



DWPC Technology Newsletter

Technology news from David W. Potts Consulting

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Welcome to the thirteenth 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.

My computer is slow, has annoying pop-ups and browser redirection! There are a number of things that can cause your computer to be slow or can cause pop-ups, Web browser redirection or can change your Web navigation, directing you to sites other than where you expect to visit. Many of these problems can be avoided by practicing "safe computing" and by paying attention to the Microsoft User Account Control windows (and other windows), especially when installing or updating software. Computers can also be more vulnerable to attacks when certain items are not updated (many updates are for system stability or security). I have been noticing many computers that have been infected with malware, often caused by simply visiting Web sites with malicious content, or accepting undesired ancillary components while installing or updating software. David W. Potts Consulting has enhanced our preventative maintenance procedure, to help remove this malicious software. We have found that Windows Vista and above can generally use preventative maintenance every 6 months, when "safe computing" practices are followed (where earlier version of Windows needed more attention). If you would like David W Potts Consulting to perform periodic preventative maintenance on your computer(s), please call or email us, and we will be happy to place you on our preventative maintenance schedule.

What is this Comcast "X1" thing? The satellite TV providers have DVRs (Digital Video Recorders-- devices that record content and pause and rewind live TV) that do special tricks--and Comcast was behind the 8 ball. Comcast is now providing a new solution, which they dubbed "X1", that includes a DVR that can record up to 4 programs at once, while allowing the user to watch a fifth program. In addition, the "X1" DVR can communicate with [up to] four additional cable boxes in your home that can play or record regular TV or play back content that was recorded on the "X1" DVR. The "conventional" Comcast DVR would only record two programs at once . . . or one program while allowing you to watch another live program. the "X1" DVR also significantly increases the amount of content that can be saved. Comcast also does offer free apps for iOS (iPod, iPhone, iPad) and Android devices that will allow you to control the DVR and some of their other set-top boxes to record programs and change channels). Now for the better news . . . you may be able to upgrade to the "X1" platform, get more functionality than you currently have, and save money over your "non-X1" Comcast system (I saved a significant amount off my monthly bill when I upgraded to the "X1" system). The "X1 Operating System" (their designation, not mine!) can also allow you to view content on your iOS or Android device(s) . . . with the proper subscription. David W. Potts Consulting can assist you with your transition to the "X1 Operating System" or your other audiovisual needs, including helping you integrate everything into a single remote control or allowing scene control to turn lights off or on in conjunction with your home theatre. You may be amazed at how inexpensively we can implement a HD 1080p projection system with an 8' wide screen (or more!). Call me for a demonstration!

Can I reduce my Comcast bill? As I mentioned in my "What is this Comcast "X1" thing?" article, you may be able to get increased functionality (standard DVR to the "enhanced X1 DVR" with multi-room playback) for less than you are paying for your existing Comcast DVR, by simply upgrading to the "X1 Operating System" (not certain why their marketing folks call it an "Operating System"). The FCC has also ruled that providers must allow customers to purchase devices, rather than being required to pay your provider to lease their equipment to be able to use their service. As an example, Comcast recently quoted me \$1.00/month for a cable access card for a TiVO. If you don't already bundle services, that can also save you money.

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. 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 IS HERE--with 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 IS NOW more vulnerable (after April 8, 2014, Microsoft stopped supporting Windows XP). Microsoft has stopped 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, 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 Windows XP vulnerabilities that will never be patched! This means that Windows XP is vulnerable to what IT calls "zero day exploits", forever forward!** 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.

What is malware? Malware consists of a number of types of MALicious softWARE. Viruses are a special type of malicious software that can replicate to other computers or devices (hence the name "virus"). Malware, other than viruses, is confined to the infected computer. Examples of malware include: *adware*, that displays annoying pop-ups, offering products or services; *scareware*, that often uses a pop-up, reporting the computer is at risk, attempting to scare the user into paying to "fix the problem(s)", and *keystroke loggers*, that record keyboard input and send it to someone who attempts to find things like user IDs and passwords. Viruses are likely contracted by opening an email attachment, installing software from a source that is not trustworthy or using media (diskette, CD, Flash drive, USB disk, etc.). Other malicious software is often installed by simply visiting an infected Web site. It is important to only install software from trustworthy sources and to read all pop-ups or dialogs before allowing anything to install. Even when you try to be as safe as you can, one visit to a Web site with malicious content can cause you to become infected. Please allow David W. Potts Consulting to assist you with correcting issues due to malware, or any other issues, with your computer.

Heartbleed woes are being experienced due to Web sites being compromised where passwords and other personal information may be stolen. It is strongly suggested that you change all your passwords, using complex passwords (at least 8 characters long, upper and lower case characters and at least one number or special character).

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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