## What's New

Here we go, summer is finally here. We knew we could count on it, just like the Leafs losing in first round (too soon)?

June is the month with the longest daylight hours of the year, perfect for after work golf or time in the backyard.

Covid numbers are dropping, and vaccination rates continue to rise. Great signs! Ontario's stay at home order expired June 2nd and the Stage 1 reopening plan is set for June 14th. Finally! We will see some patio dining resume and nonessential retail reopen at 15 percent capacity. And just in time for summer, camping to resume at Ontario parks.

Optimistically hoping that all London & area businesses will soon be in a position to flourish.

As always, if your company is interested in discussing IT changes, new strategies, goals or just technology in general; we would love to hear from you.

## June 2021

This monthly publication provided by Stronghold I.T.

Our Mission:
To create and build professional, valuable and exceptional relationships with our clients; to develop and implement the most appropriate and effective technology solutions and processes.

# Take Your Business To The Next Level With These Technology Solutions

When you set goals for your business this year, there's a good chance one of those goals was tied to growth. It's a common goal. You have your eyes set on acquiring new customers. You're ready to take their business to the next level. The challenge, however, is getting to that next level. If you do a web search on how to grow your business, you'll find more results than you know what to do with. It can be frustrating and overwhelming.

This month, we're here to take away some of that frustration and share a few ideas on how you can use technology solutions to put together a growth strategy that works for your business, its needs and *your* overall goals. There are

four areas where technology really shines: automation, access, engagement and security.

**Automation**
There are automation tools that assist with everything from invoicing to customer service. One great example is the chatbot. Thanks to major strides in artificial intelligence (AI), chatbots are more useful than ever. All you have to do is plug one into your website, and it can handle a surprising amount of customer service issues. It can even direct customers and leads to real humans within your organization. When you can direct leads accordingly, it makes it easier to track and follow up with those leads, possibly increasing your sales and growth.

*Continued from pg.1*

### Access

Thanks to the cloud, you have the potential to access virtually any part of your business from anywhere, including your employees. This makes the remote work model (as well as the hybrid model) much easier to implement. Plus, if you back up critical data to the secure cloud on a regular basis, you never have to worry about losing that critical data. But the truly great thing about the cloud is that it's automatically scalable and fully customizable. The cloud grows with you, which means you save serious money when you're no longer bound to traditional models of scaling.

### Engagement

It may be wedding season, but we're not talking about a marriage – at least not in the "wedding bells" sense. Technology allows you to engage with customers and leads in a way you've never been able to before. Social media platforms especially give you tools to engage with customers. From Facebook to LinkedIn, these platforms have tools to connect with

> **"When you can direct leads accordingly, it makes it easier to track and follow up with those leads, possibly increasing your sales and growth. "**

specific demographics. You can post videos, share content and simply interact with customers and your community. These kinds of things put you and your brand out there in front of new customers.
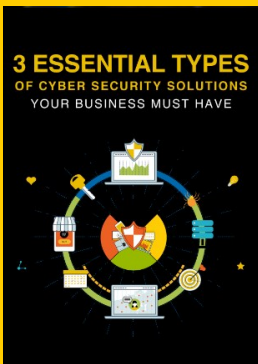
### Security

We saved this one for last because it's a big one that not everyone thinks about, but it's absolutely crucial. As your business grows, your IT needs grow and change too. You need to make sure your network is ready for the challenge of growth. On top of that, you need to be sure that your employees have the tools and resources they need to keep your business secure. There are a lot of threats out there, from the internal threat of hardware failure to the external threat of malware and cybercriminals. With more business shifting to remote or a hybrid work model, your IT security needs should be top priority.

### Final Thoughts

As you fold different technologies into your business, remember that you never have to do any of it on your own. If you need help or want to maximize the benefits of technologies you're using or interested in using, work closely with your managed services provider or IT partner. They are there to answer your questions and to help you optimize your business for your growth goals.

## Security Terms Everyone Should Know

You can start increasing your knowledge by learning some of these basic cybersecurity terms.

### Malware

For a long time, the phrase "computer virus" was misused to refer to every type of attack that intended to harm or hurt computers and networks. The more appropriate term for these harmful programs and files would be "malicious software" or "malware." Whereas a virus is a specific type of malware that is designed to replicate itself, any software created for the purpose of destroying or unfairly accessing networks and data should be referred to as malware.

### Ransomware

Don't let all other cyberthreats ending in -ware confuse you; they are all just subcategories of malware. Currently, one of the most popular of these is "ransomware," which is malware that encrypts valuable data until a ransom is paid.

### Intrusion prevention system (IPS)

There are several ways to safeguard your network from malware, but an IPS is quickly becoming one of the non negotiables. An IPS sits inside your company's firewall and looks for suspicious and malicious activity that can be halted before it can exploit or take advantage of a known vulnerability.

### Social engineering

Not all types of malware rely solely on fancy computer programming. Experts agree that the majority of attacks require some form of "social engineering" to succeed. Social engineering is the act of tricking people, rather than computers, into revealing sensitive or protected information. For cybercriminals, complicated software is totally unnecessary if they can just convince potential victims that they're a security professional who needs the victims' password to secure their account.

### Phishing

Phishing is the act of defrauding people using an app or a website that impersonates a trustworthy or often well-known business in an attempt to obtain confidential information. Just because you received an email that says it's from the IRS doesn't mean that it is. Don't take such emails at face value — always verify the source, especially if the emails are requesting your sensitive data.

Get in touch with us today and find out how we can help you with your IT security woes.

# Soft Skills, Solid Results

Parenting seems unrelated to business, but in my experience, it is very much related to people skills – and people skills are necessary for business. There are four key people skills, often called "soft skills," that I want to talk to you about:

- Gratitude
- Listening
- Grace By Margin
- Vision

### Gratitude

How do you feel when you get a thank-you note? People never forget when they get a handwritten thank-you note. A text or e-mail is nice, but they last a day. People love to feel gratitude. They love to share it and to receive it. Thank-you notes remove barriers, so make it a habit.

### Listening

Listen longer and listen better. When you're speaking with someone, encourage long pauses. Let the silence do the heavy lifting. You don't have to rush into an answer or response before thinking about what a person is saying. This is helpful in sales and with direct reports. Allow yourself to stay quiet so the other person can do the talking. Don't be afraid to ask open-ended questions like "How did that go for you?"

### Grace By Margin

This is all about things that save you time. Consider using the "while" system as a way to multitask. For example, place an under-the-desk bike to work out while you work at your desk. Another thing to consider: timed e-mails. Schedule an e-mail to be sent out at a specific time and add links in e-mails to schedule time on your calendar. One more time-saving tool is speech-to-text transcription. This ensures you have a record of every conversation that you can reference as needed.

### Vision

Break down your vision into small parts. Instead of feeling overwhelmed by something large, choose one smaller goal for the month. Do this with everyone in your organization. Break down everyone's goals into smaller parts. This makes it easier to track over the course of a quarter or year. Even go as far as creating a vision board. Add images of what you want to achieve. Make your vision visual. Lastly, write down your achievements as part of your vision. Where are you now and where do you want to be over the next three years?

**P.S.** Don't forget to check out the "Soft Skills, Solid Skills" Petra Coach webinar at **PetraCoach.com/soft-skills-solid-results-with-bea-wray.**

*Bea Wray is an entrepreneur, innovator, mentor and author of* What An MBA Taught Me… But My Kids Made Me Learn. *She founded (and sold) SourceHarbor Inc. and has consulted with over 300 companies around the globe. She's the former chair of ForbesBooks and has hosted* The Front Porch *podcast, Savannah's: Engage SGTV, TEDx and the GeekEnd Innovation conference. With years of experience and an MBA With Distinction from Harvard Business School, she's always on the lookout for the next opportunity.*

## As A Business Owner, Are You Ready For The IT Future?

Over the past year, countless businesses moved to a remote work or hybrid model. It also meant these businesses had to change the way they operate, including a sweeping shift to cloud-based services and a renewed look at their IT security. But despite these changes, many businesses aren't where they need to be. There are still gaps in their cloud infrastructure and security. How do you fill those gaps?

Put a greater emphasis on endpoint security and monitoring. As much as you need solid IT security on your end, every employee needs solid IT security on their end as well. Not only does every device need endpoint security, but you also cannot forget about performance monitoring. This gives you the ability to see threats and potential threats to your network in real time, which means you can react accordingly and stop potential attacks or hardware failures. As

you work with your IT security partner, discuss monitoring options and give yourself one more tool in the protection of your organization. *Forbes, April 15, 2021*

## 3 Key Ways To Keep Your Business In Growth Mode

**1. Talent.** You must hire a team willing and able to meet the challenge of growth. You want people who are not only talented in their field, but who also fit within your company culture, who are eager to learn and ready to solve problems, and you have to be just as willing and able to reward them for their talent.

**2. Innovation.** When you have a talented team at your side, innovation comes easier. You need to continuously develop products and services that customers want to buy. Understand your customers and their problems at the highest level so you can bring solutions to the table.

**3. Accountability.** As your team and business grow, you must put greater emphasis on accountability. Track everything and have key performance indicators (KPIs) attached to every goal and project. But don't just hold people accountable to meet certain goals – hold them accountable when they succeed; that is to say, make sure the wins are celebrated along the way. *Inc., April 8, 2021*

## Are You In The Cloud Yet?

Some businesses have tried to avoid the cloud. There are lingering fears that cloud-based services aren't as secure as their non-cloud counterparts. However, cloud services are more prominent than ever, and service providers are fully aware that they must meet the IT security needs of today.

For those businesses still unsure, it's estimated that 97% of businesses already use cloud services. You might not realize it, but cloud services are in the mainstream. Even businesses that are hesitant to join the cloud may already be a part of it. Most e-mail and communication apps are cloud-based. If you use virtually any Google or Microsoft service, you've joined the cloud.

The bottom line is that digital security is top priority for cloud platforms. Not only do these providers need to meet the requirements of their clients, but they must also follow international rules and regulations. If you want to keep your data backed up and secure, the cloud is your answer. *Forbes, April 1, 2021*



*"He opened his email and saw the attachment from an unknown source. His hand slowly reached to click on the paper clip. He had no idea what horror awaited him…"*