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TECHBLDRS, INC.

JOE AWE

Delivering the Best IT Practices of the Large Corporate World to Small & Medium Sized Businesses

When TechBldrs, Inc. founder and president Joseph Awe left his position as chief technology officer for PECO Energy to start his own IT consulting business in 1998, his vision was to deliver the best practices of the large corporate world to small and medium-sized businesses. Thanks to his unique combination of technical knowledge and acumen, leadership ability, a down-to-earth winning personality, and his highly developed communication skills, Awe has grown his company into a regional leader in providing professional IT Support Services, Cyber Security and Audit Training, and additional technologies like FlowFile Document Management.

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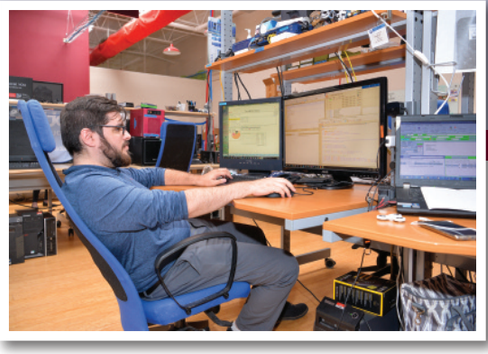
Every communications system needs protections, and TechBldrs' Microsoft Certified Professionals customize and build a defense plan that's catered to your business' unique needs.



Keeping your technology running smoothly is paramount. Your IT shouldn't be slowing your business down. TechBldrs can take away the stress and insecurity that comes with mismanaged IT.

Since 1998, they have worked to develop a timely and professional Core Values driven approach, tailored to your business, that allows technology to work for you, and not the other way around.

Joe Awe has a way with words. He places a premium on clear communication — both with clients and among members of his hand-picked team of highly-trained IT professionals. He has a knack for converting the arcane jargon and complex, myriad aspects of information technology (IT) into bite-sized, easy-to-understand, digestible morsels, as evidenced by a set of portable 5" X 7" double-sided "TECHBLDRS CORNERSTONES" handouts he gives to clients providing helpful tips on topics such as creating un-hackable passwords, expected employee behavior for data preservation, and personal cybersecurity guidelines.

"We are IT health experts," Awe explains, using a metaphor anyone can relate to. "Our job is to help prevent IT heart attacks from happening. We have all the recovery plans to help you recover from an IT heart attack, and recover most people's blunders, but we like to help prevent them. It's like going to a doctor on a regular basis, but rather than you going to a doctor, we come to you. It's a concierge service at a different level and very affordable price.

"We understand what most people are looking for out of IT," Awe continues. "They want it to be safe. They want it to be secure They want it to be invisible, behind the scenes, seamless. It's our job to understand all the technology that is necessary to make everything work and to communicate recommendations that our clients should take. We want to make sure that when we service our clients, we take their entire health into account, and give them a way to easily take that program into their business life and get those recommendations executed," he says.

Part of the process of insuring optimal IT "health" for clients is making sure they have an IT plan — a custom-built, personalized process and list of recommendations for the client — and then taking all the necessary steps to make sure that client's plan is implemented, including on-site visits as needed. "Our job is to not only address IT issues or problems and make sure that those are taken care of, but prevent them from actually happening," Awe reiterates. "If we do our job right, we are invisible to the client, but one of the ways we keep ourselves in front of what they are looking at is we make house calls.

(Continued on page 8)

Desktops, laptops, servers, smartphones – in today's interconnected world where things are often the tap of a finger away, keeping your technology running smoothly is paramount.

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Cover Story

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We make visits on a monthly basis to all of our clients, to let them know that these are the things that are happening. Some things, people will only tell you face-to-face — Just like you won't tell your doctor certain things until you are in a private setting. We use that as a flag. Is this an IT heart attack or is this just an inconvenience, or is it a user training issue?"

Awe explains that most IT issues or problems can be prevented though a combination of user training and applied automation. In terms of user training, in addition to the "TechBldrs Cornerstones" hand-outs that provide clients with an understanding of what's most important in terms of preventing IT heart attacks, Awe and his team give specialized attention to each and every client. They also offer free talks about the state of IT threats in the world (and how to keep yourself safe) to chambers of commerce, associations, and to their clients.

"When I started out 21 years ago what I wanted to do was provide a level of professionalism to small businesses that can't really afford an IT department," Awe explains. "My personal reason for why is to bring clarity and understanding. And clarity and understanding are really about understanding this huge jigsaw puzzle called IT, with ever-changing pieces, and trying to figure out the best solution in each case, recognizing that the landscape continually changes for every client, and every client uses their technology differently."

SERVICES

TechBldrs offers a wide range of IT services, packages and options tailored to the individual needs of each client — from basic Core Support to Priority Support, to support for your business decisions, to support for your IT systems and safety — from Chief Information Officer services like IT growth planning, personalized business technology and framework creation, to Outsourced IT services — from cybersecurity and backup/disaster recovery plans, to document management services, cloud integration, Office 365 support, productivity training and much more . . . TechBldrs can do it all!

"Part of the whole concept of TechBldrs is we have a technology stack that we bring for our services," Awe explains. "So that when you engage us, we implement our technologies. This is not something that you need to worry about. We have your back. We've got you covered. This is the technology stack we're going to put in place," he said. "We'll do all the right things to make sure you are covered. Some of it we'll just do because it needs to be done. It's almost like someone checking your tire pressure on your car every day. If it's low, they're going to fill it up. I don't need to know that it's low. I just want my stuff to be working. I've got profit to make and taking care of my car is not my primary job. That's the way we look at our services. It's a retained service to keep you running."

"That's foundational," Awe continues. "Another part is that you have projects you want to do. You want to improve something. You want to accelerate something, and you have people out in the field that you wish you could lower the expenses on. The only way to do that these days is to outsource for cheaper labor or start looking at automation that could help you lower those costs. We'll help you deal with those issues and try to figure out the best solutions."

The final piece is planning for the change that has to happen on a regular basis. "If you own a car and you drive it for a long time, you need to know that you've got to change your oil, transmission fluid, tires, even if everything was going great," Awe says. "You know that's what the manufacturer says you need for

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your car. Nobody gives you that instruction set for your IT system, because everybody's system is unique. There is some commonality, but everybody needs an understanding of what's out there. What are the rough roads they are going to run into? That means they've got to budget for it. They have to plan for it. So, we try to give our clients as long a lead time in looking forward to that, so they can be sure that they are on track."

When TechBldrs takes on a new client, the first they do is conduct an IT Audit. "We have to do that so we can have a business discussion," Awe explains. "Here's what you have. Here are the problems that we see. Whether it's on one system or its on 20 systems or 300, it doesn't matter. We have to do something so that we can have a business-to-business discussion. After that we basically talk about how we can resolve or remediate those things, and then what kind of programs we recommend and what the retainage cost would be for those programs to be executed," he says.

According to Awe, 60-65 percent of a company's IT budget should be spent on maintenance of the system, and 35-40 percent on new projects and ventures. "You really can't move forward without new technology," Awe points out. "We run into a lot of situations where people don't even know their budget. They don't know what they spent on. They don't seem to be moving forward. We explain that out of this big pie, 65 percent should be going to support — Keeping everything running smoothly. The rest of it should go to new things — automations and new technologies that you want to implement."

Ultimately, it's about helping each and every client leverage technology to its fullest advantage in order to reach their goals in terms of growth and profitability. "We want to take people who've been using all their technology as a big typewriter and a big calculator into something that is really the next level for them," Awe says. "It could be collaboration. It could be communication. It could be mobile, so, they can do work from anywhere. Now we are adding the layer of security to all of that, and that's why our number one core value is clarity. You have to be clear. So, our challenge is how to drive more of that clarity and understanding," he says, adding, "We definitely come in significantly lower than the cost of retaining a one-person IT shop. Plus, we bring all the tools with us, and we apply them to all of the systems. We put all of the business processes in place we need to make sure everything works and to make sure that all the security updates are done in a timely manner where it's not affecting your workload."

CORE VALUES

TechBldrs tremendous pattern of growth and success can be attributed in large part to a long-standing company philosophy based on adherence to a set of six well-defined core values or centering principles, predicated upon clear communication. "Our belief is that smarter users cause fewer problems," Awe says. "And that's our goal. We try to take all the language that we have and turn it into our very first core value, which is: **Your understanding is my responsibility.** Our job is to boil it all down. Make sure that we're not speaking anything jargonish, and just keep that all simple."

Awe explains that while TechBldrs is a technology company, they are really in the business of communication. "We just happen to work in technology. Our clients' understanding of how we serve them is paramount to us," he says, adding that the people who work at TechBldrs are translators, turning technology into their clients' business solutions. "We know that we need to make sure that you're confident and comfortable during every step of our work with you," he says.

(Continued on page 10)

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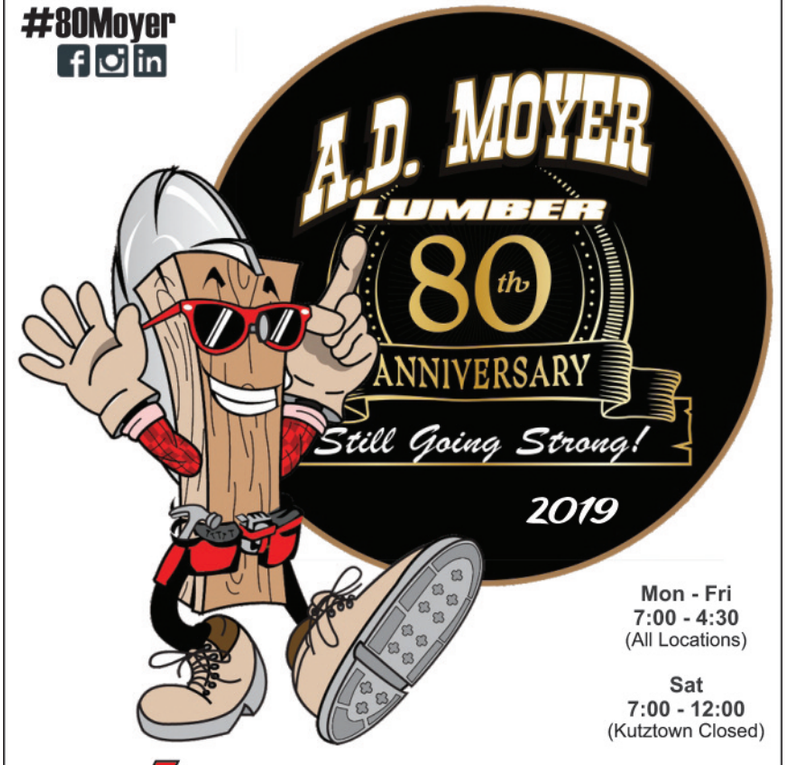

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"It's also crucial that we learn and intuit our clients' needs so that we're always preparing both ourselves and the companies we work with for the future."

TechBldrs second core value is: **Growth comes from learning.** TechBldrs employees understand that and are always seeking out the latest innovations and information so they can keep themselves (and their clients) ahead of the rest. Unlike most companies, TechBldrs requires its team of certified IT engineers to get new certifications each year so that their qualifications are always current. A curious and proactive nature is a must at TechBldrs. "There are many, many people who provide IT services that have never been certified for the things they work on," Awe says. "We are certified, and we make sure everybody is certified on a regular basis — at least a yearly basis. They are not only certified with Microsoft products but all the products we support. In our business, we tie our raises to making sure you get certifications."

Smart enough to simplify is TechBldrs third core value. Simplification requires a mastery-level understanding of the topic at hand. It also requires a skilled interpersonal communicator to help best explain the information being conveyed. TechBldrs technicians must understand the client, the technology, and the problem(s) all at once and be able to express their solutions and how they would like to proceed. TechBldrs has it down to a science, repeatable for both their convenience and the convenience of their clients.

"We have to get in there a layer or two deeper than what most other people want to get into and understand how things work," Awe explains. "We want to get into that level and understand how the actual process works, so we know where we can automate. Sometimes automation is just applied at the wrong places. This is also one of those areas where we try to save our clients some significant investment errors in technology," he said.

TechBldrs fourth core value is: **Be grateful**. TechBldrs actively seeks to bring on board team members who understand how lucky they are to be able to do what they do, and who enjoy sharing both their knowledge and their passion with clients. They are thankful every day they come into work and support, problem-solve, and collaborate with the clients and vendors they have relationships with. "We are a bunch of professional experts who love what we do," Awe says. "This is what we would do whether we get paid or not, and so we are grateful that we get paid and get to work with clients who love us and understand what we do."

The fifth core value at TechBldrs is: **I have your back**. For TechBldrs, this isn't just a team statement: it's a life philosophy. Their employees are team players who support one another and strengthen the business around them, both for TechBldrs and for their clients. The end goal is always the client's best interest. The TechBldrs team believes in ethical and clear communication, so while they are making sure their clients are covered, they are working their hardest — together.

"We've been doing this for 21 years, and one of the things that really works is the fact that everybody in the organization knows all of our clients," Awe says. "There's not one person assigned as the primary contact. They know it to the point where they know the people and where they sit, and what projects they are working on. We are their IT department, so we take that to heart. Having their backs means we're doing all the right things, not only to keep the information flowing internally to us, but the right things for them as well."

TechBldrs sixth and final core value is: **I own it.** Owning it is all about respon-

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sibility. At TechBldrs, all employees are encouraged to express their ownership, collaborative drive, and proactivity when it comes to working together as a team for their clients. "The 'I own it' core value for us is about nothing being handed over until someone has taken some action on it," Awe explains. "So, we own anything that we're suggest-ing as well as anything that the client has suggested to us. We're part of that team that says, 'I've got you covered' so, I own it until that's done."

TechBldrs ideal client is a small to mid-sized business. When Awe started the company in 1998, he saw a severe lack of support for growing business and developed an IT services business model to serve the companies whose size is too big to be small and too small to be big — "They are kind of stuck in this middle space where they need professional business IT help, not just 'fix my computer' kind of help," he says. "That's not what we are here for. We are typically advisors who are experts in several areas, that bring bearing to what the infrastructure of their business runs on. And we know that IT is not their business, their thing. We know it's the thing that sometimes gets in the way of accomplishing their thing. It's the thing behind the scenes that must be working smoothly at all times so they can generate profit," he says.

TechBldrs services the Southeastern Pennsylvania, Southern Jersey area, with remote sites all the way down to Virginia. "We want the main offices to be local because we know this area and we know the types of problems that our clients face, as we face them as well," Awe says.

Typical client types fall into four basic categories. The first is specialty contractors and subcontractors (HVAC service, Electricians, Plumbers, etc.) and professional services providers (Accountants, Attorneys, Architects, Engineers, Insurance Agencies, Financial Services). These types of businesses are often small by design, but they need IT services and some of these industries have challenging security and compliance issues to deal with. "Accountants, law firms, financial professionals all need to really have the security tied down and have to constantly report to an oversight agency," Awe explains. "So, they have to make sure that they're not running into any breaches that they have to report on."

The second is manufacturers. "Manufacturing has a huge space where there are a lot of small companies that manufacture lots of goods and they are exposed to too many things that are just a threat to their IT security," Awe explains. "We specialize in the security aspects that they need."

The third client type is schools. "We're working with a lot of parochial schools and they have the same kinds of needs," Awe says. "Their schools are being inundated with students and teachers who bring in tons of technology every day, and they want to have more remote access to school information as well as data."

The fourth client type is churches. "We've put IT systems into churches, as well as video systems," Awe says. For the aging population they are trying to put in video cameras so they can watch the entire mass. That's become very important for some of these churches, especially on Easter and Christmas, where there's a church overflow, they want to make sure their chapels get the same broadcast."

Today, TechBldrs is proud to continuously grow and expand its vision, develop its employees, and best serve their clients. Technology is advancing at a rapid pace, and security threats are becoming more and more prevalent — TechBldrs actively works to adapt to an ever-changing IT world to keep you, your company, and what you care about safe while providing you with world-class IT training and support.

TECHBLDRS

TechBldrs is headquartered at 604 Gordon Drive, Exton, PA 19341; For additional information, please call 484.341.0441; email: jawe@techbldrs.com. For a complete list of services offered please visit: www.techbldrs.com.

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