



DWPC Technology Newsletter

Technology news from David W. Potts Consulting

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Welcome to the third edition of the David W. Potts Consulting *DWPC Technology Newsletter*. I hope you find this information helpful. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please send me an email, indicating such. If you received this newsletter from a friend and wish to be added to the mailing list, please email me at the address above and indicate your desire to receive the newsletter.

What's that weird square design near the upper right corner of this page? “QR codes” (Quick Response codes) are showing up everywhere . . . on products, magazines and even newsletters! “QR codes” are “2D barcodes” that are often used to hold a URL (a Web address, like the “QR code” above) but can be used to hold other information as well, such as an email address or “plain text”. Load a “QR code reader” application on your smart phone and you can use your smart phone’s camera to capture and decipher “QR codes”. There are even apps (such as Norton “Snap”) that will capture and decipher the “QR code” then check the URL to help identify if the site is safe, before proceeding to the Web site. Would you like to create your own “QR codes”? There are free apps for smart phones and PCs that will help you create your own “QR codes” that you can add to your advertisements and other documents. Want help? David W. Potts Consulting is here to help you with this, as well as your other technology needs.

iPhone or Android? So, it’s time to upgrade your smart phone. Which offering is best for you? Both the iPhone and Android-based smart phones can do most of the same things . . . with one exception being the absence of Adobe Flash Player support for the iPhone (it may not sound like a big deal . . . until you really need to visit a site that *requires* Adobe Flash Player). Most models come with large, touch-sensitive displays and high resolution cameras (most with both front- and rear-facing cameras). Of course, both smart phone types support Web browsing, email and text messaging. Both support a wide range of apps to do many different things . . . from playing Angry Birds to reading QR codes (that funny square near the top right of this page). Although many apps are available for both the iPhone and Android platforms, some are only available on one platform. If you have a special app you really need, verify it is available for the platform you plan to use. Both can allow WiFi tethering (to allow your notebook, iPod/iPad, tablet, etc. WiFi access through your phone), depending on your plan (and installed software). The iPhone does not have a “user replaceable” battery, where many Android-based smart phones do (which also means you don’t have the option to install a higher capacity battery in the iPhone). Speaking of batteries . . . smart phones can use power very quickly . . . especially if you don’t actively manage [running] apps and phone settings. Personally, I prefer to get everything I am paying for from my [cellular plan for my] smart phone, so I prefer to use a higher capacity battery. I found a high(er) capacity battery for my Android smart phone that is the same physical size as my original battery, so I can leave all my features as I want them . . . and have at least 24 hours of use (I found a second that will give me nearly 48 hours, including a larger case back . . . but it makes the phone larger and heavier). Another consideration is the other equipment you own. If you own an Apple iMac, iPod or iPad, you may want to consider the iPhone simply for the ease of synchronizing of all your devices (as well as the iOS printing support through your iMac). A final consideration is the keyboard. Personally, I prefer a “real” keyboard (as opposed to a touch screen keyboard—and I miss a “real” keyboard with my new Android). Although both the iPhone and Android should allow use with a Bluetooth keyboard . . . who wants to carry that around with them. Although the iPhone’s only options are its memory size, you can find Android offerings with many options, including a “real” keyboard (and battery options). Android devices also include an SD reader to add memory. David W. Potts Consulting will be happy to assist you with integrating your smart phone with your computer or can help you learn how to use the device and find apps to do the things you want to do with your smart phone to help you be more productive.

Speaking of Android . . . what about *those* tablets . . . or the Microsoft Surface tablet? One of my best friends . . . a Linux guru and fellow geek . . . asked why I didn’t mention Android tablets in my article about iPads (the Google Android operating system is based on the Linux operating system). My only answer was “Good question!” In addition to my iPad, I own a two Android tablets (and an Android phone), one [tablet and the phone] running Android V. 2.3, also known as “Gingerbread”, with the second tablet running Android V. 4.0, also known as “Ice Cream Sandwich”. Remember how I stated the iOS devices (iPod, iPhone and iPad) don’t support Adobe’s Flash Player? Android *does*. Both support apps. I like my Android 2.3 devices . . . and my Android 4.0 tablet even more . . . which

includes features and enhancements I really enjoy. The Android tablets [and phones] also support microSD cards . . . allowing you to expand its memory. This is something Apple doesn't allow with their iOS devices. Android tablets are also generally less expensive than iPads . . . but usually have smaller (many have 7" screens, as opposed to the 9.7" display of the iPad) and lower resolution screens (the iPad 3 has the highest resolution screen of *any* tablet). The Android V. 4.1 release was recently announced . . . named "Jelly Bean." It is reported to have even greater enhancements. I would be remiss if I didn't also mention the **Microsoft Surface tablet**, soon to be released. These run versions of Microsoft Windows . . . which will make them more of a "computer" than the iOS or Android devices (with regard to running applications, printing, etc.), have a membrane keyboard and a 10.6" screen . . . nearly 1" larger than the iPad. We'll need to see how well Microsoft has implemented its tablet design . . . but it sounds promising. A bit of Microsoft Surface trivia for my fellow geeks . . . there were two products from Microsoft, named Surface, before the introduction of the tablet. Both were **tables** (yes, freestanding devices you sat around), with touch sensitive-screens. I saw the original, that used a low resolution rear projection TV, at a visit to Microsoft in 2008. They were pretty cool, and had some impressive wireless options (set your device on the Surface and it connects) with the second generation (renamed the "Microsoft PixelSense") using a touch-sensitive HDTV. Being pretty expensive they didn't catch on.

Why doesn't my WiFi [always] work? There are a multitude of things that can cause problems with wireless Ethernet (WiFi) connections. Although a wired network connection is safer and more robust than a wireless connection, there are times when a wired connection is either impractical or inconvenient. Some items that can cause connectivity issues are walls, floors, ceilings and other obstructions, location of the WiFi access point(s) (or wireless router), location of the WiFi client, interference and a weak "radio". WiFi uses a "radio" signal in the "microwave band" to communicate. Just like a regular AM or FM radio (or terrestrial (antenna) TV signal), WiFi signals are "attenuated" (lose strength) when traveling through walls, floors, ceilings, and other obstructions. Of course, a close, unobstructed "view" between the wireless access point (or wireless router) and your WiFi client (PC, tablet, smart phone, etc.) will yield the best connection. Obstructions will attenuate the signal based upon a number of factors, including the material from which the obstruction(s) are made and the angle of the wireless access point or wireless router's antenna(s) and the antenna(s) in the WiFi client (if the devices are perpendicular to a wall, the wall will "appear" less thick than if the devices are at a sharper angle). WiFi comes in many flavors . . . at this point, the production technologies are 802.11a (not used much any longer), 802.11b (slowest, older technology), 802.11g (faster and newer technology) and 802.11n (fastest, greatest range, newest production technology). These are often referred to only with their trailing letter, such as "wireless g" or "wireless n". With the exception of 802.11a, all aforementioned WiFi standards use the 2.4GHz frequency band. 802.11a operates at 5GHz and 802.11n can use both the 2.4GHz and 5GHz frequency bands. There are many other wireless devices that operate in these bands . . . especially the 2.4GHz band (many cordless telephones and wireless surveillance systems use this band). When another wireless device is using the same frequency band as your WiFi, issues may be experienced (while the other wireless device is in use). There are many wireless "channels" within the WiFi frequency band(s). If you have a neighbor with WiFi that is using the same channel as your WiFi signal, that can also interfere with your connectivity. In many cases, simply changing your WiFi channel can correct or reduce the issues. The wireless "radio" within your access point, router or client device could be losing its power. Especially as the devices age, the wireless "radio" can lose its power, significantly reducing the effective wireless range of the device. David W. Potts Consulting can assist you with isolating and correcting wireless problems or implementing or expanding a wireless network to different areas of your home or office or implementing wireless devices such as televisions or Blu-Ray players that include applications such as Netflix.

How do I . . . Please submit questions to me via email. Questions may be answered in future issues of this newsletter, or may be addressed individually. I often have clients who exclaim, after my correcting their issue, how they have been frustrated by working on the issue for weeks before calling me. Often the problem takes less than an hour to correct. Many mention how, next time, they will call me first to avoid the frustration! I have helped people do things from selecting and programming a high-tech remote control to setting up a company's network infrastructure.

David W. Potts Consulting will be happy to assist you with your hardware, software and network selection, purchase, integration, troubleshooting and training. We specialize in Microsoft Windows computers and networking and can also assist you with other electronics consulting.

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