SIMPLIFY MY DIGITAL LIFE

TECH TIPS

By Joe Awe, President, TechBldrs, Inc.

Have you gotten you digital life in order yet? With so many options, free or paid, it should be easy! That's what I thought. There are all these Lego pieces. I should be able to put something useful together. But unlike Legos that connect really easily, these various apps and cloud services are more like a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle dumped all over the table.

Maybe because I'm in the IT field, I have the tolerance to put together the jigsaw puzzle that makes some of this all work for me, so I don't have to put my rapidly shrinking time into remembering where to look. Most people I encounter in business may have access to their emails or keep some of their calendar and contacts on their phone, but they don't have the time to figure out how all of this works together.

And like me, if you've ever had your PC or phone die or get lost, you know first-hand the days I spent trying to recover lost photos, papers, emails and accounting transactions. Days I've lost forever, just because I didn't have a reliable backup.

I recently came across a small business owner in need of getting their digital mish-mash in order — That is, getting their business and personal emails, contacts and calendars on their work pc, home laptop, phone and tablet to all be in sync and act as one cohesive system. He wanted his employees to used one system, so that he could get all the business information at a glance. Lastly, he wanted to put all his personal stuff into the system, but keep it separate from everyone else.

So, I'll be taking a break from writing about cyber security and how people inflict their own harm, to discuss how I put my systems in order. (By the way, Barnes & Nobles had a major hack-in that they reported on Oct 10, 2020, so if you had an account at B&N, please change your password. Google "TechBldrs Passwords" to see how we teach others to create a hack-proof password.)

Why Microsoft 365?

For this discussion, if you're in business and not using Microsoft 365 (formerly Office 365) by now, you are way behind the times. Numbers don't lie. Microsoft 365 has over 250 million paying customers while Google's Workplace (formerly G-Suite) has 6 million paying customers. It's also the #1 selling product for the Apple's Macintosh.

What this means, is if you love your Apple and Google software, stay in your corral. If you're like 95 percent of the world's businesses and use Microsoft 365, you'll enjoy the benefits of cohesion that the service brings. There's also a set of apps for Android and iOS phones, that makes accessing Microsoft 365 so much more fluid.

For the rest of you, read on.

The Problem

Do you have a smart phone? That's your problem. Why? Because even the dumbest of the smart phones are configured by default to use the phone manufacturer's services (apps that come with the phone that you can't uninstall). This means if you don't configure it properly, which people rarely do, all those things you want from your business, won't show up in your phone apps.

The way I fix this problem is to use Microsoft Outlook to consolidate all my emails, contacts and calendars. Yes, I used to have several locations for each.

At a high level, here is what I do.

• Setup security for my Microsoft 365 authentication, because I want to know if anyone is getting into my stuff that shouldn't.

• Move all contacts and calendar entries to Outlook from my phone, Gmail, Hotmail, etc. and remove them from the various sources. Outlook provides the backup of all of my personal and business critical schedules and people info.

• Configure the phone's calendar and contact apps to only use the Microsoft 365 account to display and save information.

• Install the Outlook PC application and the phone App and attach all the various mailboxes (e.g. Gmail, Hotmail, AOL, Live, Yahoo, etc.) into one application. Ah, one ring to rule them all!

• Install OneDrive on your PC to create a backup that you can get through the web, phone or another computer. OneDrive provides a way to get to your older versions for 30 days.

• Because I use them frequently, I also install several of the Microsoft apps on my tablet and phones to get a smoother integration from my PC to my phone (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneDrive, SharePoint, Teams and OneNote).

Once I'm done, everything I'm working on is backed up and accessible from my office PC, home PC, laptops, Chromebook, iPad, Android tablet, and my two phones. My contacts are contained in one place along with my calendar. I don't even carry a laptop!

Is it data Nirvana? No, but I spend a lot less time worrying about losing my work and trying to remember where I put that file that I was just working on. The journey has many steps, but the end result was Simplicity.

If you want to get your digital life on track, or If you're stuck and need help, send me an email to: Info@TechBldrs.com. For additional information, please call 610.601.8017 and remember to check out our blog at www.techbldrs.com/blog for more tips!