



CONNECT

Connect
Telephone & Computer
Group

Newsletter

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Northwest Telecom joins The Connect Group

Connect Telephone and Computer Group is pleased to announce that Northwest Telecom, a Bozeman based technology company has joined the Connect family.

Northwest Telecom has offices in Bozeman, Helena, and Great Falls, MT. They have been serving Western Montana clients since 1985. Northwest Telecom is an Ideacom member and those membership benefits will now be available to Connect.

Northwest Telecom specializes in the installation, maintenance and training of Vertical (formerly Vodavi) phone systems.

This has allowed the Connect family to expand by 9 full time employees. This expansion will allow Connect to bring full service communications to all of Northwest Telecom's customers.

"The transition happened January 1st and we are excited to have such an experienced group join our staff. This will really expand our reach to the western part of Montana," says Matt Duray, President of Connect Telephone & Computer Group.

All of the employees previously with Northwest Telecom are going to come on board with The Connect Group to allow their clients continuity of services.

"We plan to roll out our Current Technology Assurance Program to the new employees to allow them to see the benefits of the program and how it can help the previous Northwest Telecom customers as it has helped The Connect Group customers," said Matt Duray.

With the expansion of the office out in Western Montana, this will allow The Connect Group to roll out some of its services faster so that the community will not have to wait to get services like unlimited training and disaster recovery planning.

"We are very excited about the new group and the talents that this combined offering will bring to Bozeman and the surrounding communities," said Bill Warwood, president of Northwest Telecom Inc.

If you would like more information on how The Connect Group can help your business increase its competitive advantage and profitability, please call, click, or stop by one of our Montana offices.

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New Certifications

(to continue to provide the most certified people in the region, our employees constantly train to stay at the top)

- Randy Begger achieves the Samsung Networking Certification
- Brian O'Loughlin achieves the Samsung Office Serve Certification
- Andrew Acker achieves Samsung Office Serv Certification
- Bill Warwood achieves customer advocate certification
- Terry Baldus achieves customer advocate certification.
- George Blackard re-certifies as customer advocate

THE POWER TO COMMUNICATE

The Connect Group wins Major Awards

Connect Telephone & Computer Group was recognized at the Annual TAG National event in San Diego California. TAG is a national group of companies like The Connect Group that spans the entire United States. There are 130 members throughout the United States.

Each year, TAG recognizes the best of the best. Last Year Connect received two awards, one for financial performance and one for sales excellence.

This year, Connect again received a financial performance award, as well as an award for best practices.

"We, at Connect, really believe in the Partner Program and



how it benefits our business as well as the businesses of our clients. We really enjoy the ability to provide unlimited service to our clients at a fixed price. With all of the uncertainty in the world today, it is great to be able to cement the cost of ownership on technology," said Matt Duray, president of the Connect Group.

"We are really proud of The Connect Group, they have really taken their business to the next level," said Dale Johnson, CEO of TAG National.

Connect has been a member of TAG for a little more than two years and has enjoyed bringing the innovative programs that TAG has designed to its clients.

When asked what has allowed Connect to achieve such high standards two years in a row after being a member for such a short time, Matt Duray responded it is the people that truly separate the service companies, and he believes Connect has the best.



How to Avoid the Pitfalls in Technology Investments

I was recently reading an article that interviewed the CEO's of five large companies and asked them what their greatest IT successes were and what their biggest IT mistakes were. The results were not surprising to me, because I live in this world every day, but I thought they would be good to share for those who do not eat, sleep and breathe the technology sector.

3 out of the 5 respondents said that their greatest successes were the hiring of the right people. Each of the respondents talked about how they tried to save money by not hiring the best qualified, but the one willing to work for the least amount of money. I think we have all tried this, maybe not in the IT sector, but in some avenue of life, we have chosen what appeared to be the bargain, only later to learn that it did not fulfill our purpose. Of the two that did not answer people, they focused on technology deployments that allowed them higher productivity across

the board. All of the five respondents agreed that the purpose of the technology is to help your people use their talents to create customer satisfaction.

When it came to biggest mistakes, the one that really hit

home to me was the CEO of Slack Barshinger, one of the nations premier integrated marketing communication agencies with revenues in excess of 14 million, he stated how in the early days, they looked at technology investments on

an individual basis. Whenever a need arose, they selected the technology, deployed it, and then found the problems as it integrated with the rest of their technology. He said they now develop a technology strategy

for short term (six months), and long term (3 years) and evaluate every purchase in the technology department as to how it interrelates with their IT strategy as a whole. He said this methodology has saved his company countless hours and dollars over

the years. Sounds great, but how can a small business with a small budget afford to hire the best people and keep track of a short and long term IT strategy?

We, at Connect, believe we may have a solution for you. With our "Gold Seal

Data Partner Program", we give you unlimited access to our entire staff of IT professionals, planners, and project managers. We maintain the staff and the training, and you maintain your business. With this program, we



Make sure your IT dollars are being invested into a long term plan, not just short term band-aids

will develop a security plan, disaster recovery plan, and a technology plan for your business. We will then work the plans to ensure that the money you are spending is heading into the proper direction to ensure that your investment is protected. We can even bundle all of the hardware and software required to maintain your business' competitive advantage into one easy monthly payment which will protect the cash flow of your business.

The reasons we developed this program was to allow small business owners access to high quality IT staffs typically only found in larger organizations. The best part is, the price for this service is probably less than you would pay for an inexperienced IT person.

If your company is tired of making technology investments that are not providing the Return on Investment that you were looking for, give us a call. Our trained professionals can look at your business processes and see if technology can give your business increased profitability and a

Take a Second Look at how Technology can impact your Business

Being in the Technology Business, it has always surprised me at how rapidly technology is changing, yet we never seem to realize it until we look back. When I first got into business, most people didn't even have a cell phone, I know I'm dating myself. I used to conduct business with a pager. People would dial that number and key in a phone number and sometimes "911" after

the number. This meant it was an emergency. I would have to go and find a phone and call that person back usually not knowing who I was calling or what I was calling for.

With the advent of a cell phone, I now had the ability to receive a call and cut out the middle step of getting paged and then calling back, then as time progressed,

we received caller ID and voice-mail on our cell phones. Today we are doing email and our data applications on the very same device.

When I think about where we are now as opposed to where we came from, this has allowed me to do more with less time. The hardest thing to find as a small business owner is time.

The next time you are looking for technology, try to look at the end goal of what you are trying to accomplish. Let one of our trained experts help you find the technology that best suits your needs, we may be able to slow down your watch enough to allow you to get your tasks done.

Travel is a Resource Hog!



**Tired of Traveling?
We have the solutions
you need!**

In my recent past, I have spent several hours on the road dealing with all kinds of different requirements. We all have travel as part of our routine, especially those of us in Montana with several offices. We just seem to accept that there are some things that must be done face to face.

I think the biggest reason for this is because there is no other alternative, so we spend 8 hours traveling for a 1 or 2 hour ap-

pointment.

This puts a squeeze on the rest of our calendar. We then must accomplish in 4 days what normally is tough to squeeze into 5.

We, at Connect, are no different than any other business with "geography issues". We must have meetings, discussions, and conversations with internal and external sources all of the time. Some of the things we have been doing to minimize this impact is

to investigate the technologies that are available to us. We have been using IP Nexxus (a web conferencing solution), telephone calls, and have deployed several video conferencing solutions. If these technologies can eliminate just 1/2 of the travel that we are now driving for, this would dramatically improve the outlook on our business and our quality of life. If you would like to investigate these technologies further, please call us today.



We Don't Know what We Don't Know! By Scott Young

My 10 year old daughter and I were delivering Girl Scout Cookies on a Saturday when we stopped by the Connect Offices to drop off some orders. We were at my desk when she looked up at me and asked me a simple question. "Daddy, what is it you do?" I was taken aback for several reasons, first of which was I always assumed my kids knew what I did for a living and second, I was at a loss on how to answer in a way a fifth grader would understand. "Well Honey," I said, "I help companies use technology so they can make more money and be more competitive." I could tell she was confused by the way her nose crinkled up and she looked at me like I was speaking a foreign language. "Don't they already know how to do that?" I laughed and said "they don't know what they don't know." To make my point I went on to remind her that she didn't know the multiplication tables until last

year.

On the way home, I was thinking about our conversation and came to the realization my simple explanation was truer than I had originally thought. I looked back to when I had my own business and how often I had long stretches of time where I was in tunnel vision mode. I was, to coin an old phrase, "working in my business instead of on my business."

I became so comfortable in the way I went about my days that they flowed together and I became irritated by those pesky salesmen who wanted to "teach" me about new and different ways of doing my business. I am ashamed to say I blew most of them off and went blissfully about the same old routine.

Every once in awhile a good salesperson got through and in spite of myself, I actually did learn something. That something usually led me to a better process, a better product to offer my customers, or

a piece of equipment that made me a significant Return on Investment (ROI). That something never failed to give my business a competitive advantage over my many competitors.

At our training meetings the phrase "We don't know what we don't know" is spoken and I am humbled by it every time I hear it. For example, I carry a piece of equipment with me wherever I go. I can send and receive e-mail, my schedule, my task list, my voice mail from my desk at work, and I can read and write Word and Excel Documents with it. No, it's not my laptop, it's my cell phone. What would this mean to a business? At Connect our technicians use their cell phones to be dispatched, to complete their invoicing, do their timecards and have the customer sign when they're done with the job. Yup, pretty fancy stuff and you may say that you don't need all of that. What would you say if I told you we get an extra hour to an hour and a

half of billable time per day per tech? Times that by 5 days a week, 50 weeks a year and you get my point.

At Connect, we tell our customers if technology can't give you more profit or a competitive advantage, don't buy it. Why would you?



We partner with you to help you use technology to improve your bottom line and increase your competitive advantage.

Process Technology

by Russ Palmer

In the twenty years I have been in the field of information and communication technology I can't help but notice that through our reliance on technology we have lost something in the process...the process itself. I have seen these tools become more sophisticated, more powerful, and more available. All positives, it would seem, yet I can't help but notice that as our technologies evolve so does our reliance upon them not as part of the process, but as the process itself.

I hold a strong belief in the power of technology and that properly applied technology facilitates amazing improvements within an organization. I believe in the value of the tool. But remember technology exists for one reason, to enhance a process.

The telephone would not exist if

it were a more efficient process to walk across town to tell your 2:30 appointment that you were going to be about 15 minutes late. The process of communication has been enhanced by the telephone and the process of travel enhanced by the automobile. But we did not create the automobile so we could travel, and the telephone was not created as an ends to speech.

Most challenges that businesses face are the result of a process breakdown. Perhaps more insidious is the process that works, is accepted but is inefficient. Harvard Business School describes three levels of business process in the following order: 1. Management process - Strategic management, process development, standards, direction. 2. Operational process - Core business, manufacturing, sales and purchasing 3. Supporting Process -IT support, accounting.

Under this model, management develops the processes, these processes are passed to and implemented at the operation level and the operational process is supported by the support group.

Here are a few steps to consider when planning for technology in your organization. Before you go out and spend more money on technology, remember technology is a process tool, ask yourself a few process questions. Does your business technology really enhance a process that pleases your customers or brings more dollars to the bottom line? When was the last time you really took a look at your processes to find what is really working? Does your technology support the process or have you developed a process to support your technology? Are you purchasing this solution with the hopes that the technology alone would fix a process problem? Look at the simple technology in your

organization. Instead of thinking of your phone, for example, as a device to make and receive phone calls think of it as a tool to better communicate with your clients, people and partners. Define the business process before applying technology to it, be thorough in your process steps. Choose the technology carefully, ask specific questions; will it enhance the process it's being applied to? Be honest with yourself about the cost, remember technology has attached to it a cost of ownership; it requires upgrades and it requires training...continual training.

Technology is here to stay, and it should be. Don't just accept that technology in itself will make or enhance your business. It's your processes that run and rule the organization and technology can enhance those processes, if applied properly.



1306 Central Ave
Billings, MT 59102

22 Shawnee Way
Bozeman, MT 59715

Phone: (800) 767-4991

Fax: (406) 869-8999

E-mail: sales@theconnectgroup.com



*THE **POWER** TO COMMUNICATE*

Classroom Training Rolled out to Bozeman Area

As I have stated in several earlier articles, I believe that training is the foundation of success. I also believe that as a business owner, it is one of the hardest things to justify paying money for, not to mention the time away from the employees duties and customers.

If we look at the purpose of the technology, to enhance an existing process, then we understand that the employees need to know the process before the technology can benefit them.

We, at Connect, believe that at the heart of any good business is the process. The process is more than how we get things done, it is what separates the great companies from the others. The process is what allows us to service our customers better, faster and easier than our competition.

It is critical that we not only

teach our employees the process, but that we then give them the tools and training to make that process as efficient as possible. The partners in our Billings



area have taken advantage of the technology training for a couple of years now. In Bozeman, we did not have an effective way of rolling out the training. All of that has changed.

We now have classes regularly scheduled in Bozeman to make the investment from a company's standpoint easier to swallow.

We currently offer training in all of the brands of phone systems we sell along with industry standard software packages such as:

Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Quickbooks, etc.

If you have an idea for a class or a proposed class, please drop us a line, we are always interested

in what you are interested in.

To check out the schedule, please go to our website: www.theconnectgroup.com and click the training link on the left hand side of the page.

We are aggressively working on the schedule for 2008 and would love to have your input.

In addition to our scheduled training, we have a fully functional moveable lab that will allow you to train on any topic you would like. This lab is available for rent and could definitely help you increase your bottom line. If you would like to get an estimate on your own private training, please get in touch with one of our representatives today. Remember, to differentiate ourselves, we must have better people and a better process. Training can help bring those two together.