



Tapping into the latest IT solutions makes life easier

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We all rely on the IT departments of the world for a variety of situations in our day to day business – everything from handling a system crash, installing a new VOIP phone system, to supplying workstations. The other day I received an email from a customer that was intended for a different recipient within their organization. The email read:

*Hi so and so,
I'm sorry if my earlier response was less than ideal, please accept my sincerest apology. To remedy the situation, and put this all quietly to rest, we are having flown in overnight, an ample supply of workstations. The attached image is an example, please contain your excitement.*

As always, whatever the IT department can do to make your life better is what we're all about.

The attached image was of a large, green metal typewriter that must have been two feet wide and would have taken at least two people to move.

While I was inadvertently included in this inside joke, I have to admit that I remember when a typewriter was a workstation staple. When I started at Computers Unlimited 23 years ago, many things were new to me. I knew little to nothing about the industrial gas and welding industry, and even less about what a software development company could do for their business.

It was 1998 and we were just ramping up for the big Y2K switch. None of us knew what was really going to happen after the stroke of midnight on December 31st, 1999. In these situations, all one can do is stock your bunker with canned goods, cross your fingers, and hope for the best – and put a lot of faith in your IT department.

When you're preparing for the unknown, it's important to have someone you can trust to help you navigate the bumps and turns. But what about your ERP provider – how heavily do you rely on them when you're faced with unknowns? Can your ERP provider offer support for more than just your data and business application,

or are they able to help with all aspects of your business – including IT support, as well as advancements in technology and supporting your day-to-day business needs. Having the option to choose a turnkey system provider is a game-changer.

It's expected that an ERP solution will handle the software aspect of your business and provide continual improvements to make day-to-day operations smoother. What often goes unmentioned is that today businesses rely on the technical solution just as much as the software. The two are not mutually exclusive of one another. If your router gets hit by lightning or your server has a failure, that is just as crippling to your operations as a program that can't calculate cylinder rent or apply A/R to a customer account. Whether you have your own internal IT department or not, having resources that are readily accessible and can assist in all aspects of your business is crucial.

Today, more and more applications and data are being served up and stored in the cloud. Having this ability increases



the need for IT expertise to keep that data secure and readily available, and insure that all the potential points of vulnerability are also secure. If you use mobile applications in the field to look up pricing or make deliveries, how securely is that information being relayed from the device to the server? Or, if you have an employee leave unexpectedly, what protection do you have to remove their access to that data?

The news is filled with one data breach after another, and while even the most paranoid of us take every precaution we can to prevent this from happening, it's worth knowing that you're covered on those days when the unpredictable happens – whether forgetting to log out of your session, or making sure your data is backed up properly. Consider the impact on your business if you were able to entrust your ERP provider with this level of security and support.

Trusted Advisor and Valued Partner are phrases we hear often from all forms of business promotions. What if we turned that around – Trusted Partner and Valued Advisor. I think

those words carry much more weight in today's world of ever-changing business landscapes and technology offerings.

A Valued Advisor can use the collective knowledge of their business experience to guide you in your business decisions; but a Trusted Partner will also listen to your needs and work towards the best outcome for your specific business requirements. Taking the partnership beyond the ERP system itself and being able to utilize a company that truly offers a turnkey solution, assures that every aspect of your business operations can be addressed. A valued advisor will offer you choices, not ultimatums; a trusted partner will offer you transparency, not ambiguity. That is priceless.

The unknown usually means change, and change forces us to open our minds to things we would rather not think about so it may seem simpler to avoid it. It can be difficult to put your trust in something, and someone, that is unknown; especially if it's going to have a major effect on how you conduct business. A trusted partner takes the

unknown out of the equation.

A progressive and forward-thinking ERP is a partner that knows your business and is committed to making enhancements that keep you a step ahead of your competition. Keeping up-to-date with the latest technology will also allow you take advantage of tools available that influence your business decisions and help improve your operations. Whether creating detailed reports on your financials or having the ability to take a granular look at your deliveries, this is where the power of a truly turnkey ERP provider is essential.

Today's emerging workforce has rarely seen, let alone used, a typewriter. We are entering an era of people who have experienced technology that only requires the internet and two thumbs to function. They are fully digital, and they aren't going to wait for you to catch up. Does your business application have the necessary appeal to attract and retain them?

Technology has come a long way since 1998 and the typewriter. Has your ERP helped you do the same? 