



PDS Happenings

PDS—2023 Was A Learning Opportunity!

PDS continues to be blessed with the opportunity to meet clients technological needs across Wyoming, Montana, and Colorado. As we recently entered into 2024, we paused for a moment to reflect on 2023, and what a transformative year it was. PDS bid farewell to its longtime CEO, welcoming a fresh leadership team to guide PDS into its next chapter. Despite challenges, our commitment to excellence propelled us to new heights. With a focus on redefining roles and strengthening teams, PDS regrouped, reorganized and restructured.

Recognizing the dynamic tech landscape, PDS divided responsibilities, welcomed new technicians, and invested in an Employee Training Center for ongoing professional development. Knowing it needed to improve response times and deliverables, PDS divided its staff into either a Help Desk Team to offer remote support or the Professional Services team to provide onsite assistance. Dedicated scoreboards now track efficiencies, and the emphasis remains on continual improvement.

PDS remains devoted to a comprehensive suite of services, including Network Engineering and Design, and Advanced Technology Consultation, aligning solutions with business objectives. Dedicated to client relationships, innovation, and exceptional service, PDS looks forward to another year of growth and technological advancement, thanking clients for their trust, patience and understanding and continued partnership as we press forward into 2024.

PDS deploys its Technology Training Center

PDS, a leading technology solutions provider, is proud to announce the inauguration of its state-of-the-art Technology Training Center. Committed to continuous learning, PDS recognizes the importance of staying ahead in the ever-evolving tech landscape.

The new center underscores PDS' dedication to employee development, offering a platform for ongoing training and skill enhancement. This initiative ensures that PDS teams remain at the forefront of industry knowledge, providing clients with cutting-edge solutions.

The Technology Training Center reaffirms PDS's commitment to excellence, fostering innovation and expertise within its workforce for the benefit of clients and the advancement of technological capabilities.

WE SOLVE **IT** TOGETHER
ONE BYTE AT A TIME!

Q1 2024
Volume 1, Issue 1

Inside this issue

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| IT Industry Challenges..... | 2 |
| Technological Thoughts | 2 |
| PDS Combatting Obstacles | 3 |
| Top Struggles MSPs Face | 3 |
| Why AV Isn't Enough | 4 |
| What is SIEM & SOC..... | 4 |
| Get to Know your PDS Peeps | 5 |
| PDS Client Spotlight | 6 |

Special points of interest

- Technology is best when it brings people together.
- 48% of MSPs state staff retention is the biggest obstacle to overcome.
- PDS Managed SIEM solution involves SIEM software with a 24/7/365 SOC oversight.
- In late 2023, PDS began scheduling Regular Business Reviews (RBRs) with a chance to Talk Tech with each client...schedule yours today...307 675 2220!



Facing the IT Industry's Biggest Challenges Today and Why RBRs are Important

Industry leaders continually grapple with a fundamental question: how adeptly can their organizations adapt to unforeseen challenges? The COVID-19 pandemic served as a global crucible, compelling industries to confront this question head-on. The IT sector, in particular, experienced seismic shifts. This surge was driven by the urgent need for businesses to navigate digital transformation, embrace remote work, address disrupted supply chains, counter slowed production, and combat post-pandemic workplace burn-out.

PDS aims to equip organizations with insights to navigate current challenges in the IT industry by delving into potential problems, offering solutions, and providing guidance for the way forward. The IT landscape faces five key challenges:

(1) Hybrid Work Environments: The rise

of hybrid work has redefined workplace culture and processes. Companies failing to invest in well-designed architectures for hybrid work risk lagging behind competitors. Prioritizing a remote-first approach and investing in collaborative systems empower remote employees for equal efficiency and productivity.

(2) Cloud Migration: The shift to cloud computing is a major trend, with a 2021 study suggesting traditional server software could halve in the next three years. The pandemic accelerated this shift, with 70% of organizations planning increased cloud spending. While cloud migration offers cost reduction and innovation, careful planning is essential as not all networks and equipment are setup for long-term success.

(Continued Below)

“PDS has utilized its Regular Business Review (RBR) as a chance to talk tech and formulate a plan of action with each clients IT Infrastructure, Cybersecurity, and Support.”

Technological Thoughts:

“Thank of digital transformation less as a technology project to be finished than as a state of perpetual agility, always ready to evolve for whatever customers want next, and you’ll be pointed down the right path.”

~Head of Google Cloud

“It’s not faith in technology. It’s faith in people.”

~Steve Jobs, Co-Founder of Apple

“The technology you use impresses no one. The experience you create with it is everything.”

(3) Cybersecurity Threats: The pandemic prompted operational changes, including work-from-home initiatives and cloud migration. Unfortunately, security measures often took a backseat, leading to a surge in data breach costs. Managing the security of hybrid work environments poses a challenge, but education on cybersecurity best practices and robust security measures can mitigate risks. Security Awareness Training has become paramount in today’s volatile cyber landscape.

(4) Annual Increase and Unexpected IT Expenditures: Despite steady IT spending increases, 2023 presented challenges with geopolitical events, supply chain crises, a chip shortage, and rising inflation causing unpredictable price hikes. To counter this, PDS has utilized its Regular Business Review (RBR) as a chance to talk tech and formulate a plan of action to ensure future demands are known and accounted for given the ever changing IT landscape.

(5) The Great Resignation: The pandemic fueled a "Great Resignation" trend, impacting the IT industry significantly. A loss of tribal knowledge combined with increased services demand—employee retention obstacles—talent recruitment obstacles—in an ever changing, warp speed technology industry...that is a unique recipe to say the least!

Undoubtedly, the IT industry has evolved significantly over the past decade, influenced by technological advancements, shifting business requirements, and pandemic disruptions. While complete preparedness for unprecedented challenges may be elusive, every company possesses the opportunity to learn and adapt.

In the 4th Quarter of 2023, to guide organizations in adapting to changing times, PDS enacted Regular Business Reviews (RBRs) with each of their clients. A RBR is a chance to discuss IT Infrastructure and hardware needs and wants; Cybersecurity best practices; and Remote and On-Site Managed Support. The conversations evoked from the RBRs have been priceless. It has been said that tough times don’t last, only tough people. PDS is proud of the scars it has earned with the lessons it has learned. Thank you to our valued client base for their unwavering support and understanding as we navigate the technology world together.



Steps PDS is Climbing to Combat 2024 Obstacles

Managed Services Providers (MSP) around the world typically struggle with similar obstacles. As a result, PDS made a concerted effort to combat these obstacles with recent changes within its operating system.

- (1) **Talent Retention:** In an effort to combat talent retention, PDS has worked hard to increase starting wages; offer a retention bonus; deployed an internal employee recognition system; increased professional development opportunities; and implemented an enhanced flex time off program. PDS recognizes that our employees are our greatest assets!
- (2) **Talent Recruitment:** PDS hesitated before making its recent hires aiming to hire the right people instead of people right now. The aim is not to throw people at the problem, but rather, place people in a situation where they can learn, grow and contribute to PDS being the preferred MSP in the Rocky Mountain Region. Thank you to all clients for your patience and understanding throughout this season of growth.
- (3) **Workload:** PDS has designated its staff to either Remote Helpdesk Support Team or On-site Professional Services Team. No longer are staff required to constantly fulfill both roles. In addition, as PDS continues to establish its workload boundaries, we are better positioned for more accountability with more defined responsibility.
- (4) **Skills Gap:** PDS is excited to announce the deployment of its Technology Training Center. PDS has always prided itself in vetting software and hardware prior to deployment, but what was lost in the mix was the intimate training environment needed for technicians to demonstrate first hand their proficiency with a variety of software and hardware applications.
- (5) **Lack of Career Development:** PDS is honored to have partnered with CyberWyoming and its CyberWyoming Apprenticeship Program. PDS personnel are now active participants in a 24-month apprenticeship where they will learn technology skills, project management skills, and customer service skills...all while being full-time employees with PDS.

These investments are not only an investment into PDS personnel, but its clients and their future together!

Top Struggles Most MSPs Face in 2024

Talent Retention (48%) - The IT Skills and Salary survey revealed that over half of IT professionals say they're either somewhat likely (27.64%) or extremely likely (25.21%) to leave their post in the next year. The main reason for leaving? To get a raise.

Talent Recruitment (24%) - Two-thirds of IT leaders say they struggle with skills gaps on their teams, which impact morale and stress, project durations and resolution times. The top reason given for skills gaps? "We struggle to hire candidates with the skills we need."

Workload (23%) - The reliance and need for tech - whether it's mobile devices or impressive new AI models - has driven up demand for the skills IT and tech employees have. Workload is a leading barrier to training and has a compounding effect when factoring in employee turnover and skills gaps.

Skills Gaps (23%) - Almost one-third of IT leaders say the rate of technological change is just too fast. The field changes constantly, and it's hard for their teams (or almost anyone) to keep up.

Lack of Career Development (20%) - Tech workers are an ambitious group. They want to learn. They want to advance their careers. They want to apply their skills to complex problems. And they will, with or without their current employer. As mentioned, behind a desire for higher pay, a lack of career development opportunities ranks among the top reasons why IT professionals leave their jobs.

Technology Jokes of the Day

What's the best computer to fly with?

A MacBook Air of course!

I took a Microsoft Office class...I Excelled in it!

Why was the mobile phone wearing glasses?

Because it lost its contacts!

What shoes do computers love the most?

Re-boots!

Why did the computer go to the dentist?

To get his Bluetooth checked!

What is the biggest lie anyone can tell?

I have read and agreed to all the terms and conditions!

What kind of computers sing the best?

A Dell!

Why doesn't Mike Tyson play the PlayStation?

Because he is an Xbox-er!

Why Anti Virus (AV) Is Not Enough Needed

Antivirus (AV) software, originally designed to identify computer malware, struggles against the rising sophistication of cyber threat actors. The evolution of malware and the use of unique structures in cyberattack campaigns render traditional signature-based detection ineffective. Additionally, developers employ tactics like fileless malware to elude antivirus solutions. Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) steps in to address these challenges, integrating various security functions to detect trends and indicators of intrusion.

Benefits of EDR

Containment—Removal from Network Remediation— Cleanup Automatically Begins

Investigation — Reveals Vulnerabilities Rollback — Reverses Undesired Changes

Modern threat detection demands more information and context than AV systems can provide. EDR solutions monitor and analyze all applications on an endpoint or network device, identifying suspicious

activities. They offer response capabilities, including automated containment, remediation, investigation, and rollback options in the event of a security breach. Containment prevents malicious actors from spreading malware by blocking processes or disabling network connections. Remediation involves cleaning up damage caused by an attack, including data restoration and file removal. Investigation determines the attack's cause and reveals underlying vulnerabilities, informing future security strategies. Rollback reverses changes made during an attack.

For instance, EDR recognizes malicious behavior in applications, isolates affected elements, and runs scans to prevent further infection. Integrated with antivirus, firewalls, and intrusion prevention systems, EDR enhances security. Cloud-based and equipped with advanced analytics, machine learning, EDR improves detection accuracy, identifying malicious activity missed by traditional antivirus software.

What is SIEM and Do I Need It?

Security Information & Event Management (SIEM) tools collect, aggregate, and analyze volumes of data from an organization's applications, devices, servers, and users in real-time so security teams can detect and block attacks. SIEM tools use predetermined rules to help security teams define threats and generate alerts.

SIEM capabilities and use cases

- ◇ Log management: SIEM systems gather vast amounts of data in one place, organize it, and then determine if it shows signs of a threat, attack, or breach.
- ◇ Event correlation: The data is then sorted to identify relationships and patterns to quickly detect and respond to potential threats.
- ◇ Incident monitoring and response: SIEM technology monitors security incidents across an organization's network and provides alerts and audits of all activity related to an incident.
- ◇ SIEM systems can mitigate cyber risk with a range of use cases such as detecting suspicious user activity, monitoring user behavior, limiting access attempts and generating compliance reports.

What is a Security Operations Center (SOC)?

Any large-scale security operation requires a Security Operations Center (SOC) to make decisions and a Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) to store the information. While SOC and SIEM stand alone as separate solutions, combining their strengths yields even better results. In theory, an organization can protect itself effectively without a dedicated SOC. However, in practice, this is complicated and prone to failure, leaving an organization vulnerable to cyber threats. Having a dedicated 24/7/365 SOC provides an organization with multiple benefits:

- Continuous network monitoring
- Centralized visibility
- Reduced cybersecurity costs
- Better collaboration.

PDS Managed SIEM includes BOTH the necessary SIEM software AND access to the 24/7/365

Get To Know Your PDS Personnel—Jim Billings

What is your role at PDS? *Managing Director*

How long have you been at PDS? *I celebrated my 15th year with PDS in 2023.*

How long have you been involved with IT? *35 Years*

Before working at PDS, what was the most interesting job you had? *Worked at a Truck Dock while going to school in Phoenix...unloaded trucks at 4 a.m. Interesting conversations with truck drivers and then had to turn around and go to school all day!*

How do you find work-life balance? *Strenuously! My wife always jokes that I have a Doctors schedule because I'm always on call to take care of technology needs.*

What has been your favorite project at PDS? *Been fortunate to be a part of so many projects that have transformed our local businesses. But if I had to choose, it would be the gut and replace projects where we take out the old technology and bring in the new. It brings a fresh approach, creative and typically efficiencies are gained once the learning curve is tackled.*

What is your proudest moment at PDS? *Starting Ptolemy Data Systems...being one of the founding individuals that started the Data Center but then we had to come together and pivot and evolve, forming PDS. We had the same experience when Jesus went to Google. Coming together and working together with our team is something I'm proud of.*

If you could do another job for just (1) day, what would it be? *Controlling the IT in the war room in Toronto watching all the NHL Hockey Games.*

What is an important career lesson you've learned thus far? *Similar to Golden Rule, treat others the way you want to be treated, the right way. Own up to your mistakes, everyone makes them. And move on to the next task at hand.*

Most important thing you've learned in the past (3) years? *I've learned to delegate tasks to teammates and help/teach them how to get them done. This helps the team as a whole, but has been challenging as well as you feel like you are giving up control to some extent.*



James Billings

Favorites:

Movie— *Original Star Wars*

Song— *Anything AC/DC*

Hobby— *Working on Cars*

Food— *BBQ*

Book— *Bible*

If you were stuck on an island, what three things would you bring?

(1) *Bible* **(2)** *Fishing pole* **(3)** *a Flint*

Top (3) life highlights:

(1) *Marriage* **(2)** *Family* **(3)** *Kids Activities*

You're happiest when... *Home relaxing with family!*

What would you tell 15 year-old Jim? *Stick to it & play hockey!*

PDS is Proud to Introduce its New Technology Training Center



- How long have you been a PDS client? **18 months**
- What problem(s) were you trying to solve with PDS products or services? **We had security issues, problems troubleshooting.**
- Does your team work remotely? How has PDS assisted with your day-to-day workflow? **We have several team members who work remotely, we as a team store and share documents in the cloud. The PDS app on our desktops to submit tickets allows a quick response time and has been greatly appreciated.**
- How does PDS assist with unexpected curveballs? **If they don't have a solid understanding of our trouble ticket, they call and talk to the individual to solve the issue.**
- If there's one word you could use to describe your experience with PDS, what would it be and why? **Professional/kind**
- If you could change one thing about doing business with PDS, what would it be and why? **We really have no issue or need for change.**
- What was one unexpected benefit you experienced from using PDS products or services? **Not so much the products, but the personalized service. Friendly, caring, kind coming out to this remote ranch to meet us.**
- On a scale of (1) to (10), how likely are you to recommend PDS to another organization? **10**
- If you had to choose one, what would be your favorite feature of a PDS product or service? How has it made your life easier? **Talking to a tech on the phone, to personally help us.**
- Has there been a success story with PDS? **The confidence and security we feel having them on board.**

Client Spotlight: Ucross Foundation

Ucross is an acclaimed artist residency program and art gallery located on a 20,000-acre ranch in northern Wyoming. Since the residency program began in 1983, Ucross has supported more than 2,700 visual artists, writers, composers, and choreographers from across the world. Distinguished fellows include Annie Proulx, Terry Tempest Williams, Elizabeth Gilbert, Ann Patchett, Ricky Ian Gordon, Theaster Gates, and Tayari Jones. National Book Award winners Susan Choi, Sigrid Nunez, and Sarah M. Broom have been residents, as have Academy Award and Tony winners Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, Emmy Award winner Billy Porter, Pulitzer Prize winners Michael R. Jackson and Colson Whitehead, and three-term United States Poet Laureate Joy Harjo.

Ucross participates in more than a dozen creative partnerships with national organizations that enhance its ability to support outstanding individual artists with residencies. National partners include the Sundance Institute, the PEN/Hemingway Award for Debut Fiction, the Ford Family Foundation, the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts, the Alley Theatre, UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance, Yale University, the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, Houston Ballet, the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice and the Latinx Playwrights Circle.

Ucross champions its former artists-in-residence through art exhibitions and events at the Ucross Art Gallery and Café, as well as performances, artist workshops, author readings, and more. Community spaces also include The Park at Ucross, which offers two beautiful gardens and an interdenominational chapel, open to the public from dawn until dusk. Learn more and plan your visit to Ucross at ucross.org.

Ucross Foundation formed an IT Partnership with PDS in late 2022 to combat Cyber attacks.

