



DWPC Technology Newsletter

Technology news from David W. Potts Consulting

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Volume 4 Number 1 January-February, 2015



Welcome to the seventeenth edition of the David W. Potts Consulting *DWPC Technology Newsletter*. I hope you had a wonderful holiday season. 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.

I've been squinting at my monitor more . . . You may find yourself squinting now at the monitor that looked great, just a few years ago. The good news is that, like TVs, monitors have become increasingly larger and less expensive. You can find 24" LED monitors now for under \$175. There are also companies manufacturing "ultra wide" monitors . . . with aspect ratios wider than 16:9. There are also large "4K" monitors (four times the resolution of a 1080p HD monitor), although these are expensive. I expect their cost to come down as they become more popular and as manufacturing processes improve. All newer notebook computers and most newer desktop computers support at least 2 monitors . . . allowing you to "extend your desktop" to have different data on both screens. This can be very helpful to watch streaming video on one monitor while computing on the other, or while doing tasks where extra screen real estate is helpful, such as preparing taxes. If you love your notebook or UltraBook computer, but prefer the larger keyboard and screen and conventional mouse of a desktop computer, you can add a larger monitor along with an external USB keyboard and mouse, and have the best of both worlds.

Watch where you charge that USB-charged device! Recently, malware has been found on computers that was installed by charging e-cigarettes through a USB port. There are more and more devices available that are charged or powered by a USB connection. Unscrupulous manufacturers can place malicious software onto a USB device that, when connected to a computer, can infect the computer with malicious software, unbeknownst to the computer user, until they see the effects of the malware. The safest option is to charge or power any device [that does not need to be used by a computer, such as an e-cigarette] by using a USB power adapter . . . not charging the device(s) by connecting them to a computer or a USB hub that is connected to a computer.

Be careful opening suspect email! One of my clients recently received what appeared to be an email from a national warehouse store, informing him of the status of an order. He opened the message, then the link to "track the package", which downloaded multiple pieces of malware onto his computer, rendering the computer unusable. Although there is some malware that is nearly impossible to fully eradicate, I was able to clean this machine. I received the same message, a few days later, and, upon its examination, found a number of things that alerted me to the fact the message was not legitimate (I opened the suspect email message in a Linux virtual machine . . . do not open suspect email messages!). First, the message was addressed to a number of recipients (why would a legitimate store provide multiple people with my shipment information?). Next, the message originated from an address from an unfamiliar Domain, not @storename.com. Next, when hovering over the link to the "tracking details", I saw the link was to an unfamiliar Domain (not @storename.com). Last, I knew I had no pending order with this retailer. I have authored papers on ways to avoid email scams and ways to help keep your computer(s) safe. Please email me at the address at the top of this page, requesting these papers, which I will be happy to email you, free of charge.

What is an OLED TV? Recently, manufacturers and stores have been advertising "OLED" televisions. OLED is an acronym for **O**rganic **L**ight-**E**mitting **D**iode. This has to do with how the pixels ("picture elements") are created and displayed. The OLEDs are built onto the screen, along with their support circuitry, and do not require a backlight, making these displays thinner and lighter. The OLEDs actually emit the light at the pixel level (as is the case with plasma displays), as opposed to [florescent backlit] LCD or LED [backlit LCD] TVs, allowing them to produce a "true black". OLED TVs are expensive, now, but we can expect their cost to come down as they are more widely produced and manufacturing processes are optimized.

Windows 10 Technical Preview has been released. Windows 10, the successor of the flailing Windows 8.1, should work on the same hardware as Windows Vista, Windows 7 or Windows 8[.1]. I installed a copy of the Windows 10 Technical Preview on a spare notebook computer and a virtual machine and have been using it for about 2 months. I am impressed with this preview, so far. I have found a few glitches, and reported them to Microsoft, but, for the most part, it seems to work well, and includes a Start Menu. Microsoft doesn't want to jump too quickly . . . they can't risk another Windows Vista or Windows 8[.1] (although driver issues with Vista weren't Microsoft's fault). The release of Windows 10 is now expected to be closer to the end of 2015. If you're looking at purchasing a new computer and can't wait for Windows 10, I suggest purchasing one with Windows 7 (at Costco or online at Dell, HP or Lenovo). You will likely find Windows 10 worth the wait. If you are a tinkerer and have a spare computer with adequate specifications (or if you want to create it as a virtual machine), you can join the Windows 10 Technical Preview team, and get a free download, that will work until Windows 10 is released. It is rumored that anyone who has a license for Windows 8.1 that was purchased by a certain date may be qualified for a free upgrade to Windows 10, once it has been released. More details will be released as we get closer to the release date.

Are you paying for Antivirus software for your computer? If so, please keep in mind Microsoft provides home and small business users with a free license (on up to 10 computers) to use their Security Essentials product, which works along with the Windows Firewall. This software also helps protect against malware other than viruses. This is a free download from www.microsoft.com for Windows Vista or Windows 7, and is included in Windows 8[.1] (called "Windows Defender" and can be activated through the Action Center). Many Comcast cable Internet customers also are eligible for free antivirus software for up to 6 computers. If you do not use your computer for any commercial purposes, there are free offerings from companies like AVG and Kaspersky.

Scam and Fraud Resources are available through the office of the Oregon Attorney General. As scammers are quickly creating elaborate ways to separate you from your money, I strongly suggest you use complex passwords, that you change often, and visit the Oregon Attorney General's Web site at www.oregonconsumer.gov, to keep abreast of newer scams and help learn ways to keep you and your family safer. You can also contact Ellen Klem of the Oregon Attorney General's office at ellen.klem@state.or.us or 503.507.1061.

Java Security Alert! As Oracle's Java continues to be a security risk, I am continuing to include warnings in my newsletters. 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 David W. Potts Consulting and we will be happy to help you.

How do I . . . Please submit questions to me via email to the email 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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