



Table Talk

Consultants Roundtable Monthly Newsletter – Jeff Freers, Editor

DECEMBER 2 MEETING

Tom Dobson led the discussion with several timely and topical questions that all consultants face, including positioning ourselves as a cost benefit rather than an additional cost that can be eliminated, how close of friends we should become with our clients, are Christmas gifts in order, and if layoffs are generally a good or bad idea-both long term and short term.

DECEMBER 16 MEETING

Chairman Bill Brennen conducted the meeting in which the past years business was discussed, and the organization financial report was submitted by Treasurer Jim Dominello. The club incurred a slight loss for the year due to primarily how income was received and expenses were disbursed. It could change somewhat if some members decide to renew their memberships before year end. As always, the group could use new members.

JANUARY 6 MEETING

The first meeting of the new year will be the annual meeting with the election of officers for 2009 and will be followed by the usual discussion conducted by Tom Dobson.

JANUARY 20 MEETING

We will kick off 2009 programs with Income Tax-Filing Tips for Consultants, presented by Don Vander Hey, E.A., a member of the group. Don, an Elkhart-based accounting specialist, provides tax planning, tax return preparation, and financial management planning for small and medium size businesses.

TIMELY TIPS

In a recent exchange, Treasurer Jim Dominello and Webmaster Gene Bohn were discussing small business cost saving possibilities and the following suggestions were provided by Gene. I felt that they were worthy of passing along.

Replacing the fax line with Internet FAX services; these can be set up to e mail the FAX message to a specific e mail box; typical service is \$7 / mo and \$0.05 / page after 100 pages per month. This eliminates the separate FAX line and is more private.

FAX is being replaced by scanning and converting the scan to a PDF and e mailing the PDF although a PDF can be altered. It is just as easy to convert most to a TIF which cannot be altered and is read by a web browser.

Using Virtual Private Network (VPN) to remote into office from remote locations. This provides a secure data line to the office for the user. The users include business travelers as well as employees accessing the office for computing, e mail, order entry, etc.

Banks are now putting check scanners in smaller businesses; both the bank and business win here. The business used to send someone to the bank to deposit checks – taking about 0.5 hr per trip. Now the scanner is at the business and a clerical person scans them in and then links up to the bank to effectively make a deposit. The scan reads all the required information, makes a copy of the check, cancels the check and records the information for transmission to the bank. If the business links up to the bank before 3:30 p.m. the deposit is logged in as this day's deposit. The business consumes about 5 minutes to do the scan saving 25 minutes that had been involved in going to the bank. The business must hold the check for 90 days or return it to the check writer. The bank no longer pays bank people to do this job. Everyone saves time and effort. The down side is that this does not work for cash. Some businesses used to want credit cards because payment was faster; now they get it just as fast but do not have to pay the credit card fee BUT they have to hope the check is good.

Retiring Point to Point hard wired leased lines among locations for multi-location facilities. They can be replaced with Internet and Virtual Private Network, wireless point to point if the geography is favorable, or even Multi Protocol Layered Switching from the phone company which includes linking all facilities voice and data transactions together in a common link mode that is maintained

and made redundant by the phone carrier.

Retire some land trunk lines. With cell phones taking some traffic, companies note that they do not need as many wired lines.

Install Internet Blocking devices. Data suggests that up to 20 % of office worker time is wasted on non-business Internet use which slows the internet and wastes employee time. The major offense is the females in the 45 – 60 age group using home shopping sites; the next are the 30 and under females using social sites. While males tend to frequent the porn sites this is far less than the above two. Internet blockers not only block numerous sites, they also track sites visited and sample them; if the site falls into an inappropriate site, it is then blocked and the employee's behavior is reported.

Use managed switches to provide priority for efficient traffic flow. This accelerates priority traffic. This is more of a load balance mode but it assures capacity for priority and uses idle capacity later.

Backing up critical data to other locations using already established links for multi-site companies. This eliminates third party data storage costs but does require added cost for internal storage.

Use of a carrier based Voice over IP (VoIP) integrated phone and internet feed line. These are nice for smaller businesses who have only a few trunk lines and Internet lines replaced by a single feed line. Voice can be converted to analog for traditional internal phone lines or kept as IP voice for IP phones. Internet feed is a secondary priority to Voice for good voice quality. Data services usually hardly notice that they are now taking a secondary priority for traffic.

COMING PROGRAMS

February - February's speaker is Ty Putrich, Senior Manufacturing Services Account Manager, with the Purdue University Technical Assistance Program.

March - Jeff Freers of the Executive Suite at Jefferson Centre will provide cost savings and enhancement alternatives for Home Based Businesses.

During this year as TABLETALK Editor, I continued the custom established by my predecessor, the late Jim Perkins to close the newsletter with a timely but also thought provoking quote or two. I can think of nothing that satisfies those two criteria any better than:

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

and also my personal favorite....

"God bless us all, everyone"

Jeff Freers Secretary / TABLETALK Editor
CONSULTANTS ROUNDTABLE