Expert IT Solutions Newsletter

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Welcome to our fourth newsletter for the year - this time we look at Windows 10 which will be released on the day your receive this - as well as 3D printing.

Windows 10

After the lukewarm (to put it mildly) reception of Windows 8 / 8.1 Microsoft went back to the drawing board for the upcoming version. The main problem with 8.1 is that it's so different to earlier Windows versions that it took a bit of learning to become productive. Windows 10 on the other hand should be an easy upgrade if you're a Windows 7 user today, as well as if you've become accustomed to Windows 8.

The new start menu combines the best of the Windows 7 experience we're all used to with the live tiles that provides up to date information like in Windows 8. As you can see in the screenshot above, normal program icons show up next to live tiles in the start menu.

There's more going on under the hood of course with universal windows apps making it possible for developers to write their applications once and this will let these programs run on anything from Windows Phones, small tablets, big tablets, laptops, desktops and large screen devices.

Anyone who has tried Windows Phone recently has met Cortana - the personal voice assistant that is Microsoft's answer to Apple's Siri or Google Now. She's now built in to Windows 10 and it'll be interesting to see if she becomes as indispensable as she is on the phone. Because it's the same Cortana (assuming you're logging in with the same account on your phone and your different Windows 10 devices) she'll keep learning your habits. I must say when I fished my phone out of my pocket the other day and Cortana was on the screen as I unlocked it, suggesting that I needed to leave NOW to make it to work in 14 minutes, I was very surprised (and a bit creeped out).

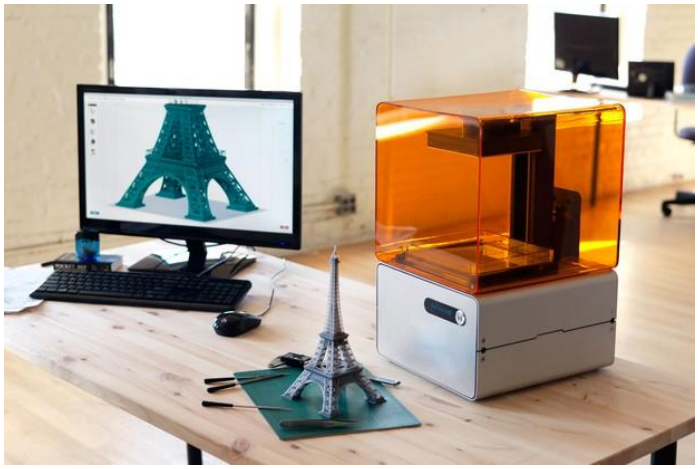
“Convertible” devices are becoming more popular with a tablet that you can attach a keyboard to when you need a laptop for productivity and detach when you need a tablet for media consumption or reading. Windows 10 adapts on these types of devices, depending on if you have a keyboard attached or not and changes the appearance of the start menu and other items subject to which mode the device is in.

If you have the right hardware, passwords might soon be a thing of the past. If your device has the required built in cameras (a normal webcam, an infrared webcam and a 3D depth sensing camera) you can configure Windows 10 to log you on simply by seeing your face. The login, called Windows Hello, is almost instantaneous and can't be fooled by pictures of your face. The jury is out on whether an identical twin can trick the system but it's bound to be a lot more secure than the (close

to) useless fingerprint scanners on today's laptops and iPhones. They are routinely fooled by the simplest techniques.

Finally Windows 10 bring improvements in file and disk encryption and other security measures under the hood, making it easier to protect your devices and your documents. There's also built in two-factor authentication technology, called Passport; Virtual Secure Mode, which uses endpoint CPU virtualization to protect data like credentials; and there's a device-lockdown/trusted app technology, called Device Guard.

If you're looking at buying new computers or devices for your business over the next few months, please contact us to have a chat about Windows 10 and whether it's a good fit for your business.



3D Printing

This cool technology has been around for a few years now. Instead of using ink to print text and pictures on paper, 3D printers use melted plastic (and other, more exotic materials) to print layers to build up a three dimensional object.

For one off or design samples, 3D printing can be cost effective and give you quicker results than sending them off for manufacture elsewhere. They are however fairly slow, and until recently required a fair bit of maintenance and care to work reliably. So if you're looking to print a run of 100 items, 3D printing is likely not the right tool for the job.

Shape are created in a 3D modelling or CAD program, converted to a suitable format for the printer and sent to the printer. Sometime later (minutes, maybe hours, depending on the printer, size and complexity of the object) you have an object to hold in your hand.

Another interesting aspect of 3D printing is the community of “makers” that have sprung up around the world, sharing their designs for all to use. The field of custom prosthetics has also grown tremendously, particularly for children (because they grow their prosthetics have to be replaced regularly), as what used to cost thousands of dollars can now be done for hundreds.

We've experimented with a couple of different makes and models of printers so if you see a need at your business where 3D printing might be useful, please contact us.

If you have any questions or suggestions for topics you’d like covered in this newsletter, please email us.

In the next newsletter we will look at multi factor authentication for enhanced security as well as Surface Pro 3.

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