



# 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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**Welcome to the twelfth 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.

**COMCAST WEB SERVERS HACKED!** Reportedly, dozens of Comcast email servers were hacked in early February, 2014, possibly exposing data of Comcast customers, which could include user IDs and passwords. Although Comcast is being quiet about the exploitation, many experts are suggesting changing Comcast passwords. As many people use the same, or similar, passwords for many accounts, I strongly suggest, along with changing your Comcast password, changing any password that is similar to your old Comcast password.

**CrossLoop is Out of Business!** If David W. Potts Consulting has performed remote support for you, a program named CrossLoop was likely used. It appears the CrossLoop company has folded, so the product no longer functions. To be on the safe side, I suggest you remove the CrossLoop program from your computer. To do so, press and hold the Windows key (the one that looks like a Windows logo, usually to the left of the space bar) and, while holding the Windows Key, press the "R" key, then release both keys. From the "Open:" box, please type in "appwiz.cpl" (without the quotation marks) then strike the <Enter> key. Once the list of programs is populated, find the entry for "CrossLoop X.YZ" (where X, Y and Z are numbers) and left-click on it so it will be selected. Select the option to "Uninstall" CrossLoop (toward the top of the window), then follow the on-screen instructions. We are still providing remote support, using Google Chrome Remote Desktop, while we find a better remote support solution.

**Java Security Alert!** As Oracle's Java continues to be a security risk, I am continuing to include warnings in my newsletters. 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. 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](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--and a small reprieve?** This is your last warning . . . if you are still using a computer that is running Microsoft Windows XP, your Windows XP computer will become more vulnerable, after April 8, 2014, when Microsoft stops supporting Windows XP (*only about 1 month away!*). After April 8, 2014, Microsoft will stop delivering updates to Windows XP, causing it to be more vulnerable. **Now--about the reprieve** . . . Microsoft will continue to support its Security Essentials [free] antivirus and antimalware software, on Windows XP, until July 14, 2015. **There are many who believe future updates to [supported versions of] Windows will be reverse engineered by malware authors, who may test Windows XP for the same vulnerabilities, allowing the malware authors to exploit vulnerabilities that will never be patched [in Windows XP]! This means that [after April 8, 2014], Windows XP will be vulnerable to what IT calls "zero day exploits", forever, forward!** What I want to stress is that Microsoft's announcement does not mean that Windows XP will be "safe" after April 8, 2014. Microsoft is simply providing minimal antivirus and antivirus support, until July 14, 2015. 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 8/8.1). 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.

**But I don't want to replace my Windows XP computer!** If you have a computer that is fast enough (at least a dual-core Pentium (or equivalent) with 2GB of RAM) and has compatible hardware, your old Windows XP computer may still have some life left, as a LINUX computer. LINUX is a public domain (free) operating system that has become much more user-friendly, over the last few years. You can't run Microsoft Windows programs under Linux, but you can use the (included) free office application suite that is compatible with Microsoft Office Excel, PowerPoint and Word files. If you just need a computer for simple tasks like surfing the Internet, creating and editing documents, spreadsheets and presentations and printing, LINUX may be a solution. I will be happy to discuss LINUX with you, if you would like.

**What if I continue to use my Windows XP computer?** After April 8, 2014, authors of security software (e.g. antivirus and antimalware software) may drop support for machines running Microsoft Windows XP. This could mean you will stop receiving updates to your products, leaving your computer vulnerable to new threats. As Microsoft has extended support of [their FREE] Microsoft Security Essentials [antivirus and antimalware software] until July 14, 2015, you may want to consider migrating from other security software to Microsoft Security Essentials. Although Microsoft Security Essentials (and any other antivirus software that continues to be updated) will help keep you safe from viruses, some believe that, once Microsoft stops providing security updates to Windows XP, hackers will reverse engineer patches for supported Microsoft Operating Systems and see if the patched vulnerabilities are present in Windows XP. If so, these vulnerabilities can be exploited, unencumbered.

**CryptoLocker Ransomware Update** In the November-December 2013 newsletter, I described a very destructive piece of "ransomware", called CryptoLocker that, according to reports, encrypts over 60 file types (including Microsoft Word documents and Microsoft Excel workbooks) and there is no way to decrypt the files, other than paying the ransom. It appears that, when this malware was released, they requested a \$50 ransom. When the authors found how well their malware was doing, they upped the price to \$100 . . . and it is now at \$400! The only way to recover is by paying the ransom (before the private key is deleted) or to restore from backup (after removing the CryptoLocker malware). Your best defense is practicing "safe computing" . . . by not opening unsolicited email attachments (without first verifying with the sender that they did send you the email) and only visiting more mainstream Web sites. A good backup strategy is also key to your protection.

**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 and technology consulting.

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