Gulfcoast Networking Newsletter

Your IT Management Experts

7 Great Outlook Add-Ins to Have

Microsoft Outlook is one of the most widely used applications, but not everybody uses it to its greatest potential. Below we list some ways in which you can use this application more effectively and efficiently.

FindTime: this is a useful time management add-in that can automatically look through schedules and find a time when all other team members appear to be free; it then sends out a list of potential meeting times and asks for a vote on the optimal time. Once this is completed, it will email everyone in the team telling them when the new meeting will take place.

Add it to your desktop: using the Outlook on the Desktop add-in, you can pin your Outlook calendar to your desktop rather than having to search through Outlook's screens to find it. You can customize its size and appearance and easily switch into other areas of Outlook as required.

Custom Signatures: this add-in enhances Outlook's capacity for adding a signature to multiple accounts. You can already do this in Outlook, but Custom Signatures allows you to add different signatures for different people or groups of people, so you can send the same email to customers and colleagues but with a different sign off.

Add Grammarly: however good your writing is, we can all do with an extra pair of eyes on our emails; Grammarly (free with premium options) provides just that, looking over anything you write in Outlook and letting you know if there are any spelling errors or grammatical problems with them. It's a good way of instantly making your email look more professional.

Advanced Folders Watch: Advanced Folders Watch is an add-in that allows you to create a wizard that searches for keywords in emails and documents and alerts you if they arrive, eliminating the danger that important messages related to your latest project won't get lost in the tide of everyday administration.

Boomerang: Boomerang (free with paid options) helps you to manage your email by giving you the option to schedule send times so you can customize them to a time when they are most likely to be opened. It also allows you to track your email, letting you know if anyone clicks through on links, and can also be scheduled to send reminders if emails are not opened.

Translator for Outlook: this official add-in from Microsoft can provide you with almost instantaneous translation of any emails you receive a foreign language, using the Microsoft Translator engine.

Sharpening Your Edge

The newly-overhauled Microsoft Edge browser has won plenty of fans already, but there are a number of ways that users can make it even better, more efficient, and more secure by choosing the right add-ons. Below we list five add-ons that can enhance your Edge experience.

Password Manager: Edge has an integrated password manager, but this only works for the browser itself. People who use multiple browsers may require a more universal password manager, and you can find these on the Edge Add-ons webpage: Norton Password Manager, Dashlane, LastPass and 1Password are all recommended for generating the most secure passwords possible. If you don't feel you need such a high level of security, as a minimum you should use the Edge integral password manager and follow recognized best practice protocols when setting your passwords.

DuckDuckGo Privacy Essentials: with privacy and security being a prerequisite for any browser, this add-on is a very useful way of staying protected online. It blocks the majority of invasive trackers and makes sure that you are only connected to websites that use HTTPS. Another useful feature is that it also gives you a "privacy grade" for each page you visit, letting you know exactly what risk you are taking.

The Great Suspender: the Great Suspender add-on monitors all the tabs that you have open in Edge and suspends any that you have not used for a specific time period that you can set yourself. By suspending unused tabs you can significantly speed up your computer and browsing experience.

PopUpOFF: in common with most browsers, Edge boasts an integral pop-up blocker, and in common with most browsers, it's a fairly basic offering. PopUpOFF provides three different levels of pop-up blocking, easy, hard, and "I just want to read!". It also blocks other irritating barriers to your enjoyment of browsing such as floating banners and page overlays.

Microsoft Editor: Microsoft Editor integrates seamlessly with Edge and will show you when any of your emails, social media posts or online chats contain grammatical or spelling errors.

News Bytes

Voice Control in Maps
Google has just added increased functionality to the Maps app, so that now users can control their phone calls, text, and music options with their voice whilst still keeping their eyes on the road and hands on the wheel.
Google Assistant will give you an audible alert of incoming calls, telling you who is calling, and you can opt whether or not to accept the call. To operate the service proactively, you can use the "Hey Google" command, e.g., "Hey Google, play Taylor Swift" or "Hey Google, text Charlie".
The new functionality is available now for Android users: you can access it either by starting to use Google Maps and navigating to your destination, when you will be offered a pop-up option to turn the service on, or you can say "Hey Google, open Assistant settings" and going through Getting Around and Driving Mode.

FBI Warns Against Copycats
The FBI has issued a warning that cybercriminals appear to be planning to use official-looking FBI-related website names to carry out criminal activities. Numerous domain names have been registered that include the letters FBI, e.g. fbiusgov.com, and it's feared that users could be tricked into giving away their passwords or other security details or downloading malware onto their computers.
As well as the potential security dangers to users, the Bureau is also concerned that individuals genuinely seeking correct information regarding the FBI's activities and services could be duped into visiting the fake websites and become the recipients of dangerous "fake news".

The Bureau recommends that everyone should follow best practice when dealing with any messages or websites that appear to be related to the FBI by ensuring that they have the latest anti-virus and malware software installed, that they are using the latest version of the operating system, and that they never give away passwords or other security details via email. Best of all, users should apply some common sense: if you get an email out of the blue for no reason saying that the FBI urgently needs to check your bank account for criminal activity and that you therefore should supply your bank details, it's fairly obvious that this isn't going to be genuine.

Question of the Month

Question: *Somebody's sent me a PowerPoint presentation that I need to edit, but I can't find a way of doing this. Is there a workaround?*

Answer:

This is a common problem and many people waste a lot of time rebuilding or rewriting PowerPoint presentations, thinking that this is the only option if they want to make changes. Fortunately, there is an easy way to make any PowerPoint presentation editable.

The key to this process is to look at the file extension: it will be either .pptx or .ppsx. .ppsx files are view-only, whereas .pptx files are editable. If you have a .ppsx file, you'll have to convert it to .pptx before you can edit it.

The first option you can try is simply to change the file extension. In Explorer (Finder in OSX) simply right click on the file and select "Rename" and resave the file with a .pptx extension, then open this file in PowerPoint. If that works, great, but sometimes it might not due to the creator using a different version of Office or a different operating system to you.

The second option if the above did not work is to resave the file as a .pptx. Open the .ppsx file on your computer in PowerPoint and then select the "Save as" option. In the drop-down menu option below the file name in the saving window you will be able to choose "PowerPoint Presentation (*.pptx)", which will save the file for you as an editable version.

Thick, Thin, or Zero Clients?

Ever since the PC first came into offices, managers have been trying to find a universal solution to the question of type of computers that their staff should be using. Within the industry, the three categories of clients available are known as thick, thin, and zero. Every organization should think carefully about which category suits their needs best and will make their staff most productive whilst remaining secure.

Thick clients (a.k.a. "rich" or "fat") clients are standard PCs, desktops or laptops, which can work to a large extent without needing to be connected to a server, i.e., they have their own operating system, storage capacity and contain their own programs. These devices generally offer superior multimedia experiences, and in addition they can be used when Internet access is down or otherwise unavailable.

With thin clients (e.g., smart phones, tablets, and some desktops) all applications and data are held on a central server accessed by the user. More frequently, even desktop PCs are becoming thin clients, not actually saving data or applications at the point of use.

Zero clients (a.k.a. "ultra-thin" clients) are clients that have absolutely no storage available, not even to save user configurations, but are simply a means of accessing servers or cloud resources; effectively, they are simply terminals displaying data to the user from servers elsewhere.

Each of these categories of clients has its advantages and drawbacks. The thinner the client, generally the cheaper, safer and easier to manage they are. They frequently also boast a longer lifespan than thick clients. Nevertheless, thick clients offer greater functionality, allow for off-line working, and (particularly important in these times) can be much more useful for those working at home. Thin clients are most useful for workplace scenarios where the worker is almost always in the same place, for example in a call centre or on a financial trading floor.

Zero clients can be useful for those who tend to move around a lot and need access to data without necessarily needing storage capacity. Thick clients still have their place for those who need high levels of processing power at their fingertips, for example graphic designers using two or three large high-resolution screens.

Rather than simply accepting the status quo, business owners and IT managers should be carefully examining the needs of their employees and selecting the mix of clients that will allow for optimal economy, security, and efficiency.

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A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER TO INFORM AND ENTERTAIN OUR CLIENTS **DECEMBER 2020**

APP OF THE MONTH: COOKPAD

Cookpad is a free (in-app purchases) app that brings together thousands of home cooks from across the world to share recipes, tips and stories about their cooking. Every recipe is one that a home cook has created themselves and others have tried out unrated, so you can be sure that you are getting something that works. If you got a bunch of ingredients in the cupboard and you're not sure what to do with them, you can put them into the app and find recipes that use them. You can also search for specific holiday foods, cultural foods, or by type of food. You can share your recipes, stories and photographs of your creation with other cooks from around the globe, sharing ideas, questions and chat. Available on the App Store for Android.

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

Need an inexpensive computer for your home?
Call us and ask about our refurbished computers.