

THE HD TECH WAY

Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Smoother, and More Profitably

OCTOBER 2026

TRICK OR THREATS: KNOW WHO'S KNOCKING BEFORE YOU ANSWER THE DOOR

Your monthly newsletter,
written for humans not ghouls.



AI ROUNDTABLE

Someone on your team pastes a contract into a free AI tool to summarize it.

Someone else connects a MCP to their inbox. If you don't know what an MCP is, that's a reason to attend right there!

Nobody asked IT — nobody thought to.

That's not hypothetical. That's most businesses in Orange County right now.

This Halloween, HD Tech is hosting Tower Talks: Trick or Threats — a closed-door roundtable for OC executives & AI leaders on where AI is quietly changing the risk inside their businesses. (And yes, there's a bar and appetizers waiting for you when you arrive.)

Before you RSVP, sit with a few questions:

- Do you know if someone on your team is already using an AI tool you've never approved?
- If a client's files ended up in the wrong chatbot tomorrow, would you hear it from your own team — or from the client?
- What systems can I connect together via AI to enable the complete usage of all company data for analysis?
- If a cyber event started this afternoon, would you catch it in the first hour, or the first week? What does it mean to secure AI?
- Which AI model(s) should we be using?

If any of those gave you pause, you're exactly who this room is for.

This isn't a room to sit back in.

There's no pitch deck to hide behind — the roundtable only works if the people in it show up ready to ask. This is a unique opportunity to ask real world AI users and implementors the questions necessary to implement AI effectively and safely for your business.

**When: Thursday, October 29 | 4–6 PM
| Long Beach Yacht Club**

Beer and Wine bar and great food!

Your Hosts: Tom Hermstad (HD Tech), Sean Patterson (CrossGenAI), Dave Cunningham (Alvaka)

Space is limited and invitation-only.
RSVP at [hdtech.com/tower-talks](https://www.hdtech.com/tower-talks)

If you can't attend but still want answers to your AI questions, we're here to help.

Get in touch.



HAPPY HALLOWEEN!!
FROM YOUR CYBER LIFEGUARDS

“INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“The time to prepare isn’t after you have been given the opportunity. It’s long before the opportunity arises. Once the opportunity arrives, it’s too late to prepare.”

John Wooden,
Legendary UCLA Basketball Coach,
“the Wizard of Westwood”

October’s tech quiz: **Let’s see what you remember...**

1. What does “Wi-Fi” stand for?
2. What does VPN stand for?
3. What was the successor to the old dial-up internet connection, allowing much faster speeds?
4. What does “GB” stand for when talking about your phone or laptop’s storage?
5. What everyday piece of computer hardware did Douglas Engelbart invent and patent?

The answers are below.

1. It's not an acronym: it's a brand name coined to sound like "Hi-Fi!"
2. Virtual Private Network
3. Broadband
4. Gigabyte
5. The computer mouse



ANSWERS BY: TOM HERMSTAD,
YOUR CYBER LIFEGUARD

Q: If I have strong passwords, why do I need a password manager?

A: Strong passwords only help if they're unique and stored securely. Password managers make that practical for everyday use.

Q: What happens if our cloud provider has an outage?

A: Most cloud services are designed to stay available even if something goes wrong behind the scenes, but it's still important to know what your backup and business continuity plans look like if a service becomes unavailable.

Q: How do I know my MSP is doing what they say they are?

A: Healthy skepticism is part of good business ownership — and a good MSP should welcome it. You should never have to take your IT operation's operation on faith. Your MSP should send regular reports you can actually read — clear summaries of what was monitored, caught, fixed, and what's next. Strategic Business Reviews (SBRs) are where that conversation happens face to face. If you're not having them, ask for one. Beyond the paperwork, pay attention to how your team feels. Are problems getting fixed before they notice them? That's one of the clearest signs your MSP is earning their retainer — and that the relationship has moved past a vendor to a true partnership.



STRATEGIC EXECUTION SERIES

PART 6: THE PROCESS OF EXECUTION

TURNING EXECUTION INTO A REPEATABLE PROCESS



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Over the past several months, we've explored the fundamentals of Strategic Execution—from understanding why execution breaks down to creating clarity at the individual level and leading through the lens of execution.

Along the way, several themes have emerged:

- **Execution is a discipline** that influences everything an organization does.
- **Execution can be understood and improved** when its underlying principles are clearly defined.
- **Execution happens at the individual level**, requiring clear goals and specific actions.
- **Leadership matters**, because leaders create the habits, clarity, and accountability that drive results.

But there is one final question: **How do you make execution consistent and sustainable?**

The answer is a process.

Managing Execution With a System

In our Operational Excellence series, we discussed the principle that “**a well-defined process will give a well-defined result.**” The same applies to Strategic Execution.

Most senior executives would say their organizations have processes for managing performance. Yet we often find that these processes consist of disconnected reports, meetings, and KPIs that don't fully address the discipline of execution.

A strong execution process connects **strategy, individual responsibilities, actions, measurement, communication, and accountability.**

A Real-World Example

In 2001, I had the opportunity to serve as VP of Operations at an aerospace company that became one of the first organizations to implement an Execution Management System called KeyneLink.

The system reinforced execution by:

- Establishing **Performance Agreements** that clarified each employee's responsibilities, goals, and action items while connecting them to organizational initiatives.
- Creating **Progress Meetings** between employees and managers to review goals, provide feedback, address obstacles, and establish accountability.

When the September 11 attacks dramatically disrupted the aerospace industry, this process helped the organization refocus, reset priorities, and execute through a period of extraordinary uncertainty. Over the following eight years, the company grew revenue six-fold. KeyneLink has since evolved into a web-based platform, and we have seen clients use similar disciplines to create significant improvements in organizational performance.

Takeaway: Make Execution a Discipline

Great strategies don't execute themselves. **People execute strategies—and people need clarity, communication, measurement, and accountability to consistently deliver results.**

NEW TO

MICROSOFT



Teams will stop those awkward interruptions

Microsoft is giving Teams Facilitator a new trick:

Helping fill knowledge gaps during meetings.

If someone seems unsure about a term, concept, or topic being discussed, the AI can provide an explanation in the meeting chat without interrupting the flow of the conversation. Microsoft says it uses cues from the discussion itself and keeps responses relevant to the meeting topic.

The feature isn't enabled by default and requires a Microsoft 365 Copilot license.

If you want to strengthen execution in your organization, start by connecting individual Performance Agreements to strategic initiatives, establishing a regular cadence of Progress Meetings, and creating clear accountability for results.

When execution becomes a process rather than an occasional management activity, it becomes a capability your organization can continuously improve.

Strategy sets the direction. Execution turns that direction into results.

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AI TRAINING & AI SECURITY

A.I.

Do you
know
whichAI tools your
team uses?

DID YOU KNOW

a new CAPTCHA is
coming (maybe)?



Google's testing a new type of CAPTCHA that asks people to wave or hold up their hand to their webcam to prove they're human.

The system analyzes points on the hand and fingers to distinguish people from bots, with the aim of making it harder for automated attacks to create accounts or attempt stolen passwords.

There is one small problem, though. Testers reportedly managed to bypass the system using nothing more than a photograph of a hand displayed through a virtual webcam.

Hmm...

Training helps make sure it arrives in a way that benefits the business as much as the people using it.



Everyone in your business is already using AI.

They might be using it to draft emails, summarize notes, organize information, research ideas, or even to help with presentations and reports.

AI has arrived long before any formal plan for using it. The conversation around workplace AI usually focuses on the technology. Which tools should we use? Which platform is best? How quickly should we adopt it?

But the more important questions are simpler: Do people know how to use it properly? And are they using it safely?

Like any workplace tool, AI delivers the best results when people understand both its strengths and its limitations.

Used well, it can save time, remove repetitive admin, and help people focus on higher-value work.

Used poorly, it can create confusion, introduce errors, and increase the chances of sensitive information ending up in places it should not.

The challenge for businesses is that employees are often learning about AI from social media, online videos, articles, and

conversations with colleagues rather than from their employer.

That means people inside the same business can develop different habits and expectations around the technology.

Some become confident users very quickly.

Others avoid it altogether because they worry about getting something wrong.

Good AI training helps employees understand where AI adds value, where human judgment is vital, what information should never be shared, and how to spot when an answer needs robust verification.

Importantly, that training should reflect the work people do.

The way a finance team uses AI will look different from marketing, operations, customer service, or leadership teams.

A one-size-fits-all training approach won't cut it, from an adoption or security standpoint.

Invest in practical guidance now and you're likely to find adoption becomes more consistent, confidence grows more quickly, and security concerns become easier to manage.

Because whether you actively encourage AI use or not, the technology is already finding its way into the workplace.