



## Cathy's Message

WOW! What a month.

We took time to visit family members in different cities. A couple of boards we sit on did some remarkable things in the Erie Community. I finished a chapter for a book that will be published in the Spring time.

David and I are truly blessed to work with the most amazing people. We are so thankful to have the team that we have. They are truly amazing. We are also thankful for the clients that we have. We have had a great year and could not have done this without the people we get to work with every day and our clients.

I love hearing everyone who is sharing our newsletter, if you want your own, please let me know and we will add you to our newsletter mailing.

**We hope you can join our event on December 6th. Please read Save The Date to find out more information.**

David and I would like to take this time to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas. Thank you for everything you do. Cathy & David

## Save The Date

**December 6, 2013**, we are hosting a fun family and friends night at the Bayhawks game at the **Erie Insurance Arena**. The party will be in the suites at the new Arena.

SOPHOS and Lenovo will be speaking at 5:45 and the game begins at 7 p.m.

There will be plenty for your family members to do as well as plenty of food and drink.

We have 200 tickets for the evening for the suites. Please contact [cathy@szy.com](mailto:cathy@szy.com) asap to get your tickets saved. don't be shy on how many you need. This is going to be a fun evening filled with fun, food and drink.

We will also have some touch enabled Windows 8 machines that you can play with.

This is always a fun night and this year it will be in the new Arena. Hope you make this EPIC evening. Let Cathy know asap how many tickets you need.

## The End Of An Era... Take Action By New Year's Eve 2013!

As you may have heard, Microsoft has long ago announced the retirement of its most successful software platform of all time, Windows XP. Effective April 2014, Microsoft will no longer support the Windows XP platform in any way, shape or form.

### What this means if you are currently running XP

This means any computer or server with Windows XP installed will be completely exposed to serious hacker attacks aimed at taking control of your network, stealing data, crashing your system and inflicting a host of other business-crippling problems you do NOT want to have to deal with. This is such a serious threat that all companies housing financial and medical information are being **required** by law to upgrade any and all computer systems running XP because firewalls and antivirus software will NOT be sufficient to completely protect them (or you). Unless you don't care about cyber criminals running rampant in your company's server, you **MUST** upgrade any servers or workstations running these programs no later than April 2014.

### The Time To Act Is Now

As Windows XP comes to the end of its life, businesses with software applications dependent on XP will feel the effects. Not only will Microsoft stop supporting XP, so can any other company that still has software built for XP that they are currently supporting. The writing is on the wall and these companies will follow. Companies producing antivirus and firewall software will also have no reason to continue releasing updates for something considered to be dead.

Don't wait until the last minute to plan for an XP-free business existence. We fully expect to be extremely busy now through April 8.

**Schedule your Microsoft XP Risk Assessment and Migration Planning Consultation today by calling our office at 814-455-6069 x300 and ask for Cathy**

## December

Things you probably didn't know about December

December is known around the world as a family time of celebration honoring cultures, religions and traditions that have been with humanity for hundreds of years. See below for a mix of the weird and wonderful facts about this magical month!

An almanac prediction states that if snow falls on Christmas Day, Easter will be warm, green and sunny.

The name December comes from the Latin *decem* for "ten," as it was the 10<sup>th</sup> month in the Roman calendar.

December 12<sup>th</sup> is Poinsettia Day.

Saint Nicholas, who would eventually be called Santa Claus, was originally the patron saint of children, thieves and pawnbrokers!

December 28<sup>th</sup> is considered by some to be the unluckiest day of the year.

The first artificial Christmas tree was made in Germany, fashioned out of goose feathers that were dyed green!

Spiders and spiderwebs are considered good luck on Christmas.

"Jingle Bells" was composed in 1857, and not for Christmas – it was meant to be a Thanksgiving song!

In 1647, Oliver Cromwell, English Puritan leader, banned the festivities of Christmas for being immoral on such a holy day. Anyone who was seen celebrating was arrested! The ban was lifted in 1660.

Do you have anyone you would like to refer to us! We have a referral program that we would love to share with you. Please email Cathy today to find out more information.

We hope you are enjoying our weekly videos. If you have a specific topic you would like to see us cover please let us know.

If you would like us to add someone onto the list we will certainly take care of that.

We feel the more education we can get out to you, the better.

## Free Microsoft Office 365

### Cloud Software For Non-Profits?

As part of its "Technology For Good" program, Microsoft has recently announced that it is giving away Microsoft Office 365 software licenses for free to qualified nonprofit organizations.

Office 365 is Microsoft's cloud-based software solution that allows users to run office applications, e-mail, calendars, video conferencing and more all through the web.

The Office 365 donation program is part of Microsoft's larger giving program where it hands out \$2 million worth of software each and every day to nonprofits around the world. This specific program donates the "cloud only" Web Apps version of Microsoft Office 365, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, SharePoint, online cloud storage and more, to qualified organizations. Nonprofits can upgrade to the cloud/desktop hybrid version of Office 365 for a reduced rate of over 75% off the normal price.

**See If You Qualify:** Eligible nonprofits must hold recognized charitable status and must have a mission to benefit the local community in areas such as providing relief to the poor, advancing education, improving social welfare, preserving culture, restoring the environment, promoting human rights and establishing a civil society.

If you're a nonprofit organization or have a nonprofit organization in mind that could benefit from this free program, you can check for availability online at

<http://www.microsoft.com/office365nonprofits>

### Shiny New Gadget

#### Lockitron: Keyless Entry Using Your Phone

Hate taking your keys with you on a run? Have friends coming to visit and can't be there to let them in? No worries...

Now you can lock your door from anywhere in the world. Any smartphone can use Lockitron through its intuitive two-button app. With Lockitron you can instantly share access with your family and friends.

In addition to the convenience, Lockitron gives you peace of mind. Lockitron lets you see if your door is locked when you're gone. It will send a notification when someone unlocks the door using a phone or key.

Here are some of the key details (no pun intended):

Any phone works – Lockitron is compatible with any smartphone, thanks to our mobile web site. Older phones can use Lockitron through simple text-message commands.

Wi-Fi built in – Lockitron connects to the Internet, thanks to built-in Wi-Fi. You can control Lockitron and receive notifications from Lockitron anywhere in the world.

Keyless entry – If you use an iPhone 4S or iPhone 5, you can enable Lockitron to sense when you walk up to the door and unlock for you using Bluetooth 4.0.

Powerfully smart – Thanks to intelligent power management, Lockitron's batteries last for up to one year. Lockitron will even send you a notification when they are running low.

Easily customizable – You can control your Lockitron through our incredibly simple API endpoints or program it directly, thanks to its Arduino-compatible ATmega microprocessor.

Pre-order your Lockitron today for only \$179!

<https://lockitron.com/preorder>



## Microsoft Windows 8.1 features

Windows 8.1 is more of a touching up when it comes to an upgrade, rather than the full facelift that Windows 8 proved to be. The bright and colorful tiles are still there but there are some changes that are worthy of note and may go some way to attracting new users unsure about Microsoft's newest operating system.

For Windows 8 users the 8.1 upgrade is free and for other users the price is USD \$120, with the Professional Edition costing USD \$200. For present users there seems little point not to upgrade. For others, considering the upgrade, there are a few features which might persuade them.

**New Start button:** Windows 8 had many users feeling disoriented without the ability to click on the classic Start button in the bottom left hand corner. It seems that Microsoft might have been listening the gripes as the button is back. However, the techies may not have been listening hard enough as whilst the button launches to the Metro tile screen it doesn't include the traditional start menu which is what many users miss.

**Boot to desktop:** If you want to miss out the tiles and the Windows 8.1 Metro screen then the upgrade now allows users to boot up and go straight to their desktop. You can set this up by first of all clicking on the Desktop tile. From there, right-click and select *Properties*, then select *Navigation*. Here tick the *Go to the desktop instead of Start when I sign in* box. Click OK. The change will be effective when you reboot.

**Configure the Start button:** Windows 8.1 also allows you more control over the start menu tiles that pop up. You can now configure this so that it displays the Apps screen instead. This can be useful for businesses who want to have all their apps right there visible in front of them. To configure the Start button:

Right click on taskbar and select *Properties*.

Click on *Navigation*.

In the Start screen tick the *Show the Apps View Automatically When I Go to Start* box.

Click OK. Click on the *Start* button and the Apps will show.

**More screen control:** You are able to display more tiles and apps on screen with Windows 8.1 and you can also organize apps more easily. These can be resized and renamed and sorted into categories and which are most used. When two apps are open at the same time these can be resized, which allows for easier multi-tasking too. Still more control comes with the new feature of being able to add your own tile backdrop, which is much more reminiscent of the classic desktop look with tiles sitting on top.

**Omnisearch:** Perhaps one of the biggest changes is with Search. When you tap in a search this is extended beyond your computer and includes the Internet too and Bing. There is intelligence added to the searches too with relevant information being presented too. Type in the name of a city and the weather will pop up. Links to Microsoft apps will also be visible on the dashboard too. The screenshot carousel look of the results is pleasing to the eye but the limitations of Bing's searches and the default to helpfully present accompanying information which you might not want may prove a little tiresome if nothing else.

Windows 8.1 may not have enough startlingly different features to sway you to the tile UI but it certainly lets users know that tweaks aside, the modern look of Microsoft's OS is here to stay. With more personalization possible businesses may become more interested too and if you want to find an OS that works for your needs then get in touch.

Work spares us from three evils: boredom, vice and need. "Voltaire"

## *Backing Up Your Server Alone May Still Lead To Data Loss*

Most business owners know that it is important for their server(s) to be backed up. But what about your computers (desktops, laptops, Macs)? Though it's true that quite a bit of your data is stored on your servers and backed up by your network, your computer itself (your icons, your background, all of your settings, your local files, music and pictures you have stored, and all of your software applications) is NOT being backed up.

If your computer were to crash, get a virus or simply die, all of that information could be lost. The company data that you've saved to your server would still be there IF you are saving everything to your server (a big if for many companies), but everything else would be gone. You would have to recreate that computer by reloading all of the software and settings. And if you've ever had this happen to you, you know it can take a significant amount of time to do. What a pain!

### **So, How Do You Solve This Problem?**

**Simple.** You use imaging software on your computer that automatically takes periodic images of important, irreplaceable machines and sends them off-site or to your server for safe-keeping. For travel laptops, this can often be done via the cloud. Imaging software takes a "picture" or "snapshot" of your computer, recording it exactly as it is, with all of the software, settings and local files you have on it. This way, if your computer ever crashes, there is no need to reload everything onto it and reconfigure the computer. Simply restore your last "image" from before the crash and your computer can be back to its old self again. This is a huge time-saver and can be a lifesaver when something goes wrong.

### **Protect Your Desktops And Laptops!**

How are your desktops and laptops currently being backed up? Take action today. You'll be amazed at the peace of mind you find when you are **completely** backed up!

Give Cathy a call at 814-455-6069 x 300 to find out more details.

## *Windows XP*

Microsoft support for Windows XP and Office 2003 will end on April 8, 2014. That is only a few months from now. This means that Microsoft will no longer release security updates, hotfixes, or provide ANY support for Windows XP or MS Office 2003.

Computers running Windows XP will open your network up to numerous security risks, compliance violations, hackers and viruses. The end of Windows XP support will affect everyone, even home users. It really is a security risk with a countdown that is ticking away.

Windows XP WILL NOT BE HIPAA, HITECH or PCI Compliant.

Call Cathy for a free planning session at 814-455-6069 x 300 We will have suggestions on replacement workstations and special pricing on orders of 5+ computers if requested by December 30, 2013.

## *Five Tips To Finding You On Social Media*

There is a common trend on social media of trying to make your personal profile difficult to find, perhaps because of issues about privacy and security. However, logic dictates that as a business this should be the opposite. You want to be easily found in order to connect and interact with your loyal and potential customers. The problem is, many businesses simply aren't easy to find on social media, something which could be hurting their overall success.

If you are struggling to make your existence known on social media, and missing out on those all important connections, then here are five tips to make you easier to find.

### **1. Use your actual name**

When it comes to social media, you want to be easily found. When your customers try to find you, they will almost always enter the name they call your company by. Therefore, your profile on social media needs to register this name even if it isn't your company's official name. Use the same name in various places on your profile e.g., in the About us section and even in your posts if it fits.

### **2. Become more recognizable**

We are highly visual people and when we see patterns, will normally begin to associate it with something. Many of us are also on more than one social media platform, so companies can leverage this in order to gain more connections.

Try having the same profile picture on all of your profiles too. What this does is make you and your brand more recognizable.

### **3. Create more social emails**

We don't mean start emailing people asking them to connect, as this will likely drive people away because they will think you are spamming them. Instead, try putting links to your social media profiles in your email signatures with a suggestion to connect.

### **4. Don't use multiple email addresses**

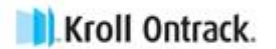
It can be tempting to use different email addresses for each social media platform – this can help track integration and engagement – but in truth, this can actually confuse people and could make more unnecessary work for those who manage your profiles.

### **5. Make your website social**

Finally, you likely have a website. It is a good idea to include links to your social media profiles on your website. It helps you build your brand image.

The most popular way to display your social media presence on your website is to include icons on the homepage, or in the footer. When you click on each of these, a new window or tab opens and takes you to the relevant social media page.

In general, the more locations you broadcast your social media presence, the higher the chance of gaining more connections. It follows that the more connections you have and the more active you are on your social media profiles, the greater consumer interest and engagement is, and the stronger your brand identity becomes. Over time, you should see an increase in sales and ultimately profitability. If you are looking to learn more about how to leverage social media in your business, please contact us today.



Szymanski Consulting, Inc.  
8127 Nathan Circle  
Erie, PA 16509  
814-455-6069  
www.szy.com

