

MTC TECH TALK

*For Humans
Not Geeks!*

Your resource for the latest technology updates and opportunities for your success.

Are Your Smart Devices (Siri, Alexa, Google) Eavesdropping on You?




What's In This Issue?

Your Monthly
Technology Update

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IT Hacks to Help Cut
Your Energy Bill

Yes, It Matters Which Browser
You Choose

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Have you ever had a conversation about a topic, and then later that day, you saw news, ads, or updates about that subject and said to yourself: "This can't be a coincidence?"

Well, you're right, it isn't.

According to Norton, who you may know as an antivirus software company, your smart devices ARE listening to you because that's their job.

When you activated Siri, Alexa, or Google Assistant and it asked you to accept the terms and conditions, you, like most of us, probably simply hit "accept" without reading or listening to them. However, you may have yet to realize how much these voice-activated assistants listen to you or what they do with the information they collect.

A quick search of the terms for Siri (<https://www.apple.com/legal/privacy/data/en/ask-siri-dictation>) reveals that: When you enable Siri and Dictation, your device will send Siri more data than you may have bargained for, such as:

- Contact names, nicknames, and relationships (for example, "my dad"), if you set them up in your contacts
- Music and podcasts you enjoy
- Names of your devices and those of your Family Sharing members
- Names of accessories, homes, scenes, shared home members in the Home app, and Apple TV user profiles
- Labels for items, such as people's names in Photos, Alarm names, and names on Reminder lists
- Names of apps installed on your device and shortcuts you added through Siri



And Google states (<https://policies.google.com/privacy>):

"We will share personal information outside of Google if we have a good-faith belief that access, use, preservation, or disclosure of the information is reasonably necessary."

- We may share [non-personally identifiable information](#) publicly and with our partners – like publishers, advertisers, developers, or rights holders. For example, we share information publicly to [show trends](#) regarding the general use of our services.
- We also allow [specific partners](#) to collect information from your browser or device for advertising and measurement purposes using their own cookies or similar technologies.

These are just some of the highlights from their privacy policy, which is a lengthy 15 pages.

Remember, privacy policies aren't there to protect you – they're there to protect the companies that create them!

So, what do you do? Do you stop using smart devices, get rid of your phone and build a house in the woods?

That's probably a little extreme for most. However, if you're uncomfortable with your data being collected, you can do some basic things that make sense: cover your microphones and review app permissions.

Just as you might cover your webcam, you can also cover your microphone with a piece of tape or purchase a special phone case to stop your phone from listening to you. But a more surefire approach is to review the microphone permissions:

To disable your mic on your computer:

1. Go to your computer's list of devices,
2. Look for the microphone and disable it,
3. Just enable it once you need it for voice or video calls.

How to turn off your microphone on iPhone:

If you're questioning "is my iPhone recording me" or "is Siri always listening," you should know how to turn off your microphone on an iPhone.

1. Navigate to Settings > Siri & Search
 2. Toggle off the following items:
 3. "Listen for 'Hey Siri'"
 4. "Press Side button for Siri"
 5. "Allow Siri When Locked"
 6. When a pop-up window appears, tap "Turn Off Siri"
- And that's how you disable Siri.

How to turn off your microphone on Android:

To turn off "Hey Google" or to stop "OK Google," follow these steps:

1. Navigate to Settings Select
2. Google > Account Services > Search, Assistant & Voice > Voice
3. Select Voice Match and, finally, toggle off "Hey Google"

And that's how to turn off "Hey Google" and disable "Hey Google."

Something to keep in mind, though, is that while it's a little weird that Apple may know that your favorite musician is Taylor Swift, it's much worse if your business data gets stolen or locked down and you're out of business until you pay ransom to hackers.

The reality is that, if your data is going to be stolen, it's probably NOT through Alexa, Siri, and Google. Instead, most data breaches come from malicious links in e-mails; old, unpatched security vulnerabilities in software; and unsuspecting employees taking actions they shouldn't be taking. These risks can be mitigated and monitored, and existing vulnerabilities can often be eliminated by installing software updates.

We're available if you'd like to schedule some time to discuss any concerns on the topic. Call us at 845-237-2117, ask us to conduct a simple security assessment for free, and you'll know if your network and data are safe.

Technology Update:



If you use Google Chrome as your browser, did you know there's a way you can check exactly how secure it is at any time?

Go to the browser's **Settings** and select **Privacy and Security**. On the right, under **Safety check**, select **Check now**.

This checks for updates, looks at the strength of your stored passwords and tells you if browsing is safe and/or if you've downloaded a harmful Chrome extension.

Reach For Big Goals This Year With Microsoft Planner

Got big plans for your business this year?

Whatever you want to achieve, Microsoft Planner can help you to organize tasks, assign them to team members, and check the progress along the way.



To get started, create a team in Microsoft Teams. Add the people responsible for helping to complete tasks in your plan.

Next click on the + icon, and then the Planner tab.

Create a new plan and give it a name. When you do this, members of the team will be alerted that a plan's been created.

Next, you can create 'buckets' of work. For example, if you were organizing a virtual event, you could have a bucket for attendees, one for speakers, one for marketing, and so on.

Within each bucket you can set tasks with deadlines and assign them.

When you click into each task you get a more detailed view. Set a priority, add notes and attachments, comments, and even break the task down into sub-tasks.

Click on Charts at the top of the Planner screen, and you can see the progress of each task, in chart form.

Click on Schedule to get a calendar view of when each task is due to be completed.

We like to think of it as the ultimate collaborative to do list!

IT Hacks to Help Cut Your Energy Bill

With energy bills constantly on the rise, it's not just households feeling the pinch. Businesses too are being squeezed, and in many ways it's harder to cut down on the energy we use at work.

But there are a few little IT hacks that can help save money each month. Some things you'll already have considered – like cutting down on your printing, which not only saves energy, but also reduces ink and paper.

There's always more you can do.

Since the rise in hybrid working, many of us have switched from desktop computers to laptops. That's great because they already use a lot less energy, but when



employees leave the office at the end of the day, they often don't turn their machine off. Depending on your rate, that could be costing as much as \$35 per year for every workstation. So, encourage your people to power off computers every evening rather than leave them on standby.

You should also pay attention to other electronics in the office.

Turn off your printers, switch off chargers, and unplug any big screens you may have around the office. Even an unused phone or TV costs a little to keep it on standby overnight.

There are some tweaks you can make for daytime savings too. Reduce the brightness of monitors and use energy efficient lighting.

To make it easier to shut off office equipment, use energy-efficient surge protectors. Then, either have a maintenance specialist make the rounds after business hours, or task your employees to turn off equipment near their workstations when they clock out.

Does It Really Matter What Browser You Use?

Yes. The web browser you choose can have a big impact on your online security.

As well as allowing advertisers to track your online activity, there are often bugs and vulnerabilities in lesser-known browsers that cyber criminals can exploit to not only steal your data, but to compromise your entire network.

And while it's vital that you choose your browser carefully (and stick to the same browser across the business), it's equally important to make sure you run updates and patches as soon as they become available to keep your browsing as secure as possible.

You may already know that Google's Chrome is the most popular desktop browser in the world – more than 6 in 10 people use it. It's fast, easy to use, and it has built-in phishing and malware protection (though you shouldn't rely solely on that).

Next comes Apple's Safari, followed by Microsoft Edge. Edge is similar to Chrome in that it's fast, customizable and simple to use. It also gives you clear privacy options, which are super-important when



using a browser for business. As a Microsoft product, it's the default browser for Windows 11, and comes with some Microsoft-specific links. So if you use Windows 11 and haven't tried Edge, give it a go.

The key thing to keep in mind when choosing your browser is security. Don't just stick with the standard settings – customize them to suit your business. Look at the threats you may face, the settings that can help protect against them, and the usability... all in equal measure.

It seems like a relatively simple task to choose a web browser, but there's more to it than you think if you want to take security seriously (and you should!)

Can we help recommend the best browser for your business? Or make sure you're getting the most from your current browser's security settings? Get in touch – we're here to help.



This is how you can get in touch with us:

call: 845-237-2117 | email: info@meetingtreecomputer.com
website: www.meetingtreecomputer.com

Q&A

What's Focus Assist in Windows 11?

Focus Assist takes Do Not Disturb a step further. It can hide distracting icons from your Taskbar and give some notifications more priority than others. Use it together with Do Not Disturb and you'll be able to block out distractions to better focus on work.

Can I share a Word document without someone changing it?

Yes! Just click the editing button next to the share button in the top right of your screen. Then simply select whether you'd like people to be able to edit, view, or review the document. You can switch it back whenever you're ready.

Can I unsend an email in Outlook?

Sometimes. If both you and your recipient have Outlook email addresses, if the email hasn't already been read or opened, and if you're working on a PC, not a Mac. Open the email, go to File, and select Resend or Recall.

Submit Your Questions Here:
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