



Gulfcoast Networking Newsletter

Your IT Management Experts

July 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:

"Good friends, good books and a sleepy conscience: this is the ideal life."

Mark Twain

"As a well-spent day brings happy sleep, so a life well spent brings happy death."

Leonardo da Vinci

"Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose."

Lyndon B. Johnson

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Goodbye Office, Hello Microsoft

On April 21st this year, Microsoft has changed the name of its collection of productivity apps from Office 365 to Microsoft 365. This new branding is a reflection of Microsoft's desire to offer customers a holistic productivity platform.

This new brand puts Azure, Windows 10, and Office 365 all on a single new platform. Overall, this change is not significantly different: what you paid for on April 20 is pretty much the same as what you get on April 21. Nevertheless, this switchover is a good time to review what Office 365/Microsoft 365 can give you and which subscription is best for you.

As with Office 365, Microsoft 365 offers a number of different levels to suit what your business needs. All of these subscriptions contain well-known applications including Word, Excel, Outlook, and PowerPoint, as well as a variety of service offerings including Teams, OneDrive, SharePoint, and Exchange.

For business users, the cheapest option is Microsoft 365 Business Basic, which costs \$5 per user per month (this used to be called Office 365 Business Essentials). This subscription only allows you to access cloud-based versions of office apps; you can't put them on your desktop. However, the package does include mobile versions of all the apps and Teams, SharePoint, OneDrive, and Exchange.

Next up is Microsoft 365 Business Standard (previously Office 365 Business Premium). This costs \$12.50 per user per month and provides desktop, online, and mobile versions of all the essential office apps. As above, Teams, SharePoint, OneDrive, and Exchange are all included.

The highest-level package is Microsoft 365 Business Premium (previously Microsoft 365 Premium). This costs \$20 per user per month and includes everything in the Business Standard package plus the Intune and Azure information protection services.

An additional offering is Microsoft 365 Apps for Business, which incorporates all the office apps but is only supported by OneDrive. This costs \$8.50 per user per month.

The home version of Office 365 is also being renamed Microsoft 365. There are three versions of this, Personal (\$69.99 a year), Family (\$99.99 per year) or Office Home & Student 2019 (\$149.99, single purchase). The first two options have all the best-known apps; Personal has 1 TB of cloud storage for a single person, while Family has 6 TB to be shared between up to six people. Home & Student allows for a one-off installation of all the classic Office apps on a single PC or Mac.

Keeping Your Team Together with Teams

Across the world, working from home has become the new normal as virtually every nation battles the Covid-19 pandemic. Anyone running a business team has had to find a way of staying in touch with its members. One of the most ubiquitous solutions is the Microsoft Teams app. This application allows for both digital and telecommunications connections to be made between team members; many workers will not have had occasion to use this service before, and so it's useful to think about the different ways Teams can help your team communicate.

Teams allows people to both to receive incoming calls and make outgoing ones within Teams using Calling in Teams. This requires you to select Microsoft Teams to make your calls, and to use the Phone System. Additionally, you must select a Calling Plan, decide on Direct Routing, and decide on Audio Conferencing.

The Microsoft Phone System is the foundation of Calling in Teams. This permits Teams' users to make outgoing and receive incoming calls, mute/unmute calls, and transfer them to others.

The Calling Plan is an additional telephone service that works with Microsoft 365's Phone System and can provide a telephony solution for the whole business. The Calling Plan

sets up a primary phone number and allows users to call in and out; there are three options based on the call volume used, ranging from \$12 for domestic calls only up to \$52 for a high volume of domestic and international calls.

You might consider adding Direct Routing to your package; this allows users to make direct calls using their existing phone numbers, accessing a regular phone system including a dialing tone. If you add this feature to work with your current provider, your existing phone numbers can be put straight into Teams so that users can make and answer calls within the app itself, both on mobiles and on desktops.

Audio Conferencing is included in Office 365 E5; if you use the E1 or E3 version, you can add it for a monthly fee. Your subscription allows you a certain amount of minutes per user per month to call non-premium numbers in a wide range of countries across the world.

If you go over the Audio Conferencing/Calling Plan minutes, you can pay for extra minutes using Communications Credits. You can either prepay for a certain amount of Communication Credits, or use auto-recharge that will automatically top up your balance when your minutes fall below a certain level.

News Bytes

Bad Vibe(r) for Facebook

The messaging app Viber (1 billion users) has severed all links with Facebook, according to a company statement on Thursday. The company stated that this was due to Facebook's failure to deal with data breaches or hate speech on its platform.

Viber has immediately stopped buying advertising on Facebook, and Facebook SDK, Facebook Connect, and Giphy will be removed from the app imminently.

The company said that the breaches of data privacy highlighted by the Cambridge Analytica scandal were already highly concerning, and the fact that Facebook had, in their opinion, not done enough to prevent hate speech spreading across the platform in the wake of the George Floyd killing and Black Lives Matter protests, sealed their decision.

Viber stated that the company was also fully in support of the #StopHateForProfit movement, established by the NAACP and the Anti-Defamation League; this movement has called for advertisers to withdraw their spending on Facebook for the whole of July to send a message that the company must do more to address the issues that led to Viber's decision.

New Covid-19 Information Available on Yelp

The online business directory, review, and reservation service, Yelp, has announced that every business page will now contain a section letting customers know about the action that a business is taking to keep its workers and customers safe during the ongoing pandemic.

The new section will outline the health and safety precautions in place for each business and what options it can offer, e.g., eating in, outdoor dining areas, personal visits, virtual assistants, delivery, or curbside pickup. The section will also allow potential visitors to see what steps a business has taken to enforce social distancing, what sanitation procedures are in place, and whether employees are required to use PPE. Additionally, customers will be able to find out what other requirements a business has of them, for example, whether a potential customer will have to have their temperature checked, and whether it will be compulsory to wear a mask when visiting a business.

This is not the first initiative Yelp has launched to help businesses in these difficult times: contact-free delivery options were added to the directory in March, and a GoFundMe button was added to business pages so that customers could choose to make a contribution for businesses suffering losses.



Question of the Month

Question: *How can I enable dark mode on computers or mobile devices?*

Answer:

Computer and mobile device dark modes are very useful for effecting reductions in the amount of blue light coming from your screen, and thus reducing eye strain. Below are details of the way you can select dark mode for various types of device:

Windows: Simply type “dark mode” into the Windows search box, then press enter. Select Settings for the default Windows mode and default app mode settings, and choose “Dark” as your default modes. The same procedure can be used to deactivate Dark mode.

Mac OS: Click the Apple menu icon at the top left corner of your screen and select System Preferences>General>Appearances and select the Dark option. The same procedure can be used to deactivate Dark mode.

Android smartphones/tablets: Open the Settings option and select Display. Scroll down and choose Advanced>Device theme and click the Dark option. The same procedure can be used to deactivate Dark mode.

iPhone/iPad: There are two ways to activate dark mode with iPads and iPhones: you can either activate using Siri or do manually. To use Siri, simply say “Hey Siri, turn on dark mode” when your phone is unlocked, and it will be activated for you. You can also turn it off using Siri.

To activate this feature manually, swipe up from the bottom of the screen; Control Centre will appear. On the brightness indicator, hold your finger down and the brightness settings will appear on screen. The default setting is Dark Mode Off; you will see this underneath an icon on the left-hand side. Clicking on this will activate Dark Mode. You can use the same procedure to switch it off again.

It goes without saying that servers are at the heart of every modern business, but it is sometimes difficult to know when the time has come to have them replaced before they fail and do your business significant harm. Below we detail five indicators that could tell you that it's time to invest in new hardware.

Customer feedback/worsening performance: if your server starts to slow up, you may not immediately recognize it, but your customers will. Ask your sales team to closely monitor customer feedback and let you know if they are starting to complain about slow service on your website. You may be able to speed up performance with new hard drives, extra memory, or CPU upgrades, but it's often simpler and cheaper to replace the whole thing.

Replace old servers: general industry agreement is that small business servers should be replaced between three and six years from new. Servers can last a decade if well cared for, but they will be hopelessly outdated. Many latest recommendations state that installing new servers every three years will reduce operating costs increase significantly.

Energy costs increasing? Older servers tend to overheat as workloads increase, and so they will need more and more cooling. This can represent a significant expense in terms of your company's energy bill. Newer servers don't need repairing so often and use less energy, saving you money.

Warranty coming up? If the warranty on your server is about to expire, that's a good time to consider replacing it. Once your server is out of warranty, the manufacturer has no obligation to supply you with parts or provide repairs, and you won't get updates to help protect your security. Definitely time to consider a new server.

Security/compatibility: as above, if your warranty on your server has expired, you are no longer protected against security threats through manufacturer updates they may not be available in any form, or they could be difficult and expensive to obtain. Old servers also have problems with compatibility; sometimes they simply can't handle software that could be vital to your business. Having a new server in place that can handle all updates and new developments could, in the long run, be the far more efficient and economical solution.

Your Newsletter

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A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER TO INFORM AND ENTERTAIN OUR CLIENTS

JULY 2020

APP OF THE MONTH: MEALBOARD

Mealboard is an app that can help you coordinate your cooking plans and grocery shopping all in a single app. Users can type in their favorite recipes, or import recipes from cooking websites, to create a calendar of meal plans; the app will then ask you to input how many people will be at each meal and will calculate the quantities of groceries you require for your recipes and add them to your shopping list. You can also set up alerts to remind you when you need to start preparing the next meal. Mealboard is available from the App Store for \$2.99.

Your Company Name Here

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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