



# Gulfcoast Networking Newsletter

Your IT Management Experts

## September 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:

"Be yourself; everyone else is already taken."

*Oscar Wilde*

"A room without books is like a body without a soul."

*Marcus Tullius Cicero*

"Life is what happens to us while we are making other plans."

*Allen Saunders*

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## Private Browsing, Better Security

Every browser manufacturer now realizes that one of the prime concerns of their users is their privacy when browsing the Internet. Scandals over the misuse of private data, such as Cambridge Analytica and others, have made consumers very aware of the fact that if they don't want to be tracked and targeted through their Internet use, they need a high level of security from their browser.

Different companies have different approaches to this issue: Google is forging ahead with plans for the "interactive web", where machine-based apps will be a thing of the past, with everyone using online applications. Apple, by contrast, which doesn't rely so heavily on advertising revenue, is being more cautious, fearing that users will resent being targeted by advertising and that greater reliance on the Internet for applications will be damaging to security. Below we explain how to protect your privacy when using three of the most popular apps.

Chrome is the most widely used browser worldwide but in its raw form is distinctly lacking in privacy. However, there are numerous extensions available through the Extension option on the toolbar: applications such as Privacy Badger, Cookie Autodelete, HTTPS Everywhere, and uBlock Origin. All of these applications add extra privacy to your chrome browser. Unfortunately, these are not available for the Android version of Chrome. Chrome also has the capacity to block third-party cookies: you can find the option in the settings >Privacy and Security area.

Safari's default setting has the Intelligent Tracking Prevention tool switched on, and this works well despite some early problems. The latest version of Safari will be able to inform users of any ad trackers and the websites being visited and provide a 30-day report of the trackers it's found. Cookies can be managed in Safari through Preferences >Privacy >Prevent cross-site tracking. The Manage Website Data option allows you to view any trackers and cookies on your system and remove them.

Firefox comes with built-in protections that are turned on by default; you can adjust the settings through the Preferences >Privacy & Security option. There are three privacy settings available, Standard, Strict, and Custom. In the Standard option, trackers using private windows, cryptominers, and third-party tracking cookies are cut off. In the Strict setting trackers and fingerprints for all windows are blocked, and the Custom setting allows you to fine-tune the way cookies and trackers are handled.

# Advanced Threat Protection in Office 365

As the Internet has grown, with it being predicted that three-quarters of the world's population will be online by 2022, so has cybercrime. Although there are many sophisticated applications available to block cybercriminals, one of the greatest dangers to a company's or individual's security is human error, with it being estimated that 90% of security breaches are a result of user mistakes. Microsoft's new Advance Threat Protection (ATP) in Office 365 aims to mitigate or even abolish this problem by offering complete protection against malware, viruses, and phishing attacks.

Office 365 ATP filters emails coming into a computer or system, offering real-time analysis of threats and protecting against malicious links. Its URL tracing feature gives administrators the capacity to monitor every URL link that comes in via email. When the recipient of an email clicks a link, ATP undertakes scanning and analysis and will block access to unsafe or suspicious URLs.

The problem with malicious attacks up to now is that antivirus software can only identify threats once they have been activated, i.e., the software will only have threats on its database once they have appeared. ATP not only blocks

threats it already has in its database, but puts all other emails into a virtual holding pen in which content is monitored and analyzed. Emails are only allowed through to the user if they have been thoroughly scanned and marked as safe.

Another feature of ATP is that it assists users in identifying spoof emails. Spoof emails are ones that imitate a user's own domains and those of trusted partners, tricking users into opening emails containing threats. With ATP, the software tracks and monitors all emails in a system, both those coming from outside and internal ones, and alerts the user to the danger. It does this rather than immediately block such emails because there may be a reason for an email to spoof a user's domain, e.g., when an external advertising company is providing services centered on the user's domain.

ATP is fully customizable for all users, and administrators can visit the ATP dashboard to see the ways in which the software is protecting their system and which URLs and emails it has been blocking.

## News Bytes

### **A solution looking for a problem?**

With facemasks seemingly becoming a part of the landscape for the foreseeable future in these pandemic times, it was always likely that high-tech companies would come up with products that reflect this. LG has jumped on this bandwagon with a mask which promises to provide clean air for its users. Effectively the mask contains a miniature air purifier driving fans that deliver air to the user's mouth, speeding up or slowing down in sync with your breathing. The mask is powered by an 820 mAh rechargeable battery offering eight hours of use in low-power mode or two hours of use in a high-power mode. An app is available to let users know when filters need replacing. Unfortunately, not only does the mask look extremely heavy but it does not appear to offer any protection against coronavirus; LG's publicity simply states that it will filter particles out of the air, not airborne viruses. Additionally, the point of mask wearing is to protect others against your own exhalations, not to protect you from others. Although LG's mask is undoubtedly ingenious, it seems users would be better off with a simple paper medical mask.

### **Facebook Privacy Problems**

Facebook, like many other online service providers, relies for its financing to a great extent on advertising that targets an appropriate market through the use of tracking software. The latest version of Apple's operating system for iPhones, iOS 14, will challenge this position. When an iPhone user uses an app or visits a website, developers can access an IDFA, a random identifier created by the device. This identifier allows developers to follow users' interests as they travel across the digital world and therefore target them with appropriate advertising. With iOS 14, an app will have to make users aware that it is collecting this information and ask them to give permission for it to be used. Facebook claims that this effectively will prevent the collection of IDFAs as most users will not voluntarily accept an app tracking them. This means that targeted advertising will become impossible and, Facebook says, will lead to a downturn in advertising revenue for many platforms. However, given the distrust of the way Facebook uses people's data, many users may well welcome the opportunity to limit their access to it.



## Question of the Month

**Question:** *Is there a free and safe way to combine PDF files?*

**Answer:**

Although PDFs are extremely useful for creating and sharing documents, they can be a headache to handle, particularly if you want to merge several of them into a single document, whether for space-saving purposes or to produce a portfolio. This can be done using Adobe Acrobat, but that means paying a minimum \$13 a month subscription to the service. However, there are free-to-use alternatives available.

If you're working in Windows AnywaySoft's PDF Merger & Splitter is available free on the Microsoft Store. To merge PDFs in their entirety, simply select the Merge option, click Add PDFs, and select the required documents. You can change the order in which the documents will appear in your final version and preview it; once you're satisfied, simply select Merge and give your new file an appropriate name. For greater customization, you can select Split, which allows you to select specific sections of a PDF for merging with others.

Working on Macs, you don't even have to download an app; there is a built-in tool in Mac OS. To combine PDFs, open a PDF in Preview mode and click on View >Thumbnails; choose the page where you want the document you are merging to appear. Click on Edit >Insert >Page from File and open the PDF you are adding, then save the merged document under a new name. If you want to add sections of a PDF to another, open both documents in Preview and choose the Thumbnail view, which will show page thumbnails on the sidebar for both documents. Holding down the Command key, use your mouse to select the thumbnails of the pages you want to merge into the target document, then simply drag and drop them into the thumbnail sidebar of your target PDF at the spot you want them to appear in your final document.

## Anti-(Biological) Virus Protection

Hygiene should always be a priority in the workplace; employers and colleagues have a duty of care to each other to ensure that infections such as colds and flu do not get passed around the office. Apart from health considerations, it's simply economic common sense for employers to want to keep their employees in good health. In this time of pandemic, hygiene around the workplace is more important than ever. Many companies may be employing professional cleaners, but for smaller operations doing it yourself may be the way to go.

The first thing to consider is what needs cleaning. Essentially, anything that is constantly touched by workers should be put on your cleaning list. This includes tables and desks, keyboards, mice, mousepads, telephones, staplers, tape dispensers, light switches, the arms of chairs, and doorknobs. Experts suggest that these items should all be cleaned twice, firstly with a standard soap-based detergent and then with antibacterial wipes. Be careful with any items where moisture can seep inside machinery and damage internal electronics, such as keyboards and cell phones; use a cloth moistened with antibacterial cleaner rather than spraying it straight on to this type of item.

Don't forget that there is more to office than just the workspace; clearly, communal bathrooms and shower

areas should have rigorous regular cleaning schedules at all times, but you might want to consider increasing the frequency and thoroughness of cleaning in the current environment. Make sure all your employees are aware of their responsibilities to be even more meticulous about handwashing, disposal of sanitary wipes, etc. If you do have any fabric towels etc in your bathroom, now is the time to replace them with disposable ones.

Other communal areas such as break rooms should get as much attention as the office and the bathrooms; all surfaces should be thoroughly wiped down several times a day. You should pay particular attention to refrigerators, microwaves, and anywhere else that food is stored. Make it clear which storage area belongs to whom, so you can minimize the chances of people handling each other's food containers, cutlery, etc.

For all these cleaning jobs, make sure that you use a product such as Lysol or Clorox, one that says on the label that it is designed to kill viruses. Some vinegar-based cleaning products may leave your surfaces looking clean, but obviously viruses are not visible to the naked eye; use a product that offers the greatest peace of mind, use it regularly, and use it thoroughly.

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A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER TO INFORM AND ENTERTAIN OUR CLIENTS

SEPTEMBER 2020

## APP OF THE MONTH: WATCH WITH FRIENDS

The new Watch With Friends app is designed to make hosting watch parties easier; a host can create a party and add names to the guest list. When guests use the app, they will find a link to the target program which they can watch on Roku or Apple TV. The app also has a live chat feature, so that all guests can talk to each other while watching. It should be noted that in order to join the party, each guest will need an Apple TV or Roku device and their own Netflix account. At present the app only works with Netflix, though it is planned to add other services in future. The app is available for Android, iOS, and Chrome.

## 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

Mention this newsletter and get half off a computer multicheck.

Offer expires October 31, 2020.