

business solutions

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A Healthy Outlook at Stonecreek Family Physicians



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Editorial and Circulation Contact:
Angie Armstrong
aarmstrong@bluevalleyinc.net
785-799-3311

Business Consultants Contacts:
Chad Hiltgen
chiltgen@networksplus.com
800-299-1704

Jake Schulte
jschulte@networksplus.com
800-299-1704

Richard Lincoln
rlincoln@networksplus.com
785-320-0404

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Postmaster send changes to:
Angie Armstrong
Blue Valley Network of Companies
1559 Pony Express Highway
Home, KS 66438



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What are you doing to move your business forward? As you get caught up in the day-to-day, it can be easy to forget about the big picture. But, improvements in areas like technology, human resources, and your employee mix can make a big difference and take your company to the next level. This issue of *Business Solutions* focuses on some great examples of impactful next steps you can take.

First, on page 3, we discuss **Mentoring: A Win-Win-Win Activity**. It may seem like the person being mentored (the mentee) is the only person benefitting from a mentoring relationship. The truth is, mentors and companies that encourage these relationships get great business-building benefits as well.

The Business Spotlight on pages 4 and 5 features **Stonecreek Family Physicians**, which has been forward-thinking in many ways since its start. For example, it proactively ensures its technology is up to date to give patients the best care each time they visit. Networks Plus assists with regular check-ins and reliable help desk support.

On page 6, you'll find **Your Guide to Ransomware Protection**. Sometimes moving forward in your business means making sure you don't have to take a huge step back. That includes protecting your company's computers from malware attacks that can take up a big chunk of time and money.

Finally, on page 7, you'll get to **Meet Our New Business Consultants**. As you may know, Networks Plus is growing, and we're expanding our employee roster to ensure we can meet and exceed all our customers' expectations. We're excited to have Robbie Smith, Jake Schulte, and Michael West on board.

Networks Plus is always here to help your business move forward in any way we can. Feel free to reach out any time to share your vision.

Sincerely,

Brian Thomason
CEO
Blue Valley Network of Companies





Mentoring:

A Win-Win-Win Activity

Mentor, mentee, and company all reap rewards

What is mentoring? Generally speaking, mentoring refers to the activities conducted by an experienced person (the mentor) in order to help another person (the mentee) achieve career goals. Mentors use a variety of approaches including coaching, training, and counseling. Mentoring relationships depend on creating an informal, trusting environment in which the mentee feels comfortable discussing their needs and circumstances openly with the mentor. The term comes from Greek mythology, where Mentor was a trusted counselor to Odysseus.

According to the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD), more than 75 percent of executives surveyed consider mentoring to be one of the key factors in their business success.¹ And it's not just the mentee that benefits from mentoring — so do the mentors and the companies that encourage such relationships.

Mentoring programs offer an inexpensive yet highly effective way for companies to enhance their employees' individual growth and on-the-job performance. Each employee being mentored gains the counsel and insights they need to max-

imize their career potential. (After all, discussing your work with someone else that has “been there, done that” can help anyone — even other executives — make better decisions.) At the same time, mentors themselves gain enormous satisfaction from helping someone else develop new skill sets.

In addition to improved employee performance, your company gets other valuable benefits from a mentoring program, including the following:

More Successful Recruitment

A mentoring program sends an important message to prospective employees that your company values personal and professional development and makes communication a priority.

Improved Retention

Mentoring can increase the sense of company loyalty felt by employees and thereby decrease your turnover rate.

New Employee Orientation

A new employee's entry into your company's culture and organizational system can be greatly streamlined by a mentoring program.

Enhanced Diversity

The guidance provided by a mentoring program can help your company provide a more level “playing field” for women and minorities.

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If you're interested in beginning or expanding your own mentoring program, keep in mind the features that successful programs have in common. First of all, experts stress that the most critical element is a supportive climate — senior management must be visible, frequent, and on-going program advocates. Secondly, mentoring relationships should be voluntary and based on compatible personalities, values, interests, and work styles. It's also essential that both mentor and mentee establish clear expectations and goals from the beginning, including how often meetings will take place. Finally, make sure evaluation is part of the process. For example, some mentoring programs encourage each mentee to complete a personal development plan that can be used throughout the mentoring relationship to measure progress.

¹<http://www.evancarmichael.com/library/michael-donovan/Why-even-consider-a-Mentoring-Program-for-Your-Business.html>



Stonecreek Family Physicians opened in 1999 with four doctors who understood the need to make patients comfortable as well as the need for efficiency. Additional doctors joined over the years, and the practice added an extension to its building in 2012 as well as two urgent care facilities. As the practice grew, so did its staff.

Keeping Up With the Times

Today Stonecreek Family Physicians consists of 115 member staff, including the core group of physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners as well as employees who work in the lab, x-ray area, and office.

With all the transformations that took place as the practice developed, administrator Jennifer Haefke says, “We don’t anticipate any major changes in the near future.” One notable exception is the office servers. Haefke notes, “We’re always reevaluating our equipment to keep up with changing technology and space. We just consolidated six servers into one virtual server about a year and a half ago, but typically upgrade every five years.”

Caring for the Community

Stonecreek Family Physicians is a family practice, so, notes Haefke, “Patients include pediatrics, geriatrics, and everything in between.” The practice offers a wide range of standard services including physicals, preventative care, diagnostic testing, injury care, dermatology, gynecological services, immunizations, allergy injections, newborn care, and occupational medicine. It also provides counseling, minor surgery, and geriatric consulting.

Haefke notes that the staff strives for excellence in customer service, and that physicians maintain board certification even though doing so isn’t required to maintain the practice. She says, “Our physicians continue their education on a regular basis, and are dedicated to patient care.” In addition to continuing medical training, the practice emphasizes the following guidelines for patients:

- Continuity of care through a primary physician
- Accessibility with a physician on call 24/7
- Advocacy for patients within the medical system
- Quality care through referrals and attention to national practice care guidelines

Employees appreciate the shared dedication to patient care, a good environment in which staff works well together, and high morale. Each employee is valued for their dedication to the team and their role in caring for patients.

In addition to caring for their patients at Stonecreek Family Physicians, several physicians volunteer at a local community clinic

and a local hospital. In addition, says Haefke, “All the physicians are very involved with community and family including churches and kids’ sports teams.”

Maintaining Technology Health

To ensure patients get the best service possible on the administrative side, the practice takes advantage of services from Networks Plus including hardware support and networking. Haefke explains, “They get all our systems to work together, and provide backup and monitoring services. Windows updates and patches are also part of the service as well as some software support. The services from Networks Plus have saved us from hiring an in-house IT person, which lowers our costs. With the Networks Plus service, we just pay for what we use.”

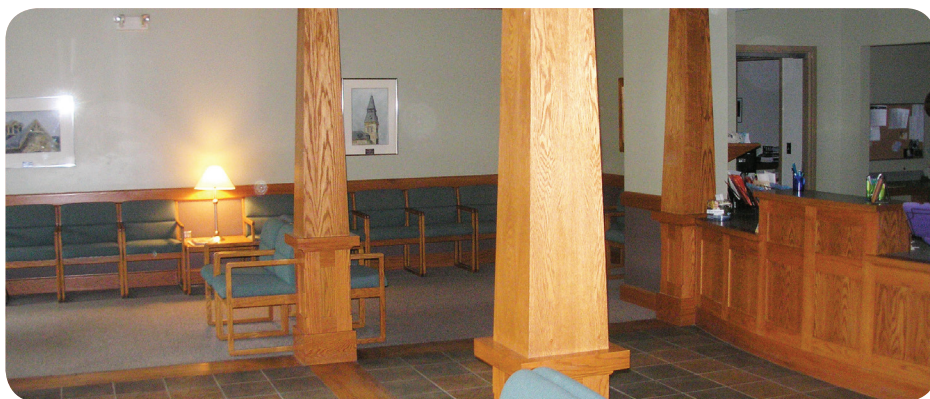
The monitoring services prevent a lot of problems; for example, if a virus is detected, it’s fixed behind the scenes. In addition, a Networks Plus technician visits the practice at least once per month to make sure everything is running smoothly. Business consultant Jake Schulte says, “We do multiple checks on the server, assess event logs, complete updates, test backups, test power supplies, and all sorts of other things that are critical to the business running efficiently.”

The services from Networks Plus have saved us from hiring an in-house IT person, which lowers our costs.”

— JENNIFER HAEFKE, ADMINISTRATOR, STONECREEK FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Haefke observes, “With these services, we don’t often have problems. But, when we do, they’re solved quickly with very friendly customer support. Networks Plus helps the community by enabling local businesses to provide efficient services.”

Schulte notes that Networks Plus recognizes the practice’s value to the community as well: “Stonecreek Family Physicians offers an excellent service to their patients and the community of Manhattan. They understand the importance of providing superior care to their patients and take every measure possible to do so.” Schulte commends the practice for its proactive use of technology: “The team at Stonecreek understands the value of having a reliable backup and disaster recovery plan. Regardless of the type of disaster, they’re prepared for it and will be able to assist and support their patients through it.”



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To learn how Help Desk support from Networks Plus can save you time and money, contact a Networks Plus Business Consultant at 800-299-1704.

Your Guide to Ransomware Prevention

Six essential tips for avoiding malicious computer attacks



Ransomware is a type of malicious software (malware) that can restrict access to files on your computer system, or encrypt data, making it unreadable. It then demands that you make a payment by a certain date and time to un-restrict or un-encrypt your information. Once you pay (up to several hundred dollars), you get your files back. Ransomware, such as CryptoLocker, typically propagates as a trojan, and is usually disguised as a legitimate file attached to an email, or on a USB drive or website.

Prevention is key when it comes to protecting your business from ransomware. Follow these six prevention tips:

- 1.** Install a reputable anti-virus/anti-malware software that features on-demand scanning. However, remember that anti-virus software alone may not be able to prevent a ransomware infection and can do nothing once your system is infected. Good anti-virus protection is only one part of a smart prevention program. Schedule your anti-virus/anti-malware software to automatically run scans at least once per week.
- 2.** Ensure all your software is up to date. Software includes your operating system, browser (including plugins), and all applications. Malware makers commonly exploit software vulnerabilities, and keeping yours up to date decreases the likelihood of this method being used on your system.
- 3.** Never open an email attachment unless you know exactly what it is and trust the sender, and don't click links within emails unless you know where the link is going. Email attach-

ments and website links are two of the primary ways ransomware is transmitted.

- 4.** If you use cloud services such as Google Apps, Microsoft Office 365, or Microsoft Azure, consider investing in a cloud-to-cloud secure backup solution. Cloud-to-cloud backup solutions offer an additional secure copy of your data that maintains prior versions, which, in the event of an attack, gives you the unencrypted files without the ransomware infection.
- 5.** Install a "next-generation" firewall that is capable of unified threat management. It can help prevent suspicious traffic from reaching your internal network.
- 6.** Most importantly, back up your data. Imagine the worst happens, and you're not able to access your data due to a ransomware attack. You'll still have all your information readily available. The key is making sure your data is backed up regularly with a reliable service such as Carbonite.

While the ransomware can be removed, prevention is crucial for protecting your data from being encrypted or restricted. If your system does become infected, don't pay the ransom! Instead, remove the affected system from your network, and restore your backed up files.

To get a free network security proposal for your business, contact a Networks Plus Business Consultant at 800-299-1704.

New Faces at Networks Plus

We've hired more people who can help you find the best solutions for your business

Networks Plus is growing, and we've hired two new business consultants and an IT technician to address your needs. Meet Robbie Smith, Jake Schulte, and Michael West, who are all looking forward to helping you resolve your business technology concerns.

Robbie Smith

Robbie Smith started at Networks Plus in March. As a business consultant, he's responsible for retaining existing Networks Plus customers and bringing in new clients. He has the opportunity to provide companies with IT solutions that help make their businesses better.



Smith says, "Networks Plus is a great company with great people. I feel valued, and that I'm serving an important role in expanding our presence in the Topeka market." He adds, "It's easy to promote the company and products when I know the people I work with will do whatever is needed to take care of our customers."

When not working, Smith loves to spend time with his wife and three children. He also enjoys supporting the Kansas City Chiefs and getting outdoors, especially to the beach.

Jake Schulte

Jake Schulte has the inside scoop on Networks Plus customers because he has been an IT customer himself. He explains, "In a prior position, I was responsible for managing IT services at a pharmacy and home care company. I experienced the best and the worst of IT, so I understand the challenges customers face."

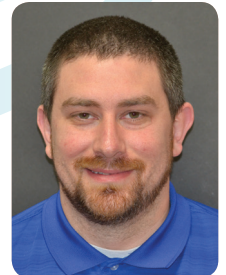


Schulte joined Networks Plus in early 2016 and appreciates the company because it shares his values. "Our great team members care passionately for each other, our customers, and the community," he says. "We all have the same goal, which is to provide the best solutions to our customers." As a business account consultant, Schulte serves companies in Manhattan, Wamego, Junction City, Clay Center, Salina, and nearby locations.

In his spare time, Schulte enjoys being involved in his church and the community. He also loves being outside, watching sports, golfing, hunting, and fishing.

Michael West

Michael West, IT technician, has been enjoying his first position in the IT field at Networks Plus since March. Having recently earned his A+ and Network+ certifications from Washburn Tech's computer repair and networking program, he assists clients with various network and hardware issues. He comments, "I enjoy the challenge that comes with solving problems."



Networks Plus is a good fit for West because, he says, "The staff is incredibly knowledgeable and helpful, which makes it a great place for me to learn and grow professionally."

During off hours, West enjoys spending most of his spare time with his wife and daughter. In addition, he is a drummer who enjoys playing and listening to a wide variety of music, especially heavy metal and blues.

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