(membership includes monthly subscription)

The Digital VIKING

Twin Cities PC USER GROUP NEWSLETTER

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TC/PC Exists to Facilitate and Encourage the Cooperative Exchange of PC Knowledge and Information Across All Levels of Experience

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General Meeting

Tuesday, November 10, 2026

7:00 PM

Exploring Space

Or What's Elon Musk Up to?

Via Zoom Only

. At this month's meeting we will explore outer space. We will take a look at some youtube videos that explain in detail the plans Elon Musk and SpaceX have for our future on Mars. We will learn about the challenges involved and what ideas are being studied and tested to meet those challenges. Science or science fiction? You be the

Note: All TC/PC Meetings and SIG Groups will be virtual until further notice. Visit tcpc.com for info.

Tech Topics with Jack Ungerleider via Zoom at 6pm before the General Meeting.

TC/PC is a APCUG

24-Hour Information • www.tcpc.com
Application form inside back cover

The Digital Viking

The Digital Viking is the *official monthly publication of the Twin Cities PC User Group, a 501(c)(3)organization and an all-volunteer organization dedicated to users of IBM-compatible computers. Subscriptions are included in membership. We welcome articles and reviews from members.* The Digital Viking is a *copyrighted publication and reproduction of any material is expressly prohibited without permission. Exception: other User Groups may use material if unaltered and credited.*

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Product previews and demonstrations

Special Interest Groups

Monthly Newsletter

Discounts on products and services

Advertising

Full page (7½ x 9½)	**$100.00**
Two-thirds page (7½ x 6)	**80.00**
Half page (7½ x 4¾)	**65.00**
One-third page (7½ x 3)	**50.00**
Quarter page (3½ x 4¾)	**40.00**
Member Bus. Card (2 x 3½)	**10.00**

Multiple insertion discounts available.

Contact Sharon Walbran at:: SQWalbran@yahoo.com

Business Member Benefits

All of the above PLUS:

FREE ½ page ad on payment of each renewal

20% discount on all ads Placed in the *Digital Viking* Newsletter

Newsletter Staff:

Sharon Walbran, Editor

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Meets once or twice per year. All members welcome to attend. Visit www.tcpc.com for meeting details.

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Upcoming Meetings

Tuesday, December 8 – Show Us Your Gadget!

Share gadgets or DIY projects or products you'd recommend with our members. Bring photos or videos and tell us the uses, advantages, availability, and cost. It's your time to shine!

Tuesday, January 12 – Make Windows 11 Work for You

J B Burke, President of Prescott Computer Society will give us insight and tips on getting the best out of Windows 11.

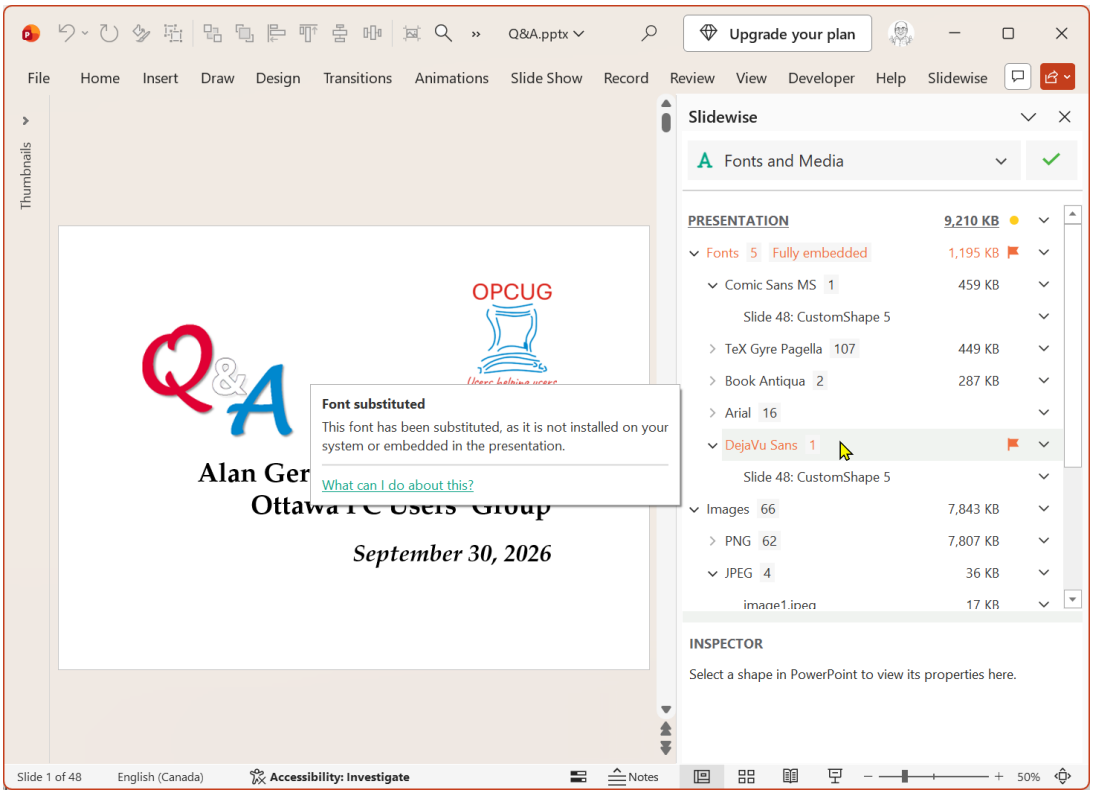
Slidewise—an update

by Chris Taylor, President
Ottawa PC Users' Group, Canada (*https://opcug.ca/*)
chris.taylor (at) opcug.ca

In January 2024, I wrote a review of the PowerPoint add-in Slidewise 2.0 from neuxpower (https://opcug.ca/Articles/2401NEWS.pdf) and in March of that year, I wrote an update for version 2.1 (https://opcug.ca/Articles/2403NEWS.pdf) when they introduced a *freemium* version.

For anyone like me, who does a lot of work in PowerPoint, Slidewise is a godsend!

What attracted me most to Slidewise was its ability to expose what fonts (another obsession of mine) are used in a presentation, where they are used and easily replace fonts throughout a presentation. Slidewise can also let you know when fonts have been embedded, missing and substituted. This is most helpful when you have input from multiple PowerPoint users and the combined presentation is a hodgepodge of inconsistency. Slidewise goes well beyond font prowess: analysing graphics usage; finding non-theme colours; controlling slide masters and layouts; finding external links to content; exposing hidden content; and more.



Finding inconsistencies in fonts

Neuxpower has continued to refine Slidewise, which now stands at version 3.1, with features including;

- much faster font replacement and much improved font handling capabilities;
- improved handling of masters and layouts;
- replace selected instances of a repeated image instead of replacing every occurrence;
- find broken links to external web content;
- review and delete empty placeholders;
- export selected slides as images or a standalone PowerPoint file;
- export selected original images;
- bulk set *Autofit* settings across boxes, shapes, & placeholders to *Do not Autofit*, *Shrink*, or *Resize*;
- finer control over colours used in the presentation.

In short, Slidewise is a powerful tool, especially for those who must clean up inherited PowerPoint presentations.

When you install Slidewise, you get the full set of features for 30 days, after which it switches to Slidewise Free. Even if your use of PowerPoint is limited, Slidewise Free brings some really nice capabilities to the table, in particular its ability to ferret out font inconsistencies in your presentations. For details about Slidewise Free features, see https://support.neuxpower.com/hc/en-us/articles/21741589503377-What-can-I-do-with-Slidewise-Free

Bottom line:

Slidewise PowerPoint add-in
https://neuxpower.com/Slidewise-powerpoint-add-in
Price: US$79 per year
System requirements:
Windows 8.1 or greater
32-bit or 64-bit Office 2016 or greater, or installed (not web) Office/Microsoft 365
XML versions of PowerPoint data files (e.g. pptx and potx)

(see reviews of Slidewise 2.0 and 2.1 in PDF here: https://opcug.ca/Reviews/SlidewisePlusUpdate.pdf) 

Cloud Storage – The Inevitability of Modern Technology

By: Ken Pyzik, Contributing Member
Sun City Summerlin Computer Club
https://www.scscc.club pyz01 (at) outlook.com

Do you currently use cloud storage? Whether you know it or not, you probably do. Let's take a look.

Do you have an iPhone? You're storing things in the cloud. Do you use Gmail or Google Chrome for browsing? You're storing things in the cloud. Do you use a Windows 11 PC with OneDrive turned on by default? You're storing things in the cloud. What about an Android phone or a Chromebook? Yes, cloud storage again.

In fact, whether you realize it or not, you're storing far more in the cloud than you ever intended. But more importantly, cloud storage wasn't something you actively chose; it's something the industry built around you. Understanding that can give you back a little more control.

How did this all happen?

Well, if you're like me, you didn't wake up one morning and decide, "I'm going to put my entire digital life in the cloud." No, it happened slowly, quietly, and almost invisibly. A photo here. A document there. A backup you didn't think about. A sync you didn't realize was turned on. A storage subscription you accepted because it seemed easier than spending hours cleaning things up.

And then, before you knew it, your devices were no longer yours. Your data was no longer local. Your storage was no longer free. Your digital life was no longer manageable. Most people didn't see it happening. Many people still don't realize it happened.

When I researched this topic, I was amazed to find that while most people say they hate using the cloud, they were using it anyway. That contradiction was so striking that I wrote and published a book about it: *Cloud Storage – The Digital Trap that NO ONE Saw Coming: How Big Tech Turned Human Behavior into Recurring Revenue.*

But I don't want to spoil the book. Instead, I want to give you a little insight into why cloud storage became inevitable. In my book, I explain *how* it happened. Here, I want to explain *why* it happened.

Historical Background

In the 1970s, the biggest technology company in the world was IBM. IBM leased computers, leased software, leased services, and leased support contracts. Almost every major company relied on IBM, and the arrangement was simple: you owned almost nothing. IBM owned the technology, and you rented it.

Your data lived on large disk drives rented from IBM. Renting those drives wasn't cheap. The software that protected your data came from IBM. The upside was control. IBM fixed everything. Their engineers came on-site. Their systems ran your business.

But companies didn't like how much money IBM was making, and they didn't like having all their technology eggs in one very large IBM-controlled basket. And IBM? IBM had what every company dreams of — predictable, recurring revenue.

Then everything changed.

The personal computer arrived. Suddenly, people could store data on a hard drive that wasn't connected to a mainframe. Clever clerks built small applications and databases that lived outside the central system. Tasks that once took weeks could be done in an afternoon. Reports that took months could be generated in hours.

Distributed computing exploded, and IBM's centralized model couldn't keep up. People gained control of their own data, and IBM was left inside the massive technical structure it had built, unable to adapt.

Next came what I call the "ME" generation of computing. My computer. My data. My technology. Everything at my fingertips. If I wanted a program, I bought it. If I wanted to store data, I stored it wherever I wanted. This was great for consumers and small businesses but for large companies, it was chaos.

Then smartphones arrived, and the chaos multiplied. Now one person had data scattered across multiple devices. Multiply that by a billion people, and data integrity was out of control. And remember — every app on every phone began storing data in its own way.

Distributed data created inefficiency and inconsistency. Invoice numbers didn't match. Product numbers didn't match. Inventory counts didn't match. Local sales didn't update central warehouses. A laptop's data didn't match that on the company's server computer, and neither matched that on the customer's phone. Companies needed a way to harness the chaos because otherwise it was almost impossible to control and operate.

Enter syncing. Syncing allowed everyone to have the same information, updated everywhere. Syncing was great. Finally, all the data was consistent. But syncing wasn't enough. Duplicated data was consistent but still living everywhere. Which version was right? Companies did not want just synced data – they wanted data with one source of truth.

Enter the Cloud.

If data lived in the cloud, redundancies disappeared. The cloud became the central point of truth. Everyone accessed the same single version of the data, and everyone synced to the same place. The distributed client and the central host finally saw the same numbers because the data lived in one spot — the cloud. And the byproduct was centralized control of information for large companies.

Unfortunately, they didn't just ask you or me. They did not announce this to every consumer out in the world. Instead, they made the decision and made us live with it. And they did it in a very subtle and almost "sneaky" way. They just made this the "default" way to do things. They made it the natural way – the easy way, the way it was to be expected. Defaults are simple and easy. So, like most defaults, everyone naturally "defaulted" to using it – because – that is just the way it is "supposed" to be (or so that is what they expected you to believe)!

So, now I've condensed 50 years of IT history into a few paragraphs, but I think you can see the drift. Cloud storage didn't happen because consumers wanted it. It happened because companies needed full control of information. And consumers and small businesses were told: this is the way it is now. This is the default. If you want modern technology, you have to live in the cloud.

What Does It All Mean?

What this means is that today, whether you realize it or not, you are probably storing things in the cloud. Now granted, there are some major exceptions. I run a Linux Mint desktop and laptop and don't store any of my personal data from those devices in the cloud. But guess what? Even in this scenario, I use Outlook.com and Gmail for email, and guess where that data lives? In the cloud.

And living in the cloud is not all that bad. As I've mentioned in past articles, if you want to share pictures of your grandkids or vacation photos with the rest of the family, cloud storage can be a blessing. Also, having your e-mail in the cloud is even better. Let the vendor control all that spam!

But it's important to recognize that whether you love or hate cloud storage, modern technology companies have made the cloud inevitable. And, as most of you know, it's either their way or no way at all.

Conclusions

If you want to learn more, including how to reduce your cloud-storage footprint, take a look at the book I've written. You might be surprised at how much you can wrestle back from those cloud-hungry technology vendors and gain more control over all your own cloud-stored data.

And if you really don't mind having all your data in the cloud, then don't worry about it. You can do what large corporations did in the 1970's – let the vendor worry about it. But just remember one thing: if you take that path, you will soon find out: cloud storage may be free for a while, but as it grows it will cost you!



At the end of the day, cloud storage is simply part of the modern world we live in. The important thing is not to fear it, but to understand it. When you know how and why your data ends up in the cloud, you can decide whether to bring back control or let the vendor handle it for you. Either way, the choice is yours. Having that awareness means you’re no longer just drifting along with the defaults but steering your own digital life.

Wow! Another Scam!

By: David Kretchmar, Hardware Technician
Sun City Summerlin Computer Club
https://www.scscc.club dkretch (at) gmail.com

Our community is constantly receiving warnings about potential scams, yet some of us are still victimized. I was almost starting to feel that these warnings were being overdone when I found another resident was taken advantage of in October 2026. I discussed the first Sun City scam victim I was made aware of in the Kretchmar's Korner article in the May 2023 *Gigabyte Gazette* https://www.scscc.club/Gigabyte/gg_2023-05May.pdf.

This more recent scam was completely different, costing the victim "only" $25,000 – still way too much of course. In the May 2023 article, I was careful not to reveal the identity of the victim, not even his gender. In the most recent scam, the victim, I'll call V2 for Victim two, was also a male, which I disclose now because it might be pertinent. Also, it makes pronouns easier.

The victim has been a member of the computer club for many years

I will continue to protect the victims' identities. However, I can share that V2 has belonged to the computer club for many years and readily admits he should have known better. At first, he was reluctant to discuss the scam with me. Over the next few days, as I helped him buy and set up a new computer and recover his Gmail accounts, he agreed to tell me what happened. He shared his story for this article in hopes of preventing others from becoming victims.

What happened?

V2 stated he sat down at his computer one morning and his monitor screen was black, except for some white lettering that appeared along the bottom of his monitor, he believed the text might have advised him of a problem on his computer.



He then said received a phone call supposedly from his bank advising him that an employee was attempting to steal his money, and they needed his cooperation to help catch the thief. The caller had a South Asian accent, as do many tech support people.

Over the next couple of days, V2, who wanted to help, believed he was working with his bank and Microsoft, both of which he trusted. The caller's knowledge of his personal information made the story more convincing and helped earn his trust. V2 was first advised by phone to go to a nearby smoke shop and use a terminal to transfer money into Bitcoin. V2 was unable to make that work, so he was sent to another location where he was also unable to complete the transaction.

Cash withdrawal

Following further instructions given by phone, V2 withdrew $25,000 in $100 bills from his bank account. I was shocked that the bank allowed such an unusual transaction. According to V2, no one questioned him.

The shipment, then the epiphany

The caller told V2 to stuff the cash in a pair of old shoes, wrap it up, and ship it by UPS to a provided address, and V2 complied. When the caller instructed him to return to the bank and withdraw more cash, V2 realized something was wrong and refused.

V2 contacted his longtime Merrill Lynch broker in Summerlin and was told that he had been scammed. The broker advised him to replace his computer, iPhone, and phone number. I considered that overkill, especially because his old phone and number offered the only viable way to recover his Gmail account. Although V2 knew his Gmail address, recovering the account with no viable verification option was tedious and frustrating but ultimately successful. V2 tried to stop UPS from delivering the package but it was too late.

A shared pattern: isolation

In both cases, the victims had no contact with anyone who might have recognized the warning signs and intervened before it was too late.

It's a secret

In the more recent scam, V2 was "sworn" to secrecy to protect the sensitive investigation he supposedly was assisting. The first victim did not tell me he had been instructed to not tell anyone, but he told no one before me. Keeping victims isolated is a common and important part of these scams.



Are men more vulnerable?

Are men in our community more vulnerable to internet scams than women? Two cases are far too few to support a statistically meaningful conclusion. With that limitation in mind, and temporarily setting aside what I learned in Stat 101 more than 50 years ago, there are a couple of commonalities that offer some insights.

Many men suffer from the painfully untrue attitude that they are more financially savvy than women. I have avoided this delusion since my wife was a C.P.A. in a former life and I was only a C.O.P. Men, and women, are more likely to confide in a woman regarding a scam than confide in another man. It might be an ego thing or maybe men perceive women as more nurturing and less judgmental than other men. Unfortunately, we men *tend* to have a shrinking circle of male friends rather than women, so this resource is not always available.

Real-world social networks help

Women are just as likely as men to be targeted by scammers, but in my limited experience, their losses tend to be smaller and the scams shorter-lived. Women often have broader social networks than men, which provides some protection.

Why it matters



I can imagine a woman mentioning a scam situation to friends while sewing or playing cards, before she becomes fully victimized. In my imaginary scenario, at least one friend would drop her jaw, stare in disbelief and ask, “Are you out of your f’ing mind?”

Questioning a victim’s sanity, male or female, can be counterproductive. Instead, try to get the victim to share as much of the story as they are willing. If they are reluctant, back off – they are not yet ready. But appear to be interested in their story (you probably really are) and maybe vaguely allude it later, but don’t push. As the victim feels more comfortable telling their story they will sometimes realize that something does not compute.

Don’t say or ask things that put the victim on the defense or make them feel stupid; they probably already feel bad enough. If a person has shared enough information to alert you that they are being scammed, they probably are at least beginning to have second thoughts, and will eventually open up, hopefully before it is too late. Then maybe you, and they, can deal with their “motivated reasoning”.

How motivated reasoning works

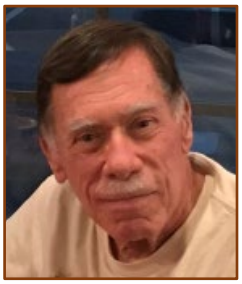
There is a phenomenon in humans called “motivated reasoning”, that is triggered when a person becomes the victim of any scam. If a person desperately wants something to be true, their brain does not ask, "Is this story believable?” Instead, it asks, “What can I do to make this story believable?” It is important to keep this in mind if you have an opportunity to short circuit a scam being perpetrated on a friend.

Conclusions

The real, possibly permanent, damage scammers inflict is the hit to the victim’s ego, their sense of self-esteem, when they realize they have been taken. These incidents cause many victims, or their children, to question whether the victim is able to live by themselves anymore.

No one should blame themselves for being scammed. These scammers are professionals skilled at manipulation. They know exactly what buttons to press to gain an individual’s trust. That’s why so many experts tell you to “Just hang up”

V2 originally did not want to tell me his story, but I used the techniques described above to draw out his experience. I have spent a considerable amount of time with V2, and he has no mental impairment. The financial loss is relatively insignificant to V2, and he is just considering this an expensive learning experience.
V2 is an intelligent guy and is still quite sharp – he just let his guard down. Don’t you! 💻



Meetings start at 7:00 PM (9:00 AM on Saturday) unless otherwise noted.

***Virtual Meetings during Covid pandemic..**

November

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 7pm General Mtg Space 6pm Tech Topics	11	12	13	14 Linux on Saturday 9:00 AM-Noon
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 MS Office (including Access) 9:00 AM—Noon
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5

December

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
6	7	8 7pm General Mtg Show Us Your Gadget 6pm Tech Topics	9	10	11	12 Linux on Saturday 9:00 AM-Noon
13	14	15	16	17	18	19 MS Office (including Access) 9:00 AM—Noon
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		



You have just read an issue of The Digital Viking.

Would you like to receive this delivered directly to your email or business each month?

As a member of TC/PC, the Twin Cities Personal Computer Group, one of the benefits is reading this monthly publication at www.tcpc.com..

As a member of TC/PC, you may attend any or all of the monthly Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings and be eligible for software drawings. The small membership fee also includes access to real-live people with answers via our helplines, discounts, and various other perks.

Does membership in this group sound like a good way to increase your computer knowledge?

It's easy to do! Simply fill in the form below and mail it to the address shown.
(If you use the form in this issue, you will receive an extra month for joining now.)

Here's the info for my TC/PC Membership:

Full name_____

Company name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

❍Home ❍Business ❍Change address: ❍Perm. ❍Temp. 'til _____

Home phone_____ Work phone_____

Online address(es)

Administrative Use Only Rec'd_____
Chk#

11/26

I'm signing up for3

❍ Individual/Family Membership ($9)

❍ Business Membership ($100)

If an existing member your # _____

Make checks payable to:

Twin Cities PC User Group
341 County Rd C2 W
Roseville, MN 55113

Or sign up on our website:

http://www.tcpc.com

❍ Check #_____ ❍ Bill me

❍ New member ❍ Renewal ❍ Prior member

I'm interested in:

❍ Training classes ❍ Volunteering

❍ Special Interest Groups: New User, Access, etc.

List here: