

Bits of Bytes

Newsletter of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, Colorado Springs, CO

Volume XL

March 2020

Issue 3



The Prez Sez

by John Pearce,
President,
P*PCompAS

Joe Nuvolini showed us the best of CES at our February meeting. I would like to have that big roll-down screen in my basement if the price drops to fit my pocketbook.

Cary Quinn, vice president and program chairperson, is planning a survey to determine your interests and ideas for future presentations. I sure hope everyone will take time before the meeting to think about topics of interest to you. For example, I would like a presentation on home security systems. There are a number of do-it-yourself security systems available. You read all the glowing sales material yet you rarely hear about the negatives like installation problems.

A quick reminder that the April meeting will be on March 28th. The church will be having Easter activities on our normal meeting day.

See you at the March 7th meeting. ☺

Meeting Minutes

by Greg Lenihan,
for the P*PompAS Secretary

President John Pearce began the 1 February 2020 meeting at 9 am. John stated the coffee and doughnuts are free to first time guest, and a dollar donation for members. A motion to approve the minutes from the January meeting passed.

Next P*PCompAS meeting: Saturday, 7 March 2020

Cary Quinn will perform a survey, and then offer a program on Internet nostalgia, old-time radio online, and the Wayback Machine.

OFFICER REPORTS

Vice-President Cary Quinn said he is working on presentations for the rest of the year. He has someone in mind for a presentation on Project Gutenberg.

Secretary Phyllis Butler had nothing to report.

Treasurer Chuck Harris said we have \$448.33 in checking and \$3321.97 in savings. Joe Nuvolini has been paid back for the January Volunteer's Luncheon.

Membership Chair Ann Titus welcomed and mugged Jerry Stroud, who was introduced as a new member by Joe Nuvolini.

Newsletter Editor Greg Lenihan announced the next deadline as 22 February.

Librarian Paul Godfrey had nothing to report.

Hospitality Chair Ilene Steinkruger reported Jim Geil is recovering from shoulder surgery.

BOD Chairman Peter Rallis was not present for a report, and next-in-line Paul Godfrey had nothing to report.

APCUG Rep/Webmaster Joe Nuvolini said he got our 2019 income tax filed.

OLD BUSINESS

Joe Nuvolini spoke with Natalie at the church and it was decided that cash would be our best choice for a gift. There was a motion we give the church \$300 and it passed.

Harvey McMinn and Bill Gardner will be doing a financial review for the last year.

NEW BUSINESS

Paul Godfrey proposed the club create a Dropbox account where presentation files and videos shown at the meeting can be uploaded for members to get a copy. Paul said it could be part of an online library. It was mentioned that the club may have to pay for space as storage could be limited. Paul and Cary Quinn will work on setting this up.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ann Titus sent out an e-mail with details of the APCUG Virtual Technology Conference on 8 February.

The next social breakfast is 15 February, and our next membership meeting is 7 March.

As a reminder, our April meeting will be on 28 March.

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Officers

President: John Pearce
jlpnet@comcast.net

Vice President: Cary Quinn
cary.quinn@gmail.com

Secretary: Phyllis Butler
phylbutler@aol.com

Treasurer: Chuck Harris
charris7525@gmail.com

Staff

APCUG Rep/Webmaster: Joe Nuvolini

Barista: David George
Drawings: Cary Quinn
Editor: Greg Lenihan
Librarian: Paul Godfrey
Membership: Ann Titus

Committees

Audio: A.J. Whelen
Hospitality: Ilene Steinkruger
Programs: Cary Quinn
Publicity: Cary Quinn
Nominating: Vacant

Board of Directors

Peter Rallis
Paul Godfrey
Ann Titus
Harvey McMinn
Jeff Towne

Meeting Minutes (Continued from page 1)

PRESENTATION



Joe Nuvolini did a presentation on CES 2020 at the February meeting.

Below, Membership Chair Ann Titus mugged our newest member, Jerry Stroud, in February. ☺



In Memoriam



LTC (RET.) JOHN EDWARD BRUNK

August 25, 1939
January 14, 2020

The club is saddened to announce the passing of member John Brunk. He served in the USAF from 1959 to 1981, and after retirement, worked for KETA Group LLC/Colorado Professional Resources LLC for 32 years as a program manager. In addition, John was a Sertoman member, sang in the Colorado Springs Chorale, was a Boy Scout leader, and a Quiet Birdman.

John was buried with full military honors at the Pikes Peak National Cemetery.

The 2020 Volunteer's Luncheon, honoring those who selflessly aided the organization in 2019, was held at Old Chicago on January 25, 2020.



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P*PCompAS welcomes any comments, letters, or articles from members and non-members alike. Please send any articles to the editor (see last page for address). The editor reserves the right to reject, postpone, or edit for space, style, grammar, and clarity of any material submitted.



40th Anniversary History of P*PCompAS

By Toni Logan, P*PCompAS

In 1981, 'Raiders of the Lost Ark' was the big movie, Ronald Reagan became president, the term "Internet" was first mentioned, MSDOS was released, and the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society was formed. Now, we find ourselves 40 years old and still going pretty strong.

There have been a lot of changes in the past 15 years since I first wrote the history of our club. Television went from analog to digital and we had to buy those boxes for the TVs if you didn't have cable until we got smart TVs. Computers have changed too in design. We have the all-in-one and no more 3 1/2-inch discs and in most cases no CD drive.

We started in the 80's with MSDOS and quickly migrated to Windows and since have gone through Windows XP, Vista, Version 8 and 8.1, and lastly and forever, evidently Windows 10.

Apple released the iPhone in 2007 and the iPad in 2010. A lot of us drank the Kool-Aid and joined the OS crowd. Not to mention the new watches that put your iPhone on your wrist.

The club has been lucky to have so many who have served as officers and committee chairs over the years. The WebBoard was overseen by John Pearce and housed by Dave Hughes, and then Jon Peters. John has also served as president, vice-president, and served on the Board of Directors.

Joe Nuvolini has managed the website and our obligations to the government and APCUG, plus taking care of our computer equipment and

arranging the tables at our breakfast meetings. Joe has been president and served on the Board of Directors.

Ilene Steinkruger, Phyllis Butler, Carol Stanton, and Ann Titus have handled the membership duties over the past 15 years.

When we finally got a sound system including microphones so that we can hear every word said, A J Whelan has overseen that department.

Greg Lenihan has been the newsletter editor since 1996, a yeoman's service. There have been so many wonderful articles in the newsletter. He also handled the coffee duties until David George relieved him in 2016.

We have had the pleasure of receiving our coffee from Starbucks at the Citadel Crossing for many years. Between Pat Krieger, Warren Hill, and Ilene Steinkruger, we have had tasty doughnuts for our meetings each month.

Bill Berkman, Frank Fraser, and Gene Bagenstos served on the nominating committee. The Librarians have been Paul Major and Paul Godfrey. Bob Logan and Cary Quinn managed the drawings for the better part of the past 15 years.

The Board of Directors has consisted of so many of our members over the past 15 years. Joe Nuvolini, Chuck Blaney, George Francis,

Continued on page 4



How many digerati does it take to make a fun gathering? Not many. If you are so inclined, come and join in on the fun. Great food and conversation abound, like here at the February 2020 breakfast get-together.



40th Anniversary (Cont. from page 3)

Bill Berkman, Jim Way, Dave Guevara, Greg Lenihan, Ilene Steinkruger, Gene Bagenstos, Norm Miller, Bob Blackledge, Warren Hill, John Pearce, Peter Rallis, Paul Godfrey, Ann Titus, Harvey McMinn, and Jeff Towne.

The Treasure's duties have been ably handled by Bill Berkman, Ilene Steinkruger, Jim Way, Dennis Conroy, Bill Gardner and now Chuck Harris.

The vice-president and programs chairman have been Cary Quinn, John Pearce, Harry Birkner, Laura Pellerin, Bonnie Snyder, Bob Blackledge, Harvey McMinn, and Jeff Towne.

The Secretary's job is to take the minutes and has been done since 2007 by Bob Blackledge, Pat Krieger, Bill Abell, Cary Quinn, and Phyllis Butler.

Our presidential leader's duties have been handled by Paul Godfrey, Joe Nuvolini, Gene Bagenstos, John Pearce, and Cary Quinn.

We have had a good representation of all the members as officers and on the committees over the years. A great many of our presentations have been made by members of P*PCompAS. The club couldn't function without them.

In 2006, a volunteer lunch program was instituted to thank those who volunteered during the year. We first went to Bambinos on Platte Avenue until the building was torn down, and we then went to Old Chicago at Academy and Austin Bluffs Parkway. A big thanks to Joe Nuvolini, Bob Blackledge, and Ilene Steinkruger for arranging our yearly lunches.

Speaking of presentations, we have had a wide variety of subjects over the past 15 years. As times changed, we have had to rely on our own members or videos for programs instead of vendors. We have had so many that I won't try to list them all.

We had SKYPE meetings with Gene Barlow quite frequently and presentations from members who attended the annual CES and APCUG meetings in Las Vegas. The weatherman from KKTU, Brian Bledsoe, was a presenter. We have had security experts, digital programs, 3D printing, and a Pikes Peak Library representative. In addition, many programs on systems and even an FBI agent, Bitcoin and hearing loss.

Our meetings have been held at the Springs Community Church for many years now. We moved into the new annex in 2005 and the

room was eventually remodeled and enlarged. We have given annual gifts to the church for letting us have our meetings there. We paid for and installed the Internet connection in the new annex.

Our breakfast meetings were held at the Country Buffet at Academy and Galley Road. We briefly met at the Country Buffet on Academy while the new building was constructed at Citadel Crossing. In 2019, Country Buffet closed and we moved to the Golden Corral on Powers. Everyone enjoys getting together once a month for good food and good conversation.

Members Warren Hill, Bill Kennedy, and Bill Everett collected used computers to be sent to a sister city in Mexico through the Rotary Club. One of the great things about our club is the Around the Room segment of our meetings and the willingness of each of us to help our members.

Lastly, we have lost quite a few members in the last 15 years. Some have merely moved away and others sadly, have passed away. We have memorialized them in the newsletter and miss them forever. Bill & Barbara Everett who perished in the 2012 Waldo Canyon fire had a trail dedicated to them at the Mountain Shadows Park in 2014.

I happily served as President, Secretary, and Board member over the past 15 years. This is my memory and research of the last 15 years of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society. If I have missed one of your memories, please share it with the club. ☺

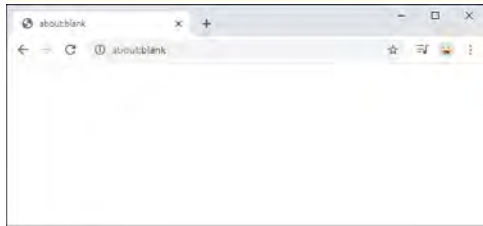


A Volunteer's Lucheon at Bambino's, back in 2007.

What is about:blank, and How Do You Remove It?

By Chris Hoffman, reprinted with permission from [HowToGeek.com](https://www.howtogeek.com)

Original article at: <https://www.howtogeek.com/656466/what-is-aboutblank-and-how-do-you-remove-it/>



If you see “about:blank” in your web browser’s address bar, you’re viewing an empty page built into your web browser. It’s a part of Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, Microsoft Edge, Internet Explorer, and other browsers.

There’s nothing wrong with about:blank. Many people choose to use about:blank as their home page, ensuring their web browser always opens with an empty white screen. If your web browser always opens with about:blank and you don’t like it, we’ll show you how to stop that from happening.

What Is about:blank?

This is a blank page built into your web browser. The “about:” part of the address tells the browser to show internal, built-in web pages. For example, in Chrome, you can type about:settings into the address bar to open the Settings page or about:downloads to view Chrome’s file downloads list.

When you type about:blank into the address bar and press Enter, your web browser will load an empty page with nothing on it. This page isn’t from the internet—it’s built into your web browser.

Why Is about:blank Useful?

Many people use about:blank as their home page. This gives you an empty page each time you open your browser.

To achieve this, all you have to do is go into your browser’s settings and tell it to open with “about:blank” instead of another web page.

Web browsers may also open the blank about:blank page if they launch and don’t know what else to display. A browser always has to display something, after all, and loading about:blank is a way of displaying a blank page.

Is It a Virus or Malware?

The about:blank page isn’t malware or anything dangerous. However, if you’re concerned your computer might have malware on it, we recommend performing a scan with [your antimalware program of choice](#).

We like [Malwarebytes](#), and we recommend giving your computer a scan with it. The free version can perform manual scans and remove malware. The paid Premium version just adds automatic background scanning. Malwarebytes supports both Windows PCs and Macs.

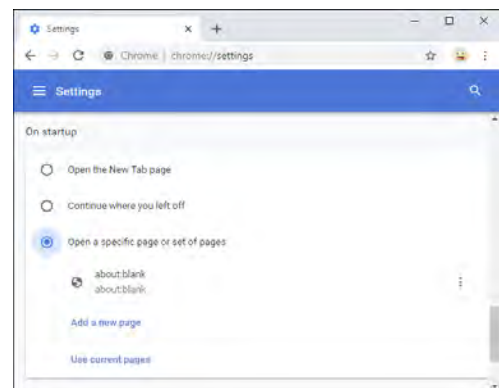
RELATED: [What’s the Best Antivirus for Windows 10? \(Is Windows Defender Good Enough?\)](#)

How Can You Get Rid of about:blank?

You can’t actually get rid of or remove about:blank. It’s part of your web browser, and it’ll always be there under the hood. However, you never have to see it again if you don’t want to.

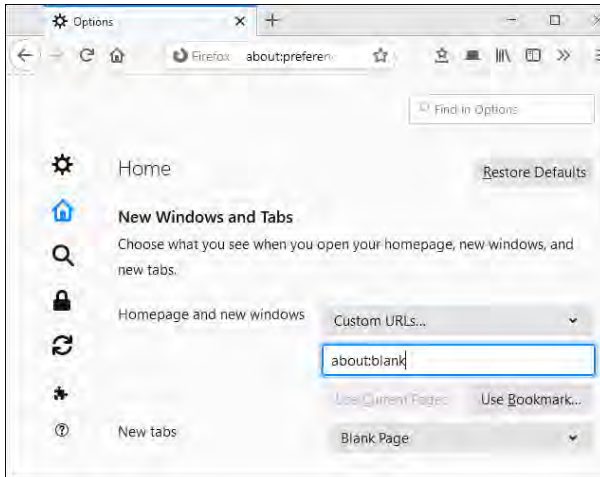
If you always see about:blank whenever you open your web browser, and you’d rather see your browser’s New Tab page or any other web page, all you have to do is change your web browser’s home page.

In Google Chrome, head to menu > Settings. Scroll down to the “On startup” section and select either “Open the New Tab page” or delete about:blank from the web pages that open on startup and choose your favorite web page.

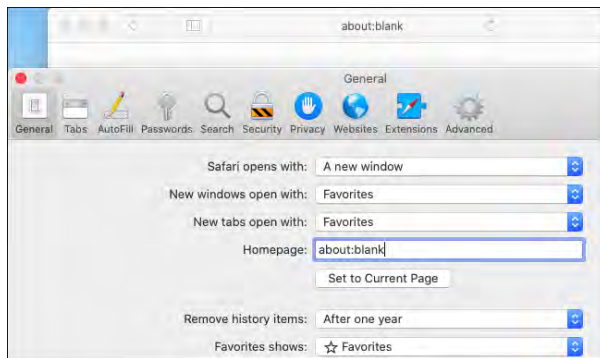


In Mozilla Firefox, click menu > Options > Home. Select your desired home page for new windows and new tabs. Ensure “about:blank” or “Blank Page” isn’t selected here.

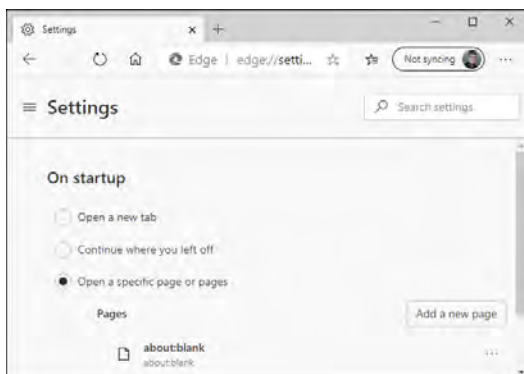
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About:blank (Cont. from page 5)

In Apple Safari on a Mac, click Safari > Preferences > General. Under Homepage, remove “about:blank” and enter your desired home page.

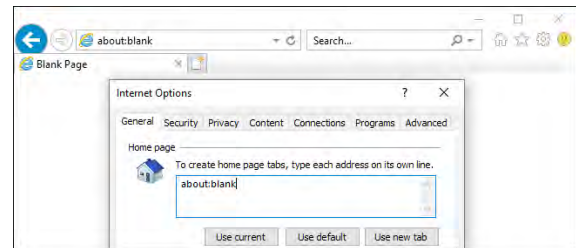


In [Microsoft's new Chromium-based Edge browser](#), click menu > Settings > On startup. Select “Open a new tab” or remove about:blank from the list of pages Edge opens when you launch it.



In Internet Explorer, you can change this from the Internet Options window. (You shouldn't be using Internet Explorer anymore, of course. Even Microsoft recommends you leave IE behind. But it may still be necessary for some old business applications and other legacy software.)

Click the gear-shaped menu button and select “Internet Options.” Remove “about:blank” from the home page box at the top of the General pane. Enter the address of your desired home page. ☺



Dropbox tip from Ann Titus:

I have used Dropbox for a long time without any difficulties. Recently they changed things when I wanted to “share,” by making the recipient create an account before allowing them to access the file. I discovered a workaround, which is as follows:

1. Navigate to your Dropbox folder.
2. Press the Control key as you click on a file (not a folder) inside your Dropbox folder.
3. Select Copy Dropbox Link from the menu.
4. Navigate to your e-mail application, compose and address a new e-mail message, then paste the link into the body of your e-mail message.

Why do they always have to change things? It's like in a grocery store. I finally figure out where my favorite products are and they change locations.

The Worst Data Breaches (What You Need to Know and Do)

By Bob Rankin, <http://askbobrankin.com>, published through the APCUG

Data breaches are getting bigger, more frequent, and more worrisome. That's the message from digital privacy experts at NordVPN, who just released a report detailing the most shocking data leaks of 2019. Eight of those breaches affected the personal data of millions of people worldwide. Read on for details on the biggest and worst data breaches of 2019, and what you need to know about protecting yourself in the age of vanishing privacy...

The Biggest Data Breaches of 2019

NordVPN, a VPN service provider with a focus on online privacy, does an annual report that focuses on just the opposite. Namely, how much personal and private data is released into the dark corners of the online world by malicious hackers.

Daniel Markuson, a digital privacy expert at NordVPN, says that in 2019 hackers did more than just hack — they also collected billions of consumer records from breaches and leaks that had occurred years ago, and packaged them up for sale. Some of those breaches were really shocking and affected millions of people worldwide.

"With so many breaches and leaks in 2019, it's possible that your email address or other details ended up in the wrong hands," says Markuson. But there are several online resources that can help you determine if any of your login credentials have been compromised.

You can check to see if your email address was leaked in a data breach by visiting [Have I Been Pwned](#). Enter your email address and this site will tell you if it has been compromised at any time in the past. (The term "pwned" is geek speak for "owned," or "defeated.")

[NordPass](#) is a free service that lets you anonymously measure the strength (hackability) of your password, and will tell you if your password was exposed to any known data breaches.

[Breach Alarm](#) is a similar but more proactive service that scans the dark corners of the Internet in search of stolen password lists that have been posted online. You can

sign up to be notified about future password hacks that affect you.

Who Was Breached, and How Bad Was It?

Here's a list from the NordVPN report with eight of the worst recent data breaches. They're ordered from the smallest to the largest, with details on what specific types of personal data points were compromised.

American Medical Collection Agency (19.6 million). This breach affected two prominent lab testing companies. First, Quest Diagnostics was notified that someone had unauthorized access to AMCA's databases for eight months. The hack affected almost 12 million of their customers. Hackers got access to very personal information such as credit card numbers, bank account information, medical information, and Social Security numbers. Then there was LabCorp, another company whose customers were affected by this breach. Almost 8 million customers' personal and financial data was compromised.

Suprema (27.8 million). This security loophole left 27.8 million people's biometric data exposed. Suprema is a security company responsible for the web-based Biostar 2 biometrics lock system. The system is used by almost 6,000 organizations in 83 countries, including governments and banks. Biostar uses fingerprints and facial recognition to allow employees into restricted buildings and areas. Security researchers from VPNmentor found that the Biostar database was left unprotected and largely unencrypted. Worst of all, they got access to tons of sensitive information. Really, a "security company" failed to protect sensitive confidential client information?

Houzz (48.9 million). Houzz, a home design website, started the year 2019 by announcing a breach in which hackers got unauthorized access to its customers' publicly available information, as well as usernames and encrypted passwords. The company noticed the breach at the end of 2018 and was pretty vague about it in their public statements. However, ITRC reported that the hack affected almost 49 million Houzz customers.

Capital One (106 million). In July 2019, Capital One announced that they suffered a

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Data Breaches (Cont. from page 7)

massive data breach affecting 100 million Americans and 6 million Canadians. The hacker accessed credit card applications made between 2005 and 2019. They contained personal data including names, home addresses, email addresses, dates of birth, etc. What makes this one of the worst breaches of 2019 is that some bank numbers and social security numbers also ended up in the hands of the hacker.

Zynga (218 million). If you've ever played online games such as "Words with Friends" or "Draw Something," you should be worried because their creator, Zynga, was breached in 2019. The hack affected a whopping 218 million users. Bad actors accessed log-in credentials, usernames, email addresses, some Facebook IDs, some phone numbers, and Zynga account IDs.

Facebook (419 million). A security researcher at the GDI Foundation found an unprotected server with a database containing approximately 419 million phone numbers belonging to Facebook users. The database was available to anyone, and it also included Facebook IDs, which makes finding user's names and personal details even easier. The owner of the server wasn't found, but the database was taken down shortly after it was discovered.

Collection by Gnosticplayers (1 billion+). This isn't a breach per se, but rather a collection of breaches affecting more than 1 billion internet users. A hacker who calls himself Gnosticplayers collected databases from 45 companies and put them up for sale on the dark web. These batches contained data such as users' full names, email addresses, passwords, location data, and social media account information. The companies whose data was released includes Dubsplash (162 million), MyFitnessPal (151 million), MyHeritage (92 million), ShareThis (41 million), Animoto (25 million), 500px (15 million), CoffeeMeetsBagel (6 million), and more.

Collections #1-5 (3 billion). A batch of leaked data dubbed "Collections #1-5" was probably the biggest leak of 2019. These collections of leaked and stolen data contained usernames and passwords collected over many years of breaches. These batches appeared on hacking forums

and were noticed by security researcher Troy Hunt, who identified the link between them all and informed the public. The first batch was released in January and contained the data of 770 million people. Then, a few weeks later, Collections #2-5 appeared on the internet. They contained 25 billion unique records and roughly 2.2 billion unique usernames and passwords, making this one of the most significant leaks to date.

What Should You Do?

Now that the number of leaked records (usernames, passwords, phone numbers, social security numbers, credit card info, and other personal data) reaches into the billions, and new data breaches are announced like clockwork, how should you respond? My advice is to assume that at least some of your personal info HAS been compromised. Here's what I recommend:

- * [Change your passwords, and use a password manager](#) to create strong passwords going forward.
- * [Use two-factor authentication](#) to protect your online accounts (even if your password is stolen)
- * Consider using [disposable email addresses](#)
- * Keep tabs on your credit reports (see sidebar above)

I want to thank the folks at [NordVPN](#) for allowing me to share their reporting on recent data breaches. NordVPN offers VPN (virtual private network) services that let you browse the web securely and anonymously. And in case you're curious, I have no business relationship with NordVPN, and was not compensated for this article. ☺

Tip: Cloud Clipboard

Windows 10's copy and paste can be deployed across multiple PCs with the cloud clipboard—a feature introduced in the October 2018 Update. Go to Start > Settings > System > Clipboard and enable "Sync across devices" to start copying data on one PC and pasting it on another PC. While in this menu, enabling "Clipboard history" lets you save multiple items to the clipboard to use again later.

Why Do So Many Tech Support Solutions Start with “Reboot” or Turn It Off?”

By Leo A. Notenboom, <https://newsletter.askleo.com/>; published under the Creative Commons License

Quite often, the first thing a diagnostic technician asks you to do is reboot your computer. Why? Because rebooting works surprisingly often.

It seems like every time I call the tech support line for my software, operating system, or even my [broadband](#) connection, the first thing out of the technicians mouth is “reboot.” Or worse yet, “Turn the power off for a while.” What does that have to do anything? And why does it work?

It does seem like magic, doesn't it? The computer's acting up, you reboot it, and *poof*, things are better again. At least for a while.

It gets even weirder when you achieve the same effect just by shutting it all down and pulling the power cord for a while.

A friend of mine once provided a nice explanation for the power scenario, and I can speak a little bit to the magical mess that is software.

Turn it off and back on again

Jerrold Foutz is a friend of mine who is an industry expert in the design of power supplies. Some time ago, he provided a very interesting write up on [unplugging the power](#) as perhaps the single most effective electronics-troubleshooting technique.

The topic came up in a discussion when I recommended power-cycling a [router](#) — unplugging it, waiting 30 seconds, and then plugging back in — as a way to resolve a connectivity problem.

The fact is, electronic components can get into an odd state, and as Jerry points out, power-cycling the equipment forces the equipment to reset and restart from a known good state.

The same is true for software.

When in doubt, reboot

Complicated software (and what software isn't complicated these days?) involves lots of things on your computer as it runs.

The longer it runs, the more it impacts.

[Memory](#) is used, released, and fragmented. Same for the disk, as programs open, read, and write local and temporary files. And

then there's the hardware — video cards, networking adapters, mice, keyboards, other peripherals — they're all accessed continuously.

The result is that any of those (and perhaps all of them) can end up in states that can cause problems.

It shouldn't be that way, of course, and the inherent quality of the software and/or hardware plays a huge role, but the bottom line is that it happens. Software can get confused over time.

And those technicians who ask you to reboot your device? They do so because it works more often than you might imagine.

Starting over

A reboot restores all the software to a known state.

A power-cycle restores all the hardware to a known state.

Well, a *mostly* known state. Temporary files, installed files, [registry](#) changes, and more will remain. That's why in extreme cases, a reformat and reinstall is a recommended solution for some computers: it returns things to a known state.

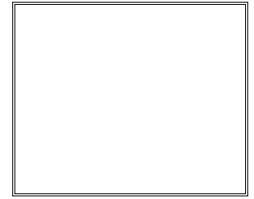
The router problem that started this discussion? Like many devices these days, routers are actually small single-purpose computers. Their internal [memory](#) tracks a variety of information relating to the [network](#) connections they manage.

The longer they run, the more likely it is that something will create a problem. It could be hardware related, as explained [in Jerry's article](#), or something in its software, as I've outlined above.

In any case, I typically reboot my own router every few months. ☺



P*PCompAS Newsletter
Greg Lenihan, Editor
4905 Ramblewood Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80920
e-mail: glenihan@comcast.net



Coming Events:

Next Membership Meeting: 7 Mar, beginning at 9 am (see directions below)

Next Breakfast Meeting: 21 Mar @ 8 am, Golden Corral, 1970 Waynoka Rd.

Newsletter Deadline: 14 Mar

Check out our Web page at: <http://ppcompas.apcug.org>

