



DWPC Technology Newsletter

Technology news from David W. Potts Consulting

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Welcome to the ninth 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.

Microsoft Windows Support SCAM! In this difficult economy, many scammers are inventing creative ways to try to get you to give them your money. Be armed with facts and beware of anyone who wants to charge you money for services over the telephone--especially if it is a "cold call". These scammers, often from a foreign country, make "cold calls" to telephone numbers in the USA, trying to scare you into paying for their "services" . . . which you likely do not need (and these "services" may do nothing to help you and could result in compromising your computer). These scammers use high pressure techniques, trying to make you think that, if you don't immediately utilize their services, your computer will fail, soon. As most US households have at least one computer and the greatest market share is computers running Microsoft Windows, the likelihood of their "cold call" finding someone with a Windows computer is high. These scammers will do things like walk the user through opening up the Windows Event Logs, pointing out errors or warnings. Most Windows computers have at least some errors or warnings in their Event Logs . . . even if a computer is operating normally. The scammers know this, and rely on your not knowing it (helping them to make you think this is a legitimate call). These people often represent themselves as being "Microsoft Authorized" or state that Microsoft has alerted them to the problem(s) with your computer. Some of these scammers may, once convincing you to purchase their "service", connect you with a company that sells something like the Microsoft "InTune" subscription service (although Microsoft's InTune is a legitimate service, most people don't need this expense . . . the service is geared toward businesses). Don't trust your computer to strangers . . . use a support resource you can trust, preferably David W. Potts Consulting!

Comcast support changes--if you use Comcast high speed Internet, you should know about this! Comcast has recently changed their support structure. Their "service demarcation" now essentially ends when the Internet signal exits the Comcast cable modem or cable gateway (a gateway includes the cable or DSL modem and a wired or wireless router). Although Comcast used to assist its customers with connectivity issues, they now use a third party to "help you" troubleshoot your connectivity issues--for a fee. These third party folks, often from a foreign country, will often try to get you to subscribe to a support package to "help you with your computer issues". In many, if not most, cases, this service will cost you much more than a support visit (or remote session) from David W. Potts Consulting . . . and can lead to your being billed monthly for support . . . even if you have no connectivity issues and do not use their support services. Some of these support people will use high pressure sales techniques to try to get you to subscribe to their service. David W. Potts Consulting will be happy to help you with all your technology needs.

New Windows 8.1 tablets? It seems Microsoft is positioning its new Windows Version 8.1 to take over the world. They are reported to have the new Windows 8.1 scalable to work, not only on our latest desktop and notebook computers, but with smaller tablet computers and devices such as ATMs and POS (Point Of Sale; like your grocer or big box store) "cash registers". With the enhancements included in Windows 8.1 (refer to the "Windows 8.1 preview is on its way . . ." article in my last newsletter), along with the enhancement of a "Start Menu" (please refer to the "I REALLY want my Start Menu back!" article in my last newsletter), Windows 8 is much closer to being "ready for prime time". With these enhancements, Windows 8 should be a much more viable operating system--being more familiar to the users of earlier versions of Windows (most of us!).

What about LINUX? LINUX is the "open source" (generally free) version(s) of the UNIX operating system, originally developed by Linus Torvalds (hence the name LINUX). LINUX is considered "open source", which means, generally, it is "free to use" for commercial and non-commercial users (please check out the GNU license agreement at <http://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>). UNIX, the [often expensive] engineering operating system, has been characteristically used by engineers and scientists. Linus Torvalds began bringing the UNIX operating system "to the masses", with the open source LINUX. After many upgrades and enhancements, LINUX is nearly "ready for prime time". Although not as user-friendly as Microsoft Windows, basic users can use LINUX for basic computing tasks. If you have an old Windows XP machine you are retiring and want to tinker, check out one of the free LINUX distributions (there are many, such as Ubuntu (<http://www.ubuntu.com/download>) or Fedora (<http://fedoraproject.org/get-fedora>). Some LINUX distributions, such as Ubuntu, will allow you the option to boot from their installation disk to run LINUX from the optical disk, instead of installing it on your hard disk drive.

Java Security Alert! I hate to sound (write?) like a broken record, but Oracle's Java continues to be a security risk. The Department of Homeland Security has warned that Oracle Java, a method to run programs on your computer [mainly through your Web browser(s)], contains vulnerabilities that could be exploited to compromise the security of your computer. They strongly suggest disabling Sun Java, unless it is necessary for programs used on the computer. The issues with Java are present in Microsoft Windows, Apple Mac OS X.x and the Linux operating systems. One recent article stated Kaspersky Labs indicated half the exploit-based attacks in 2012 were targeted at Oracle Java. Although Oracle recently released security updates to help thwart attacks through Java, the Department of Homeland Security warns there are still Java vulnerabilities that could allow a computer to be compromised. Many users do not need Java. Oracle has published a Web page that details how to disable the Java program. Please visit the page at: http://www.java.com/en/download/help/disable_browser.xml. If you do need to run Java, ensure you are using the latest release and remove any old versions. If you have any questions about this or other security issues (or any other computer questions), please feel free to contact us and we will be happy to help you.

Windows XP End-of-Life Countdown! Again . . . sorry to continue to repeat myself . . . but I know many people who are still using their Windows XP computer(s). If you are still using a computer that is running Microsoft Windows XP, you will need to stop using that operating system by April 8, 2014, when Microsoft stops supporting Windows XP. After April 8, 2014, Microsoft will stop delivering updates to Windows XP, causing it to be more vulnerable. In many cases, it is most cost-effective to replace Windows XP computers with new computers (Microsoft provides no direct upgrade path from Windows XP to Windows 7 or Windows 8). The good news is that a new computer can cost under \$400 (you can get a great computer for \$500 or so). If you are still using computers running Microsoft Windows XP and would like assistance migrating to Microsoft Windows 7 or Microsoft Windows 8, or new computers, please allow David W. Potts Consulting to assist you with your transition.

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 home theatre and other electronics consulting.

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