

Insider Tips to Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier and More Profitably

Tech Talk With Lisa

Vacation season is here, and with it comes a shift in our priorities. We spend more time with family, enjoy the warm weather, and mentally check out from work for a while. That is exactly what hackers and cyber criminals are counting on.

When we're relaxed, we're less likely to question an unexpected email, a phone call, or an urgent request. We move a little faster, pay a little less attention, and assume things are legitimate. That's when mistakes happen.

A few years ago, one of my clients fell victim to a scam. He and I had spent countless hours talking about phishing emails, suspicious phone calls, and the importance of verifying requests. Then one Friday afternoon, he received a phone call from someone who sounded completely legitimate. The caller claimed to be with PayPal.

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CST Group Inc.

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OUR MISSION:

CST Group Inc. is a PROACTIVE technology management firm who's mission it to SECURE, PROTECT and MANAGE technology for Small to Medium Businesses like yours.

SCHOOL'S OUT, Cybercriminals Are In



School's out, which means the workday doesn't look quite the same as it did a few weeks ago.

Maybe you're starting earlier to wrap up sooner. Maybe you're working from home with a little extra background noise and fewer stretches of uninterrupted time.

Either way, you're adjusting to the new rhythm and cybercriminals are adjusting right along with you.

This isn't your normal workday

Hackers know that summer fragments your day and they plan around it.

They're not waiting for a major lapse; they're just looking for a quick decision made while your attention is elsewhere.

Cybercriminals don't rely on big, obvious scams.

They send messages that look routine — an invoice, a shared file, a quick request — timed to catch you in the middle of something else.

That's when the click happens

The click isn't the problem. It's what that click has access to.

When someone clicks a phishing link or opens a malicious attachment, it doesn't stop there. It opens the door to email accounts, files and the systems your business runs on every day. From there, it moves quietly, spreading across accounts and accessing sensitive data before anyone realizes what's happening.

By the time it's noticed, the impact is already much bigger than one mistake.

Why "just be more careful" doesn't work

That assumes people have time to stop and evaluate every click. They don't. Work moves fast, attention is split and people are juggling more than usual.

The goal shouldn't be perfect attention. It should be building systems that don't rely on it. If your team is moving fast and getting interrupted, your security needs to account for that.

In practice, that looks like:

- Unique passwords for every login so one compromised account doesn't unlock everything else
- Multi-factor authentication so a password alone isn't enough
- Email filtering that flags suspicious messages before they reach your team
- A culture where anyone can pause and ask, "Does this look right?" without feeling like they're slowing things down

None of this depends on perfect behavior. It's built for real workdays.

Summer doesn't create these risks. It just makes them easier to miss.

If your business still depends on everyone catching everything, it's time to take a closer look.

LEADERSHIP IN THE AGE OF AI

Jay Shetty on the Power of Connected Thinking



CELEBRITY SPOTLIGHT

Even as AI reshapes how we work, Jay Shetty has a different kind of edge in mind. One that has nothing to do with software.

Shetty, bestselling author and host of the "On Purpose" podcast, recently made the case for what he calls "connected thinking" and why it may be the most important leadership skill you can develop right now.

"In an age where it feels like technology is in charge, I want to talk about the power of human connection," he said. "Becoming a connected thinker is not only important, it's necessary."

A connected thinker, in Shetty's words, is someone who can think as broadly and deeply as they choose.

The leaders who do it best share one trait: they spot connections across departments, industries and markets that everyone else misses.

So how do you get there?

Shetty laid out four mindsets.

Mindset 1: Community

Most leaders think about building a strong network. Shetty pushes that further. It's not about how many people you know, it's about how different they are from each other.

"When you know lots of people who know each other, you create an echo chamber," he said. "Your ability to be innovative, impactful and creative is reduced."

If you're emailing the same five people and bouncing ideas off the same group chat, you're not stretching your thinking. You're reinforcing it. A connected thinker actively seeks out perspectives that don't already match their own.

Mindset 2: Coach

Great leaders don't lead everyone the same way. Shetty broke the room into four personality types: Doers, who live by deadlines and results; Inspirers, who run on energy and ideas; Perfectionists, who want precision above all else; and Supporters, who lead with empathy and care. Each needs to be spoken to differently.

"If I don't learn to speak that language, I'm making it harder to lead," Shetty said. The leaders who get this right don't just manage people. They bring out what each person does best.

Mindset 3: Child

Ask a group of kids to draw 30 unique circles in 30 seconds and you'll get soccer balls, bubble wrap, clocks and faces. Ask adults and you'll get circles numbered one to thirty.

Somewhere along the way, the creative brain gets overruled by the logical one. Shetty's challenge to leaders is to find ways to bring that curiosity back into meetings, into problem-solving and into the way you view your business.

"It's fascinating what happens when you tap into that childlike mind," he said. Innovation lives there.

Mindset 4: Coder

The founder of Pokémon Go didn't set out to build a tech phenomenon. He wanted to get his kids outside, the way his own father once got him outside.

The technology served a deeply human purpose. That's Shetty's point about AI more broadly. "All we can do is humanize the way we use it and what we use it for," he said. "The machine becomes us. We can't be scared of anything we created."

At a time when it's easy to feel that humans are becoming less relevant, Shetty's argument runs in the opposite direction. The four mindsets he outlines map directly onto the skills predicted to matter most by 2030: problem solving, critical thinking, creativity and people management.

The leaders who will thrive alongside AI aren't the ones who out-tech it. They're the ones who stay unapologetically human, relentlessly.

THAT 'OLD' TECH?

You're Still Paying For It Each Month



Most people treat outdated technology like a favorite sock with a hole in it. Clearly past its prime, but not bad enough to throw out yet.

You notice it here and there. It suddenly takes forever to send a simple email. You hit save and the screen freezes like it forgot what it was doing. It's frustrating, but it's not enough to stop what you're doing. You deal with it, move on and the tech keeps hanging around.

What doesn't feel like a big deal in the moment is costing you more than you think every single month.

At some point, "still working" stops being enough

Holding onto older systems can feel like a practical, frugal choice. If it's still working, why replace it?

The problem is that these systems don't just sit there. Over time, they start costing you in ways that aren't always obvious.

Your energy bills begin to creep up because older equipment works harder just to keep up. It uses more power, generates more heat and puts extra strain on everything around it, especially during summer.

Newer systems are built to be far more efficient. They use less power and run cooler while doing more, which means lower operating costs over time.

Then there's the time side of it. Tasks that used to be quick take longer. Systems lag, files take longer to open and small delays become part of the day. Work doesn't stop, but it stretches out. That lost time adds up faster than most people realize.

On top of that, interruptions become routine. Systems freeze, connections drop and restarting things becomes part of how people get through the day.

Each interruption might take only a few minutes, but it breaks focus and slows everything down.

When you step back and look at the full picture — higher bills, lost time and constant interruptions — it becomes much harder to justify what you thought you were saving.

What it looks like when you stop paying for problems

Once outdated systems are replaced where it makes sense, the difference shows up quickly.

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SHINY NEW GADGET OF THE MONTH

Plaud Note Pro

Capture Every Conversation, Skip the Notes

If your day runs on conversations, this changes how you keep up. The Plaud Note Pro is credit-card thin, but what sets it apart is the "press to highlight" button. Tap it during a meeting and the AI prioritizes that exact moment later. It records from up to 16 feet away, auto-detects calls vs. in-person conversations and turns everything into structured summaries, tasks and insights.



All of us at CST Group would like to wish you and your family a safe, happy, and memorable Fourth of July.

May your holiday be filled with laughter, great food, fireworks, and quality time with the people who matter most.

Thank you for allowing us to be part of your journey—we appreciate your trust and support.

Have a wonderful Independence Day!

FREE REPORT DOWNLOAD

The Business Owner's Guide To IT Support Services And Fees

You'll learn:

- The three most common ways IT companies charge for their services and the pros and cons of each approach
- A common billing model that puts ALL THE RISK on you, the customer, when buying IT services; you'll learn what it is and why you need to avoid agreeing to it
- Exclusions, hidden fees and other "gotcha" clauses IT companies put in their contracts that you DON'T want to agree to
- How to make sure you know exactly what you're getting to avoid disappointment, frustration and added costs later on that you didn't anticipate



Get your **FREE** copy today: <https://www.cstsupport.com/itbuyersguide>

CARTOON OF THE MONTH



"When fireworks show signs of quietly quitting."

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Systems start when they're supposed to, without delays or second attempts.

Restarting things stops being part of the daily routine. Your team spends their time working instead of waiting on technology. Energy use drops as newer, more efficient equipment takes over. The ongoing costs tied to inefficiency and downtime start to come down.

The day runs more smoothly, your team stays focused and you're no longer spending money to keep systems barely functioning.

What this actually costs you

Here's a way to think about it. If outdated technology costs each person on your team just 20 minutes a day in delays, freezes and workarounds, that's nearly two hours a week per person.

Across a team of 10, that's close to 1,000 hours a year. Hours spent waiting, not working.

That's before you factor in the energy bills, the repair costs and the wear it puts on everyone who has to work around it every day.

Is it time for a change?

If your systems are slow, if issues keep coming back or if your team has quietly gotten used to working around the technology, you're already covering the cost. The only question is how much longer you want to keep doing that.

This doesn't fix itself. It just keeps costing you through lost time, higher bills and interruptions that never quite go away.

That's where we come in.

As your IT partner, we don't just fix issues. We help you stop overpaying for technology that isn't pulling its weight.

That means identifying which systems are costing you more than they're worth, helping you decide what should be replaced now vs. later and recommending the upgrades that are right-sized for your business, not unnecessary ones.

We handle the transition so your team isn't disrupted and we maintain everything going forward so you don't end up in the same position again.

Instead of guessing or putting it off, you'll have a clear plan and systems that truly support your business.

If you're ready to stop paying for problems, let's talk.

Make a *Splash*

with Better Business Communication!

CST Group's VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) solutions help your team stay connected whether you're in the office, working remotely, or enjoying the flexibility of summer schedules. With crystal-clear call quality, mobile accessibility, advanced features, and reliable service, our VoIP platform helps your organization communicate smarter... not harder.

Think of it as a cannonball-sized upgrade to your current phone system. No more costly maintenance, limited functionality, or missed opportunities. Instead, you'll enjoy modern communication tools designed to keep your team productive and your customers happy.

Ready to dive in and see what all the buzz is about?

Book a live demo with Michelle today! She'll walk you through the features, answer your questions, and show you how CST VoIP can help your organization make waves all year long.



Passionate
NOT
Pushy
WITH LISA BROWN



New Episode Alert!

Lisa sits down with her daughter, Sam Zaworski, for a heartfelt conversation about growing up in Malone, building a career in Florida, balancing motherhood and work, and the lessons learned along the way. It's an honest, inspiring episode filled with laughter and real-life perspective. Listen now and subscribe to *Passionate NOT Pushy* so you never miss an episode!



Summer Cybersecurity Checklist

- Verify invoices before paying.
- Never allow unexpected remote access to your computer.
- Call a trusted phone number to confirm requests involving money.
- Be skeptical of urgent emails, texts, and phone calls.
- Enable Multi-Factor Authentication on every important account.



The timing couldn't have been better. He had recently been having trouble accessing his PayPal account, so the conversation immediately felt believable. The caller explained that he simply needed remote access to the computer to resolve the issue.

He agreed.

Within about three minutes, he realized something wasn't right and disconnected the session. Unfortunately, three minutes was all the attacker needed to install tracking software, capture keystrokes, and begin looking for personally identifiable information.

More recently, another client received what appeared to be an invoice from a trusted vendor. The amount was higher than normal, but instead of questioning it, they clicked the "Pay Now" button and processed the payment.

The invoice wasn't from their vendor. It was fraud.

Have you noticed that scam calls now know your name? Or that package delivery text messages include your address?

Scammers didn't guess. They bought your information.

Data brokers collect and sell enormous amounts of personal information, including your phone number, address, family relationships, purchasing habits, and much more. Criminals use that information to make emails, phone calls, and text messages sound convincing. The more they know about you, the easier it becomes to earn your trust.

So here is my best advice.

Confirm and clarify everything!

Simply replying to an email is no longer enough to verify it's legitimacy.

If money is involved, pick up the phone and call a trusted number you already have on file. Have a real conversation before approving payments, changing banking information, or sharing sensitive data.

If anyone unexpectedly asks for remote access to your computer, the answer should almost always be no. Hang up and contact your IT provider or the trusted vendor directly using a known phone number. Notice I have mentioned "a known phone number" because I want to ensure you are not calling the phone number listed on any of the communications you are getting that may be fraud. They will list a valid phone number to them.....the cybercriminal. So, always go back to a phone number you can verify belongs to the company.

As we settle into vacation mode this summer, slow down. Take an extra minute to question the email that seems a little off, the phone call that feels urgent, or the invoice that doesn't look quite right.

Cybersecurity isn't about being suspicious of everything. It's about taking the time to verify before you trust.

As we celebrate America's 250th birthday, I hope you enjoy time with family and friends, travel safely, and return home with nothing more than great memories.

Keep your guard up, protect your information, and make cybersecurity part of your summer plans.

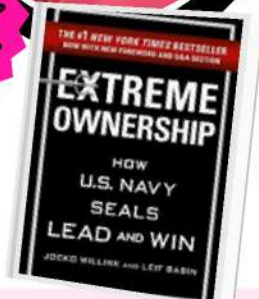
Lisa



Passionate
NOT
Pushy
WITH A LITTLE BOLDNESS



<BOOK>
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What I'm Reading

Extreme Ownership by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin

Written by two former Navy SEAL officers, the book isn't just about military leadership. It's about taking complete responsibility for outcomes, whether you're leading a business, a team, or even your own family.

The biggest lesson I took away is that great leaders don't waste time assigning blame. They ask, "What could I have done differently?" That shift in thinking creates accountability, builds trust, and strengthens teams.

Another message that resonated with me is the importance of clear communication. As leaders, we often assume others understand our expectations. This book is a reminder that if the message isn't understood, the responsibility falls on the leader, not the listener.

Whether you lead a company, a department, or simply want to become a better version of yourself, Extreme Ownership offers practical lessons that challenge you to lead with humility, discipline, and accountability.

A DIFFERENT VIEW

Summer is one of mine and Shawn's favorite times of the year. We spend more time with family, enjoy everything Northern New York has to offer, and remind ourselves why we love calling this place home.

Last week, our daughter Sam and two of our grandchildren came up from Florida to visit. They even brought a few friends who had never experienced the Adirondacks before. Watching them see our mountains, lakes, and small towns for the very first time reminded me of something.

Sometimes we stop appreciating what's been right in front of us all along.

Being born and raised in the Adirondack region was never something I gave much thought to. It was simply home.

I don't know that I ever truly appreciated how special it is until I started traveling around the country and now, seeing the Adirondacks through someone else's eyes gave me a whole new perspective.

One of our adventures was hiking Ampersand Mountain.

Now, I've done my share of hiking. I usually take my time, stop often, and enjoy the journey.

Up until this hike, I've never attempted a mountain that I didn't finish.

Ampersand had other plans.

While it's not one of the Adirondack High Peaks, it still climbs to 3,353 feet and is 5.4-miles round trip. The first part of the trail lulls you into thinking you've got this. Then, around the two-mile mark, everything changes.

The trail becomes a relentless climb over boulders, slick rock, mud, and uneven terrain. At one point, I felt more like a rock climber than a hiker.

About a half mile from the summit, I made a decision I wasn't expecting.

I turned around.

Two others in our group did the same.

For a few minutes, I was disappointed.

I wanted to reach the top. I wanted to say I'd finished another mountain. But as we made our way back down (which had its' own challenges), I realized something.

There is wisdom in knowing your limits.

Sometimes determination means pushing through. Other times, it means recognizing when the risk outweighs the reward.

That isn't failure. It's good judgment.

I was able to experience the summit through my grandson's eyes, who made it to the top and couldn't stop talking about the spectacular 360-degree view of the Adirondack Mountains. His excitement was contagious, and honestly, I was just as proud of him as if I'd made it myself.

When I looked back on the day, I realized the summit wasn't the best part anyway.

The laughter, the conversations, the challenge, and spending time with family are the moments I'll remember years from now.

Life has a funny way of teaching us lessons when we least expect them.

Sometimes it's through seeing your hometown through someone else's eyes.

Sometimes it's through a mountain that humbles you.

And sometimes it's simply having the courage to try something that pushes you outside your comfort zone.

You may surprise yourself. Even if the view you gain isn't from the summit.

Lisa

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SUMMER READING WITH A PURPOSE

From My Book:

From Exposed to Secure

One of the biggest lessons I share in *From Exposed to Secure* is that cybersecurity isn't just an IT issue. It's a business issue. Every organization, regardless of size, has something worth protecting. Too often, business owners don't realize their vulnerabilities until after an attack. My goal in writing this chapter was to simplify cybersecurity by sharing real-world experiences, practical strategies, and actionable steps that help organizations move from uncertainty to confidence. When you understand your risks and take proactive action, you're not just protecting technology. You're protecting your people, your reputation, and everything you've worked so hard to build.

Every Book Helps a Child.

All proceeds will go to the
St. Jude Children's Hospital



Turn Up the Heat on Learning This Summer!



Summer is the perfect time to refresh, recharge, and sharpen your skills—and that's exactly what CST Academy is here to help you do!

Whether your team needs cybersecurity awareness training, Microsoft 365 coaching, software instruction, or customized technology education, CST Academy offers training programs designed to meet your organization's unique needs. Our goal is simple: help your team work smarter, safer, and more confidently. Don't let valuable training opportunities melt away this summer. Investing in your staff's knowledge today can prevent costly mistakes tomorrow and improve productivity all year long.

🌴 Ready for a customized training plan?

Contact Jessica today to discuss training options tailored specifically for your team. We'll help build a learning experience that fits your goals, schedule, and budget.



Schedule a Meeting with
Jessica Today

