



CONNECT

Connect
Telephone & Computer
Group

Newsletter

3rd Quarter 2008

Do not Panic During Slow Economic Growth

All the news lately has been focused on the slowing economy. I have even heard the recession word thrown around quite a bit. Encarta defines "recession" as "a period, shorter than a depression, during which there is a decline in economic trade and prosperity". In that definition, we are not in a recession, although I think we could all agree that we are in a slowing phase of the economy.

With Fuel prices at all time highs and that affecting everything else we have because of delivery charges, we are going to experience some challenging times.

We, at Connect, believe that these trying times mean it is even more important that we look for ways to increase our efficiency and output.

Since that is what technology does, we are continuing to educate ourselves so that we can help our clients with technology solutions that will impact their businesses in a positive way.

We have found some key factors that can help you determine if technology can help your business increase its profitability and competitive advantage:

- Is your process of turning contacts into clients manual?
- Does your delivery time on parts & services slow down your cash flow?
- Are you contacting your existing clients on a regular basis to ensure that they are satisfied?

The above are just a few questions that we must understand to see if Technology can help your business.

We are working diligently at Connect to sharpen our skills to understand different businesses. We understand that our value to our clients comes when we can be an advisor and help our clients reach their goals.

This is what has driven the innovation to the C-Tap program, the partner program, outsourced IT staffing, and numerous other services that can help our clients grow their businesses.

Are you tired of buying technology and not seeing a pay-back? If you would like to try a different way to adopt technology, give us a call.

Inside this issue:

There are 3 ways to Increase Profitability in any Business 2

Web Conferencing Saves Time and Fuel 2

Connect Announces Carrier Services Audit 2

5 Steps to Successful Information Technology 3

It Can Happen to You! 3

If I Train them, they will Leave! 4

New Certifications

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

- Robert Jenkins attains Sales Professional Certification from TAG
- Barry Jenkins attains Sales Professional Certification from TAG
- Clint Croft attains Samsung Applications Certification
- Dan Davis achieves Samsung OfficeServ 7100 Certification
- David Taft Achieves Comp/TIA A+ Certification
- Connect renews Cisco Premier Partner Status
- Connect renews IP Telephony Certification

THE POWER TO COMMUNICATE

Fuel Prices Continue to Rise!

I'm sure this isn't the first time you've seen this headline. Are you tired of high fuel prices, but don't know what you can do about it in your business? We, at Connect, believe we have some answers for you.

We have a technology, called Network Car. This technology plugs into your vehicle and monitors several things that can impact fuel mileage:

- Speeds driven
- Idling time
- Unauthorized Use
- Service Requirements
- Trend Analysis

No longer do we have to continue to let our fleet vehicles



plague us with unexpected results in terms of fuel costs. We can now monitor the performance of the vehicles and set expectations to allow us to get the most out of this \$4.09 per gallon gasoline.

We, at Connect, have adopted this technology and are in the

midst of developing a procedure that will return the cost of the technology in the first few days of every month.

We currently have over 30 vehicles on the road and we want to ensure that we can deliver the same level of service while reducing our monthly expenses.

We receive Email alerts when thresholds are exceeded, and these can be from driving too fast, idling too long, or service is required.

If you run a fleet of vehicles and don't have this technology, you are paying too much for gasoline. If you would like to see how this technology can help your business, please give us a call.



There are 3 ways to Increase Profitability in any Business

In some recent reading, I came across a book written on the challenge of increasing profitability. What I found out is there are really only three ways to increase the profitability of *any* business.

1. Increase your sales with the same amount of profit margin.
2. Retain your current sales number, while increasing your price.
3. Retain your current sales, current pricing, while decreasing your cost of delivering your goods and services without affecting quality.

Sounds simple enough, but we all know it may be simple, but it is not easy. We know that if we try to raise our prices we may lose some clients, but the other two we can make changes without

affecting the quality of our delivery.

First, let's look at our sales staff, can they physically sell more? We could look at ways of making their time more productive. Look at the tasks that they do every day and see how we can make them more efficient. Take, for example, the way they contact clients. Could we use technology to help with the ways and frequency of contacting clients?

When we are looking for ways to increase sales or decrease the cost of delivering products, this is where our process comes in.

You hear us all of the time talking about process and how the process is the way we can gain efficiency and profitability.

If you look at a company like McDonalds, how can they continue to deliver a hamburger (or any other food item) with a

consistent quality at a low price? They have a very defined process that they use technology and training to create a very streamlined delivery.

Now, we all know that McDonalds does not make the best hamburger, nor do they set out to. Their goal is to deliver a inexpensive lunch. If their goal was to deliver the best hamburger, there is no doubt in my mind that they would. What Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonald's understood was how to replicate a system.

If we take that approach in our businesses, how often do we not use the process when we deliver? Does anyone even know the whole process? If we do not know the process and do not train on the process, then chances are technology will not impact our process.

If your business has a defined process that is understood by all of the employees, then you are an ideal candidate to look at how we can use technology to increase your profitability and competitive advantage.

For example, if you have a process that dictates that you call all of your patients the day before their appointment, we can either hire someone to do that, or have a piece of Technology that will call them and give them the reminder.

If you need help with your process or determining how technology could have a dramatic impact on your business, call, click or stop by one of our offices today.

Technology can help you deliver the same products and services at the same quality level for less money?

Web Conferencing Saves Time and Fuel

We all have to go out of town and across town for meetings. This is still the most effective way to meet with people. As pressures for productivity and the cost of travel continue to rise, we will see increased use of Web conferencing. Most businesses today have internet access. I think internet access is almost a requirement anymore. With the use of the internet, we can help your business do more appointments with the same amount of people at a lower cost. Here is how web conferencing

works.

On the meeting organizer's end, you will set up a conference, the users will then go to a website and will have the ability to see your desktop. Anything you do on your computer, they will see. The nice thing for the other end is they will not have to load any software or programs, they just need to have internet access. You can set these meetings up at the drop of a hat, or in advance. It is very flexible.

This tool will allow you to train

internal employees at remote offices, educate clients from your desk, or demonstrate to anyone or hundreds of people across the globe.

We have implemented this technology in our office and are amazed at the amount of time it can save, not to mention the confusion.

The best part is you get unlimited web conferencing for one flat rate per month. We are so convinced that you will love it, we will waive charges on thirty

days of conferencing allowing you to evaluate the technology with no risk. To take advantage of this offer, please clip this article and give it to one of our reps and they will help you set it up on your computer.



Web Conferencing may help your business increase your profitability.

Connect Announces Carrier Services Audit



Let us help you wade through your monthly connectivity bills.

Are you tired of getting your phone bills every month and are not sure what to do with them? Most people I talk to tell me: "If it's about the same price as last month, I just pay it because I know that I don't have the time to figure it out." Good news, you don't have to. We have a division here at Connect that will do that for you. Are you getting the best deal? Is there another carrier that could help me accomplish better productiv-

ity with the same amount of monthly costs? Am I being charged what I am supposed to be charged? All great questions. We, at Connect, understand your frustrations. We know that your phone bill, wireless bill, Network connections, and internet connections take up a healthy portion of your monthly operating costs. We want to help. We can get copies of those bills and work with most major carriers to help you. Even if you are in a con-

tract, we can verify you are being charged what you should be.

Best of all, we include this service in our partner program. If you are a partner and would like to have this service, please call your local rep and round up a copy of all of your monthly bills.

If you are not a partner, you should look at how the partner program helps you take care of all of your communications needs for the best possible price.

5 Steps to Successful Information Technology by Russ Palmer

Many business owners and managers struggle with technology spending. Spending money on Information Technology is like spending money on marketing, on one hand we hope it's paying off, on the other we wonder if we aren't just throwing money into a pit! Ask anyone running a business today if technology is important to the operation of that business and most would steadfastly agree. Ask them if the dollars they spend on that technology are bringing efficiency and bottom line dollars to the organization and you will most likely get an "I think so" and let's face it, it's probably an "I hope so". Technology exists for one reason only...to bring efficiency to an existing process. For a process to be efficient it must be measured and this is where most business managers struggle with technology. The efficiency of technology in your organization must be measured just like any other tool or process within the organization, this month I'm going to talk about what those measurements should be.

Some companies are large enough to have an in-house IT staff, most companies contract these services. Whether you have a staff or contract I have put together a brief overview of five important areas you should be measuring in regard to IT.

1) **Help Desk** – The ability for your team to get answers quickly to technology problems is critical to maintaining process workflow. Each time an employee is "stuck" with a tech problem, however small, the result is down time. This has the same effect on productivity as repair issues.

2) **Training** – Training is the process of knowing the skill level of your people and using training resources to build upon that level. Don't assume that because someone in your organization can create and edit a spreadsheet that they are productive with the software. Are your people properly trained on the technology they are using, is there a training program for upgrades so that your team can take advantage of software enhancements? Are new hires trained in the

use and integration of technology to your process?

3) **Build-Fix** – Installing and repairing technology is traditionally the cornerstone of IT service and what, but what really happens when something breaks? What is the real cost of down time (cost of repair + cost of employee + lost production = cost of down time). What is the plan to repair...is it efficient? What technology do I have to repair and / or modify when and how do I accomplish this?

4) **Security** – 80% of all security violations are internal to the organization, of that group 80% of those breaches is accidental. Security covers not only software and hardware devices like firewalls and virus software, but user practices as well as backup and disaster recovery plans...do you have one?

5) **Planning** – For many organizations planning is a very reactive process which puts the company behind the technology eight-ball from the onset. Companies with planned implementations and

upgrades have a better handle on technology expenditures and much less stress within the organization.

Efficient information technology must be tracked and measured and backed by a clear vision. In his book *Maximum Achievement*, Brian Tracy, a leading American business motivator states "A clear vision, backed by definite plans, gives you a tremendous feeling of confidence and personal power." Clear vision is what leads to clear processes, process that can be enhanced by technology. Keeping the technology process in your organization organized, on track and cost effective is only five simple steps away. Follow these five steps and not only will you better understand what technology works within your organization, you and your team will be positioned to embrace and make productive that technology.

Russ Palmer is an Executive Advisor for Connect, he can be reached at 869-8910

It Can Happen to You!

Last week I was in Cedar Rapids, IA. For those of you who have been watching the news, you saw that Cedar Rapids had a flood of disastrous proportions. When I arrived in Cedar Rapids on Monday, the river was high, but there was no cause for alarm. On Tuesday, we were not able to golf the front nine, because it was under water. Now, for you golfers out there, you understand what a disaster this was. Just kidding, on Tuesday, there still was no cause for alarm. When I went to training on Wednesday morning, the water was higher yet, and everyone was a little nervous since the place we were training in was on the Cedar River. We were evacuated out of the building mid day and by the next day the power was off in downtown

and more than 1300 city blocks were flooded, and I'm not talking about a little bit of water. Cars, houses and commercial buildings were completely under water.

I have never been in anything like that in my entire life. To see the water rise as fast as it did over the amount of area that it did was awesome. To see it do that with no more than 48 hours to predict was unbelievable.

This brings me to my point. Most of those businesses thought: "That could never happen to us." That was more than 1 week ago and most of downtown is still evacuated. All of the hotel ballrooms are rented out. All of the open real estate is taken, I'm sure all of the personnel resources are exhausted. What would your business do?

Let's say today you were told that tomorrow you had to set up shop 80 miles from where you are at today.

I firmly believe that the difference between a disaster and an emergency is the people who do not know what to do in an emergency cannot react fast enough, thus causing a disaster.

It is much easier to build a plan of what to do if you do it without the stress that you have to do it immediately.

We at Connect, understand the importance of business continuity and have put resources on helping our clients plan for these contingencies. If you would like to see

how we can help you create a disaster recovery plan for your business, please call, click or stop by one of our offices today.



The recent flooding in Cedar Rapids gives all of us a chance to count our blessings and a warning to prepare for emergencies.



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*

If I Train them, They will Leave!

We all deal with employee turnover and it is a fact of life that as a small business owner, it is the hardest thing to understand. I hear it all the time: "Employees don't have the same amount of loyalty as they did years ago."

I think if we look at the situation, the truth is, employers do not have the same loyalty they did years ago.

In my father's generation, you went to work for a company and that company provided you a living for your family and if you stayed, that living would continue well past retirement.

It is a word we don't hear much about anymore and that is pension. When pension's were common place, it was typical to see employees start at a job and continue in that until retirement. In today's economic climate, employers can no longer afford a

pension, unless you are the Federal Government.

How, then do we create employee loyalty and try to encour-



age people to stay. We have implemented benefit packages, like Health Insurance and 401K contributions. Now these are becoming more portable as the

American worker becomes more portable. I think the answer to that question is to continue to advance people within their jobs and departments.

When we talk about advancement, we need to ensure that the people we have in place have the skills and knowledge

necessary to complete the goals the new position requires of them. Training, another word no small business likes to hear because training costs a lot of

money. On the other hand, what is the alternative? Some people may say "If I train them, they will leave." I say the alternative is even worse. "If I don't train them, they may stay." As small businesses, we understand that what separates us from all of the other companies out there is our service and quite frankly, service boils down to people. Do I have the most knowledgeable and experienced staff dealing with my clients? Do they have the ability and the knowledge to take care of our clients the way we would?

With training on your process, on your visions, on your values, there is a better chance to be able to answer yes to the above question. Connect has a great training facility that is available to our clients. If you would like to reserve our room for your next function, please give us a call.