



DWPC Technology Newsletter

Technology news from David W. Potts Consulting, LLC

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Welcome to the twenty-seventh edition of the *DWPC Technology Newsletter*. We hope you find this information helpful. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please send us an email, indicating such. If you received this newsletter from a friend and wish to be added to the mailing list, please send an email to the address above and indicate your desire to receive the newsletter. Please feel free to share this newsletter with your friends.

Back up your data! Unfortunately, many people don't consider the need to back up their data until they have experienced a catastrophe . . . and recovery can be expensive, if possible at all. Hard disk drives are electromechanical devices . . . and just like *any* electromechanical device, it is not a question of "if" it will fail, but, rather, "when". With regard to the newer SSD drives, although they have no moving parts, they can also fail. ANY data you care about should be in at least 2 locations. There are many options for backing up your data, or your entire computer. Some options use a local device (such as a USB or optical drive) and others back up your data over your Internet connection, to a Cloud-based service, to which you must subscribe (unless you only have a small amount of data). Both options have benefits and drawbacks. In Windows 7 and beyond, Microsoft has included an image backup option . . . to back up your Windows files, program files, settings and data files. The benefit of the image backup is that, in the event of a computer failure, you can boot to a special disk and easily make your computer look exactly like it did when the backup was performed. Unfortunately, in the case of a catastrophe (fire, flood, burglary, etc.), the backup drive could be stolen or destroyed (unless kept offsite or rotated). That is where the Cloud-based services shine. In the event of a catastrophe, any files backed up are kept safe at the data center of your Cloud-based backup provider. Unlike the image backup, only data files are backed up to your Cloud-based backup. Further, backup and recovery take much longer, over the Internet, than using a local drive, and come with a modest cost (many are available, starting about \$5/month). As such, a combination of both local and Cloud-based solutions may be the best fit. Please let David W. Potts Consulting help you create a backup plan--before you lose any data!

What if I already experienced a computer crash and lost data? Even if your computer does not boot, your data is likely intact. Even if the hard disk drive won't spin, there can be options. If the hard disk drive is not experiencing a hardware problem, data recovery, in many cases, is inexpensive. In the event you experience a crash and would like to recover your data, please let David W. Potts Consulting assist you with your data recovery process (and resurrecting your computer).

"Ransomware" and what you need to know. Ransomware is a specific type of malware (malicious software) that holds your data or computer hostage, requesting payment to release your data (or computer). Although there are some pieces of ransomware that can be eliminated relatively easily, there are many pieces of ransomware that can be next to impossible from which to recover, or that do encrypt your data, making it inaccessible. I have seen ransomware that claims to encrypt your data, but doesn't, but there are some pieces of ransomware, such as "CryptoLocker" or "Cerber", that actually do encrypt your data files, making them inaccessible, without paying the ransom. Some ransomware tries to convince the user they have done something illegal and must pay a fine to some government agency to avoid prosecution. I have not encountered any ransomware that has been a virus . . . in other words, the ransomware stays locally, on the infected computer, and does not try to infect other computers. Generally, these types of malware can be avoided by using safe computing practices, such as not opening attachments that are not expected, not clicking on questionable links and not visiting questionable Websites. Often, email may request that you click on a link to correct an issue (such as with your bank account). These emails often contain misspellings and poor punctuation. Ransomware has been increasingly prevalent, due to the success these programs have had, generating revenue. If your computer has been infected with ransomware that has encrypted your files, your only option (other than paying the ransom, which does not guarantee success and furthers funding criminals creating this malware) is reverting to backup copies of your files (before the files were encrypted).

Why does my Windows 10 look different [than yesterday]? Microsoft is taking a different approach toward updating Windows 10 than it has with its earlier client Operating Systems. Microsoft, in their infinite wisdom, has decided they know what you want, more than you do, *and you are going to like it* (sound like Windows 8.x?)! In the past, users have been able to delay or inhibit updates. With the advent of Windows 10, Microsoft is forcing updates, and some updates (such as the “Anniversary Update”, Windows 10 Update 1607) can include lots of changes, including changes to the user interface (the Start Menu has changed, significantly, with Update 1607). Some of these updates are actually more “upgrades” to the Operating System, similar to Service Packs, with earlier versions of Windows. Hardware updates that were considered “optional” with earlier versions of Windows are now installed, automatically, with little the user can do about them.

Cellular insurance (and extended warranties) are likely available through your cellular carrier or equipment manufacturer, but can also be purchased through other sources, such as SquareTrade. There are differences in the plans, and you need to be aware of the coverage and inclusions and exclusions in the plan, before making your purchase (SquareTrade does not cover lost or stolen items). Generally, I do not suggest paying for extended warranties (except for cell phones), as, with most electronics, if the device survives the first 6 months, it will likely work for years. If the item is “high-end”, it may be a good idea to consider an extended warranty—you will need to weigh the pros and cons. If you are a Costco member, keep in mind that Costco automatically doubles the manufacturer’s warranty on computers and TVs, to 2 years.

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 and QuickTime Security Alerts! As Oracle's Java and Apple’s QuickTime continue to be security risks, I am continuing to include warnings in my newsletters. You can view the alert from Homeland Security about QuickTime, here: <https://www.us-cert.gov/ncas/alerts/TA16-105A>. Oracle has published a Web page that details how to disable the Java program, at: http://www.java.com/en/download/help/disable_browser.xml. Either program can be uninstalled from the Programs and Features Control Panel. 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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