



Dedicated I. T. Support for Home Users & Micro Businesses

SCM Newsletter November 2016

Hello everyone and welcome to the 3rd edition of the Stone Computer Man newsletter. If you wish to opt out of this newsletter then see the link at the very bottom of each issue.

Security

You've no doubt heard all about the latest hacks inflicted on TalkTalk, Yahoo and Tesco Bank to name but a few. It is a sad fact of life that, in the digital age in which we now all live, security plays a huge and vital part.

Like me I'm sure that you find the need for so many different passwords and PINs is an absolute pain, however they are essential and even more essential is the need to change them frequently and those passwords need to be of a complex nature.



So how often is frequently? Ideally every 30 days or so but I, like many, find this a burden so suggest passwords are changed at least every 6 months and preferably no less than every 3 months.

What are complex passwords? Most, if not all, on line accounts force you to use a complex password with typical rules being

- at least 8 characters
- A mixture of numbers and letters.

I strongly recommend that also you use at least one capital letter and a punctuation character such as a dash -, underscore _, exclamation mark !, or similar.

There are websites that will allow you to generate complex passwords.

As well as on line accounts many of us are now utilising portable devices, laptops, tablets and phones etc. it is important that these are also protected with passwords using the built in facilities that these devices have.

Clearly having so many passwords and PINs presents a problem in remembering them. One way might be to have a spreadsheet listing the account/device and login details, such a spreadsheet can either be saved as a password protected document or printed out and kept in a very safe place.

Beware if you do save a document as password protected and you lose that password you will never get back into it!!

If you have concerns about security of the data on your PC/Laptop then you can utilise an encrypted drive or folders/s. Again loss of passwords here will result in loss of data as without the password you will never be able to get into that drive/folder again.

If you would like any help regarding IT security please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Windows is it the only game in town?

Windows is, as we all know, an operating system i.e. the software that makes your PC/Laptop work and in the same way Apple have their own system which is simply designated OS.

Now just suppose that you have an older machine that has Windows XP or Vista installed and you don't fancy or can't afford to splash out on a new system. What would you say if I told you that you could give such a machine a new lease of life by installing a new operating system and a full office suite of programmes that would cost you nothing other than the cost to do the work and transfer your existing data (around 2.5 to 3 hours) Such a system is available and has been around for many years during which time it has been constantly updated and well supported.



The system is known as Linux, it comes in various guises and has a great array of free (in this case free really does mean free) software that you can install and use on it. Linux has a similar look and feel to Windows and there would be some differences to get used to but in terms of what it might save you it could be well worth it. If you are interested please get in

touch and let's see if this might be an option for you. Please note that you cannot install proprietary software such as Sage or Adobe Photoshop on Linux machines.

Scams

The nasty scammers are as busy as ever so please be on your guard. The latest one I have encountered claim to be "Windows Support" and although the number they are calling from may appear as international it later shows as a Leicester number beginning 0116.

These people, given the chance will install some remote access software on your PC and if it is subsequently un-installed it will prevent Windows from booting up. Additionally if your machine is booted up to a recovery disk we find that all your system restore points have been deleted.

The only way to fix it is to remove your hard drive backup all the data and then reload Windows, all of your programmes and restore your data from scratch. Please, please do not accept I.T. telephone support from anyone. Find someone local who you can meet face to face. I hope this would be me but there are plenty of really good guys locally who have been doing good I.T. support for many years and are honest.

Scammers now use the ruse of saying they have refunded you some money (say £200) but transferred £2000 in error and want you to transfer the difference back to you!!

Given the time of year be very aware of emails with zip files attached, especially purporting to be from couriers, FedEx, DHL, Royal Mail etc. Opening such attachments might put you at risk by invoking a ransomware virus whereby you could lose all of your data.

I know I keep nagging on the above but I do like to keep it at the forefront of everyone's mind and more importantly if it helps to avoid a disaster for someone then I think it's worth it. #

And Finally

This will be the last newsletter this year so I would like to wish you all (if a somewhat early) very Merry Christmas and a happy new year and thank you all for your continued support and choosing me as your "computer man".



As always if you need further advice with any of the above don't hesitate to ring me on 01785 530770.