Rich Snippets

- Trumping Security?
- From Windows 8 to Windows 10
- Happy Halloween!

Windows 10

Microsoft recently announced that they are skipping Windows 9 (its current OS is 8.1) and will be proceeding directly to Windows 10.

The new upcoming OS seems to aim at striking a nice balance for a wide variety of users. It's not just business users with desktop and keyboards versus tablet users. Microsoft is aiming at all devices, whether that means a desktop, laptop and tablet or Windows Phone or xBox One – Microsoft is clearly aiming at a consistent user experience across all devices. Windows 10 is balancing the heritage of two decades of Windows with the new world of touch.

This is what we know so far based on the initial technical preview:

- The Start menu is back. It is the default in Windows 10 if you use a keyboard and mouse.
- The search box has all the Windows 8 features, including results from Bing and the Windows store. A separate Search menu next to the Start button gives you trending topics directly from Bing.
- You can pick the size and shape of the Start menu to give you more traditional app links or more pinned Live Tiles.
- You can have multiple virtual desktops (this is a nice feature specifically designed for power users).
- Despite rumors, the Charms bar that appears when you swipe the edge of a touchscreen has not gone away.
- When you are using a modern app, the Charms show up like a little menu on top of the app.
- The command prompt gets familiar keyboard short-cuts and other experimental opt-ins.
- There is only one version of Internet Explorer in the preview of Windows 10 and it is the full desktop version. It's not a new version of IE and it looks like the advances in IE will come out on their own schedule.
- Microsoft is promising that Windows 10 will ship to consumers later in the year in 2015.

So, to sum up, Microsoft is trying to keep the bits of modern interface that people like and find useful and, at the same time, not have them be annoying or intrusive when mouse users are trying to get things done. Windows 10 is fast, intuitive, bug free, and equally adept for tablets, laptops and desktop PC's.

Should User Access Trump Data Security in the 'Cloud' Era?

Recent news headlines have brought awareness, rightly so, to the importance of data security - and in particular, to the protection of confidential and proprietary information. We see new data breaches as a regular occurrence, from credit and debit card information, to other personal information (names and addresses, social security numbers, passwords). This is causing real losses and consumer pains:

- Target (40 million card holders and 100 million customers),
- Home Depot (56 million cardholders),
- Apple iCloud photo and storage breached, and more recently
- JPMorgan Chase (83 million customers with information such as names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses) to name just a few high profile occurrences.

This poses a real risk to your business from a loss perspective – loss of trust, loss of clients, and loss of revenue due to real or possible loss of personal or other proprietary and confidential data. How does this affect small businesses without a retail presence or vast amount of external consumer customers? We believe in a very real way since each business holds some business or trade secrets and customer information! We often hear, "We aren't big enough to be the target of a hacker. While there may be a strand of truth to this statement, there are nameless and faceless attacks that do not discriminate, and we propose that your business resources (both hardware assets and data) are valuable and need to be protected!

So realizing that our risk is real, AND ALSO that we still need to operate productively as a business - how do we balance security needs with the daily operating requirements of our businesses? In particular, how does this affect our everyday business practices of wanting an ever increasing flexible and mobile workforce while increasingly leveraging cloud services? We have at the core competing business components of protecting our business assets and ease of use for our user communities. Data protection can be as simple as:

- routine management of security patches for all your computing assets,
- adopting good practices for perimeter protection including business grade firewalls with intrusion detection and prevention,
- maintaining a reasonable but secure password policy,
- enacting a mobile workforce policy including acceptable use,
- ensuring industry standard practices for security are used for remote access to systems and resources including SSL encryption and VPN for cloud and mobile access,

- and educating our workforce about security practices and policies.

Happy Halloween

Is Halloween *your* holiday? If it is, here are a few fun activities to do around town.

Fright Fest at Six Flags Great America - Fright Fest is open weekends from September 20 - November 2 plus Fridays in October.

Nightmare on Chicago Street, Elgin, IL - A few Agility consultants have survived the last three years, but somehow, someway a few of the undead keep on coming back. Top researchers and scientists have been working hard to keep everyone up to date about the coming annihilation which they believe will happen October 25th, 2014.

Spooktacular Weekend Downtown Downers Grove - family friendly Halloween activities all weekend long. Friday, Oct. 24th - Sunday, Oct. 26.

Chicago - Navy Pier's Really Big Halloween Party is just that... really big. The top tourist attraction gets a Halloween makeover from top to bottom. On Halloween and on the weekends leading up to it.