

## What's Up?



### JUNE IS NATIONAL EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS MONTH

June is known for a host of special days of recognition like Father's Day, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and World Day Against Child Labour just to name a few. But it is also National Effective Communications Month.

Effective communication and the ability to build relationships based on those communications has been dramatically impacted over the past 15 months. Affecting us personally and in our businesses.

If you are a good communicator, take the time to help those that are struggling. If you are not a good communicator seek out someone who is-ask for help. People are more willing to help than you may realize. We are all in this together and can, and should, help each other through the struggles we face during these times.

Take a moment to read the Editors Column on page 3.

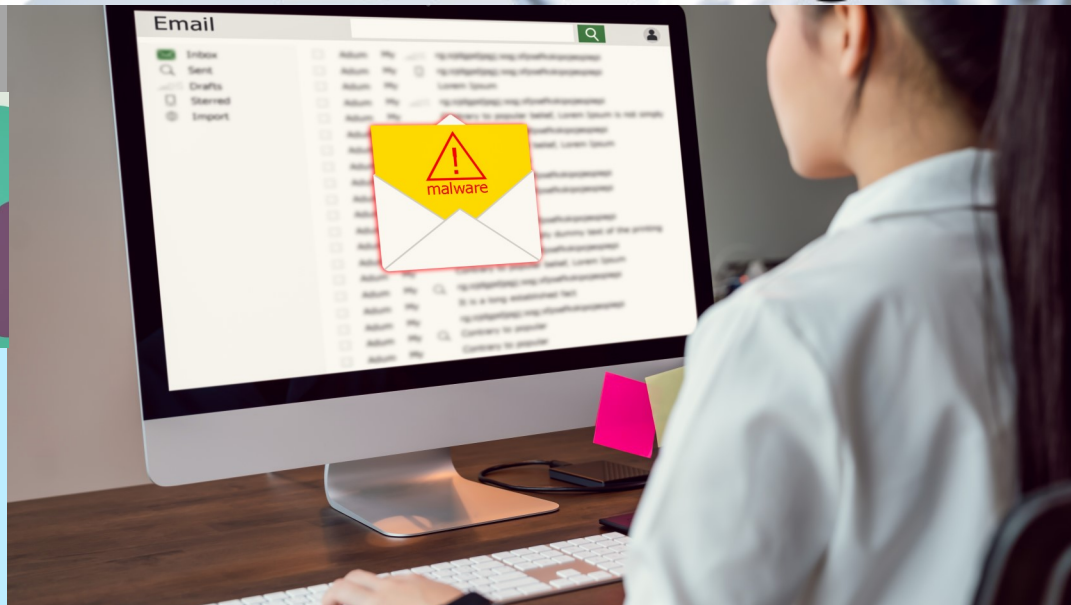
## June 2021



This monthly publication provided courtesy of Will Sperow, General Manager of Blue Bay Technology.

#### OUR MISSION

To provide our clients with the same expert-level of support that we would expect ourselves; provide it in an understanding and compassionate environment; and, work to exceed your expectations.



## Don't Let Your Employees Become Your Biggest Vulnerability

A couple years ago, *TechRepublic* ran a story with the following headline: "Employees Are Almost As Dangerous To Business As Hackers And Cybercriminals." From the perspective of the business, you might think that's simply inaccurate. Your company strives to hire the best people it can find - people who are good at their jobs and would never dream of putting their own employer at risk.

And yet, many employees do, and it's almost always unintentional. Your employees aren't thinking of ways to compromise your network or trying to put malware or ransomware on company computers, but it happens. One Kaspersky study found that 52% of businesses recognize that their employees are "their biggest weakness in IT security."

Where does this weakness come from? It stems from several different things

and varies from business to business, but a big chunk of it comes down to employee behavior.

#### Human Error

We all make mistakes. Unfortunately, some mistakes can have serious consequences. Here's an example: an employee receives an e-mail from their boss. The boss wants the employee to buy several gift cards and then send the gift card codes to them as soon as possible. The message may say, "I trust you with this," and work to build urgency within the employee.

The problem is that it's fake. A scammer is using an e-mail address similar to what the manager, supervisor or other company leader might use. It's a phishing scam, and it works. While it doesn't necessarily compromise your IT security internally, it showcases gaps in employee knowledge.

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Another common example, also through e-mail, is for cybercriminals to send files or links that install malware on company computers. The criminals once again disguise the e-mail as a legitimate message from someone within the company, a vendor, a bank or another company the employee may be familiar with.

It's that familiarity that can trip up employees. All criminals have to do is add a sense of urgency, and the employee may click the link without giving more thought.

### Carelessness

This happens when an employee clicks a link without thinking. It could be because the employee doesn't have training to identify fraudulent e-mails or the company might not have a comprehensive IT security policy in place.

Another form of carelessness is unsafe browsing habits. When employees browse the web, whether it's for research or anything related to their job or for personal use, they should always do so in the safest way possible. Tell

employees to avoid navigating to "bad" websites and to not click any link they can't verify (such as ads).

Bad websites are fairly subjective, but one thing any web user should look for is "https" at the beginning of any web address. The "s" tells you the site is secure. If that "s" is not there, the website lacks proper security. If you input sensitive data into that website, such as your name, e-mail address, contact information or financial information, you cannot verify the security of that information and it may end up in the hands of cybercriminals.

Another example of carelessness is poor password management. It's common for people to use simple passwords and to use the same passwords across multiple websites. If your employees are doing this, it can put your business at a huge risk. If hackers get ahold of any of those passwords, who knows what they might be able to access. A strict password policy is a must for every business.

### Turn Weakness Into Strength

The best way to overcome the human weakness in your IT security is education. An IT security policy is a good start, but it must be enforced and understood. Employees need to know what behaviors are unacceptable, but they also need to be aware of the threats that exist. They need resources they can count on as threats arise so they may be dealt with properly. Working with an MSP or IT services firm may be the answer - they can help you lay the foundation to turn this weakness into a strength.

**"One Kaspersky study found that 52% of businesses recognize that their employees are 'their biggest weakness in IT security.'"**

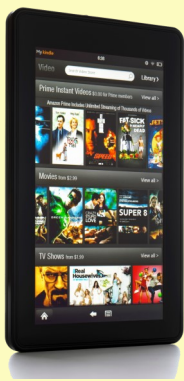
## Help Us Out And We'll Give You A Brand-New Kindle Fire For Your Trouble

We love having you as a client and, quite honestly, wish we had more like you! So instead of just wishing, we've decided to hold a special "refer a friend" event for the remainder of 2021.

Simply refer any company with 5 or more computers to our office to receive a FREE computer network assessment (a \$999 value). Once we've completed our initial appointment with your referral, we'll rush YOU a free 10" Kindle Fire HD or 8" Fire HD Kid's Edition tablet as a thank-you (or donate \$100 to your favorite charity ... your choice!). If the meeting results in a contract with your referral, we've got a bigger surprise for you.

Please let your referral know that you have referred us and that one of our Client Relationship Specialists will give them a call to set up an appointment. Keep in mind that the appointment can be held in person under proper social distancing protocols or via Microsoft Teams.

Simply call us at 703-261-7200 or 540-546-5625 or e-mail Paula, our Director of Client Relationship Management at [phofmann@bluebaytechnology.com](mailto:phofmann@bluebaytechnology.com) and provide your referral's name and contact information today!





## NATIONAL EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION MONTH

Editors Column  
Editor, Paula Hofmann

Clearly, effective communication is a very important topic for this month. For the past 15 months our ability to communicate – let alone effectively – has been extremely hampered by the restrictions placed on us due to COVID. Not only were we not allowed to go into our offices, we couldn't interact with family that didn't live in the same house, and get together with friends. To save ourselves from complete isolation, we resorted to more phone calls and video calls – just not the same. We are human beings and need person-to-person contact. In the process some of our ability to communicate face-to-face effectively eroded. In addition to all of this, we have been wearing masks which has hindered our ability to see facial expressions. The key to effectively communicate is being able to react to and modify behavior by observing body language. It's how we "read" each other.

Another side-effect of being semi-isolated is a good percentage of working adults were forced to work from home. Many have decided that this works best for them and do not want to return to the office. A real predicament for some employers and a blessing for others. Companies that provide services that require staff to be in office will have to find workarounds or replace employees. As if that wasn't hard enough before the pandemic, it's becoming increasingly more difficult. Companies that have realized that their business functioned just as well, maybe better, without staff (or not all of them) in the office now may recognize that they may be able to save on operational expenses by downsizing their facilities. They may have even found that productivity may have increased due to lack of distractions. This is the time to re-evaluate how you conduct business. And, if you are thinking about continuing with a remote workforce, please make sure to add data security to your planning. Remote workers and their connections to your network are extremely vulnerable to hacking if not properly set up and protected.

There are varying degrees of fear and anxiety controlling how people communicate. From those still wanting to be completely isolated to those who just don't care anymore. None, or at least the majority, of your staff will feel the same about being in the office. This will most assuredly affect communications in the office. Those that are nervous about being in the office may be standoffish and even get agitated when approached by someone that is less concerned. Those relishing being back in the office will be excited and possibly be overly communicative. This alone is a communication disaster waiting to happen. To stave off some of this, try having a meeting with your staff and let them know that you understand their fear, or lack of fear, and ask them to be mindful of their fellow co-workers and their feelings. Work with your employees to make the best, and most reasonable, accommodations that will make everyone comfortable in the workplace. You will find that your staff will be appreciative of the openness and understanding. This will likely reduce the fear and anxiety that we all know is going to exist when everyone returns to the office.

# From Start-Ups To Best Places To Work: How Culture Changes Everything

There are two parts to culture: people and systems. On the people side, consider the "Empathy Accountability Continuum." Empathy is at one end of the spectrum and accountability at the other.

Then, based on who you are dealing with and the context of the conversation, figure out where you need to be on that continuum. The more you get to know someone, the easier it becomes to choose the right moment in time to lean toward either empathy or accountability.

How do you know where to land on the scale? Be curious about the people on your team as well as people in the world around you. Ask what they are doing and how they are doing it.

A big part of maintaining curiosity and understanding also comes from being calm and connected. You can't have a connection with your people unless you are calm. It's part of being a leader within your organization.

To that effect, you need to be able to lead yourself and know where you are on the Empathy Accountability Continuum. We can't lead others unless we can lead ourselves. So, we have to understand our own fears and concerns. Then it becomes easier to make those connections.

On the systems side of things, you have to "discover the core": your core purpose and core values, which tell you what is important to you and your business.

As part of that, you also need to document the future. Plan, strategize and put it into writing. Where are you going? What is your vision?



What is your BHAG (big, hairy, audacious goal)? What is your 10-year obsession?

Once you plan and put your future into writing, you have to execute relentlessly. This is how you make sure you get there. Live your system – use daily rituals like huddles and make sure they are useful. You should be constantly talking about your core values and goals.

Of course, as part of building a strong culture, you need a robust recruiting process. Find the right people and keep them engaged. Have a multistep and multiperson process when hiring and use a scorecard (a very detailed job description) when recruiting.

When you bring it all together – people and systems – be sure to show more love. Make sure there is peer recognition and recognition from leadership on a regular basis. Send them cards on their anniversary or birthday. Even have a budget for when bad stuff happens in people's lives.

But don't rush your culture. Take it one piece at a time – do something every day to work at it and build something great.



*Tristan White is the founder and CEO of The Physio Co, a unique health care company based in Australia. While he's led The Physio Co, the company has been ranked one of Australia's 50 Best Places To Work for 11 consecutive years. In building this fast-growing company, White authored the book Culture Is Everything and started a podcast, Think Big Act Small. Learn more at [TristanWhite.com](http://TristanWhite.com) and see his Petra Coach webinar at [PetraCoach.com/from-start-up-to-best-places-to-work-how-culture-changes-everything-with-tristan-white](http://PetraCoach.com/from-start-up-to-best-places-to-work-how-culture-changes-everything-with-tristan-white)*

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Or call (703) 261-7200 to speak with a Client Relationship Specialist

## ■ Are You Stuck In The Self-Employment Trap?

Many people go the self-employment route in order to have more control over their days, in search of a better work/life balance. But reality soon becomes very different: long hours while you pour everything into the business. This leads to burnout. What actions can you take to avoid or escape this trap?

**Delegate More Tasks.** This is hard to do, especially when you want things to go just right. Turn your attention to hiring one or more employees who are up to the challenge and can meet your needs. It might take a while to find the ideal match, but it's worth it to find someone who can take on crucial tasks and help you achieve your goals.

**Inspect Your Systems And Processes.** Across the board, you need systems and processes in place. When you have a framework to follow, it makes it much easier to

reclaim your time and energy. *Inc.*, Feb. 18, 2021

## ■ Make The Most Of Your Remote Workforce

More people are working at home. With a spread-out workforce, businesses face new challenges that they didn't face with the traditional in-office model. Now, as businesses adapt, they are looking for ways to get more out of their remote workforce.

### 1. They're Reorganizing.

Businesses are taking a hard look at their internal structure, along with systems and processes. They're shifting the way they hire by raising their expectations. Along with that, they're redoing the way they onboard and train. They're relearning to do everything remotely, and tools like Slack and Zoom are taking center stage.

### 2. They're Investing In

**Technology.** Businesses are bringing new tools and tech into the mix. They're investing in

communication and collaboration tools. They're relying heavily on the cloud and VPNs. They're also buying devices like laptops and PCs for their remote workforce to ensure everyone is using the same, approved technology – which makes support and security more efficient. *Inc.*, Feb. 27, 2021

## ■ Use Technology To Make Your Business Stand Out

Today's workforce is more tech-savvy than ever before. This means your business should be as well. You want to attract good talent, and leveraging your own tech prowess can be a way to do just that.

Think about how you engage with social media. Is it something that's just there or is it something you're using to actively reach out and connect with customers, potential customers and your community? TikTok, for example, relies on a powerful algorithm to reach specific audiences. Businesses can take advantage of that to get content, including ads, to relevant eyes. According to Hootsuite, TikTok pushes for five million daily impressions for certain ads.

Taking it a step further, you can mix AI with human communication. Chatbots are more advanced than ever and can seriously impact lead generation. Chatbots also direct users to real people to continue the conversation on specific terms. Basically, there are more ways to customize how you communicate, and it's worth investing in. *Forbes*, March 12, 2021

