Gulfcoast Networking Newsletter

Your IT Management Experts

August 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:

"We know what we are, but know not what we may be"

William Shakespeare

"The measure of who we are is what we do with what we have"

Vince Lombardi

"How wonderful is that nobody needs to wait a single moment before starting to improve the world"

Anne Frank

IN THIS ISSUE:

It Is Time to Start Adopting E-Signatures

In the modern business world, the electronic signature (e-signature) is becoming ever more prevalent. An e-signature can be very simply provided by a user either typing in their name or providing a digital picture of their handwritten signature. With the correct implementation, e-signatures can be just as valid and legally enforceable as a standard pen-and-ink signature.

It should be remembered that "digital signature" and "electronic signature" are not the same thing: the electronic signature is what is provided by the signatory, and the digital signature is the technology that ensures the integrity and safety of the electronic signature.

While some people feel uncomfortable with electronic signatures, believing that they are less secure or enforceable than traditional signatures, this is not the case. In fact, e-signatures are more secure; if you receive a document from a client with their signature on it, how do you know it hasn't been forged? However, with an e-signature, password protections, etc guarantee that it has come from a genuine user. Protection can be as simple as ensuring the e-signature has come from the correct email address, or it can be stepped up by using two-factor authentication or the ultimate Public Key Infrastructure technology.

With Public Key Infrastructure, there are two keys used in the security of the e-signature. A public key is used by everyone who needs access to a document in question, but the private key is only known to individual users; it is impossible for anyone who does not have access to the relevant private key to sign a document. Not only does this mean that the recipient can rest assured that the signature on the document is genuine, but the signatory cannot deny that they signed a document. An electronic paper trail will be generated with every signature, showing where, when, and how a document was signed and who the signatory was.

An additional advantage of electronically signed documents is that, with the requisite levels of security, they remain valid even when copies are made of them; with traditional paper documents, legally generally the original is required for validity and if this is lost or damaged many problems can arise. Every digital copy of an electronically signed document contains all of the same information and proofs as the original, and so if the first copy to be signed is lost in a software crash or hardware malfunction, copies can still be regarded as legally valid.

How to Extend your Windows Laptop's Battery Time

Probably the chief drawback of using a laptop computer, so good for so many purposes, is the fact that battery life is limited. Most people have experienced the frustration of running out of battery when no power outlet is available; below are a number of ways in which you can increase the battery life of a Windows laptop.

Battery Saver mode: Windows automatically activates Battery Saver mode when your battery level drops below 20% (this can be customized). This mode limits all background activity to maximize battery life; you can access it by clicking on the battery icon in the taskbar and using the displayed slider to choose between longest battery life and best performance.

Turn down brightness: the higher level of brightness you have on your screen, the quicker your battery will be used up. You can turn brightness down by clicking on the notification icon at the bottom right of your screen; you'll find a slider for brightness at the bottom of the action center menu.

Hibernation mode: when you press the off button on your laptop, generally it will go into sleep mode, a low power setting that is still running all your programs, so that eventually the battery will drain completely. Hibernation mode saves all your information on the hard drive and then almost completely shuts down; it will be slower to restart but it saves a lot of power. You can access this by pressing Start + R and typing in powercfg.cpl and changing the settings in the Windows Power Options menu.

Close down greedy apps: if you go into the Start menu >Settings >System >Battery >"See Which Apps Are Affecting Your Battery Life" you can find out which apps are using the most battery life and make sure you delete them or shut them down when not in use.

Turn off Bluetooth and Wi-Fi: most of us leave Bluetooth and Wi-Fi on by default, but they are one of the biggest battery drainers. Consider disabling Bluetooth and Wi-Fi (this can be simply done from the taskbar) if you're traveling with your laptop or when you're not using them.

Use the Troubleshooter: you can access the Windows 10 Power Troubleshooter by clicking Start >Settings >Update & Security >Troubleshoot >Power >Run the Troubleshooter. Windows will then run through your settings and let you know about any unnecessary excess battery usage and how you can address it.

News Bytes

Outlook Issues

In mid-July many of Microsoft's millions of global users of Outlook for email started to experience difficulties; clients using Office 365 Business version found that Outlook was crashing immediately after being opened. It is suspected that a recent update could have introduced a flaw into the system; this was seemingly confirmed by a tweet from Microsoft. Microsoft assured users that a patch was being rolled out immediately that would be installed by the automatic update system; until this was downloaded, the company pointed out that Outlook online remained unaffected. The update did appear within a few hours of the fault being reported and it does appear that the problem has now been resolved.

OnePlus Email Leaks

One thing that you would think consumers can rely on is that companies at the cutting-edge of technology would also be at the cutting edge of Internet security; unfortunately, all too often this faith turns out to be misplaced, as is shown by the latest (but by no means the first) security lapse from mobile manufacturer OnePlus. Having released the latest iteration of its OxygenOS (v.10.5.11), the company asked users to participate in a survey about the new offering. Unfortunately, when the company replied with a thank you email to those who responded to the survey, they not only got the thank you but also the email addresses of every other user who responded. It might appear that this isn't such a big deal; after all, we reveal our email addresses to others probably many hundreds of times every year. However, security experts have pointed out that knowing a particular email address belongs to a OnePlus customer could allow malicious actors to associate it with other elements of the company's accounts (particularly as this particular company is not renowned for its impenetrable security) and exploit the information for nefarious purposes.

Question of the Month

Question: *What are the common digital privacy pitfalls?*

Answer:
Below we list some of the common problems and misperceptions about Internet privacy.
Private browsing: most people believe that if they are browsing in private mode, they are at no danger of giving away any private information. In fact, although private browsing will delete your history from your device, it is still held by your service provider and can be hacked or even subpoenaed by state authorities. If you want to be truly private, use a VPN.
Public Wi-Fi: publicly available Wi-Fi hotspots are so commonplace now that we use them without a second thought. However, this doesn't mean that they are safe. You might be in a Starbucks and see their Wi-Fi network on your computer, but that doesn't guarantee that it's their network, it could have been set up by a malicious actor to gather your information. Even if a Wi-Fi network is legitimate, remember others can access it and either hack your data or introduce viruses to your computer. The safest thing to do is to only use such networks for basic browsing, and don't enter any site where you need to use your passwords.
Hard drive safety: just because you've deleted something on your computer, it doesn't mean it's not still somewhere on your hard drive; it can still be there even after you've reformatted the disk. If you're going to dispose of your computer in any way, even for recycling, use proper "shredding" software to ensure the hard drive is completely cleared of your information.
Passwords: many people believe that if they have a very complex password, they can use it for everything. This is definitely not the case, because it means that hackers only need to get hold of your password once to access all your accounts. Use different passwords for every account (password manager apps will save you having to remember them all) and consider using two-factor authentication whenever it's available.

Six Good Reasons to Adopt Multiple Monitors

The late author Sir Terry Pratchett, when asked why he had six different monitors at his writing station, replied, "Isn't it obvious? It's because there isn't room for seven."

Whilst most of us probably wouldn't go quite as far, it's undeniable that there are substantial advantages to having more than one monitor at your workstation, and this sort of setup is now commonplace with designers. Below we list some of the chief advantages of having multiple monitors.

1.Higher productivity
Research has proven that workers using multiple monitors are undoubtedly more productive, with reports of between 10% and 40% improvements, alongside a 20% fall in the number of errors made and reduced stress levels for operatives. Some research has estimated that companies will enjoy a 600% return on investment in extra monitors for their workstations.

2.Using multiple programs at the same time
Even those of us who aren't graphic designers frequently need to have two programs open at the same time, for example, our email server and a Word document. Being able to refer to both simultaneously not only is more convenient and quicker but it reduces the need for clicking between the two and so lessens the risk of repetitive strain injury.

3.Keeping something "always open"
With two screens, you can get on with your primary work but at the same time monitor what's going on elsewhere; for example, you might want to keep your company's Facebook or Twitter account open on one screen just to keep an eye on what customers are saying while you get on with your core activities. With two screens, you don't have to interrupt your main task to quickly check something else.

4.Increased laptop screen real estate
Most laptops can now easily be connected to a second monitor, so you can enjoy all the advantages of multiple screens but still pick up your computer and take it with you wherever you go.

5.Improved data sharing
Frequently you will need to copy items from one program to another; with multiple screens, you don't have to copy, minimize one program, find the next program you need, open it and paste, it can be done in one simple click and drag.

6.Video conferencing
With multiple screens, you can videoconference on one screen while keeping all the data you need for your meeting open on the other.

August Newsletter

Gulfcoast Networking, Inc.

6335 Grand Blvd

New Port Richey, FL 34652

727-847-2424

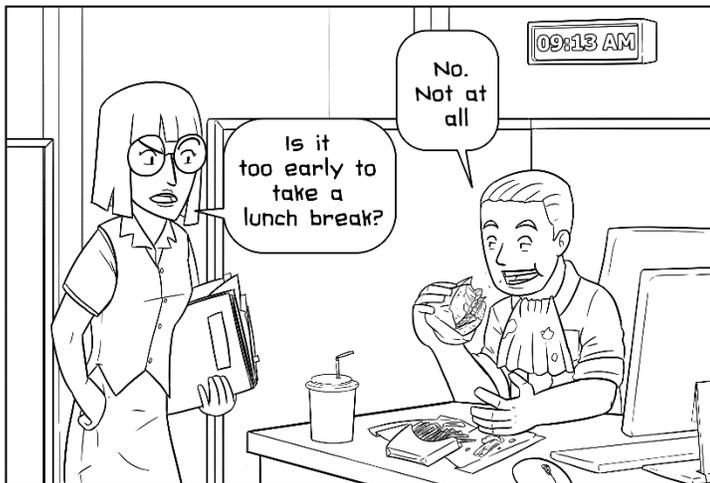rob@gulfcoastnetworking.com

https://gulfcoastnetworking.com

APP OF THE MONTH: TOGGL

The Toggl app is a real-time tracker that can be used in project management to monitor working hours for billing purposes. Users simply switch the app on when they start work and off when they have finished. The app also allows the tracking of the time spent by other members of your team, creating user rights, and setting up projects. It can generate timesheets and email reports that can be exported to clients or project managers; if you're off-line or forget to switch the app on, you can always manually enter time values later. Toggl is priced by individual user, with monthly or annual billing available; it can be integrated with a number of the best-known productivity apps, and it works with Windows, Mac, Android, and iOS.

Gulfcoast Networking, Inc

FROM THE DESK OF:
Rob Marlowe

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!

Email: *rob@gulfcoastnetworking.com*

Phone: 727-847-2424 x103