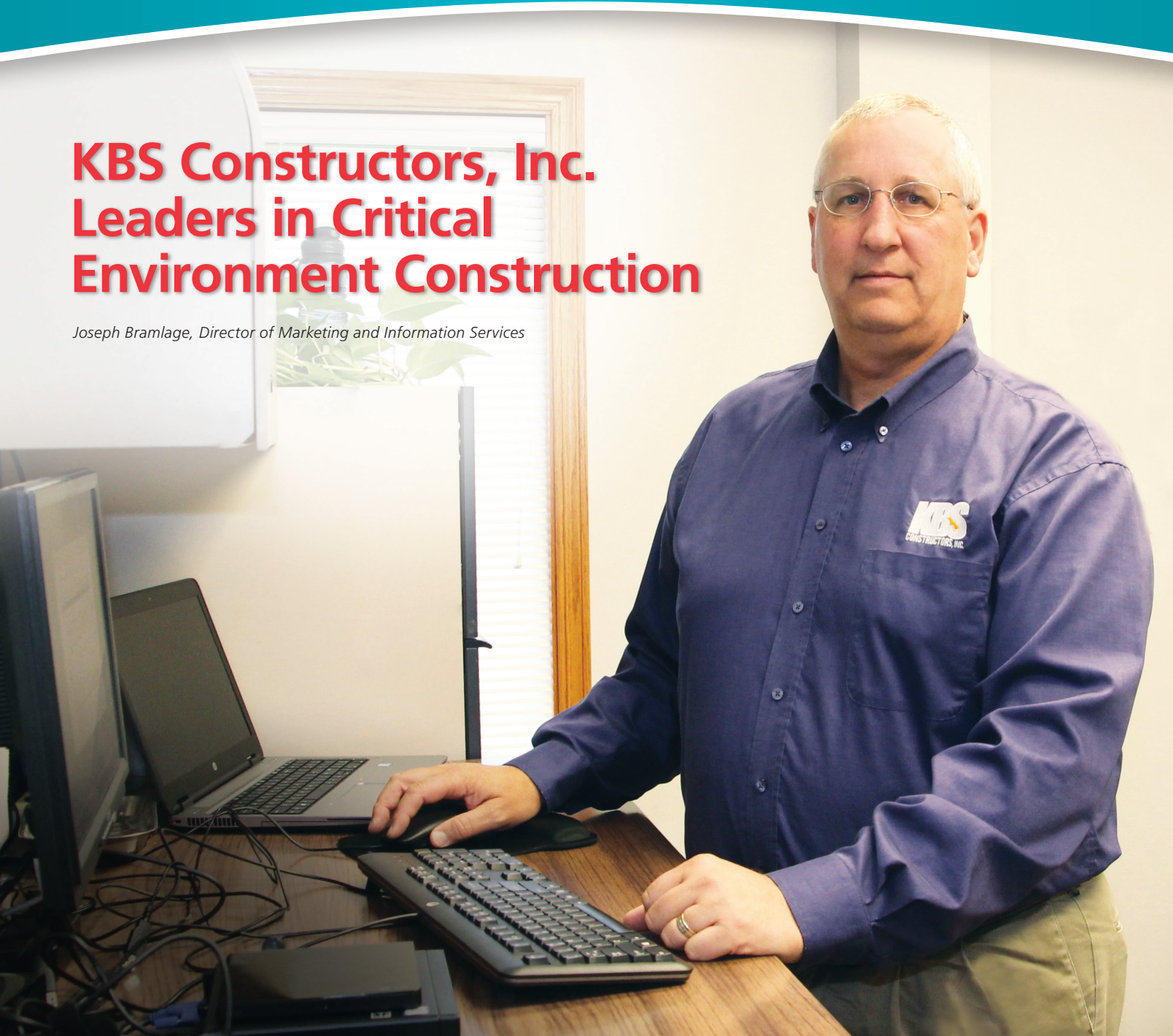


business solutions

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KBS Constructors, Inc. Leaders in Critical Environment Construction

Joseph Bramlage, Director of Marketing and Information Services



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What is your business planning to build? Is there a new office space or manufacturing facility in your future? Or are you more focused on building your customer base, sales, and profitability?

With respect to information technology, you may face decisions about whether to renovate the systems you now have or replace them with something “bigger and better.” We explore this idea in the following pages of *Business Solutions*, beginning with **Make Your Next Phone System a Virtual PBX** on page 3. If your phone system has been around for years and has become a challenge to maintain, you’ll want to consider building your efficiency with this new Networks Plus service.

On pages 4 and 5, we share a **Business Spotlight on KBS Constructors, Inc.** These commercial contractors are leading experts in Critical Environment Construction. Networks Plus maintains the KBS Constructors server environment and network as well as provides other IT services. It’s a working relationship built on mutual respect and one we value greatly.

Also in this issue, you’ll find a reminder that **Hackers Don’t Cause All Security Breaches** (page 6) and tips on how to **Work Less, Accomplish More** (page 7). Think of them as tools to help you manage your business more effectively.

Give us a call at Networks Plus when you’re ready to discuss building your business—one cable, computer, or network at a time.

Sincerely,

Brian Thomason
CEO
Blue Valley Network of Companies





Make Your Next Phone System a Virtual PBX

It offers the flexibility to accommodate staff fluctuations and aid in business continuity

What kind of a phone system does your business currently use? Perhaps you have a few phone lines that connect to a key system or private branch exchange (PBX). Quite possibly, this on-site equipment was installed years ago and is starting to become a challenge to maintain. If so, you may want to reevaluate your unified communications needs and consider making the switch to Virtual PBX.

What is Virtual PBX?

Virtual PBX (also known as Hosted PBX, Hosted Voice, Virtual Voice, PBX in the Cloud, and Remote PBX) is a service provided by a telecommunications provider and hosted in the cloud. With Virtual PBX, the service provider owns, hosts, manages, and updates the handsets and system equipment in their network. This means a Virtual PBX subscriber doesn't have to purchase, set up, and house the equipment. Virtual PBX makes all the features and capabilities of a best-in-class unified communications system available without the need for an expensive upfront purchase.

Networks Plus plans to offer Virtual PBX fourth quarter 2016. It gives smaller businesses easy and affordable access to phone capabilities previously only available to larger businesses. These advanced features include simultaneous ring, auto attendant, hunt groups, and music-on-hold.

Configure as Needed

The flexible, scalable infrastructure of Virtual PBX can easily grow as your business grows. Because it's a cloud-based system, you can add new users without any capital charges or equipment upgrades. For example, your business can quickly add or remove seasonal workers to support changing needs.

Popular features include:

- Simultaneous ringing that goes to the office phone and a cell phone.
- Web portals that enable end users and administrators to configure the service as needed—including call forward, transfer, music and announcements on hold, and auto attendant—right from their computers.

Maintain Calls After an Outage

Virtual PBX has superior disaster recovery attributes as compared to a premises-based system and can play an important role in business continuity planning. Since the PBX and other equipment resides in our secure facility with safeguards like back-up power, events at the business location — such as a power outage, fire, or other interruption — would not prevent incoming calls. Users can quickly route their calls to an alternate location or mobile device, enabling business to proceed.

To discuss how Virtual PBX could benefit your business, call a Networks Plus Business Consultant at 800-299-1704.



KBS Constructors, Inc.

This Kansas company has built success on a strong foundation of value-added services

KBS stands for Knowledge Beyond Structures, and this commercial construction company is known for going well beyond simply building a structure according to a set of construction drawings. Its philosophy is to also bring added value to the table, create client relationships based on trust, and be good stewards of their clients' resources.

Founded in 1989 by Dan Foltz and Neil Fisher, KBS Constructors is headquartered in Topeka and has branch offices in Kansas City and Manhattan, Kan. The company's first project was completing a telephone switch room for Southwestern Bell. Over the last 27 years they have become Leaders in Critical Environment Construction.

KBS Constructors specializes in projects for clients in these sectors:

- Telecommunications
- Animal Science
- Data Centers
- Commercial Office
- Healthcare
- Bioscience
- Research
- Religious & Church
- Manufacturing

To help make sure every building will function well for the people who work within it, KBS Constructors meets with clients through every stage of the process, from initial planning to post-construction. Services offered include consulting, design/build contracting, and integrated project delivery.

A Long History With Networks Plus

Technology plays an integral role within the company, which keeps Joe Bramlage, Director of Marketing and IT, consistently busy. He notes, "KBS Constructors has been using Networks Plus since before I joined KBS 16 years ago. At the time, I was not sure how I would continue to utilize this service but knew some kind of help with our systems was necessary. Because I have other responsibilities besides IT, I've come to rely on the techs at Networks Plus to back me up with more in-depth knowledge of information technology. Servers are a rapidly changing area for which I have neither the experience nor the time to keep pace with all the developments."

Networks Plus currently maintains the KBS Constructors server environment and network, helps with email accounts, and provides IT solutions for the branch offices.

Bramlage says, "Networks Plus has helped me keep our systems operating smoothly. They also advise me ahead of time when I

need to invest in new technology. Our administrative staff at KBS Constructors enjoys the peace of mind of knowing they can call Networks Plus for IT assistance when I am out of the office. That kind of support backup is comforting to our staff. It also gives me peace of mind to have a partner in place. I know they have my back."

Building Valuable Relationships

He adds, "I rely on the expertise and knowledge of my associates at Networks Plus to help me keep pace with emerging technology within our budget. We periodically sit down to review our current technology and make plans for future upgrades. This helps me create realistic budgets for coming years and gives me the confidence to take advantage of industry trends when it makes the most sense for our firm."

Since Bramlage joined KBS Constructors, the company has continued to enhance and add services to its systems. It has doubled the number of users and seamlessly moved from a Novel environment to Microsoft Windows, including incremental server upgrades along the way.

I rely on the expertise and knowledge of my associates at Networks Plus to help me keep pace with emerging technology within our budget."

— JOE BRAMLAGE, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND IT, KBS CONSTRUCTORS

"As a one-man shop, this would not have been possible without help from Networks Plus. We expanded our environment to three in-house servers in order to provide productivity increases. Now we're contemplating moving some of our server functions to the cloud and reducing our physical servers on site," Bramlage explains.

What does Bramlage appreciate most about working with Networks Plus? He replies, "Over the years, I've grown to really value the working relationships I've had with our System Administrators from Networks Plus. I look forward to the monthly system checkups and discussions about industry trends and predictions. We share a common language. It's invigorating to hear their perspectives and experiences with technology that I might be considering."

Two Companies, One Contact

The recently created relationship between Networks Plus and Blue Valley Tele-Communications is already benefiting KBS Constructors. He says, "We're currently planning to implement office-to-office voice and video communications based on Microsoft's Office 360 with Skype for Business. To do this, we'll move from our aging PBX systems to a Voice over IP (VoIP) system. The added voice communications expertise of Blue Valley Tele-Communications gives me additional confidence as we move toward more integrated communications. I'll continue to work with a single contact at Networks Plus to develop and implement these changes, so while it will be a big project, I'm confident that it will be a smooth transition."



GET EXCEPTIONAL CLOUD DATA SERVICES FROM NETWORKS PLUS

Networks Plus' Data Center allows you secure 24/7/365 access to your important data, without purchasing expensive new equipment. Our cloud data services are hosted on the highest quality virtualization servers, and our state-of-the-art data storage facility boasts exceptional security, fire suppression, climate control, power redundancy, and the ability to withstand natural disasters. Here are a few of the benefits of cloud data storage:

1. Virtual servers and applications can be spun up as needed, allowing growth that suits your company's needs.
2. You only pay for what you use.
3. You have access to the latest technology.
4. Uptime is guaranteed.
5. You have several business continuity and disaster recovery options.
6. Your data center is staffed by highly skilled, local technicians who care about you and your business.

Call 800-299-1704 to find out how Networks Plus' Data Center services can help your business increase efficiency and reduce costs!



EYE-OPENING DATA ABOUT SECURITY AND DOWNTIME

If you think security breaches won't happen to your business, you may want to think again. Check out these statistics:

- 45 percent of employees receive no cybersecurity training from their employers. (*CompTIA CyberSecure Report, 2015*)
- The top endpoint security concern is an infected personal device connecting to the corporate network. (*Malware Mutation, InformationWeek, 2014*)
- 58 percent of downtime incidents are caused by human error alone. Natural disasters account for only 10 percent of downtime. (*Enterprise and the Cost of Downtime, Independent Oracle User Group, 2012*)
- The exact cost of downtime depends on company size: small companies lose approximately \$8,581 per hour, medium companies \$215,638 per hour; and large enterprises \$686,250 for every hour of downtime. (*Downtime and Data Loss: How Much Can You Afford? Aberdeen Group, 2013*)
- Less than half of survey participants believe that their business is "very prepared" to recover their IT assets in the event of a disaster. (*The 2015 Disaster Recovery & Business Continuity Survey*)

To discuss security or downtime concerns at your business, call a **Networks Plus Business Consultant** at 800-299-1704.

Hackers Don't Cause All Security Breaches

Unhappy or careless employees also pose a threat to your data

Hackers are certainly responsible for many computer viruses and phishing attacks. But they're not the only culprits. Security breaches can also occur from inside a business—ranging from deliberate actions by disgruntled employees to accidental breaches caused by human error.

Don't wait for a problem to occur. Review these basic precautions to help protect your company data from internal threats:

1. **Revoke account access when an employee leaves.** This is the single best thing you can do to prevent security breaches. With a few keystrokes, an outgoing employee with an ax to grind could do serious damage.
2. **Do your backups.** An essential safeguard against internal data sabotage is having an effective backup system to keep mission-critical data secure. This statement can't be repeated often enough.
3. **Account for data and tech devices your employees own.** The proliferation of personal devices (such as smartphones and tablets) used for work purposes has led to a business environment where personal activities commingle with work. By allowing employees to use their own equipment, your business loses some control over security issues. You may want to have employees sign an agreement regarding the proper use of such devices.
4. **Protect against downloading of malicious content.** The average employee in a small business spends up to an hour a day doing personal online activities such as playing games or using social media. Malware and virus threats can be inadvertently introduced to a computer network by employees via a rootkit hidden in a game or a video clip. The best advice is to constantly update and patch your IT systems to ensure protection.
5. **Educate employees about social engineering.** One of the most common ways for attackers to gain access to a network is by exploiting the trusting nature of your employees. Make sure your employees know not to provide their password over the telephone and teach them how to recognize a phishing email.

Threats to data security can come from many places. If you take a multi-faceted approach that addresses both external and internal issues, your business can reduce the odds that a breach will take place.





Work Less, Accomplish More

Reduce your hours to improve health and increase productivity

Technology makes it so easy to work. Just press a few buttons and you have all the tools you need. You can work from home, correspond 24/7/365, and take your work with you wherever you go. And that's a good thing, right? Maybe. Flexibility in your work schedule is clearly good. But the temptation—or even the compulsion—to work around the clock can sabotage the quality of your work and even be detrimental to your health.

Studies have shown that those who work longer hours are at greater risk for such conditions as high blood pressure, heart disease, depression, diabetes, general health complaints, chronic infections, and even death. Clearly, your health is one big reason to work fewer hours.

Another reason is that putting in more time isn't necessarily better. In fact, working fewer hours may actually make you more productive, since it forces you to prioritize, delegate, and improve your workflow. You may not realize you're regularly engaging in time-wasters—such as interruptions, unnecessary meetings, and preoccupation with personal tasks you don't have time to address—until you make a conscious effort to eliminate them. Turning off your “work brain” can actually provide just the refreshment you need to find solutions to work problems that have been plaguing you.

What if you feel that you just can't break away? Think about the reasons you are working long hours. Are you trying for a promotion? Ask yourself if your boss truly values long hours, or if he or she actually values quality work. Do others in your company do it? Ask yourself what they're getting out of it and whether or not the trade-off is worth it. Are you unable to get your work done during normal business hours? Make sure you're using your time well. (For tips, see the sidebar.)

TIMELY TIPS FOR WORKING SMARTER

It never hurts to review these time-management basics:

- Schedule time off the same way you would schedule other important activities.
- Know how much exercise, sleep, and nutrition you need, and schedule enough time to get them.
- Set daily, weekly, and monthly priorities to maintain focus.
- Restructure your sense of “accomplishment” to be more tied to quality rather than quantity.
- Eliminate tasks or projects that don't help you reach company goals.
- Tell people who want to give you extra work how accepting it will affect the progress of current projects.
- To keep email from becoming a distraction, check it only at specified intervals.
- Post a “busy now—no chats” sign when you are concentrating on important tasks.
- Delegate as much as possible.

Now wasn't that time well spent?





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