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MARC UMSTEAD



ENSURING YOUR SMALL BUSINESS DOESN'T BECOME THE NEXT CYBERSECURITY HEADLINE

By Kathy Hunt

No one wants to fall victim to a cyberattack. Phishing schemes, email compromise, viruses, and ransomware all cost businesses data, credibility, time, and money. That cost increases with every year. According to a report from *Cybersecurity Ventures*, global cybercrime's price tag is expected to grow by 15 percent annually over the next five years. By 2025 it could reach a yearly price tag of \$10.5 trillion. To avoid the risk of successful cyberattacks and protect your business's assets, credibility, and customers, you need to have a cybersecurity plan in place. That's where the IT business solutions of Plus One Technology come into play. The Pottstown-based company furnishes protection and peace of mind to small- and medium-sized businesses around the country.



PHOTOS BY STYLISH IMAGES



Headquartered at 3277 W. Ridge Pike, Suite B201, Pottstown, Plus One Technology is the brainchild of Marc Umstead. "I had \$10,000 and a dream. I don't recommend anyone starting a business with just \$10,000," he said, laughing. "We started slowly growing from there. We incrementally grew 10 to 20 percent each year. From the end of 2021 to the end of 2022, we expect to grow by 40 percent. That's due, in part, to more businesses becoming aware of cybersecurity needs," he said.

Umstead's customer base reaches beyond the Route 422 corridor and into such states as Florida and Arizona. "Even companies that are headquartered in Southeastern Pennsylvania have employees everywhere. With so many companies no longer having offices, work has become almost borderless," he said.

IT solutions for every need

When Umstead started his business in 2005, he opted for the name Comp-U-Ship, which reflected the company's involvement in computer warranty repairs. In 2020, to better represent the range of services he offers today, he changed his company name to Plus One Technology. The new name aligns with the company's commitment to deliver solutions that increase technological efficiency, reliability, and security.

In the company's early days, Umstead and his team focused on software and helping businesses streamline their workflow. He pointed out that, in 2005, technology remained somewhat novel for many businesses and software programs such as Microsoft Excel were not as commonplace. Since then, Plus One Technology has deployed Microsoft's suite of products to hundreds of customers with varying needs and requirements.

Along with being an authorized Microsoft 365 provider, Plus One Technology administers business email services, including integrated calendars and shared contacts, as well as VOIP (voice over internet protocol). The latter enables businesses to use internet-based phone systems to make and receive calls from any location that possesses an internet connection.

Computers have become the lifeblood of almost every business. With that in mind, Plus One Technology has created networking solutions to ensure that computers and other electronic devices keep working and business continues at a steady pace. Using high quality, monitored networking devices, Plus One troubleshoots issues regarding speed, connectivity, security, and reliability. Should abnormalities or failures in internet service arise, a member of Plus One Technology will notify the business and address the problem.

To further ensure business productivity and safety, Plus One has partnered with the industry leading partners to provide next generation backup solutions. Together they supply reliable data backup, continuity, and recovery. Plus One also provides cloud computing, which has enabled employees around the world to work remotely. The Cloud also removes the need for costly hardware and hardware upgrades and enables increased performance, reliability, and security.

Along with supporting computer systems and other electronic devices, Plus One Technology sells equipment. It has a range of Lenovo products, including laptops, desktops, and servers, in its inventory. Plus 1 Technology also implements networking solutions that allows them to remotely monitor all their client's networks and provide notification if internet is lost or other connectivity issues exist.

Furthermore, the company can perform dark web monitoring. The service entails searching for, and tracking, an organization's information on the dark web. This is the area of the internet where personal and confidential business data can be illegally bought and sold. Dark web monitoring can be done on an ongoing basis or as a one-time evaluation to determine what information, if any, regarding your business has been exposed.

"What we really provide is peace of mind," Umstead said. "Mike Ciano has been our project manager for 15 years, and between the two of us we have over 50 years of business process optimization experience."

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Your Partner for IT Products and Services

- Network Security
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 - Software Sales
 - Service Contracts
 - VOIP Phone Service
 - Security Awareness Training
- Dark Web Monitoring
- Password Management

COVER STORY

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He noted that one of the company's founding principles is "Do the right thing."

"As corny as it sounds, we try to exemplify it every day," he said. "We always recommend the right solution for our clients even if it means we make less money, or the client is going to save money. We pride ourselves on always recommending the right solution for each particular client situation and environment."

Safeguarding businesses against cyberattacks

As the number of cyberattacks on businesses continues to increase, so, too, has the number of new and existing customers interested in securing their businesses' data. The combined escalation of attacks and customers has influenced how Plus One Technology approaches cybersecurity.

"We used to offer customers a choice about what security solutions and services they implement," Umstead said. "Now we have a recommended solution that we advise customers to take. In the end, if something goes wrong with what you'd chosen and you have a ransomware attack or your email gets compromised, you're going to come back and yell at me. As a business owner, you may not be in the position to know what the best option for security is. We're supposed to be the trusted resource and tell you what you should have. If you're hiring us, you're

"Our goal is to take the stress out of IT through our innovative products and services."

hiring us to be the people making cybersecurity decisions, and we don't want your company to be the next cybersecurity headline," he said.

Plus One Technology specializes in cybersecurity and offers free consultations to evaluate your current cyber security environment. It then provides an assessment of your overall security situation. After that it implements a comprehensive security plan that includes round-the-clock, live phone support and after-hours, emergency service.

"We've had companies come to us after they've suffered an attack under another provider, and they ask what they have to do so that this never happens again," Umstead said. "We believe in protecting you from the start so that you don't have to go through the pain of experiencing an attack. Ten years ago, a lot of these protections didn't even exist. Unfortunately, it's the world we live in — you have to have these protections in place."

He observed that, over the past 17 years, none of Plus One Technology's customers have been affected by a ransomware attack.



In all likelihood, hackers may attempt to gain access to a company's computer system at some point. Ideally, when that occurs, the proper security measures will be in place so that the assault is thwarted, and business continues as usual.

Umstead recommends that businesses consider getting cyber insurance to protect against the events that can't be completely mitigated.

"There are still humans involved and, no matter how much protection you have in place, people are still pressing buttons," he explains. "A big piece of our cybersecurity package is education, and we do cybersecurity training every year. We want people to wait two seconds and think before they press a button. Just remember, 'Think before you click.'" Their innovative cyber security awareness training platform rewards company employees for being engaging in further cyber security training. "Investments in your workforce can provide tremendous payback".

"Think before you click" is essential when combatting business email compro-

mise (BEC). In this scenario hackers posing as company executives, vendors, or other respected individuals email an employee and ask for a transfer of funds. Alternately, the attackers may access a client email list and contact all of the company's customers with their financial request. They rely upon trust, particularly the belief that the email request is legitimate and originates from someone whom the recipient knows. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Internet Crime Report, in 2020 BEC cost businesses over \$1.8 billion and accounted for 37 percent of all losses.

"For a long time, smaller companies have assumed that their own or a friend's relative who is studying IT or who works in a related field can take care of their cybersecurity," Umstead said. "We see over and over how that doesn't work. Sixty percent of small businesses that suffer a cyberattack close within six months of the attack. Whether you're a business of one or 200, you need a trained, experienced specialist to handle cybersecurity."

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Home of the Plus 1 Advantage

- Live US answering 24/7.
- After-hours emergency and scheduled service available.
- Provide the right solutions to improve your business's efficiency, productivity, and reliability.
- Managed Solutions to monitor your environment so we know your issues before you do.
- Offer loaner or rental computers for unexpected equipment failure or temporary staff during your busy seasons.
- Meet with each of our clients at least twice a year to understand your goals and how we can use technology to help you reach those goals.
- No long-term contracts required.
- After our initial consult you will be provided with our 5 year IT budget. This budget will layout a hardware replacement plan, planned network upgrades, and any other projects to meet your goals.



Commitment to sustainable IT management

In addition to its commitment to cybersecurity, Plus One Technology is dedicated to sustainable IT management. In layman's terms, a company engaged in sustainable practices tries to impact the environment in a positive, rather than negative, way. Plus One Technology does this through such initiatives as recycling and repurposing hardware.

"When a customer refreshes their hardware, we bring in their old equipment, crush the hard drives, refurbish what we can, and give it to local nonprofits at low or no cost," Umstead said. Some of these computers are then donated to lower-income families in the region. We really try to find a new use for equipment."

The company has begun working with a new vendor to recycle more equipment and electronic waste (e-waste). Umstead explained that recycling electronics, or e-waste, is not a simple task. The amount of metal in a single computer is slight and difficult to extract. Plus, a computer does not contain only one metal but a mixture of gold, silver, copper, aluminum, iron, zinc, and more. Some of its materials are



hazardous. According to a United Nations report, the complexity of separating metals from each other and metal from plastic and glass has resulted in over 75 percent of the United States' obsolete electronics ending up in landfills.

Along with reducing e-waste, Plus One focuses on reducing energy consumption. "We try to do what we can. We recommend that customers use tiny, ultra form factor computers, which have smaller footprints when they become

obsolete. They also run on the same amount of power as a laptop," he said.

Plus One purchases and resells energy efficient desktops, laptops, and servers. It also buys its hardware from a manufacturer that abides by green manufacturing laws. Among other things, green manufacturing advocates the use of non-polluting manufacturing processes, minimization of waste, and conservation of energy and natural resources.

In its attempt to reach a carbon-free or negative carbon footprint, the company is replacing its company cars with electric vehicles (EV). Umstead noted that Plus One Technology recently purchased its first EV.

Supporting a range of fields and customers

During its almost two decades of business, Plus One Technology has worked with a range of small- and medium-sized companies, including dental and law practices, manufacturer's representatives, and accounting firms. In the case of accounting firms, the team at Plus One Technology has considerable knowledge of such software as CCH, Quickbooks, Sage, and Peachtree. It understands compliance requirements and the demands of tax season.

Plus One Technology also works with nonprofits and offers discounts to them. During the COVID-19 shut down, Umstead gave the company's nonprofit clients a \$250 credit toward any monthly invoice and/or service. Whether you're a nonprofit or for-profit business, all of Plus One's clients receive assistance with long-term planning and budgeting for IT. Plans and solutions are presented in an understandable way.

"One of our strengths is that we talk to people normally and don't pitch products and services," Umstead said. "We sell peace of mind, the knowledge that your business has the right kinds of backups and security in place. You have someone there to stop anything from happening."

To schedule a free consultation for hardware, software, cybersecurity, and other IT concerns, call 610.792.5660 or schedule an appointment online at plus1technology.com. Umstead and his team can address all of your IT needs. Most importantly, when it comes to cybersecurity, they provide you and your employees with peace of mind.

