



DWPC Technology Newsletter

Technology news from David W. Potts Consulting, LLC

david.w.potts@att.net www.oregoncomputer.com 503.659.5588

Volume 7 Number 1 January-February, 2018



Welcome to the thirty-fifth 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.

I just want to play with my new toys! Technology has given us many new gizmos. Unfortunately, we often find we need to spend a great deal of time to learn how to use these new toys and tools. Sometimes, when we find how much is necessary to learn before we get to use our new toy, it just sits in a box. Other times, we may learn just enough to get something out of the item—but not use much of its full potential. We specialize in technology. Even if we are not familiar with your specific item, we can usually call upon our knowledge of technologies to apply to new devices. Please let us help you learn to use your new devices to take the frustration out of your new toys!

Security Appliances (e.g. Norton Core) Network security appliances have been available for many years, from companies like Barracuda Networks, Cisco Networks and SonicWall, geared mainly toward medium to large businesses. Home users, however, generally receive their security through their router (that only provides minimal security) and antivirus/antimalware and firewall software. Security appliances generally require a paid subscription, which entitles the user to updates to protect them from newer threats (like the virus definitions for your antivirus product). The cost of the equipment and subscriptions for security appliances are often not justifiable for home and SOHO (small office/home office) users. Enter Norton Core, a new security device, built into a powerful wireless router, that helps secure *home* users, at a much more attractive price. Norton has been in the security business for decades . . . protecting home, SOHO and corporate computers. At the time of writing, the Norton Core hardware (the security appliance built into a WiFi router) is selling for \$249.99 (after a \$30 promotional discount . . . with free shipping). As with the security appliances used by the big boys, the Norton Core device is automatically updated to protect against new threats, through a subscription service. The subscription service is required (the device will continue to work as a wireless router, with no subscription, but the advanced security features are disabled) and the first year is included. After the first year, the subscription will be automatically billed at \$9.99/month. In addition to protecting your computers, Norton advertises their Norton Core device (with an active subscription) will also protect IoT (Internet of Things) devices, such as [smart] doorbells, thermostats, baby monitors, TVs, etc. (hacking of IoT devices can create “botnets”, performing malicious activities or could allow unauthorized changes to your devices, such as alarm components or your smart thermostat, or viewing cameras inside your home). Norton further indicates that, with the Norton Core subscription, no other antivirus solution is needed for devices connected through the Norton Core device.

Remove all data before recycling electronics! In addition to conventional computers, devices such as cell phones, tablets, cameras, Blu-Ray players and other streaming devices (such as smart TVs) or other Internet-connected devices often hold personal data such as account information (e.g. your email, contacts or Netflix account information), photos, music, movies, etc. Before recycling any old electronics, ensure you remove any memory cards, back up any data you care to retain, then wipe the memory in the device. Most electronics provide a way to remove all data from the device and return it to its factory default. Windows 10 provides a way to securely wipe the data from a computer and return it to the factory default configuration, so the computer could be reused by someone else. Simply recovering a computer to its factory default configuration does not securely erase all the user data on the computer, leaving behind traces of the data that could be reconstructed by criminals. Removing the hard disk or SSD drive(s) from the computer will also remove data from your computer. In the event you do remove the hard disk or SSD drive(s) from a computer, their data is likely accessible, unless the drive is securely wiped or physically destroyed, so I strongly suggest labeling it and placing it in a secure location.

Any important data should be backed up! There are many things that can lead to data loss. Disk drives are electromechanical devices, and, as with any electromechanical device, it is not a question of “if” the drive will fail, but, rather, *when*, and to what degree. Although SSD and “Flash” drives have no “moving parts”, they can fail, as well. Data loss can also result from viruses and other malware (which can also allow scammers to connect to your computer). As such, any data you would not want to lose should be kept in at least two locations (one of which can be the drive in your computer). There are many options to back up your data, including local (to a USB hard disk or Flash drive) and to the “Cloud”. Local backups [to hard disk drives] can include system images [from which a full recovery of your Windows computer, including Windows, settings, programs and data can be made, so the computer will work just like it did, when the image backup was created (**when restored to the same computer**)]. Backing up to the Cloud can be a good option, as the data is stored offsite . . . safe from a local catastrophe, such as a burglary, fire or flood. Most Cloud-based backup options only back up selected data . . . they generally do not support backing up Windows, your settings or your programs. Some only back up the standard “User Libraries”, unless configured to include other locations. Recovery from a Cloud-based backup can take a very long time . . . as it generally requires downloading the data from the remote server of the backup provider, over the Internet (which can take days to complete). Any viable Cloud-based backup provider should have multiple “data centers” in disparate areas, so, even if one data center is disabled, their service should failover to another location. Unfortunately, although Cloud-based backup options can be very reasonably-priced for personal data, Cloud-based backup options for commercial data is much more expensive. Please allow David W. Potts Consulting to help you choose a backup solution that fits your needs.

Make sure you monitor email from your ISP! Some Internet Service Providers (ISPs) require that you create a special email address, used to administer your account (e.g. joeblow@myisp.net). Often, users may not even be aware of this email address, as they don’t generally use it. Even if the user knows about this account, they often don’t monitor it, as it is not their “regular” email account. Unfortunately, ISPs may send important email to this address, and, if you do not monitor that account (or have your ISP send notices to an account you monitor), things could happen that could affect your services, including email. To avoid surprises, ISPs often will allow users to configure an alternate email address for communication about your account, so you can receive messages from your ISP, to an email account you monitor. If your ISP does not allow adding an alternate email address for communication, you may be able to configure the ISP’s email to forward messages to [one of] your monitored email address[es].

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 Windows 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.

The information contained in this newsletter is provided at no cost. David W. Potts Consulting, LLC provides no warranty, express or implied, for this information and the user assumes all liability for any issues arising out of the use of the information contained herein. The information contained herein is the intellectual property of David W. Potts Consulting, LLC. This information may be freely distributed, as long as it is distributed in its entirety and David W. Potts Consulting, LLC is acknowledged as the source of its content. Happy computing!