

In This Months TechPoints

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Are We Compatible?

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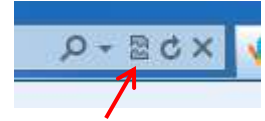
If you have been using the Internet for any reasonable amount of time, you have probably run into this problem once before. Like most people, you likely have a number of websites you will frequent at least once a day, be it LexisNexis, MSN, YouTube or any number of other sites for work or recreation. One day your web browser, such as Internet Explorer, runs an update, often citing increased security and browsing speeds. Suddenly, one or more of your frequently visited websites just doesn't look or work right anymore. Some buttons are missing or don't work; text boxes are empty or jumbled together; pictures don't look right or videos don't work; or perhaps entire pages of the site will not load. You try the refresh button multiple times with no luck. You may even have resorted to anti-virus scans and nothing shows up on your computer. Yet you still are unable to access some of your favorite websites. What could be going on that some websites are working fine and others are not? This situation is an all too frequent occurrence, one that is commonly caused by an issue known as browser incompatibility.



Like all things computer related, websites on the Internet are composed of an underlying code, be it HTML, Flash or other common coding languages. Your web browser is a piece of software that is designed to interpret this code into the images, links, videos and text that is widely viewed as your average website. However, just as there are many different coding languages, there are many different browsers, with multiple different versions between each browser. Commonly used browsers are Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome and Safari. Each browser interprets a website's code slightly differently, due to the browsers themselves being created by different people and companies entirely.

Additionally, each version of a browser, say Internet Explorer 9 compared to Internet Explorer 10, will interpret the code of a website different for various reasons, typically relating to security and browsing performance. An older website that was developed when Internet Explorer 9 or older was the standard, such as LexisNexis, may not function as expected in the much newer Internet Explorer 10. Now this is likely not always going to be the case. As long as the websites you frequent are consistently maintained, eventually the webmasters for that site will update the site to function on more modern web browsers, as long as there is enough demand for it. Unfortunately a website being updated to work on new browsers could take weeks, months or even years to happen. You're probably going to want to get back to using your website much sooner than that, so what do you do?

Well luckily there are a number of options available, two of which I'll describe here. Microsoft with Internet Explorer, have accounted for the potential that someone frequents a website that doesn't work with a newer browser and have included a feature known as the Compatibility View button. This button only appears in the address bar when a site is not compatible with IE. When clicked it causes newer versions of IE to view some websites through the eyes of an older version, such as Internet Explorer 10 viewing an older website as if your browser was Internet Explorer 8.



As for Firefox and Chrome, they unfortunately do not have a compatibility view in the same way Internet Explorer does. That being said, this is not usually as big a problem for Chrome and Firefox as it is for IE. This is due to the fact that these browsers were initially written to view code in a standardized way from the very beginning of their existence and continue to do so to this day with only minor variations between major revisions. Meanwhile, Internet Explorer consistently changes the way it reads code from version to version. Essentially, a website that you could see fine with Firefox 5.0 is very likely to work the same for Firefox 11.0, while a website designed for Internet Explorer 7 is very unlikely to work in IE 8 and above without the compatibility view.

While compatibility view has a very high probability of fixing your website, it is no silver bullet. Sometimes a website simply isn't optimized to work for a particular browser, no matter which version browser you use. In this particular situation, sometimes it is ideal to have another web browser installed in addition to your normal one, a backup if you will. What may not work in one browser could work perfectly in another, and it is often a couple simple clicks of a button to move all of your favorites and bookmarks from one browser to another for browsing convenience. While I personally prefer Mozilla Firefox as my primary browser for speed and security, I have Internet Explorer and Chrome installed as well, and will switch between them as needed if a particular website doesn't appear to work like I expect it to.

So if you ever see your browser change its look or layout from one day to another after a normally scheduled update, just remember that a website that isn't functioning quite right, simply might not be up to speed with the latest browser technology, and could be as easy to fix as clicking the Compatibility View button or switching to another browser!

Put Your Head in the Digital Music Cloud



([NewsUSA](#)) - When it comes to storing digital music files, people are often confronted with the dilemma of choosing which type of operating platform to use. In many cases, people find themselves stuck in the "i-opoly" -- the monopoly-style hold of Apple's iTunes on digital music -- of the digital-media world. Worse yet, users find that their digital music use is limited to certain devices based on their operating systems.

Well, this no longer has to be the case.

The "cloud" movement has opened a new door to the world of digital music. Having the ability to store your digital files in one central "virtual" location was the first step. The second step: accessing and playing those files from various devices across different operating systems -- according to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal, about 73 percent of iPad owners have another type of mobile phone other than an iPhone. One company, MyMusicCloud, may be the first to accomplish this feat.

"[MyMusicCloud](#) extends the simplicity of enjoying your treasured music collection stored on Dropbox by allowing you to hear it anywhere you go on any mobile device, tablet or PC," says Tamir Koch, CEO for

TriPlay. "Additionally, MyMusicCloud provides an incredible user experience via a music player interface displaying users' playlists, albums, artists and tracks."

Other cloud music services, like those from Apple, Amazon, Google and others, suggest the potential for making streaming digital music to mobile gadgets an everyday tool. However, they frequently don't cooperate across different devices and operating systems. Another problem is that without a signal, service is lost. On the contrary, with MyMusicCloud, users get an interface that not only plays nicely across the various operating systems but also has the capability to keep on playing without a connection to the Internet. Better yet, users can press pause on one device, then continue listening where they left off on another device. And those dreaded Blackberry compatibility problems are now gone.

"BlackBerry users should be able to simply enjoy their music collections on their devices of choice without having to be concerned with the technical complexity associated with getting those devices to talk with each other," says Koch.

To learn more about the free MyMusicCloud service, visit www.mymusiccloud.com.

Should You Be Using a VPN?

By Mark Thornton

You may already know what a VPN, or Virtual Private Network, is but are you using one? If you're not using one, there's a high likelihood that you really should be using a VPN. When it comes to the reasons why there are a number of them. But before we get into those it would probably be beneficial to review exactly what a VPN is for those of you out there that don't know.



A VPN, according to Wikipedia, is "a technology for using the Internet or another intermediate network to connect computers to isolated remote computer networks that would otherwise be inaccessible." Utilizing a VPN will give a user varying levels of security so that the traffic sent through the connection stays isolated from other computers on the immediate network. They can be used to connect individual users to a remote network or even to connect multiple networks together, depending upon the needs of the user. In doing so it gives users the ability to access resources on remote networks, such as databases, files, or printers. Also, due to the way VPN's function, it gives users the impression that they are directly connected to the central network.

One of the most significant things to know about a VPN though is that it secures your computer's Internet connection to guarantee that all of the data you're sending and receiving is encrypted and secured from prying eyes. This very reason is why VPN's should probably be utilized more often by businesses and their employees. Also, a VPN alone is just a way to reinforce your security and access resources on a network you're not physically connected to.

So why does all this matter? It matters because there is a growing trend within today's workforce for employees to work remotely or while on the road. As a result, there are many times when that employee is using a public Wi-Fi connection to perform their work which can pose a major security risk depending upon the data being transferred. This security risk occurs because many people don't realize that it isn't too terribly difficult for snoopers to capture that data. So whether it's what you're writing in your email messages, posting to your Facebook page, or even buying on-line, they are able to capture that with any of the readily accessible and easy-to-use programs that are out there.

Meaning that if the employee is sending sensitive and confidential emails at a local cafe shop those emails have a possibility of being intercepted and the sensitive information contained within them being exposed. Thereby potentially putting your business at risk. Which is definitely not a good thing.

Although there are many more good examples for why you should be using a VPN, for the sake of brevity, we won't get into them. The main purpose or intent, if you will, in discussing the issue of VPN's is

to inform you, as an employee, business owner or manager, of the potential security risks that could already be occurring within your business on a day-to-day level and to make sure that you are fully aware of those risks so that you can take the necessary actions to ensure your business isn't unnecessarily vulnerable.

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<http://www.articlebiz.com/article/1051598536-1-should-you-be-using-a-vpn/>



Shining Light on the Top 5 Myths About Solar Energy

([NewsUSA](#)) - Across the U.S., home solar installations are on the rise. In 2012, homeowners installed enough [residential solar panels](#) to power the equivalent of almost 24,000 homes. Despite its growing popularity, solar technology remains unfamiliar to many Americans. As renewable energy becomes a mainstay topic for the nation's partisan political debates, consumers may struggle to separate the facts about solar energy from common misconceptions.

Here are the realities behind five common solar myths:

Myth 1: Solar is a new, unproven technology. Solar technology roots reach as far back as 1885, when Charles Fritts built the first solar cell using selenium. In 1954, researchers at Bell Labs harnessed the photoelectric effect on silicon, setting the course for modern solar technology. Since then, solar has powered space exploration, oil derricks, cellular networks and grid-tied businesses and homes. In particular, SolarWorld, the longest-standing U.S. solar producer, has been manufacturing solar panels since 1975. "We've been in business for more than 35 years, and we've never had a product recall," said Kevin Kilkelly, president of SolarWorld Americas.

Myth 2: Solar only works in warm climates. While sunny states like California lead the U.S. in solar deployment, northern residents still have much to gain from installing residential solar panels. Just as people don't require full sunshine to see, solar panels don't require full sunshine to produce electricity. Germany, the country with the most installed solar capacity worldwide, counts on solar irradiation comparable to Seattle's.

Myth 3: All solar panels are created equal. Consumers should be aware that differences in quality and workmanship can curb the amount of energy produced. Be wary of solar panels manufactured in poorly regulated factories with questionable quality-control, labor and environmental practices. Instead, look for home solar panels from a reputable manufacturer, which can guarantee the highest power production and stand behind a 25-year warranty.

Myth 4: Solar panels are unattractive. To meet customer demand for attractive installations, a few companies now offer true-black solar panels, designed to blend well with residential rooftops. The panels are made from the most powerful solar cells available, meaning a homeowner can produce more electricity with fewer panels.

Myth 5: Solar is too expensive. Thanks to technological advances and attractive rebates, residential solar systems are more affordable than ever. In many parts of the U.S., homeowners can use financing programs to reduce upfront costs and spread payment over 20 or more years.

For details on solar installation and financing, visit: www.solarworld.com/solarmyths.

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