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STATE-OF-THE ART CONFERENCE ROOM



PHOTOS BY STYLISH IMAGES

In the brave new world of COVID-19 restrictions, working from Home (WFH) has become the new norm for many "white collar" professionals like accountants, attorneys and healthcare administration professionals, and perhaps no local technology company is more capable and experienced — or better prepared — to help small businesses transition their employees to WFH than Plus One Technology, an all-inclusive IT services provider specializing in computer sales and service, cloud computing, networks, Microsoft products and VOIP (voice over Internet protocol) phone systems. Plus One Technology scales the solutions of a Fortune 500 IT department to small to medium businesses.

As a matter of fact, Plus One Technology has been ahead of the curve for some time in terms of assisting clients reap the cost efficiencies and increased productivity of having some or all of their employees working remotely or from home.

"We've been helping our existing and new clients work through this COVID shutdown, figuring out ways their employees and their staff can work from anywhere," explains Marc Umstead, president of Plus One Technology, centrally located on the Route 422 corridor in Pottstown. "How productive are your people when they can't come to the office? What can they still accomplish? Our goal is to help our clients make that transition seamless — So that people can be at home, or on vacation somewhere, and their customers don't know any different. When they call, they get the same experience they would as if everybody was in the same office. The trick is to enable it to happen so that those people can work the exact same way," he said. "They can answer the work phone number from their cell phone. They have access to company files and software — and they work the same exact way they would in the office. Some of our customers who we've been telling to do this for the past two years have been reluctant and then this hit, and now they are really seeing the benefits," he said.



VOIP PHONE SYSTEMS

Umstead points out that making the transition to WFH does not have to be costly. "It just involves using some different technologies," he said. "It's not a huge expense. It's as affordable for an office of three people as it is for an office of 50 or 100 or 250 people. It's really available now for anyone to do it. And there's not just one way to do it, depending on how your company operates."

Plus One Technology, which began as Comp-U-Ship, has been helping businesses and individuals throughout the region with their IT needs since 2005. The company has grown steadily as a result of their commitment to excellence and ever-growing list of IT service offerings (see related sidebar), seeing a 20 percent increase in revenues every year since they opened their doors. Their goal is to treat everyone with respect, and to service their clients' needs to the best of their ability. In early February of this year, shortly before the COVID-19 outbreak, Umstead changed the company name in conjunction with a relocation to the Montgomery Corporate Center on Ridge Pike between Pottstown and Limerick.

"We believe the branding change better aligns with our goal to provide our clients with a technological advantage, the "plus one" advantage," Umstead explains. "The name change better reflects our service offerings. The new location provides us with

a larger space to grow and a state-of-the-art conference room to host meetings and webinars for our clients. We had the privilege/opportunity to build out the space. It was an open box. We were able to build the space out to reflect exactly what we wanted," he said, adding, "We put in a lot of the state-of-the-art technology with the conference room. We have video monitoring for the security of our space. All of our servers are secured and monitored. It allows us meet compliance regulations regarding data security and privacy laws."



Marc Umstead, President

The company's primary goal is to continue to offer its clients best in class technology solutions that increase efficiency, reliability, and security. This year, the company has been rolling out some new products/services such as cyber security training, password management, an upgraded backup platform, and new monthly service contract options.

Plus One Technology views technology as an asset to a company, rather than an expense. They believe technology should empower the company and its employees with tools that boost productivity, efficiency, and reliability. They specialize in evaluating their customers' requirements and requests to recommend the right solution for hardware, software, and services. Their goal is to take the stress out of IT through their innovative products

and services. Plus One Technology is able to provide a superior level of service by employing an excellent staff capable of explaining our solutions and support in easy to understand terms. Our staff is also continually training and learning new technologies.

"Some companies view everything they spend on technology as an expense, and what we try to do is prove the value of every dollar that you're spending with us," Umstead explains. "We want to take everything that you are spending and be able to give it back to you in value, so that you see it and your employees see the benefit — Not just to your bottom line, but to the productivity and reliability of your infrastructure as well," he said.

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COVER STORY

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Transitioning employees to WFH also creates efficiencies and capabilities that will increase profitability. "If you can make your office more productive, and make your people more productive, it's going to be cheaper in the long run to add technology than it will be to add people," Umstead said.

In addition to helping businesses transition their employees to working remotely, Plus One Technology also has a great deal of experience helping business to move or set up new locations. "We've done a lot with customers building new buildings, renovating buildings, or moving locations," Umstead said. "We know all the things to look for. We can attend planning meetings with contractors to ensure IT infrastructure is considered both for existing plans and the future. We can help clients walk through the logistical components to make everything work for their business."

A couple of years ago Plus One Technology decided to enter the VOIP industry. Our VOIP platform enables our clients to answer/make calls from anywhere. A client can have a desk phone, cell phone, or softphone and work seamlessly. We also offer free web fax and phones as part of our solution.

Plus One Technology's extensive experience working with clients in specific industries also makes them a great resource for their clients within those industries. "We're a good resource because we can take the congregate experience of all of our clients and share solutions and apply what other clients are doing to mitigate risks, utilizing available technologies to make things a little more seamless in this COVID 19 environment, because some businesses are still going to require that people come to their location," Umstead said. "How do you deal with that in a safe way and in a way that you can still be profitable?"

Plus One Technology also offers services that other technology companies do not, such as dark web monitoring services, video surveillance, smart device management, cyber security training, and VOIP phone service.

"We can either do dark web monitoring on an ongoing basis or a lot of times we'll just do an initial scan, to determine exposure risk" Umstead said. It's a one-time price and we do a scan and we'll tell you what's out there right now for everybody at your company. For larger companies we can do it on an ongoing basis to be constantly searching to see if something comes up. It's not a bad idea to have it done once. If we do it, and it comes back with nothing, we don't charge you at all," he said.

When it comes to passwords, "We always recommend using two-factor authentication, because that really shuts down the opportunity for intrusion. It's much harder to break two-factor authentication than just a username and password, because they have to have access to your device."

Cyber security training is a must in today's environment, particularly with so many employees now working remotely. "We've seen a big uptick in SPAM email scams and phishing scams (with employees working from home)," Umstead observes. "The only way to address that is to help users understand what they should and shouldn't be clicking. This happens all the time to the biggest companies in the world. And the little guys aren't going to have near the security the big guys have," he said. "If you can spend just a couple of hours of your employee's time per year for training, that education can go a long way to preventing security breaches and malicious software attacks."

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Depending on each client's particular situation, several options are available. "We rolled out a cyber-security training platform where we can either do it on an annual basis or an ongoing basis for companies for their employees," Umstead offers. "If you are in healthcare, it's pretty much required now that your employees take some sort of cyber-security training, and we do it in a way that it's very affordable. It's not intrusive on the employee's time. They watch a couple of videos with a quiz at the end. Their results get tabulated and we can say that these people are qualified. With the password management, that's a feature that a lot of our clients like because it's very inexpensive — cheaper than a cup of coffee. And basically, that gives you the ability to store all your passwords for all your websites and everything in an encrypted and secure way, for everybody in the company, and even offers them a way to share those passwords as needed."

Plus One Technology also offers equipment and service specials available from the various manufacturers and suppliers they use and they offer discounts for non-profit clients. "One thing we actually did through the pandemic

shutdown is we went to all of our non-profit customers and gave them a \$250.00 credit to use as credit toward a monthly invoice or for additional services," Umstead said. "That was our way of doing what we could so they at least wouldn't be paying us during that period of time."

Plus One Technology has always been committed to supporting other members of the business community, and they are actively engaged with a number of area organizations, including several regional chambers of commerce, the Spring-Ford Rotary Club, the Association of Computer Repair Business Owners, and the Survivors Cancer Fund. Marc Umstead is also a past president of the Spring Ford Chamber of Commerce, and he currently serves on the board for Survivors Cancer Fund and Open Door Ministry Food Pantry in Royersford.

As the business community continues to work through the COVID-19 crisis, it appears as though WFH is here to stay. One recent study by Transparent Business found that 67 percent of employees currently working from home expect their WFH policies will become permanent, or at least remain in place for the long term.

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"Through this (COVID-19 pandemic), employers have figured out that people can work from home and still get things accomplished," Umstead points out. "Rents are not cheap," he continues. "If you can get away with cutting off a couple of hundred square-feet and have a couple of people working from home, it saves the company money. There are all kinds of recent studies that indicate people prefer to work from home. In many cases they are more productive. They're working harder and, in some cases, longer hours at home (without the commute) and they are happier at the same time, so it's a win-win for the company and the employee," he said.

Plus One Technology has established itself as one of the area's leading IT companies over the past 15 years, as indicated by testimonials from just a few of their many satisfied clients:

"Plus One Technology was referred to me by another small business owner a few years ago. I have sworn by their services ever since." – Chris H.

"I have used Plus One Technology several times to repair my computers. They have always been upfront and honest with their services. They also turnaround the service work in a timely fashion." – Joe M.

"Plus One Technology has helped my dental practice grow from a single office to three locations with over 40 staff members" – Danielle P.

"Plus One Technology is a shining star in the world of computer support. Although they are always in the cutting edge of the newest technology their true asset lies in their approach in valuing customer availability and service." – Neuropsychiatric Group

"Plus One Technology has always been there when I've needed them. The team working there always makes themselves available for my calls from the simplest to the most complex problems that I've encountered. Whether it's hardware or software/application-based issues, they have overcome. With the ability to remotely diagnose problems or assist with questions, their service provides a huge advantage from having to pack up a system and drop it off. Plus One Technology provides a great service." – Mark L.

For additional information, please contact Plus One Technology at 610.792.5660 or email mumstead@plus1technology.com to set up a FREE consultation or a service call, and visit www.plus1technology.com. Plus One Technology is located at 3277 West Ridge Pike Suite B201, Pottstown PA 19464.



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