

Five Questions With: Paul Riendeau

By **Lori Stabile** - March 11, 2015 7:44 am



"We take security very seriously. "

Paul Riendeau, owner of Southern New England Computer Services in [Smithfield](#) and [Johnston](#), talked about his business with Providence Business News recently. The business has come a long way since Riendeau and his business partner Nick Bernfield started it in Riendeau's basement 12 years ago. Riendeau is now looking to open a third location in central Rhode Island.

PBN: How long have you been in business and how many people do you employ? What made you start the business?

RIENDEAU: Southern New England Computer Services has been in business for over 12 years. My business partner Nick Bernfeld and I started the company in my basement. We were repairing computers and building high-end gaming computers at that time (before the next generation gaming consoles took off). We grew very fast and opened our first retail location in the Lincoln Mall. After about a year, we started working with businesses and quickly moved to a bigger location in [North Smithfield](#). After many years of adding employees and servicing a number of businesses we opened our [Johnston](#) location to better service the Providence, [Warwick](#) and South County section of the state. We now employ 14

people and are looking for our third location in central Rhode Island in which we will be moving both business departments to a central location.

PBN: What sort of services do you provide?

RIENDEAU: We mainly provide support to businesses with a complete 24/7 IT maintenance plan. Our Office Solution plans are made to give the customer an all-in-one monitored support plan which includes instant remote support, backup and disaster recovery plans, complete network support, server management, an onsite response team, a personal account manager and automated updates and patches. The unique thing that sets us apart is having the two local retail stores. We stock many parts and computers for instant replacements readily available (no waiting on orders with us). We also do Microsoft Office 365 Conversions from Exchange or new installs for people looking to get on the latest Microsoft Software for a fixed monthly cost. Of the new software, one of our favorites is Lync (part of the Office 365 package). Lync allows quick communication with all your employees via phone and/or computer and has great integration with Outlook. Also, we custom build on premise servers, configure cloud servers and offer hybrid solutions for companies with special requests.

PBN: Cyber-security is a growing problem, how do you help your customers, and what advice can you give people about protecting their equipment? (How long should people keep computers before buying a new/newer model?)

RIENDEAU: We take security very seriously. We believe that there is only one good approach and it is the only way we conduct business. We start with a commercial grade router with built-in anti-virus and firewall protection. Then, we have a monitored anti-virus on every computer and the server. We have full control of all computers, keeping them updated with all patches and updates. We also have anti-malware running and ad-blockers on every computer. The last line of defense is a 3-2-1 backup system. Data is stored in three locations, on two different formats, and one of those locations is offsite.

The second part of the question is easy. As long as it is running an up-to-date operating system and is fast enough to get all your work done, you should be fine. As long as it runs all the software you need to run, then you will get years of great performance from your computer. A good tip in general: don't buy the cheapest computer you can find. When replacing any PC, never go low-end. If you go low-end, it won't last nearly as long as a quality machine, it will be frustrating to do your work on and in the end will end up costing you more for upgrades / repairs that wouldn't need to be performed on a higher-end machine. If you are unsure of the components in the computer, talk to someone who knows computers inside out. Name brands do not mean much, it is the components that make up that brand that count. The big name brands do not make their own internal components and you need to know what is inside to get a system that will last.

PBN: How has the computer business changed since you first became involved with it?

RIENDEAU: Since we started, computer hardware has become much more affordable. The challenge of keeping the systems running, at home or in a business, has not been the hardware, but the virus and malware issues. The old way of installing a virus program and forgetting about it really does not work anymore. That is why my company has developed a home version (Home Solutions) to go with our residential department. With the huge success of our commercial IT support (Office Solutions) and how it has evolved over the years to keep up with the ever changing security threats, we felt this was a perfect option for home users. With monitored IT support you can stop 90 percent of the issues before they happen and with instant remote and onsite support, we are right there when you need us. Also, in the last couple of years, we have noticed virus makers have begun to specifically target small businesses. We have seen the examples in the news such as Sony, Home Depot, Target and Staples getting hacked. What we don't see is all the small businesses being affected by the

ransomware such as CryptoLocker and CryptoWall. These are particularly nasty viruses. They encrypt your important files on your network and force you to pay money in order to get your files back. The only way to stop this is a good anti-virus, paired with anti-malware protection, and topped off with a 3-2-1 backup system.

PBN: Where do you see your business in five years?

RIENDEAU: In the IT field five years is a lifetime. In five years I can see us on the cutting edge of the business support IT field. Over the years as the business changed, we changed right along with it (and often ahead of it). My team loves what they do and is always well aware of the latest and greatest. We attend seminars and training exercises all over the country to keep our customers ahead of what is next. Our customers had all their Windows XP machines upgraded or replaced way ahead of schedule, because we let them know in advance that the deadline for support from Microsoft was coming. We do a lot of beta testing on hardware and software to work out the bugs before our customers ever need to use it. Windows 10 shows a lot of promise for small businesses looking to upgrade from Windows 7 directly to Windows 10. You will see a lot more employees taking advantage of the "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) bandwagon. This is when an employee uses their personal device such as an iPad, iPhone, Android tablet, etc... in the workplace for business-related tasks. This is a rapidly growing trend in the healthcare field and many doctors use iPads for checkups and to have a patient's chart at their fingertips. As this trend grows and branches into other fields, small businesses will need to make sure these devices are monitored and meet all the security requirements to protect client and sensitive data. Also, we are seeing a major shift from local to Cloud Computers/Cloud Servers/Cloud Software. It will be interesting to see what works and what fails over the course of time. Our team is constantly beta testing these new cloud applications so we can inform our customers on what works great and what they should stay away from.