Meeting

FaceTime versus Google Hangouts

by

Michelle Burgess & Brian Lance

Wednesday, February 8

6:30 PM

Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th Street
Tampa, Florida

Meeting Preview: FaceBook vs Google by TPCUG members Michelle Burgess and Brian Lance.

Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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Thanks to Merle Nicholson and Ron Weinberg, I do not need to write much this month, which is good since I don't have much about which to write. The TPCUG newsletter app, *Computer Group Newsletters*, was accepted by Apple, so now you may view it on your Windows 10 device, your Android device and your Apple iPhone or iPad.

At first it was rejected (Apple is always looking for something to use to reject an app, it seems). Their reason was that an app was not needed to view the newsletters; All that was needed was a browser. That would lead you to think that they had gone to our website and noted that all the newsletters back to 1988 were there to view. Given that, in their opinion, my app added nothing of value.

I thought about that for a few minutes, a bit hurt since no one likes to be rejected (Google and Microsoft didn't reject the app). Then I formulated a response, which basically pointed out

March Meeting: To be announced

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Minutes of the January Meeting

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,
Tampa PC Users Group
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The Windows Special Interest Group (SIG) opens our monthly meeting. Merle Nicholson, the SIG moderator introduces new or little known products and technological developments for discussion by the group. He accepts questions and requests for help in solving problems from attendees.

For the first meeting of 2017, the agenda was a business meeting and Windows SIG. John Witmer, president, led the meeting, and he and the members present discussed a variety of subjects mostly having to do with the future of the club and its newsletter. The slate of officers was informally discussed and opened to new officer volunteers. None forthcoming, it is assumed that the current slate will continue for 2017. The officer list is published in this newsletter on this page. Doug Mullis, treasurer, supplied a financial sheet and the 2017 budget was discussed.

After some discussion, it was resolved that members in good standing as of December 31, 2016 will have their membership dues waived when they renew in 2017.

Some other observations were discussed: The current location and accessibility of the club PO box; obtaining speakers monthly; the difficulty of obtaining original newsletter articles, and the somewhat unlikely possibility of reducing the newsletter to four pages. ◆

that the app did provide one very import thing that a browser could not do: Using the app, you may search for a word or phrase over the entire collection of newsletters from 1988 through 2016. And I provided a couple of examples of doing such a search. Apparently that impressed the reviewer since in less than an hour, I had a message indicating that the app was on its way to the Apple App Store. ◆

Changing Providers

By Ron Weinberg, Member-At-Large,
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Since December 2009, when I switched From Bright House Networks for TV and Internet services to the newly introduced Verizon FIOS fiber service, at their attractive introductory price, I had been satisfied with the products and service, but not customer service which was at times problematical.

I had a bundled package deal which included my long time Verizon land telephone line.

Over the intervening eight years cost of the services had been inching up to becoming burdensome, too costly for the value received. My obligatory signing contract had long since expired.

It was time to try and do better. Actually, I attempted to negotiate with Verizon just at the time they were selling to Frontier and timing was poor. After the transition was completed and several months had passed to allow the new company to formulate their own prices and policies, I began again to request a price reduction.

I have been receiving excellent introductory offers in the mail from Dish Network for TV, Bright House offers and more recently a complete package from AT&T Direct TV, including Phone and Internet. Dish and Direct TV are satellite systems, and I prefer to keep a wired system.

I had been warned by the experiences of others that switching from Verizon to Bright House for whatever reason was difficult and troublesome. Recently, Bright House was purchased by Spectrum, a much larger company.

Spectrum, new to the area, obviously wishes to increase their customer base and has offered a very attractive introductory one year new customer plan for full-featured TV, Internet, and Voice (Phone) service. At the time this article was created, Spectrum's introductory offer was valid until Feb. 2, 2017. It may be extended or other offers may be available.

Armed with the competitive information, and not limited by a contract, I contacted Frontier several times and threatened to cancel their services unless they could offer

me a substantial price reduction. I was transferred to their "Retention Dept." to negotiate. Their initial quotes were not sufficiently improved. Each time I called I had to deal with a different person. The third or fourth call which I had hoped to be my last and final was handled by a person that seemed new to the job and quoted me higher than the previous despite the fact that the earlier quote was supposed to be in my record.

At that point, I concluded it was time for a change, and decide to take a chance and signed up with Spectrum. I had to pay the first month in advance but there was no contract and a 30-day money-back guarantee. Installation was scheduled for the following week with telephone number porting expected to take several additional days.

It should be noted that Frontier, as did Verizon, continues to have an excellent new customer offer which they refuse to give to existing customers. Also, Spectrum has a conditional limited offer to buy out your existing contract.

Specific costs for Frontier and Spectrum bundles are not listed as each subscriber may require different equipment such as number of set top boxes, etc. Taxes and fees are much lower on Spectrum since Frontier is taxed as a traditional land line carrier.

Since Verizon had transferred email address routing to AOL it does not appear that it will be necessary to replace the Verizon.net address.

FIOS Internet Speed was billed as 15/15. Speed tests showed approximately 25/16 Mbps. Spectrum quoted 100/10 and after the installation various tests showed speeds from 71 to 94 download and 12 upload using wireless, a distinct improvement.

On Friday Jan. 13, I prepaid for the month through Feb. 18. The installation was scheduled for Wednesday Jan 18. Since there was no access to the connection box in a neighbor's yard, installation was delayed to Jan 19. Completion took about 1½ hours. The Installers were subcontractors, not Brighthouse workers.

The Installers left leaving only the Router's SSD and WEP Password. They provided no setup or instructions other than making sure all TVs were operational.

After the installation was completed I observed that contrary to my expectations, external wiring was run along

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a neighbor's fence for expediency rather than buried for protection and security. I have requested that this be corrected. A service call to bury the cable has been scheduled.

As of the first evening, outgoing calls could be made; incoming failed while waiting completion of porting from Frontier. Porting was completed by late afternoon Jan 20, restoring incoming phone service. At that time, I called Frontier to cancel their services. The representative offered additional inducements to stay, but it was too late. Those inducements should have been offered by the retention department.

Here are the pros and cons of this changeover.

Con:
- Phone, TV, and Internet are all passed through the telephony gateway (router). If it fails or loses signal, all is lost.
- There is no power backup for the telephone line. (Charged cellphones serve as our emergency backup.)
- A battery backup for telephone while not supplied, is available at extra cost.
- There was no customer service follow up after the physical installation.
- Little information was provided as to features making it necessary to call support for every question. MoCA is not supported by Spectrum at this time and is deactivated in the Router. I was able to substitute a wireless connection for the one location it was used.

Pro:
- Phone, Internet, and TV are performing well. TV picture quality is excellent.
- Telephone service is full featured, unlimited, and includes US, Canada, Mexico, and Puerto Rico.
- Digital adapters on two TV sets were replaced by full featured set top boxes, at lower cost.
- Installation was on schedule and brief with minimal inconvenience.
- Internet speed was greatly increased. Total cost is significantly lower.

My years of IT experience reduced any difficulties caused by the lack of customer service to fully complete the installation by providing guidance to the new customer. A layman or average customer would have had greater difficulty. The changeover appears to have been worthwhile for our household. ◆

Windows 10 essentials

By Merle Nicholson, secretary, Tampa PC Users Group
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If you're not aware, Windows 10 is evolving. Two major "updates" have been issued – 1511 and 1607. I've seen several major changes to the installation procedure; not just cosmetic changes like to the Start Menu. With some updates, you'll find that some of the settings changes you have made have not been honored and have been set back to the default, all without notification. Another large change ("Creators Update") is essentially completed and due this spring.

I've had several Win 10 computers come to me that were essentially broken – unusable (unbootable) after updates were made. I've spent two to four hours getting them restored to working condition. In one case, the system restore could not repair without wiping out the disk so I had to remove the hard drive, mount it on one of my own systems and copy all the user files I could find, then let the system replacement work and return the files. Looking at internet forums for solutions to the problems I've found, I see that the same problems are not uncommon. None of the repairs I've done could be explained and are certainly not the result of owner mishandling.

One thing all these broken computers have in common is inadequate backup. No repair flashdrive, no image backup, no file backup, no accessible Safe Mode. The fault really falls on Microsoft because they do not even attempt to inform the user of the essential steps to be safe. I'm particularly apprehensive for the millions of casual users who really need an internet/mail/messaging/streaming/word processing appliance and have no interest in learning settings and fixes, antivirus and more software. Most would be much better served with Chromebook, Ubuntu, Android tablet and even maybe iMac, in that order.

To Microsoft's credit though they have made restoring the operating system back to "factory" condition fast and pretty easy. There are but two options, one pre-

Internet Picture of the Month

Robotic Barista

From the Wall Street Journal, http://wsj.com, at http://www.wsj.com/articles/robot-baristas-serve-up-the-future-of-coffee-at-cafe-x-1485781201, we have : "Cafe X's [which is in San Francisco] barista robot uses a six-axis Mitsubishi arm to grab cups, get them filled at an espresso station, then serve them to customer." It appears that one more job for college graduates without a marketable degree is about to be eliminated.

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serves your user files and the other does not. Neither though preserves any programs you have installed and of course all the settings will be at default, your accounts lost, all your email to set up all over again. For a "mature" installation it may be a week to get back where you were or maybe never. All this can be largely avoided by making an image backup. Image backup is not a part of Windows 10 backup, but it's there left over from Windows 7. It's left to the user to find it provided he knows it even exists.

To have direct access to the system repair programs you need one of two things - a system repair flashdrive or access to Safe Mode. Actually you need both. I wrote about how to revive Safe Mode in last months Bits of Blue January 2017 issue. I used it to reinstall Win 10 from scratch on one of my own systems, and it works quickly and it even did the major updates. But to use Safe Mode for repairs means that your hard drive boot record is not damaged. So Windows can be broken but not 100% broken. For 100% broken you need a repair flashdrive.

I said that I recently did a complete system replacement. It was to a Virtual Machine that I had nothing invested in. It was an upgrade from Windows 7, then

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8.1 and then 10, and I had some confusing software testing to do and decided I needed a clean Windows 10 machine. It was surprisingly quick and it installed the latest version – 1607 and it powered up with the original licensing activated intact.

Windows 10 installation is somewhat different now. Early on, be sure to select "customized" settings so you can turn all the security and telemetry settings off manually. And I do mean ALL OFF. I have found no advantage – absolutely none – in allowing any of the security and telemetry to go through. If you find something you need later, they're easy to find in "Settings," "Update and security."

The installation or repair process still makes it difficult to recognize where to create a local login account. It really looks like you must create an on-line Microsoft account to continue. There is no need to and no advantage to do that. Just don't enter an existing account or create an account – click on the other things and you'll find a panel that asks who will be logging on, two password fields and a password hint field. This isn't an extreme or angry response. It's simple. If you were on Windows 7 and you had a pop-up from Microsoft asking for the login and password to your computer, would you give it to them? I Don't Think So! Will they promise to keep the private login to your computer safe from Russian hackers forever? Don't think so, Dude.

So, it seems appropriate right now to again publish a list of essential settings to improve your odds of surviving a broken OS. For instructions on each, you'll have to read my previous TPCUG articles, July through September, 2016. If you want to download them, just go to http://www.TPCUG.org, look in the menu for past newsletters. Also you should get La-Martin's *Computer Group Newsletters* in the Microsoft App Store. The articles are in PDF form so all the links are live, making it fast to go to instructions. You will need a Microsoft account to get William's app, but you do not need your computer to be logged into a Microsoft account. Be very careful though, it's easy to be fooled into allowing the store to hijack your local account and replace it with a Microsoft account. I've

written about that in July newsletter, page 7.

Essentials:

1. Fix your login accounts. Activate or create a local Administrator account and for daily use, employ a standard local account. There's no real disadvantage in doing this. The worst case is if you install something using a standard account it will ask for the administrator's password. This will prevent most malware from installing on your system without your permission. Under no circumstances should a Microsoft on-line account be an administrator account. That would be crazy.
2. Activate System Protection, System Restore, create a new restore point.
3. Fix the Boot into Safe Mode. See January, 2017 newsletter article.
4. Fix restart to BlueScreen
5. Manage Microsoft Updates (Win 10 Pro). Do your best with Windows 10 if you don't have Pro.
6. Disable as much Microsoft telemetry and forced advertizing as possible.
7. Disable Remote Assistance. Search for "Allow Remote Access", and if you have Windows 10 Pro, disable Remote Desktop.
8. Create a Recovery Drive. Use a USB flashdrive; 8GB will allow system files to be written to it.
9. Create a Backup Image. Search: "Backup and Restore (Windows 7)". Use an external USB backup drive for this. Look at how much disk is used. Get USB3 if your computer has USB3 ports. For myself, I use Acronis, Tools, Clone drive to an external SSD for each of my computers. This gives me a complete alternative drive to boot from with no image restoration to go through.
10. Make a new Image backup regularly, replacing the old. How often you do this depends on how much your system has changed. Keep a log so you can look up the last backup date.
11. Use backup software to back up data. The Windows 7 backup program is still as good as it always was. Others: Acronis and Caspar. Windows 10 has "File History"
12. Check your network connections. My last new installation defaulted my network profile to "Public" which prevented file and printer sharing. It

TPCUG FINANCIAL REPORT
FOR 2016

TPCUG STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENSES AND BANK BALANCE

2016 INCOME

Memberships (21 single 5 Family)	$750.00
Amazon & Misc.	373.63
TOTAL INCOME	$1123.63

2016 EXPENSES

Newsletter Postage	$144.30
Newsletter Printing	457.29
FACUG Dues	25.00
APCUG Dues	50.00
Florida Incorporation Fee (Reinstatement)	297.50
Web Site Hosting Fee (12 months)	181.08
P O Box Rental	82.00
Dec Holiday Party Costs	248.12
Website Domain Fee (Not due until 2018)	0.00
Refreshments (Cookies)	0.00
Miscellaneous	0.00
PayPal Fees	7.24
TOTAL EXPENSES	1492.53
NET DEFICIT FOR 2016	**$368.90**
BANK BALANCE – January 1, 2016	7311.81
BANK BALANCE – December 31, 2016	6942.91

Submitted by D. W. Mullis, Treasurer, TPCUG

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really confused me how to change it to "Private". I wound up just joining my HomeGroup, something I usually don't think of doing. That freed up whatever was stuck.

Options:
- Disable One-Drive if you're not using it. The latest updates make One-Drive real nagware. By default it's running all the time and synchronizing files on your computer. Unfortunately the fix is pretty technical. Chances are if you're an Android Phone user you're using Google Drive which works excellently with Windows 10. See http://lifehacker.com/how-to-completely-uninstall-onedrive-in-windows-10-1725363532
- Install Google Chrome browser especially if you're also an Android Phone or tablet user or Linux for that matter. May as well, it's become the most used browser in the world anyway. Google Earth and Google Maps are unparalleled. I share

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documents and spreadsheets among all my devices and spouse's Ubuntu computer and Android phone. My documents and spreadsheets are edited in Google Docs in Chrome browser.

● Get LibreOffice. You don't need Microsoft Office unless you have a free copy or need MS Access or Publisher. Don't be fooled into believing the old term "compatibility" which disappeared with the term "IBM Clone". LibreOffice reads and produces all file formats and it's free. It's much easier to use than Office for the casual user and yet does all the esoteric stuff that mostly never gets used. http://www.libreoffice.org/ Microsoft themselves have had to make the most changes to make Office files compatible with Open Standards, so there's just no issue anymore and hasn't been any for many years. ◆

to I-275

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