DWPC Technology Newsletter

Technology news from David W. Potts Consulting

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Welcome to the twenty-second edition of the ***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. Please feel free to share this newsletter with your friends.

Microsoft Windows 10 Update Microsoft released Windows 10 on July 28th. As expected, it has proven to be a great improvement over Windows 8[.1], including a new "Start Menu", Cortana (a Siri-like digital assistant) and the new Microsoft Edge Web browser. As you likely know, the upgrade is free for qualifying (most all) users of Windows 7 and Windows 8.1, and is offered through Microsoft as a download. If you want to upgrade to the new operating system, I strongly suggest backing up your computer before performing the upgrade. Luckily, both Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 include image backup utilities, to allow you to back up your computer to external media (such as a USB hard disk drive). I have advised users that, although it should be safe to purchase a new [brand name] computer with Windows 10 preinstalled, to wait at least a month before upgrading their computers to Windows 10 (I recommend always waiting a while after the initial release of any new OS or Service Pack, to help ensure surprises encountered when releasing to the public have been addressed). To date, my experiences upgrading to Windows 10 have been good. If you would like any assistance migrating to Windows 10 or selecting a new Windows 10 computer, David W. Potts Consulting will be happy to help.

The holidays are upon us, again! I can't believe yet another year is coming to an end, this soon. 2015 seemed to fly by, even faster than 2014. Again, Santa has lots of options, this year. New phones, tablets and convertible computers/tablets are still hot. Unfortunately, you won't be finding many Windows 7 computers . . . but Windows 10 is a good replacement. New MFPs (Multifunction Peripherals; print/scan/copy, and sometimes, fax) can be purchased for under $100 (you can get a great, feature-rich, wireless, MFP for under $200 . . . I still like the Epson offerings). An intelligent, programmable, universal remote control is a welcome gift for those with A/V systems that juggle multiple remote controls (I like the Logitech Harmony series). Blu-Ray players with built-in apps (so you can stream NetFlix, etc., with the appropriate subscription(s)) continue to drop in price--and will essentially turn your "dumb" TV into a "smart" TV. If you're a Comcast customer . . . consider the new X1 Platform. LED televisions, including the 4K sets, continue to drop in price . . . and are getting larger (I recently wrote that I wouldn't go for a curved screen unless I really needed a replacement and did not want to mount it to a wall). Although 3-D is waning with TVs, it's hot with printers. There are many 3-D printers that are economical . . . some being kits. BlueTooth gadgets like headsets, headphones, keyboards, mice, etc., are great stocking stuffers for kids and geeks. Do you know someone who has issues with their technology (or needs to know how to use their gadgets)? Consider a gift certificate for a visit from David W. Potts Consulting. Have ***you*** been good, this year? Maybe ***you*** deserve some of the items, above . . . or some help getting everything to work, together . . .

What is a "4K" TV? The highest HD resolution, also referred to as "full HD" is called 1080p. The 1080 means the image is 1080 pixels high. A 1080p image is 1920 pixels (dots) across (for a total of 2,073,600 pixels); with a 16:9 aspect ratio). The "p" means the picture is displayed in a "progressive" format . . . incrementing one line at a time ("interlaced" video first displays the odd lines, then goes back and displays the even lines). "4K" or "UHD" (Ultra-High Definition) has twice the amount of pixels, in each direction (2160 high by 3840 across, for a total of 8,294,400 pixels, also a 16:9 aspect ratio). This makes for a stunning picture . . . that can appear like you are looking through a window. Although there is little true 4K "content" (things broadcast in the true 4K format), upscaling can make lower resolution images appear higher resolution than they actually are. 4K TVs are becoming more affordable, but I expect we will continue to see prices decline as more true 4K content is available and consumers begin purchasing more of the 4K sets.

What is "Upscaling"? Upscaling is a process to fill in the pixels (dots) when the display is a higher resolution than the source. An example is when playing a DVD (480p or 480i . . . only 480 vertical lines) through a 1080p HDTV (1080 vertical lines). Without upscaling, each pixel would be more than 4 pixels on the TV and the image would look less natural and "pixelated" (able to easily discern the individual dots). With upscaling, the upscaler (usually built into the video player, audio/video receiver or monitor) will digitally rebuild the image, in real time, attempting to determine the color of a pixel based on the pixels around it, creating an image that appears higher resolution than the original. This can make a DVD appear to look almost as nice as a Blu-Ray. In the same way, 4K equipment can upscale to appear more like 4K content. The quality of the upscaling conversion is dependent on multiple factors, including the [upscaler] processor speed and type and its upscaling algorithm. As such, you may receive better results disabling the upscaling in one device (earlier in the stream . . . as, once it is upscaled, it stays that way through later equipment), to allow a later device, with a better upscaler, perform the upscaling.

3-D Printing? 3-D TVs, 3-D cameraphones, 3-D camcorders, and now, 3-D printers . . . what's the deal? 3-D printing means creating objects using a device that actually "prints" in 3 dimensions . . . both the "X" and "Y" axis, as with conventional "2-D printing", but adding the "Z" axis, for depth. Many 3-D printing technologies have been around for many years. All 3-D printing technologies work in a similar fashion . . . printing a "layer" of material at a time . . . with the "Z" axis moving (either the 3-D print head(s) or the print surface). Over the last couple of years, 3-D printing technology has become relatively affordable . . . on a relatively small scale (around a 7" cube). There are many devices and materials that can be used to print 3-D objects . . . in one, two, or full color(s), depending on the technology used and the number of print "heads". 3-D printing can use acrylics, PVC (polyvinyl chloride; which can create an odor while printing), PLA (Polylacitic Acid; a biodegradable plastic, made from sustainable resources, such as corn starch) or many other materials. Most inexpensive 3-D printers use rolls of "filament" as the printing material. The "source" used to create the 3-D object can be downloaded (many 3-D downloads are available; many for free) or can be created using a 3-D scanner or software. Some 3-D printers can print directly from a Flash memory card, where others require a computer to be connected to the 3-D printer while printing.

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.