



DWPC Technology Newsletter

Technology news from David W. Potts Consulting, LLC

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Welcome to the thirty-third 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.

Ransomware abounds! Just a bit over a month after the release of the “WannaCry” ransomware virus, the US CERT (the United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team) warns of another ransomware attack, dubbed a variant of the “Petya” ransomware. In addition to encrypting data files and attempting to replicate to other computers on the same network (making these “worm” viruses), this latest variant of “Petya” also encrypts the “boot block” of the target computer, making it unable to boot. This latest variant of the “Petya” virus uses the same SMB vulnerability as May’s “WannaCry” ransomware virus, to spread to unpatched computers. As such, all currently-supported versions of Microsoft Windows should already be patched against secondary infection (infection spread from an infected computer on the same network), although you must practice “safe computing” to avoid the primary infection. In a rare update to unsupported operating systems, Microsoft released patches to close the vulnerability in Windows XP and Windows Vista (this update can be downloaded from the Microsoft Website—more details are available in my July-August 2017 newsletter). US CERT strongly discourages paying ransom to ransomware authors and indicates even if the ransom is paid, there is no guarantee the files can be recovered. As such, recovery from a backup is the best option. Unfortunately, many of these new versions of ransomware can also encrypt files on servers or other network storage locations where the user has read/write access. As these ransomware attacks can be very financially rewarding to the author of the malware, we can expect seeing even more of these attacks. These days, the end user must be the first line of defense against computer threats. The best way to avoid a primary infection is by practicing safe computing . . . not opening unexpected email attachments, avoiding questionable links, keeping your antivirus and other software (including your operating system) updated and reading pop-up messages (such as during software installation), etc., before allowing installation. Microsoft has stated that properly replying to User Account Control prompts can reduce your risk of malware infection by 30%. Unfortunately, many entities purchase advertising space on Websites that can lead users to sites that include malware and use social engineering techniques to entice users into clicking on their links (e.g. “Say goodbye to Jennifer Aniston, forever!”). Any data you would prefer to not lose should be in at least 2 locations. Online backup systems may also keep multiple versions of your data files, so even if your latest data has been encrypted (then backed up), you may still be able to recover earlier versions of working files. Please let DWPC help you create a backup strategy that will provide you with the level of protection needed for your situation.

Microsoft releases the Windows 10 “Creators Update” Microsoft has released its latest upgrade to Windows 10 . . . the Windows 10 Creators Update, available free for users of Microsoft Windows 10. You may have seen a pop-up, asking for your sharing options, in preparation for this update, or providing the option to install the Windows 10 Creators Update. This free update adds greater functionality to Windows 10 . . . including easier support for BlueTooth devices and “Storage sense”, that can help automatically delete unnecessary files. There has been lots of talk about how the “blue light” from flat panel displays can cause difficulty going to sleep [after using a flat panel device]. The Windows 10 Creators Update includes a “Night light” feature that will allow the display to emit less blue light, between specific hours (which are customizable), to reduce this effect. One change Microsoft made with Windows 10 was forcing updates on users. **The Windows 10 Creators Update will now allow users more flexibility for applying Windows Updates (you can “snooze” to delay a restart to install updates; and can do this, multiple times)!** I suggest backing up your computer before performing any major upgrades or updates. You can check your version of Windows 10 by selecting Start -> Settings -> System -> About. If you already have the Windows 10 Creators Update installed, your Windows 10 will show as Version 1703. Once you are ready to install the Windows 10 Creators Update, you can find it at: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/software-download/windows10>.

FBI warns of privacy issues with Internet-connected children's toys! The FBI has publicized an article that warns about privacy concerns over how content, created by Internet-connected children's toys, can be used by the toy's manufacturers to exploit children. This includes gathering voice and video as well as GPS coordinates. The FBI encourages reading any EULA (end-user license agreement) or privacy policy in conjunction with Internet-connected toys. There can be similar concerns with other Internet-connected devices, as well [that can record sound, video or GPS data, etc.]. You can read the entire article, here: <https://www.ic3.gov/media/2017/170717.aspx>.

Apple announces the iPhone 7 Apple has announced its newest smartphone, the iPhone 7 and iPhone 7 Plus. The iPhone 7 has a 4.7" display with a 1334 x 750 resolution and the iPhone 7 Plus has a 5.5" full HD (1920 x 1080) resolution (compared to the Samsung Galaxy S8 and Galaxy S8+ at 5.8" and 6.2", respectively, both at 2960 x 1440). The iPhone 7 and iPhone 7 Plus sport a 12MP main camera and a 7MP front-facing "FaceTime" camera (the same resolutions as the Samsung Galaxy S8). Apple claims the processor in the iPhone 7 and iPhone 7 Plus is twice the speed of the processor in the iPhone 6 and these phones sport the "longest battery life ever in an iPhone". As is the case with the Samsung Galaxy S6 on, the iPhone 7 and iPhone 7 Plus do not have user-replaceable batteries. Apple claims the new iPhones are "splash, water, and dust resistant" but go on to say "splash, water, and dust resistance are not permanent conditions and resistance might decrease as a result of normal wear". The new iPhones include stereo speakers and do not have a [3.5mm] headphone jack, although they ship with a Lightning to 3.5mm audio adapter..

"Net Neutrality" and what it means to you There has been a lot of talk lately about "Net Neutrality". What is "Net Neutrality" and why should you care? In the United States of America, the FCC currently insists on all users of the Internet being treated equally, essentially (if you pay for a 10Mbps Internet connection, you will obviously not be able to receive information (such as large downloads) nearly as fast as someone with a 100Mbps connection). Large corporations are attempting to provide Internet content to some users faster than they will for other users, regardless of the speed the user "leases". Without "Net Neutrality", ISPs (Internet Service Providers) can charge some customers more for specific content—or charge content providers more to allow their content to be better provided. If the Internet is deregulated, large corporations could afford business advantages not afforded to smaller businesses, and costs for your Internet connection, and content, could increase.

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 the US Computer Emergency Readiness Team about QuickTime, at <https://www.us-cert.gov/ncas/alerts/TA16-105A>. Oracle has a Web page that details how to disable Java, 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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