



Improving Your Business Environment Inside & Out *In this issue...*

- Is It Time To Start Looking at a Server for Your Network?
- Leveraging Technology to Manage Remote Workers
- Did You Know...Entertaining Crowdfunding Endeavors

Client Spotlight:



Monroe County Council on Aging

The Monroe County Council on Aging has recently joined the ranks of Pronets clients. Based in Lindside, West Virginia, this charitable organization offers a wide range of services for senior citizens in Monroe County since it was founded in 1976, including transportation and in home services.

They also focus on ensuring that area seniors have a hot meal by offering home delivery of meals as well as meals at four Senior Center locations in Alderson, Lindside, Peterstown, and Union, West Virginia. The Council provides approximately 300 meals day and serves a total of 8,000 clients.

Monroe County Council on Aging

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Remote Workers Pose Management Conundrums

In last month's issue, we touched on how to be a more productive remote worker. On the opposite side of that topic, here are some really great recommendations on how to effectively manage remote employees from Entrepreneur Magazine (complete article is available at <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/236196>).

Columnist Christian Lannig, CEO of Tradeshift, finds that companies benefit from remote work as much as employees, citing decreased overhead, increased production, and more employee loyalty.

In spite of the benefits, managers do have some challenges when it comes to effectually managing and leading workers who aren't technically "at work." Losing the opportunity for face time or one-on-one coaching can cause trepidation with some employers. Lannig recommends the following guidelines to help your managers clear the hurdles of managing a remote workforce.

1. Implement a formal policy. To make sure that everyone is on the same page, work with your HR department to create a policy for remote workers. Setting up clear expectations is key to avoiding miscommunication and abuse of policy.
2. Set up instant-messaging systems. This way employees can ask quick questions and send simple reminders instantly without having to send emails. This slightly more productive communication tool will help ensure that constant communication is as possible remotely as it is in the office.
3. Enable video communication. For status meetings or conference calls, encourage remote employees to communicate over video. The real benefits here are nonverbal communication cues which can lead to less miscommunications and better relationship building between colleagues.
4. Leverage cloud technologies. Ideally, employees should be able to access any files or data that they can access in the office while working remotely. If your company uses secure, cloud-based software for everything from customer relations to invoicing, employees will be able to easily access whatever they need from wherever they may be working.

Pronets can help you with planning an infrastructure that will ensure your company's and your employees' success as a remote workforce. We understand the challenges inherent with supporting a telecommuting staff and we're ready to help!



Did you know...

... a guy recently crowd funded making potato salad to the outrageous tune of nearly \$56,000 using Kickstarter? These insane crowdfunding ideas should spark your imagination for funding your company's next project; at the very least, you'll be entertained at how creative folks can be when it comes to asking for money.

- Zack Danger Brown was bored one day and couldn't decide what kind of potato salad to make, so he started a crowdfunding project on Kickstarter (tinyurl.com/omvlzak). The incentives for investors into this asinine project include everything from a thank you, to a bite of potato salad (that will be some entertaining shipping conversation at the post office), to recipe books featuring potato salads from around the world.
- The Buffoonery Factory LLC fully funded the Griz Coat, a project where you can purchase your very own coat modeled after a grizzly bear. Initially seeking \$2,500, this project received over 11 times that amount, ensuring that bear aficionados around the world can now wander around looking like furry dorks. (tinyurl.com/k65a97h)
- Cat lovers surpassed Kate Funk's goal of \$3,500 by leaps and bounds in order to fund her project of the World's Most Super Amazing 100% Awesome Cat Calendar. Backers gave over \$25K – we've got admit though, the pictures are cute! (tinyurl.com/n8c475f)

If these ideas have you shaking your head and muttering about the course of man, take heart – amidst all the silly stuff, a shining star arose with the crowd funded return of PBS's series, **Reading Rainbow**. Host LeVar Burton turned to Kickstarter to raise funds for an online version of the show and the campaign reached its \$1 million goal in a matter of hours. Way to go, humanity! (tinyurl.com/l645jde)

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Great hopes make great men. – Thomas Fuller

Is Your Business Ready for A Server?

The "Latte" Factor

In his book Automatic Millionaire, author David Bach talks about the "latte" factor. Simply put, most people end up financially broke not because of the big purchases they make, but because of the small, seemingly innocent day-to-day spending of small amounts of money over a long period of time. For example, no one thinks twice of spending \$4 for a cup of coffee at Starbucks every morning.



However, add that up over the course of a year and they've invested \$1,460 into a daily cup of coffee. Why am I telling you this? Because massive loss of productivity in any business plays out exactly the same way.

Think about this: a faster processor and a faster hard drive with greater capacity allow you to open and use applications faster, saving a few minutes every hour. Information is centralized, which saves a few more minutes every hour in finding files. There are fewer crashes and hang-ups.

Each of these little things adds up to significant employee hours saved over the course of a year. If you are like most small businesses, you acquire desktop computers, phone systems, and software in a random, "buy-it-when-you-need-it" fashion as your business operations demand it.

But at some point, this patchwork of stopgap technology you've acquired is going to end up costing you more in downtime, system errors, breakdowns, and other problems than it would to rip out and replace everything.

If you've suddenly become aware that you're at that stage of growth in your business, then you want to stop purchasing more software and hardware in a willy-nilly fashion and get serious about planning for your future growth and business operations so you don't end up with a big pile of expensive hardware and software spaghetti that doesn't meet your business needs.

One secret to saving money on IT costs is to strive for as much uniformity and connectivity as possible across your business network - and the first place to start achieving that is through the use of a server. If the technology in your office is not simplifying your business and making it easier for you to get more done with fewer employees, it's costing you a lot more than the price of a server. While there is no shortage of white papers on the topic of ROI (return on investment) for upgrading technology, you and I know that this is truly a hard cost to quantify; however, there certainly IS a cost, and depending on your business operations and how you use the computers and technology in your office, the cost may be significant. **Rely on us to help with your server needs!**



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