



# DWPC Technology Newsletter

Technology news from David W. Potts Consulting

[david.w.potts@att.net](mailto:david.w.potts@att.net) [www.oregoncomputer.com](http://www.oregoncomputer.com) 503.659.5588

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**Happy Holidays and welcome to the fifth edition** of the David W. Potts Consulting *DWPC Technology Newsletter* -- and the first edition for 2013. 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.

**Still shopping for gifts?** There are many great toys this holiday season . . . and what guy doesn't want (need?) a new gadget (don't get me wrong . . . lots of the ladies out there are technologically savvy, too!)? Tablets are great . . . from the smaller and affordable Android models to the (more expensive and powerful) iPad mini, iPad and Microsoft Surface Tablet. There are great Android phones. The iPhone 5 is amazing. If you have Windows 8, there is Windows Phone. Intelligent programmable remote controls are a welcome gift. There are a variety of still and video cameras . . . affordable to exotic. Networkable multifunction peripherals (print/scan/copy/fax) are inexpensive . . . and can be shared by multiple computers at your office (or house). Don't forget that student who really needs a new notebook computer. Inexpensive wireless phone systems with up to 5 handsets are available (for those of us who still have land lines!)-some of which will integrate with your cell phone. Santa says you have been good this year . . . you deserve to reward yourself with a new toy (I mean tool . . .)! It appears the Mayans and Nostradamus were wrong . . . time to celebrate!

**Pets like Christmas, too!** My wife and I love our long haired Chihuahua. We love to watch her as she entertains herself. We like to find toys to help her entertain herself (and us!). We have found she goes ape over lasers. We have found a toy with an automated laser, that she loves . . . and we love to watch her as she chases it. The toy is called the FroliCat, from a company called Brilliant Pet and may show the brand of "Bolt". I chose to use NiMh (rechargeable) batteries, which run about 80% the voltage of Alkaline batteries, so the beam is not quite as strong (so there is less potential for eye damage with the pet . . . and they more sustainable). I have found the FroliCat on eBay and at PetSmart, for about \$20. Dogs, cats and even fish may react to lasers . . . but some do not. You may want to try an inexpensive laser pointer with your pet to find if it enjoys lasers, before investing in one of the automated toys.

**Now Windows 8 has been released,** I need to, of course, learn the production release, to be able to assist my clients (as of the writing of this newsletter, I have assisted only one client who owns a single Windows 8 notebook). I jumped on the [vacant] bandwagon and picked up a Dell notebook with a 3rd generation Intel Core i5 processor, running Windows 8, Cyber Monday, for \$399.99! I am forcing myself to use the Metro User Interface, and am finding, so far, that I can use my standard applications, fairly easily (with Windows 8 Consumer Preview and the Release Candidate, I "cheated" by emulating the "legacy Start Menu"). I have found the majority of programs I use to be compatible with Windows 8. According to Microsoft, most applications that work with Microsoft Windows 7 should work with Microsoft Windows 8. System-related functions, however, may take a while to locate. As has been the case with each new release of Microsoft Windows, Windows V. 8 is safer than its predecessors. Microsoft Windows V. 8 is the first version of Microsoft Windows to utilize the UEFI (the Unified Extensible Firmware Interface)--[multi-platform] software that sits between the BIOS and the OS, that can help keep you safer. If you associate your Microsoft Windows 8 login with your Windows Live account, you can share data "in the cloud". Although Windows 8 brings with it some enhancements, Microsoft has, in its infinite wisdom, chosen to replace the familiar user interface of Windows (95+) with an interface similar to its portable and game interfaces (Windows Phone and Xbox). Time will tell if Microsoft has a winning formula or if they have created another Windows Vista.

**Save money and do more with your smart phone!** I believe \$1,200 a year is enough to pay my cellular provider for my remote connectivity (don't even get me started about my cable bill . . .). They, on the other hand, believe otherwise. Yes, my plan includes GPS, but, if I want to have navigation features, my provider wants me to pay even more! There are ways to circumvent some of these extra charges. **Google has a "Maps" app** that may provide you with the directions you need, as well as voice navigation . . . at no extra charge (but will use your data plan). There may be apps (such as FoxFi) that can help you "tether" your other wireless devices to your smart phone, without paying extra for a "tethering plan". I have heard stories of providers who have hit their clients with substantial charges when they "detected

tether-like activity" on their phone (as they were not paying for a tethering plan) . . . so you may want to consult your user agreement. Of course, any activity that uses your 3g/4g features will apply toward any usage cap you may have. Some apps have features that make them more desirable than a similar app supplied by your provider. **Use WiFi when it is available** so you won't use any 3g/4g data, especially when using apps that consume lots of bandwidth, such as streaming video. WiFi may also provide you with better performance than 3g/4g. Of course, 3g/4g and WiFi apps can consume lots of battery power . . . so keep that in mind. There are many other smart phone apps; many of them free. Explore your apps store to find fun and productive apps--and get the most out of your smart phone.

**What drivers should I use?** Although there was a "64 bit" version of Microsoft Window XP, it was not well received. Windows Vista came out with "32 bit", then "64 bit" versions. Windows 7 was released with both x86 (32 bit) and x64 (64 bit) versions. Now we have Windows 8. We also have "user mode" and "kernel mode" drivers. Which should you install on your computer? First, you need to know your version of Windows and if you have a 32 bit or 64 bit version of Windows. To determine this, RIGHT-click on the [My] Computer icon, select "Properties" then review the System Properties screen to find the version of Windows (e.g. Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7, Windows 8), and if you have a 32 bit or 64 bit operating system. If neither is indicated, you likely have a 32 bit operating system. You don't want to use 32 bit drivers for a 64 bit version of Windows, or vice-versa, to avoid instability. You want to ensure you always install the drivers for the appropriate version of Windows and the appropriate architecture (32 bit or 64 bit). If you have the option, the "kernel mode" drivers are generally a better option than the "user mode" drivers, as they are better integrated into the operating system.

**Google Apps?** Google Apps *was* a pretty cool service that allowed groups [of up to 10 accounts] to create, store and share information, in the "cloud", **for free** (with the exception of the required Domain, whose email is managed by Google Apps). Although users of the free Google Apps can still use the service, Google Apps for Business, which can be configured for over 10 accounts, is offered on a [paid] subscription basis, for new users. In addition to email (GMail), Google Apps includes a calendar and applications that will allow users to compose, edit and share documents, spreadsheets and presentations. The administrator can manage the access rights to share files and calendars, between users, as well as to control accounts. **Google Drive** is the replacement for the free Google Apps . . . allowing you to store and access files and folders, "in the cloud". If your business, family or select friends would benefit from Google Apps for Business or Google Drive, please consider allowing David W. Potts Consulting to help you through the process.

**Google Chrome Remote Desktop.** Just when we were impressed with the free options Google offers, they surprise us, further. Google's Web browser, Google Chrome, can be augmented with apps from the Google Chrome Store (with many applications being free). One of the free apps, "Google Chrome Remote Desktop", allows users, both non-commercial and commercial, to use this app to take remote control of remote computers. David W. Potts Consulting will be happy to assist you with configuring and using Google Chrome Remote Desktop for remote control of your computer(s) or remote assistance for your friends, family or customers.

**Correction** In the last two newsletters, I mistakenly indicated the Microsoft Surface Tablet includes a keyboard. With the release of the device, I have found the keyboard is an option with some configurations of the Microsoft Surface Tablet (and included in other configurations).

**How do I . . .** Please submit questions to me via email to the address at the top of page 1. 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 an 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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