COMPUTER BYTES

Provided by Harv Oliver, HANDS-ON Consultations Computer Support Services   *February 2015*

My goal in this column is to provide general tips for your computer operations. Some views and/or suggestions will be for business use, some for home use, and some might apply to both. I hope they will assist you as we all navigate our way through this exciting, ever-changing arena.

This time up; **Boost Your Wi-Fi Speed**.

Wi-Fi has become so popular that the initial "Gee this is great!" attitude has given way to "Come on, hurry up!" It's just the nature of us humans. So, if you'd like to give your business or home Wi-Fi network a quick speed boost, check out these no or low-cost ways to improve performance.

NOTE: These are suggestions only so USE AT YOUR OWN RISK. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our offices for professional service/guidance.

CHANGE WI-FI ROUTER CHANNEL: A common cause of Wi-Fi network slowdowns is interference from household or other business Wi-Fi devices (the popular 'Wi-Fi' phone systems) or nearby networks (the business next door in your office complex). Changing the channel your network uses can often times make a difference. If you have a 2.4 GHz router, channels 1, 6, and 11 are usually used because they're furthest away from other channels. That said, even those might run into interference from nearby networks. So first find and run software that shows you the channels any nearby networks use, and how powerful their signals are. After you see what channels nearby networks are running on, choose a conflict-free channel for your own network.

If you have a combo 2.4 Ghz and 5 Ghz router (most routers today are), use 5Ghz because you have more bands from which to choose, and so are then less likely to have interference. Also, be sure to choose Auto or 20/40 MHz for channel bandwidth. That will both give you most bandwidth and be compatible with all of your devices.

UPDATE ROUTER FIRMWARE: Firmware is the 'software' inside your router that makes it tick. Manufacturers regularly tweak/update hardware's firmware which leads to faster, more reliable performance. Check out your documentation about how to update your router's firmware. Don't blow this suggestion off – it can really make a difference.

PROPER ROUTER LOCATION: Moving a router to a different location can make a surprisingly big difference in network speed on your devices. Before moving your router, check network speeds on your devices using a service like SpeedTest. You can also often visually note the status by the number of 'bars' your Wi-Fi connection shows in your respective device Wi-Fi connection status. Then move your router or access point to different locations, using SpeedTest each time, until you find the best location. Another tip; a general rule of thumb is routers like to be 'higher'. Up on top of the hutch, that type of thing.

PLACE EXTENDERS: Repeaters, extenders, and add-on antennas are great ways to extend your network's range to places in your office or house that currently have poor network coverage. These devices are reasonable in price and can really improve the Wi-Fi coverage area. They're particularly

good for extending your network to difficult places like multi-level facilities, separate buildings, basements, or a home upstairs floor.

KEEP YOUR WI-FI SECURE: This can seem a trivial thing but if your Wi-Fi network is unsecure OR you share with too many devices, it will slow up. Most units come now with default security – that's good. You can always modify as you like. A big factor is being aware of who/how many you share the key/password with. Many employees want to connect their handhelds/mobile devices. Remember when you have people surfing the net or watching video clips, movies, etc. on their iPhone, it's using up your Wi-Fi bandwidth!

There are multiple ways to achieve the same goal(s) in many computer operations/procedures. A friend or other professional might provide different views. If you find a different way, it's OK! It doesn't necessarily mean it's wrong, particularly if you're achieving your goals in a proper manner. Again, please keep in mind if you choose to try/perform activities based on the information we share, you do so at your own risk. In all cases, you should consider, and/or ask your consultant, or contact our offices for professional service/guidance on how they affect your specific operations

I hope these suggestions help you in your computer operations. Until next time, don't forget your backups! For more information, contact Harv Oliver, HANDS-ON Consultations, (805) 524-5278, www.hocsupport.com