powerful Relationships in a Hyper-connected World

• By J. Kelly Hoey
• TarcherPerigee.
256 pages. \$15.



the legal profession. It took her 18 months, but she credits her persistent networking with a job offer at White & Case LLP for which she was the only person interviewed. She made her dream job happen by keeping in touch.

Later on, she became a member of 85 Broads (now known as Ellevest), a women’s business network, and before a year passed, she was the organization’s president. Her network connections continued to grow as her career and her networks kept changing. She began to make angel investments in emerging technology, eventually becoming a

partner at Women Innovate Mobile, a startup accelerator.

Hoey says success found her because of the strength of her network, and because the people in her network know what she does. Reading her story can serve as a reminder of how vital networking is to an upward career.

Hoey’s progression from law firm partner to an angel investor who everybody wants to know is a great lesson, but part of what makes this book so ideal for someone wanting to really understand networking is the notion that hers is not the only story worth telling in her book. Instead of focusing exclusively on her own experiences, Hoey wants her readers to learn from the experiences of people in her network.

If you think about it, that’s what networking is. It’s not merely about you. Few people enjoy knowing someone who can’t stop crowing about their own greatness. An important part of successful networking is generosity.

That’s how entrepreneur and mentor of entrepreneurs Devon Brooks’ quote about not thinking

you’re the smartest person in the room ended up at the top of this review. Hoey may even be the smartest person in her book, but because she’s generous, letting readers learn from others’ expertise, there’s no inkling that she thinks so.

Readers who feel that they need to start focusing more on networking will find practical guidance in this book. Readers will also find advice about how to choose which networking clubs to join, how to make human connections on social media, how to strategize so your connections can help you reach your goal, and common failures to avoid.

In addition to interviews with other networking experts, the book also features hand-drawn illustrations, an interesting, organic contrast from the cleanly-set type of the words. In a way, that reinforces one of the book’s lessons that as much as the technology used in networking has changed, it’s not as important as the fundamentals of what makes a network successful: old-fashioned generosity, persistence and follow-up.

Book review:

To increase customer loyalty, the answer may be simpler than you think

By Jason Whong

If you’re lucky, your business already has loyal customers. But have you given thought to what exactly makes them loyal?

John A. Larson and Bennett E. McClellan have been studying customer loyalty for decades, and they share their insights on how to make money from loyal customers in “Capturing Loyalty.”

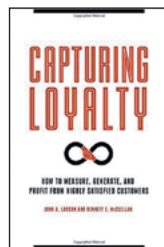
The central ideas of the book are: when measuring customer satisfaction on a five-point scale, only people who give your company the highest score, or “highly satisfied,” will become loyal customers, who make your business more money than casual customers do. But the only way to get customer loyalty is to satisfy your customers’ expectations each time your business has any contact with them.

These two propositions could fit on the back of a business card. Fortunately, the authors are great storytellers, and they pack the book with accounts of how businesses seized on, or ignored, the information about why their customers became

Capturing Loyalty

How to Measure, Generate and Profit from Highly Satisfied Customers

• By John A. Larson and Bennett E. McClellan
• Praeger. 197 pages. No official price, but it can be found on Amazon for roughly \$25



loyal. (There’s even a chapter on how to tell stories so you can communicate better with your employees!) Larson and McClellan also present steps that your business can use to measure customer satisfaction, then focus on making more of your customers feel highly satisfied.

Those people who check the highest box aren’t just more likely to return, they’re also likely to increase how much they spend, to pay price premiums, to have your business at the top of their minds, and to recommend your business to others, the authors argue. They’re the ones who are going to have an effect on the bottom line.

The way to convert people from satisfied to highly satisfied, Larson and McClellan say, is to focus on removing the risk of unwanted outcomes when a customer deals with your company. You must meet their expectations every time. If something goes wrong, you have to fix it immediately.

The authors argue that when you pursue customer loyalty, you probably won’t please all of your customers or prevent every problem. Rather, you’ll likely make some tradeoffs that mean you’ll be focusing on converting satisfied customers (called 4s in the book) to highly satisfied (which the book calls 5s) and in maintaining high satisfaction. In the industries they’ve studied, they have found that businesses make more money by better serving satisfied and highly-satisfied customers, while focusing less on the less-than-satisfied (called 1s, 2s and 3s).

Getting things right requires a commitment from every level of the organization for a loyalty initiative to succeed. Company management must make it a priority, and must

support employees, especially those who are responsible for customer interactions. For some businesses that treat their employees as expendable and value a high turnover rate as a way of keeping costs down, that may require a change in attitude, the authors argue.

Those employees who have contact with your customers are the ones who can mitigate the risk of an unwanted outcome. They’re the ones who can make your customers loyal. Here the authors raise a tough question: if your business isn’t engendering loyalty from its employees, how likely are the employees to engender customer loyalty to your company?

If you like reading stories that identify how a business succeeded, you’ll enjoy this book. If you enjoy reading stories about business leaders ignoring good information and advice, then failing, you’ll also like this book. If you love footnotes, you’ll be pleased that the first word in the first chapter is footnoted.

Spending a day alone with “Capturing Loyalty” may just leave you highly satisfied.

Digital transformation as a service for a growing remote workforce

by Koosha Araghi

UpCurve Cloud

There are plenty of benefits to using a remote workforce, including the potential boosting of productivity and employee satisfaction through increased freedom and autonomy. Any organization that wants to use a remote workforce needs to break down conventional barriers that get in the way of collaboration between employees. This breaking down of walls can be quickly done by investing in a digital transformation as a service strategy that encourages collaboration between your team members and improves the remote working experience.

What are the barriers to collaboration?

Working remotely from a physical location itself can be a barrier to collaboration. Without the right tools, employees can end up working in their silos without consulting their colleagues until the final stages of a project. Disjointed cloud-based systems can lead to miscommunication and wasted time on projects that would have otherwise stayed on track. The tools you choose must allow instant communication to ensure your employees are correctly linked instead of working in silos.

A lack of management oversight is also a barrier since managers rely on emails, texts, and phone calls to stay in the loop on what their workforce is doing. Some companies schedule regular phone updates, sometimes daily - time that can be used for everyone to do more important things when the right tools are implemented. Once those tools are switched on, management only has to contact employees if they have questions or if there is an evident problem, rather than holding regular update meetings.

The rapidly growing remote workforce

Businesses of all sizes and sectors around the world quickly realize the benefits of hosting a remote workforce - it's estimated that nearly 38 percent of full-time employees will be working remotely within the next decade and that over 40 percent of employees in the US work remotely on occasion. The freedom offered by the ability to work from home (or on-the-go) can be empowering for employees, eliminating daily stressors caused by long commutes and time spent away from family, leading to a happier and healthier workforce. Working remotely has also been found to allow employees to work in flexible and distraction-free environments, enabling team members to be more efficient and productive as a result.

Encouraging collaboration among employees

For your remote workforce to be as effective as possible, it's essential for your organization to foster a collaborative working environment for all team members. Encouraging collaboration between your team members will ensure that they work more productively, communicating and collaborating with each other throughout projects to create more refined work.

One of the most effective ways to break the collaboration barriers that exist in remote workforces is to invest in cloud-based collaborative



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workplace productivity solutions like G Suite by Google Cloud that encourage your team members to work together through secure real-time collaboration, creation, editing, data storage, and sharing from any device located anywhere in the world. G Suite allows your entire team to operate as a cohesive unit through a variety of integrated platforms, including text, audio, and video-based communication in Gmail and Hangouts Meet, project collaboration in Docs, Slides, and Sheets, and secure storage and organization through Calendar and Drive.

Another great way to encourage collaboration between employees is through a customer relationship management solution such as SugarCRM or Salesforce, which allows team members to access detailed customer information which will help employees tailor each experience to client preferences. This information and other insights are available in easy to understand dashboards and reports that can be easily shared so that your entire team is on the same page in regards to customer preferences and expectations. CRM solutions can be integrated and connected with Gmail, Google Calendar, and other G Suite platforms to sync meetings, appointments, and contact information and make this information accessible to relevant team members.

VoIP Telephony solutions allow all calls to be captured and recorded

VoIP solutions for business telephony such as Vonage Business or RingCentral allow all call data to be logged in your CRM solution and can also be launched right from an employee's email. With call data logged and captured in the CRM, management no longer has to ask if a sales rep has contacted a particular client - the data will be there. The ability to launch a call from email saves employees from having to log into the CRM to

look up a number, and then starting an app from their computer or mobile phone app to make the call; they need to click the number from their email or CRM to call instantly.

Most telephony solutions, including Vonage Business, are available as mobile apps so you can log call data from any location, whether your employees are on the road or in the office

Peace of mind for management

For those managers who are hesitant to reap the benefits of a remote workplace or who are skeptical about the benefits of encouraging collaboration through workplace solutions, business intelligence tools like Prodoscore exist to ease your worries. Prodoscore helps managers to gain a better idea of how productive their employees are being without being intrusive - this is done by measuring and assessing each employee and assigning unique "productivity scores" to team members. These insights can help managers better understand how effectively their team members are performing, how engaged and productive they are being, and allows managers to address issues before they arise.

Digital transformation as a service makes the transition to a remote workforce more accessible than ever before, and brings with it a wealth of benefits including increased effectiveness, productivity, and adoption of cloud business applications - but digital transformation as a service will not succeed unless your organization is serious about breaking down existing barriers to collaboration. Building, deploying and managing a remote workforce can be done right by implementing the right type of cloud-based workplace solutions like G Suite, SugarCRM, Vonage Hosted VOIP and Prodoscore that allow you and your employees to work together efficiently and to work from anywhere in the world.



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