

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

Lights, Camera, Marketing Action!

(L to R) Kevin Smith, Kris Meade, and James McCoy work their magic for the Meade Agency.





Robert Reimers
Business Solutions Consultant
843-761-9745
Robert.Reimers@HomeTelco.com

Mark Reamer
Business Solutions Consultant
843-377-8484
Mark.Reamer@HomeTelco.com

Charles Jenkins
Business Services Sales Manager
843-761-9836
Charles.Jenkins@HomeTelco.com

Business Connections is a publication of Home Telecom, 579 Stoney Landing Road, Moncks Corner, SC 29461.

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Editorial and Circulation - Contact: Dewey Ford, 579 Stoney Landing Road, Moncks Corner, SC 29461, 843-761-9174.

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Home Telecom
579 Stoney Landing Road
Moncks Corner, SC 29461



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

It pays to plan ahead. While flying by the seat of your pants might make sense at times, business success often comes with the slow and steady progress you make toward your goals. This issue of *Business Connections* presents some of the many ways you can plan now for success later.

On page 3, we introduce you to **The Buy Local Loop**. While buying online is easy and may be your default for some things you need for the office, consider creating time in your week to visit a local retailer instead. You, your neighbors, and the community as a whole will reap the benefits.

Then turn to page 4 for this issue's Business Spotlight, which focuses on the **Meade Agency**, a marketing solutions firm that just keeps growing. This dynamic company has been thinking big and following through on its exciting plans for the future. Home Telecom is pleased to be a part of it with our super-fast GigaFi™ internet service.

Your Guide to Ransomware Prevention appears on page 6. Remember, cyber criminals are just waiting for an opportunity to attack vulnerable networks. But you can help avoid being a victim by taking a few proactive steps.

Finally, on page 7, learn how to **Work Less, Accomplish More**. It may seem counterintuitive to think that you can get more done by working fewer hours. The secret is in the planning. Spend some time now thinking about how to get your work done in less time later.

We'd love to be part of your planning for 2017. Give us a call and let us know what your company would like to accomplish this year.

Sincerely,

William S. Helmy
President & COO
Home Telecom



The Buy Local Loop

Why it pays to think twice before shopping online

The phrase “what goes around comes around” applies to many things, including your local economy. When your company and other businesses keep your dollars local, you benefit the community, local nonprofit agencies, friends and neighbors, and—ultimately—your own business. Here’s how it works:

1. You buy local. Sure, the convenience of online shopping is compelling, and sometimes it even costs less. But consider seeking out the same products and services close to home. You get to bring needed items back to the office the same day, skip the shipping costs, and get an opportunity to know other business owners and employees in your community who often provide better personal service and advice.

2. More business creates more jobs. When you support those local businesses, you’re also supporting neighbors, friends, and relatives who can find jobs within them. Small businesses provide over half of all jobs in the U.S., but they can only do it if they keep their doors open. By spending locally, your business does its part to make sure that happens.

3. More jobs create more spending power. With more jobs come more residents who can stay in the local area, ensuring vitality and diversity. These citizens can also afford to spend money locally—supporting the economy, enlarging the tax base, and creating a better community with enhanced schools, roads, and parks.



4. Successful businesses mean support for nonprofits.

Nonprofit organizations receive twice as much support from small businesses as from larger ones. So, when you support the local economy, you’re also supporting needed services for groups like children, veterans, and the elderly.

5. Local individuals and businesses support you back.

With a “buy local” mentality in your community, you’ll get the benefit too. If your business provides products or services to consumers, more of them will have the spending power to purchase them. If your company is business-to-business, other companies that need your products or services will seek them out.

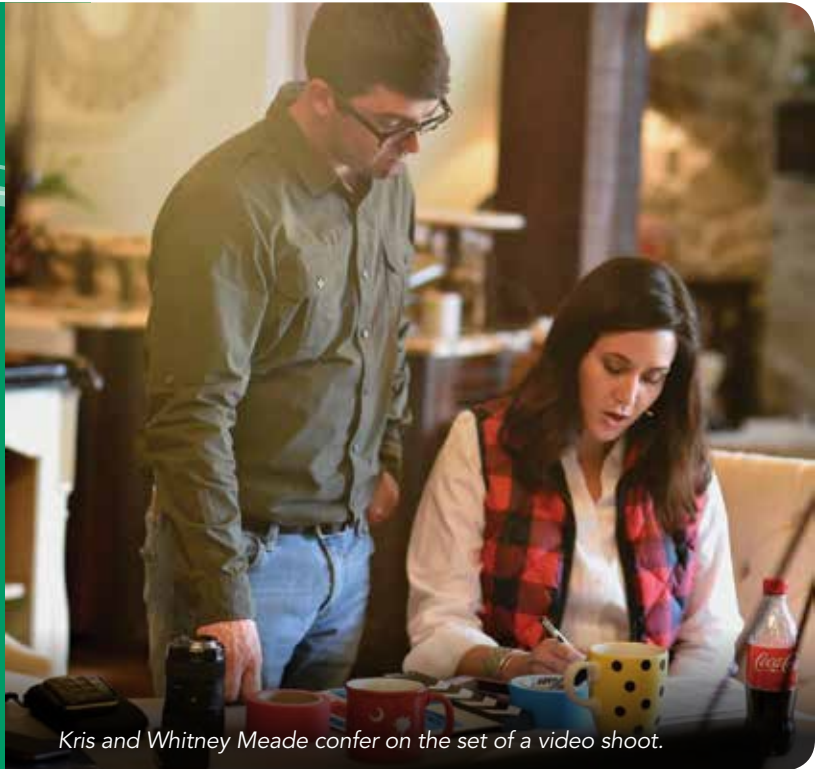
6. You see the benefit and continue to buy local. As your business benefits from the positive “buy local loop,” you have all the more reason to start the cycle again.

In addition to these benefits, shopping locally reduces environmental impact, ensures a wider variety of shops and products, and contributes to community health and diversity. If you’re not already in the buy local habit, consider making your next purchase from a vendor close to home.



Meade Agency

Creating exciting growth in video and marketing services



Kris and Whitney Meade confer on the set of a video shoot.

The Meade Agency has been providing innovative marketing solutions and technical services in South Carolina for the past decade. Founded by husband and wife Kris and Whitney Meade, the company started out with one location in Florence and a focus on video production.

Time of Growth

In 2014, with business opportunities growing and attention on their company increasing, the Meades began expanding and diversifying the company. They created a “road map” to identify what help they needed and how they could get the best possible people on their team.

President and CEO Kris shifted his focus to adding clients in more locations. His new client interactions led to landing a large contract in Charlotte, N.C. “We produced almost 200 videos for that one client in 2016,” says Meade. “That contract catapulted our business and confirmed our decision to grow.” With additional help in place, the Meades decided to duplicate what they had been doing in Florence by adding a second location in Summerville to serve the fast-growing Charleston market.

With eight employees in two locations, the company broadened its services to include drone aerial photography and video, photography, graphic design, website and logo development, social media management, sound engineering, and consulting.

With these services in place, the Meade Agency can handle a wide spectrum of marketing needs at a fraction of the cost of a full-time, in-house marketing employee. “We can play a vital role in helping our clients achieve the vision they have for the future of their business,” notes Meade.

Taking Video into the Future

The rising demand for high quality video is a big factor in the Meade Agency’s growth. “Industry has finally opened its eyes to the need for, and effectiveness of, video production,” observes Meade. “Video is a powerful medium that’s leading the way in the communications industry.” Video production was where the company got its start, and it remains one of its core strengths.

A look at the video samples on Meade Agency’s website makes it obvious why video has become so popular; its dynamic imagery and creative sound, color, and motion have the capacity to bring the message of any company or organization to life. The agency has even captured some of the most memorable personal moments with wedding videos.

The Meade Agency's staff is excited to witness the incredible growth that's happening and pleased to play a vital role in helping that growth continue. "We are always hiring and always accepting résumés," confirms Meade. To ensure they keep their valued employees, the Meades strive to provide a healthy and fun work environment, and they promote a well-balanced life for the staff.

Gigabit Internet Saves Valuable Time

The Meade Agency's expansion to the Summerville location, within the Nexton community, brought the opportunity to use GigaFi™, gigabit speed internet service from Home Telecom. While GigaFi™ is available exclusively in Nexton, Home Telecom offers gigabit internet throughout the Lowcountry with Velocity Fiber.

Whereas it takes two to three hours to upload an average video at the Florence office, it takes only two to three minutes in Summerville. "I'm a walking billboard for Home Telecom," raves Meade. "With GigaFi™, we're saving two to three hours per day per video upload."

"I'm a walking billboard for Home Telecom. With GigaFi™, we're saving two to three hours per day per video upload."

— KRIS MEADE, PRESIDENT AND CEO, MEADE AGENCY

Home Telecom Sales Representative Bill Fenters comments, "The innovative tools that the Meade Agency utilizes require the highest technology available." In addition to gigabit internet, Home Telecom provides the company with phone, TV, and security services.

If any issues with these services arise, the Meades turn to their Home Telecom local technician, Shawn Trotter. "He's been phenomenal," says Meade. "He's a down-to-earth, top-notch guy."

The Meade Agency's client base in Summerville has already grown so much that the Meades plan to look for more office space. They hope to find something in an area served by Home Telecom to replicate the great experience with GigaFi™. "Internet service plays a vital role for our business and our clients," Meade comments. "The Meade Agency has a bright future in this area, thanks in part to the services we receive from Home Telecom."



The Meade Agency shoots a music video to strike a chord with fans.



WHAT IS GIGAFI™?

Home Telecom's GigaFi™, exclusive to the Nexton community in Summerville, S.C., is more than just speed. It's managed Wi-Fi in businesses and residences, IPTV with over-the-top applications, HD everything, and being connected everywhere. It goes beyond internet to the experience of what you can do when bandwidth constraints are lifted. We believe GigaFi™ will drive innovation and bring the conveniences of tomorrow to today.

As part of the Nexton community in Summerville, S.C., the GigaFi™ experience is powered by Home Telecom's 100 percent fiber network and capable of delivering gigabit speeds, which are many times faster than what most providers across the country are offering. Gigabit internet is 1,000 megabits per second (Mbps), while the average residential internet connection in the US is less than 10 Mbps.

That means more power for streaming video, use of multiple devices, no-lag online gaming, and super-fast upload and download speeds. Both residential and business customers can take advantage of GigaFi™ speeds now and well into the future.

Your Guide to Ransomware Prevention

Six essential tips for avoiding malicious computer attacks



Ransomware is a type of malicious software (malware) that can restrict access to files on your computer system, or encrypt data, making it unreadable. It then demands that you make a payment by a certain date and time to un-restrict or un-encrypt your information. Once you pay (up to several hundred dollars), you get your files back. Ransomware, such as CryptoLocker, typically propagates as a trojan and is usually disguised as a legitimate file attached to an email or on a USB drive or website.

Prevention is key when it comes to protecting your business from ransomware. Follow these six prevention tips:

- 1. Install a reputable anti-virus/anti-malware software that features on-demand scanning.** However, remember that anti-virus software alone may not be able to prevent a ransomware infection and can do nothing once your system is infected. Good anti-virus protection is only one part of a smart prevention program. Schedule your anti-virus/anti-malware software to automatically run scans at least once per week.
- 2. Ensure all your software is up to date.** Software includes your operating system, browser (including plugins), and all applications. Malware makers commonly exploit software vulnerabilities, and keeping yours up to date decreases the likelihood of this method being used on your system.
- 3. Never open an email attachment unless you know exactly what it is and trust the sender, and don't click links within emails unless you know where the link is going.** Email attachments and website links are two of the primary ways ransomware is transmitted.

- 4. If you use cloud services such as Google Apps, Microsoft Office 365, or Microsoft Azure, consider investing in a cloud-to-cloud secure backup solution.** Cloud-to-cloud backup solutions offer an additional secure copy of your data that maintains prior versions, which, in the event of an attack, gives you the unencrypted files without the ransomware infection.
- 5. Install a "next-generation" firewall that is capable of unified threat management.** It can help prevent suspicious traffic from reaching your internal network.
- 6. Most importantly, back up your data.** Imagine the worst happens, and you're not able to access your data due to a ransomware attack. You'll still have all your information readily available. The key is making sure your data is backed up regularly with a reliable service such as Carbonite.

While the ransomware can be removed, prevention is crucial for protecting your data from being encrypted or restricted. If your system does become infected, don't pay the ransom! Instead, remove the affected system from your network, and restore your backed up files.

To learn how Home Telecom can help you with network security, please contact Business Services at 888-571-5775.



Work Less, Accomplish More

*Reduce your hours to improve health
and increase productivity*

With the technology tools available, it's literally possible to work all the time. You can get online virtually anywhere, correspond at any time of day or night, and even access your work from multiple devices. And that's a good thing, right? Maybe. Flexibility in your work schedule is clearly good. But the temptation—or even the compulsion—to work around the clock can sabotage the quality of your work and even be detrimental to your health.

Working longer hours can increase your risk of cardiovascular disease and other health issues. According to a study recently published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, the health risks are even higher for women than for men.

Not to mention that, from a purely productivity-focused point of view, putting in more time isn't necessarily better. In fact, working fewer hours may actually make you more productive, since it forces you to prioritize, delegate, and improve your workflow. You may not realize you're regularly engaging in time-wasters—such as interruptions, unnecessary meetings, and preoccupation with personal tasks you don't have time to address—until you make a conscious effort to eliminate them. Turning off your “work brain” can actually provide just the refreshment you need to find solutions to work problems that have been plaguing you.

But, what if you feel that you just can't break away? Think about the reasons you're working long hours. Are you trying for a promotion? Ask yourself if your boss truly values long hours, or if he or she actually values quality work. Do others in your company do it? Ask yourself what they're getting out of it, and whether or not the trade-off is worth it. Are you unable to get your work done during normal business hours? Go online, ask colleagues for advice, and look for other ways to work smarter rather than longer.

WHO'S MINDING YOUR BUSINESS?

JACKIE DAVIS
Sales Support Representative

A relative newcomer to Home Telecom, Jackie Davis has gained considerable knowledge about the telecommunications industry in the last seven months. This, in combination with her strong customer service background, has led to her success as Sales Support Representative within the sales team. In this role, Davis works directly with customers on their questions and needs, and also assists sales associates.

Previously, Davis worked in other customer service positions in the commercial services and travel industries. She is a graduate of the Travel Education Institute based in Southfield, Mich.

Davis notes that Home Telecom is a great fit for her because of the people she works with. “They're some of the best internal customers I've ever had the pleasure of working with,” she says. Her favorite part of her job is learning something new every day.

In her spare time, Davis loves to read and spend time with her three dogs.





Power the Speed of your Business



Upgrade to Gigabit Internet Speed!

With Gigabit Internet from Home Telecom, your Business can:

- Upload and download large files faster
- Online collaborate/video conference over a high quality connection
- Back-up critical data to the cloud quickly
- Support an influx of devices
- Maintain the security of your network with our FREE Internet Security Software

Call or visit us online to upgrade today!

*All services/speeds not available in all areas. All Internet speeds are "up to" speeds and are not guaranteed. There are many factors that may cause actual speeds to vary that are outside of our control such as equipment used and external network conditions. Some restrictions may apply. Contact your Home Telecom Business Representative for more information.



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