



# Gulfcoast Networking Newsletter

Your IT Management Experts

April 2020

Hello! We're pleased to send you this monthly issue of the Gulfcoast Networking Newsletter. It's our way of saying that you're important to us and we truly value your business. Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to friends and colleagues. Enjoy!

## MONTHLY QUOTES:

*"If you're not making mistakes, then you're not doing anything. I'm positive that a doer makes mistakes."*

**John Wooden**

*"A mediocre idea that generates enthusiasm will go further than a great idea that inspires no one."*

**Mary Kay Ash**

*"Correction does much, but encouragement does more."*

**Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**

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## Microsoft Teams vs Skype: What's the Difference

Microsoft introduced Microsoft Teams at the end of 2016, announcing it as a way of combining workers, content, and conversations for easier and more effective collaboration. Upon launching in 2017, Microsoft indicated that it planned to replace Skype for Business with Teams in the long run.

Teams has certainly proved popular, with more than half a million organizations using it, adopting it quicker than any previous Microsoft product. Such is the success of Teams that Microsoft has announced that Skype for Business Online will be retired at the end of July 2021, although users running the application on internal servers will be supported up to 2023.

Teams represents a whole new way of working rather than just improvements to Skype for Business, although many features of the latter are still available in the former. Video quality is significantly improved and a clever "background blur" feature means viewers remain focused on the speaker. Unlike Skype for Business, users can join a meeting directly via a browser without having to download a plug-in, which caused problems for secure environments in the past. Meetings can be recorded and stored in the Microsoft Stream cloud without any further processing as was needed previously.

Chat in Teams is much improved with intuitive and useful organizational features. It also supports rich formatting so that different colors, fonts, etc. can be employed. Files can be shared via OneDrive, rather than P2P as before, so their content can be audited for safety purposes.

Teams has a dedicated calling feature that keeps all contacts, history, voicemails, etc. in one place. It retains the option to use a traditional telephone handset if desired. For those who prefer this option, Microsoft has developed appropriate hardware with partner manufacturers so that it fits seamlessly with the software, whereas with Skype for Business the telephone controlled the software, which did not always make for the most consistent or reliable experience. While Teams still allows for a selection of hardware to be used, there is much more integration available. Additionally, although Microsoft Calling Plans, the company's cloud calling service, is still available as it was before in Skype for Business Online, not everybody is confident or feels secure using this; Teams allows for direct integration with existing telephone systems and other providers as desired.

## 3-2-1: The Triple Data Backup Strategy

Ransomware is one of the biggest threats one can face: once it gets on to your computer, it can encrypt your data and refuse to release it until you have paid a ransom.

Fortunately, there is a way to thwart the criminals operating such software, which is by making copies of all your valuable data so that when you're attacked you can recover your critical data without paying the ransom.

A good rule of thumb is to always have at least three copies of your important files, for example, one on a local computer to work on, one stored in the cloud, and one stored on a hard copy device such as a USB stick, removable hard drive, etc.

The reason for having three copies is that it's always possible that the ransomware could get to your detachable storage through the local computer, so you will always have the cloud backup to rely on.

In addition to having your data saved in three different places, it's always a good idea to have it saved in at least two different types of media. We never know what

technological challenges might be around the corner, and saving in two different forms of media will spread your risk.

This sort of precaution derives from the old days of using tape drives for backups; if one drive reader was to fail, all multiple copies of a document might be lost. Using the cloud, hard drives, external servers et cetera reduces the risk as it is highly unlikely that all of the services on which you store your documents would fail simultaneously.

Finally, always keep a copy of your important data somewhere secure and off-site, for example in a safe deposit box or a safe at home. That way, if your office burns down or is broken into, you will still have all your data secure.

Additionally, follow good security discipline with the encryption and strong passwords for every copy of your data; don't just assume that any particular form of data storage is secure, because in the modern world of cybercrime, there's no such thing if you don't have robust protection.

## News Bytes

### New Microsoft vulnerability

Microsoft has recently revealed a new remote code execution vulnerability present in every supported version of Windows that is being employed in "limited targeted attacks" that could allow hackers to run code or malware on infected devices.

The vulnerability is rooted in the Adobe Type Manager Library, part of the font-rendering process of Windows, and is classed as "critical", Microsoft's highest threat level.

Microsoft has not yet provided a patch to correct the problem, although if they follow their usual policy of releasing security fixes on Update Tuesday (second Tuesday of each month) there may be one available on April 14. Until then, the only advice coming from Microsoft is to employ temporary workarounds, e.g. disabling the Details and Preview panes in Windows Explorer. Full details are available on the Microsoft website.

### Double Virus

As a response to the current Coronavirus crisis, Johns Hopkins University created an interactive virus tracking map. Unfortunately, it appears there is no crisis too serious for criminals not to attempt exploitation; an Android application, "Corona live 1.1", poses as being a simple interface to the Johns Hopkins data and claims to need no special access, but once installed it demands access to virtually everything on the user's device.

As well as warning against this specific threat, experts have issued general warnings that in times of crisis, criminals frequently redouble their efforts to gain illegal access to data and devices; users who already under stress looking for reassurance from the digital world have a greater likelihood of being careless or making errors. More than ever at this time it is vital not to accept links, plug-ins, or apps from untrusted sources and to ensure that all data is robustly protected and backed up.



## Question of the Month

**Question:** *Is it possible to remove the Cortana icon from the taskbar?*

**Answer:**

While voice-controlled applications have been a hot topic in IT for some years now, a significant proportion of users don't like them and would rather stick to the standard methods of input.

For these users, the Microsoft Cortana voice-controlled system, which appears by default on the Windows 10 taskbar, is at best an irrelevance and at worst an annoyance. Fortunately, there is a way to remove it.

To start with, you should update your Windows version to the latest available (at least release version 1903 or above – you can find this by using the Windows key + R and typing winver in the available box then clicking OK).

Then all you have to do is right-click any empty section of your taskbar and a menu will pop up on which the third item will be "Show Cortana button"; simply uncheck this option and you won't be bothered by the Cortana icon any longer.

## Top Tips for Working from Home

Due to the unprecedented global situation with the coronavirus, many people are finding themselves having to work from home for the first time in their careers. Some may find it everything they've ever wanted, but many people will be missing the routines and discipline of regular office life, not to mention the company of their colleagues. Below, we offer a series of tips, some personal and some technical, that could make this period more pleasant and productive.

### Personal

- Get up and get dressed! Losing the routine of preparing for work by having breakfast, showering and dressing at a regular time is a big step on the slippery slope. Stick to your standard work routine and hours.
- Set up your own office in as quiet and isolated a situation as possible – a separate room if you have a spare one. This means you can work without being disturbed and leave work behind you at the end of the day.
- Use the same technology you're used to in the office; if necessary, get permission to bring home anything from the office that you can't replicate with what you have.
- Odds are that your home office setup won't be as ergonomically designed as your actual office, so make sure you take more time to take breaks, do some stretches and walk around. Try not to use breaks as an

excuse for snacking though! Stick to your regular work and food routines.

- If you've got kids in the house, noise-canceling headphones can be a godsend, especially if you need to make lots of calls. If you don't have and can't procure noise-canceling headphones, the Krisp app described below will at least help with telephone calls.

### Tech

- Slack is an app that puts all messages, files, and attachments in a single place to help deal with the extra email load homeworking will inevitably generate more efficiently. Free options are available.
- Google Docs and Sheets are an excellent way of allowing people to collaborate; a document from one user can be shared to a group and edits and comments can be added for all to see without having to send around multiple emails with attachments. Zapier provides many useful add-ons you can incorporate into this system.
- WordPress has a new group collaborative area named P2 allowing collaboration with others, either on WordPress or through other apps.
- If you don't have noise-canceling headphones, try the Krisp app which eliminates background noise from online calls. Although this is a paid service, the first 60 minutes each week are free, or if using on iOS the first 240 minutes.



# Your Newsletter

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A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER TO INFORM AND ENTERTAIN OUR CLIENTS

APRIL 2020

## APP OF THE MONTH: TIMETREE

TimeTree is a useful app that combines all the elements of reminder, notepad and calendar apps in one place, and allows for sharing with others. It's possible to use the app to create multiple calendars, so you could have one for kids' schooling, one for work, one for social life, etc. It's an easy way to simplify your scheduling and make sure that life doesn't throw out nasty surprises because something's slipped your mind or you've forgotten to coordinate with others.



Gulfcoast Networking, Inc.

FROM THE DESK OF:

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If you don't have a managed-service agreement in place, please let us know and we'll conduct a needs analysis and provide you with a proposal free of charge!

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## OFFER OF THE MONTH

Try Cloudcare AV for 30 days FREE! Go to <https://gulfcoastnetworking.com/special/> for details