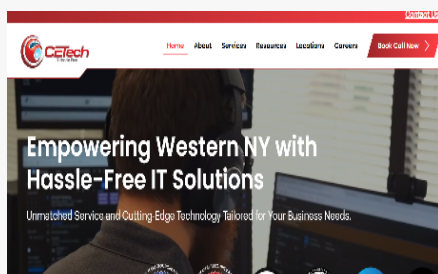


CE BITS & BYTES

INSIDER TIPS TO MAKE YOUR BUSINESS RUN FASTER, EASIER, AND MORE PROFITABLY

FEBRUARY NEWS



CETech's New Website Launched in January

"We are thrilled to debut our new website and provide our clients and partners with an enhanced online experience," said Sue Brumm Co-owner of CETech.

"The new website reflects our commitment to innovation and delivering exceptional technology solutions that help businesses thrive in today's digital landscape."

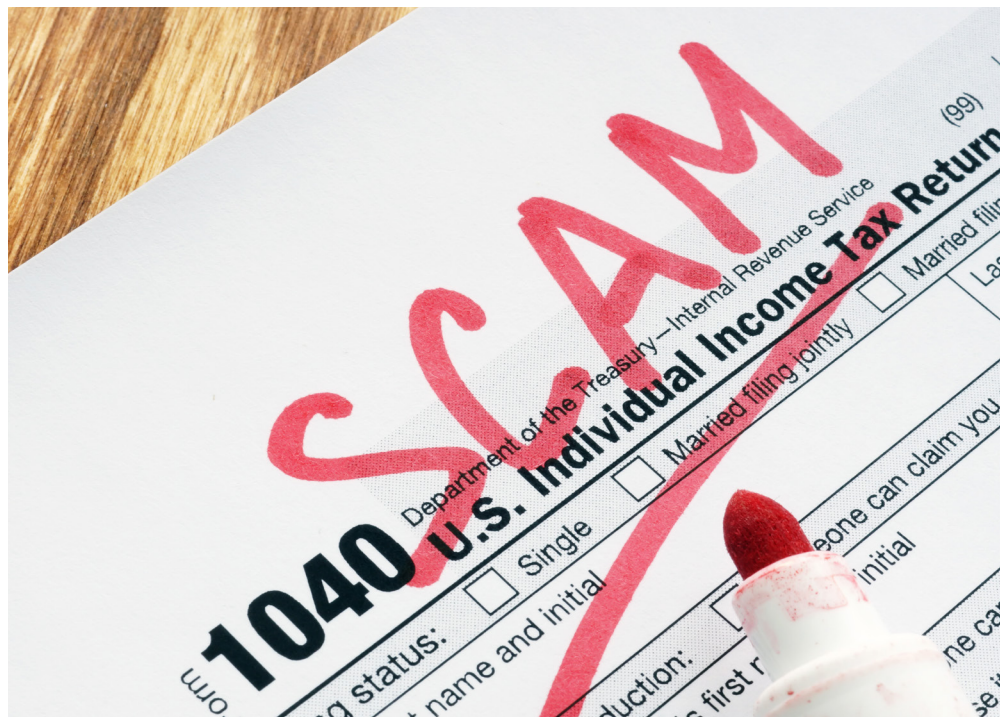
The redesigned website features an user-friendly interface with intuitive navigation, making it easy for visitors to learn about CETech's services, explore resources, and connect with our company.

Key features of the new website include:

- Comprehensive service pages
- Testimonials
- Blog and resources
- Easy contact options

Visit www.cetechno.com to check out the new design.

585-441-0055



Make Tax Season A Little Less Miserable

Ah, February – love is in the air and Cupid may just have his arrow pointed toward you and a special someone. But Cupid has competition. It's also tax season and scammers are out looking for their special someone(s), too. As if taxes weren't horrible enough on their own, criminals are devising new ways to trick us into tax scams, with horrific consequences.

According to IRS data, tax scams spike in January and February and intensify through April. Last year, scammers targeted numerous business owners by

misrepresenting the Employee Retention Credit (ERC), charging hefty fees for assistance with applications – even for a credit many victims didn't qualify for. So many business owners were attacked that the IRS set up an ERC withdrawal program to help those who realized they had unknowingly submitted fraudulent claims.

Popular Tax-Time Scams

Tax scams are particularly tricky because no well-meaning taxpayer wants to make a mistake and get in trouble with

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the government. Scammers and cybercriminals prey on our fear of compliance issues by posing as IRS agents, tax software providers or even colleagues in financial departments, with urgent messages demanding payment or Social Security numbers.

It may be only February, but these scammers are likely already in your inbox. Take a few minutes to read about these common tax-time scams and what you can do to prevent them.

1. Phishing And Smishing Scams

Scammers love pretending to be the IRS to get your personal information. They'll send fake e-mails or texts promising refunds or threatening legal action, hoping you'll click on their links or share



sensitive details. These scams don't just target individuals – they often go after tax pros and businesses because those can give access to loads of valuable data.

How to prevent it: Never click on links or reply to unexpected messages claiming to be from the IRS. If something feels off, report suspicious e-mails to phishing@irs.gov, and always verify messages directly with the IRS through official channels.

2. Online Account "Help"

Scammers are targeting taxpayers by offering help setting up an IRS online account. Their goal is to steal your personal tax and financial information, which they can then use for identity theft. These criminals may pretend to be "helpful" third parties, tricking you into handing over sensitive details like Social Security numbers or IDs, which they can use to file fake tax returns and steal refunds.

How to prevent it: Only create your online account directly through IRS.gov and avoid any unsolicited offers for third-party help. If someone reaches out offering to assist, it's probably a scam.

3. Fuel Tax Credit Scams

The IRS is warning taxpayers about popular scams pushing Fuel Tax Credit claims, which are only available for

off-highway business or farming use. Scammers will mislead you by fabricating documents or receipts for fuel to make false claims, often charging hefty fees in the process. While these scammers profit, you are left with the risk of facing IRS scrutiny and potential penalties.

How to prevent it: If you're considering claiming a Fuel Tax Credit, make sure you're eligible, as incorrectly claiming it could lead to serious consequences like fines or criminal charges. Always consult a qualified tax professional to ensure your claims are legitimate.

You Know The Saying: If It Sounds Too Good To Be True, It Probably Is

Many of these scams are plastered all over the Internet, often with promises of tax savings that sound too good to be true. But the old saying still rings true: If something seems too good, it probably is. These schemes might look tempting, but they can land you in hot water with the IRS and lead to serious legal trouble. This year, make tax season a little less miserable by sticking to legitimate, proven methods.

"The team is supersonic!!"

—William Lill, Industrial Furnace Company

FREE REPORT: 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

IT BUYERS GUIDE

What Every Business Owner MUST Know About IT Support Services And Fees



What You Should Expect To Pay For IT Support For Your Business And How To Get Exactly What You Need

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Cartoon of the Month



"If you could fill out the attached survey that would really help me out."

GADGET OF THE MONTH

ANKERWORK BLUETOOTH SPEAKER
AND PHONE STAND

Life demands a lot from us these days – work spills into dinner prep, exercise happens with kids underfoot and calls interrupt, well, everything. Yet tools like AnkerWork's Bluetooth speaker and phone stand aim to simplify the chaos, keeping you connected, productive and hands-free when you need it. Its AI-powered VoiceRadar 3.5 technology cuts through the chaos by filtering out up to 99% of background noise, making it great for noisy households or shared workspaces. Whether you're following a recipe or streaming a workout, the 70-degree adjustable magnetic phone stand lets you stay hands-free and focused. Add 15W wireless charging to keep your devices powered and 360° rich sound for calls or music, and suddenly life feels a little easier to manage.

FOR YOUR
EYES ONLYThe Price Of
“Free” Browsing

Online interactions fuel companies like Google, allowing them to gather data on your habits and location for targeted ads. While these “free” services seem convenient, they come at the cost of your personal information.

To protect your online privacy, consider these steps:

Use Incognito Mode: Prevent browsers from saving history and cookies.

Switch Search Engines: Privacy-focused options like DuckDuckGo avoid tracking.

Add Privacy Extensions: Block trackers and secure connections with vetted tools.

Use a VPN: Encrypt your connection and hide your IP address, especially on public WiFi.

Clear Cookies: Limit tracking by managing or deleting cookies regularly.

With simple measures, you can minimize exposure and reclaim control of your digital footprint.

THE INFLUENTIAL
PERSONAL BRAND: HOW TO
TURN YOUR REPUTATION
INTO REVENUE

Many business owners dismiss building personal branding as unnecessary or time-consuming. Yet Rory Vaden, co-founder of Brand Builders Group and author of *Take The Stairs* and *Procrastinate On Purpose*, argues that a personal brand is essential for earning trust and growing your business. His practical approach makes creating a personal brand much simpler than you think.

**Credibility + Recognition =
Your Personal Brand**

At its core, a personal brand is what people think of when they think of you. Vaden defines it as “the digitization of your reputation.” According to recent studies, 74% of Americans are more likely to trust individuals with a personal brand. This trust impacts consumer action, with 63% more likely to buy from companies whose leaders have personal brands.

So why do so many business owners avoid it? Vaden explains that branding is often linked to posting on social media or YouTube – activities that seem annoying or irrelevant. However, he emphasizes that personal branding builds “celebrity authority,” a blend of authentic credibility and recognition that is necessary to convince consumers to work with you.

Why Most Personal Brands Fail

“Just because it’s simple doesn’t mean it’s easy,” says Vaden. A common mistake is to imitate others’ success, leading to diluted focus. “When you have diluted focus, you get diluted results,” he says. Instead, the key is to hone in on what makes you unique.

How To Stand Out

“Find your uniqueness and exploit it in the service of others,” Vaden advises. Start by answering one crucial question in one word: What problem do you solve?

For example, after 10 years dedicated to research on shame, Brené Brown now “owns” the problem of shame and is recognized as the leading authority on the topic. Similarly, Dave Ramsey built an empire by focusing entirely on solving personal debt. “Become an ambassador of the problem,” Vaden says. “That’s how this works.”

To deeply understand your uniqueness, Vaden suggests answering each of the following questions in one word:

What problem do you solve?

Who do you solve that problem for?

How do you solve that problem?

What one revenue stream matters most?

If you’re struggling to answer those questions, Vaden offers this shortcut: “You are most powerfully positioned to serve the person you once were.” Sharing your journey makes your message authentic and relatable.

Content That Converts

There’s no point in creating a personal brand unless it helps you connect with more customers. Once you’re clear on your uniqueness, Vaden says, it’s time to create content that builds trust. Your content should help customers to:

See you (understand what you do);

Know you (understand who you are);

Learn from you (solve their problems).

Focus on the “Three E’s,” Vaden says, creating only content that entertains, encourages and educates. Share relatable stories, inspire your audience and provide practical advice. Standing out isn’t simply about what you do but who you are. By focusing on your unique value and creating meaningful content, you can build a personal brand that earns trust and transforms followers into loyal customers.



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Win a \$25 Gift Card!

Last Month's Trivia Challenge Quiz winner is JoAnn Klos from RYCO.

Q: While building magnetrons at MIT in the 1940s, Percy Spencer noticed a chocolate bar was melting in his pocket. Deeper investigation and exploration led to the invention of a household device – what was it?

The answer was: D. Microwave

Who will be the Grand Prize Winner of this month's Trivia Challenge Quiz? The winner will receive a \$25 gift card to Amazon.

Q: In recent years, reported losses to romance scams have surged. How much money was reported lost to romance scams in 2023?

- A. \$765.4 million**
- B. \$1.14 billion**
- C. \$33.8 million**
- D. \$67.9 million**

Email your answer to jmorgan@cetechno.com

One winner per company per quarter

February Cyberside Chat

Love isn't the only thing in the air...

Apple fixes AirPods' Bluetooth eavesdropping problem.

A flaw was found on Apple AirPods that allowed attackers to connect to your device and even eavesdrop on your conversations. Apple released a new firmware update for AirPods and Beats, so make sure your devices are up-to-date!

Pay for new stuff with your old stuff!

One of the founders of Postmates is back with a new payment service called Tiptop that lets you pay for online purchases by trading in something old. Soon you'll be able to see the service alongside PayPal and Apple Pay when you check out online and you can use it to trade in anything TV-sized or below (sorry, no husbands) to help pay for something new.

Concerned your spouse is ignoring you? Use AirPods to test their hearing.

Millions of people are living with hearing loss and have no idea, so Apple has designed a convenient way to test our hearing. To take the test, you'll need a specific model of AirPods 2 (A2931, A2699, A2698, A3047, A3048, A3049) and an iOS-compatible iPhone or iPad. For full instructions, you can go to www.apple.com/airpods-pro/hearing-health/.

Big nostalgia, tiny screen

TinyTV 2 is a nostalgic novelty – a fully functional mini-TV combining retro charm and modern convenience. This teensy TV has a 1.14-inch screen, working rotary knobs and authentic static effects when changing channels, just like the '80s portable TVs we loved. You can even upload up to 10 hours of your own videos, making it as practical as it is delightful when you're

craving a tiny trip down memory lane.

This call is being recorded for training purposes

Having an important call on your cell? Getting a long grocery or to-do list that you know you won't remember? If you're on an iPhone, no sweat! With iOS 18.1, just tap the Start Call Recording button. Others dialed in will be notified, so this isn't the way to go if you're trying to record in secret. Recordings are saved to the Call Recordings folder in your Notes App. You can also turn the call recording into a transcript while in the folder by selecting the call you call and then tapping Transcript!

