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Dedicated I. T. Support For Home Users & Micro

SCM June Newsletter

Hello everyone and welcome to this the first edition of the Stone Computer Man newsletter which I hope to make a regular monthly or bi-monthly edition. If you wish to opt out of this newsletter then see the link at the very bottom of each issue.

Many of you will know of the merger of I.T. systems & Solutions Ltd. With EPX Ltd. Last July and that in April I decided to get back to my computing roots and so founded Stone Computer Man with the aim of providing quality I. T. support for home users and micro businesses.

So far things have gone really well and a big thanks to all of you that have chosen Stone Computer man to be your preferred I .T. support.

Windows 10

I'm sure that we are all aware of Microsoft's offer of a "free" upgrade to Windows 10 and that it's being pushed really hard by them. Some of you have already taken the plunge and feedback has been mixed.
Ultimately we will all end up on Windows 10, be it through the free upgrade or that it is the operating system pre-installed on our next PC / laptop. So what is Windows 10 all about? Below are some thoughts and things to consider.

- Microsoft state that Windows 10 will offer seamless integration between our PC/laptop, Windows 'phone, tablet and Xbox.
- With the explosion of "Apps" & "Apps Stores" users will be hooked into a myriad of new applications for their 'phones and tablets etc. and it is this that MS hope will generate a new and profitable revenue stream.
- If you do decide to upgrade, Windows 10 will check that your machine is compatible, however, you should still check with your manufacturers web site to see if they have tested your particular model and passed it as being Windows 10 compatible.
- So your PC/laptop is compatible but what about your programs? Most "off the shelf" software should be o.k. but it may need to be re-installed following an upgrade to Windows 10. Bespoke software is a different matter though and you really should check beforehand with the software vendor to ensure that they have tested their product and it is fully compatible with Windows 10.
- Most important to note if you do upgrade and find that you aren't happy or have problems you only have 1 month to roll back to your previous operating system.

Security

Crypto locker attacks, or attacks from one of the many variants, are on the increase. This is a particularly nasty form of malware know as ransomware.
Once infected your files will become encrypted and you will not be able to open them unless you pay the ransom.
The attacks will encrypt files types on USB hard drives/pen drives and network shares.
Such attacks usually come via Emails but can come from websites as well.
Payment is made in Bitcoins and thus the perpetrators cannot be traced. Sophos report that this is a $35 billion industry and yes you read that correctly 35 billion dollars!!!

Please ensure that you take all possible precautions to protect your data and minimise the risk of an attack. Such precautions include:

- Ensure that you have a reliable and valid Anti-Virus solution installed and that it is working correctly and up to date.
- Do not open suspicious Emails (no matter how tempting) especially those that contain attachments. If you are unsure who sent the Email or you were not expecting it delete it.
- Remind people in your business frequently about the dangers of Emails and attachments.
- Where possible disable the use of macros in Office programs.
- Consider removing administrator rights form user accounts that are in daily use.
- Consider getting a good spam filter and web content filter.

PCs/Laptops Performance

How well are your PCs/laptops working? Just like our cars our machines can benefit from regular "servicing" i.e. health checks. Following an health check, quite often, a noticeable improvement in performance can be seen. Hardware components can be tested to see if they might be failing and additional scans for malware can be run using different tools to your usual Anti-Virus software.
Tired machines can benefit from a memory upgrade especially if your operating system is 64bit and you have 4Gb or less of memory installed.
To really give a machine a boost then a solid state drive is becoming almost a must these days, especially now that the cost per Gigabyte of storage has fallen so dramatically.

If you would like to help or advice with any of the above please do call on the above number or Email steve@stonecomputerman.co.uk to arrange a visit to discuss your requirements.
Stone Computer man only charges a very competitive **£50** per hour and that is it as I am not VAT registered. I can find the best deal for any hardware you need and, in most cases, you can order it direct from the supplier thus cutting out the middleman and in doing so you can then claim the VAT back on these items.