

The Aspect Diary



2021 kicked off in another, albeit unsurprising, lockdown. But there is a light in the distance & maybe by the time of the next issue, or the one after, we'll all be back in rooms full of actual people who are allowed to bring each other coffee, get Welsh cakes from caf  s (because, gosh, it's not like we didn't put on enough extra weight already in lockdown) & Zoom can go back to being just a feature on your camera.

We know there's been a collective losing of marbles over the last year, so I thought I'd share a recent moment of techno-idioty on my part to make you feel better. I was working from home, remoted onto my office PC, & Steve wanted me to test a video conferencing solution at the client site he was at. So he sent me a Teams invitation by email, which I accepted, joined the meeting & there he was, on screen. Perfect. Except he couldn't see me. What he *could* see, we eventually realised, was the planner on the wall behind my chair. My empty chair. In my dark, empty office. See, I was meant to accept the Teams meeting from my local PC, not from a remote session on my office PC. But hey, at least it was Steve on the other end, eh? Lucky it wasn't someone with no patience for stupidity

(And OK, there may have been that one occasion when I picked up my mobile phone to make a call & started tapping numbers, not realising I was still on the calculator app, but by & large, I have been firing on all cylinders, yes sirree).

Going back to video conferencing testing for a second, can I just say as well, when you've never actually 'met' a client before, having your first introduction to them be your WFH face (hair unbrushed, no makeup) splashed across their 60" TV ... eek.

We know you all believe that we're the repository of all knowledge (& of course, we are) but sometimes - whisper it - we're driven to consult vendor support. On one such occasion recently, we were trying to import a file & kept getting the error "invalid column header, header must be X". But it was X. So we sent the file to Vendor Support to see what they made of it. Now call us silly, but we assumed they'd look at the file, yes? No. "Try removing the '=' signs". Er, if you looked at the file, you'd see there aren't any. "Try breaking it down into smaller files". Again, if you looked at the file, you'd see it's only 3 lines. We hate to quibble, but - novel concept, we know - do you think there really might be something wrong with the header, you know, like the error said? Vendor support, day shift, knocked off. Vendor support, night shift, picked the ticket up & fixed it in 5 mins flat. It was the header. (No! Really?) It's like the Helpdesk of Horror in reverse & Steve has fallen victim to it too recently, where support for a different Vendor guided him through a series of printer menus, triumphantly announcing each time "& now you'll be on XYZ page!" No. "How about now?" No. "Now?" No!

Well that's it for issue 50. Hopefully # 51 will see life edging a little bit closer to normality again. We're getting there.



The Last Laugh



May as well alienate half the readership!!

The Aspect Newsletter

Issue 50 - Spring 2021

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Welcome to the Spring edition of the Aspect newsletter. It's our 50th issue! 50!! And now that we've all returned to the office here at Aspect, we probably could've had a cake. Except half the point of returning to the office is to get back into good habits, and cake - sadly - doesn't qualify. There again, it's never good to quit any habit completely cold turkey, is it?

It feels a bit odd, coming back to the old office routine, but it is nice to be able to see people again. As the song says, *little darlin', it's been a long, cold, lonely winter*. But keep your chins up, here comes the sun. (We do mean one chin per person; we're not implying you have double chins. Well not all of you.... ummm, OK, moving swiftly on).

The Helpdesk of Horror is a little truncated this time round, sorry. In the scant number of stories circulating online, most were of the "oh no, I had to do a site visit and the client was positive and didn't tell me!" variety, which - while undoubtedly fairly horrible for the support person concerned - aren't exactly *entertaining*. We mention this in case you thought the dearth of stories might mean people were actually getting tech-savvy. Don't be silly. You read about the lawyer who turned up as a cat (see page 2) and you realise they've just been lying low. But the Helpdesk will be back!

We started closing off this issue when the weather was as balmy as summer. But then it snowed. Isn't British weather wonderful? With all that variety, it's a pity it's no longer the weather that's our go-to conversation. No, the opening salutation between acquaintances these days is "have you had your jab then?" followed by ascertaining if you've had one dose or both, shifting onto which particular one you had, and finishing up with a comparison of side effects. The weather really can't compete.

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AspectBC FAQs

My Sage 50 accounts is still showing a date from weeks ago.

Sage only seems to synchronise the date when you log in. If you stay logged in, it won't update.



My remote connection isn't working!

This was THE ticket of 2020 and looks set to continue. Whichever VPN method you're using to connect to your office PC, you have to remember that there are two parts to it. First, you make connection to your office network. Once you're connected to it, then you connect to your actual PC. Mostly, people are forgetting the first stage and are clicking on the icon that would connect them to their PC. But without making that first connection, it's like going straight to spinning your steering wheel when you haven't turned the engine on. You're not going anywhere.

My Office365 Outlook search bar is gone.

Well no, it's not gone. It's just moved. Right up to the very top of the screen, above all your menus. Microsoft decided the new layout would improve efficiency for us all. (One might argue that what would improve efficiency is things being left where they used to be so we could find them without sending out a search party). You'll also notice - once you've tracked it down - that it doesn't start searching as you type anymore; you have to hit Enter.

So where do the Rules live now? And how do I forward something as an attachment?

Ah, efficiency. Isn't it great?

You will notice *waaaaay* over to the right at the end of the Outlook ribbon toolbar, an ellipsis (or three dots, to you and me). If you hover over it, it says "More commands" and that's where they've hidden them.



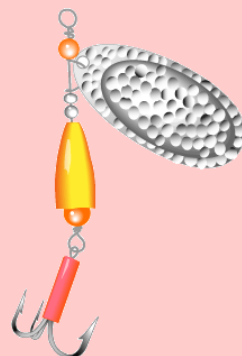
It strikes us that all this has much in common with the way supermarkets suddenly reorganise all their aisles. Their hope is that you'll discover new things while you search for stuff that's no longer where it used to be.

But, also in common with the resulting supermarket experience, it's mostly just really bl**dy annoying.

Are Usecure?

Since you're all getting into a voting mood (possibly pushing it there) we'd like to canvass opinion on a product we're thinking of taking on, see if you think it's something you'd take advantage of.

It's called **USECURE** and it's concerned with Cyber Security Awareness Training. With interactive training and phishing attack simulations, it can help you identify where your individual users are at risk, and deliver personalised programs to target those risks. The phishing simulations can be automated to run regularly, with different techniques, to see if users are getting better at spotting the fakes, and can deploy templates impersonating major, trusted brands. It can also run targeted spear-phishing exercises, where they pretend to be internal staff in your organisation.



There's more to Usecure than just the security training, but at this stage, we're mostly interested to see if you're interested, so we'd appreciate any feedback you have.

Oh my paws and whiskers!

Anyone who has suffered a Zoom / Teams malfunction will have sympathised with Texas lawyer Rod Ponton, who appeared by video link before a judge ... as a cat. As he struggled desperately to remove the filter, the kitten's face mimicked his own, eyes flitting in panic back and fore across the screen.



So well done Rod, firstly for bringing a welcome note of hilarity during lockdown, and secondly for setting what must surely be a legal precedent, as he testified in front of a judge - "I am not a cat".



We'd love to hear your comments and feedback.
Just email:
newsletter@aspectbc.co.uk

(Recent issues are on the website if you missed them).

Analogue Phone Service in the UK - it's switching off soon

In 2025, Openreach will be switching off their analogue phone service. If you still have an analogue phone plugged into a regular 'BT' socket on the wall, it will no longer work. By June 2021 Openreach will already no longer install or accept new analogue line orders for lines at 120 exchanges around the UK, with that number increasing over time.

Should I panic now?

No, but we can quite believe you'll be encouraged to. Businesses have been getting grave warnings delivered as though the service is cutting off this year (it's not, but as we said above, new orders for the old technology won't be accepted past summer). The media will likely climb aboard to terrify domestic customers with photos of rural villages who have lost their banks, post offices and now stand to lose their phones. They all deserve a good slap. If you remember, it's not that long ago that all TV services went digital and the old analogue signals stopped. The world did not end.



For some people, this will make no difference at all. Many people only have a landline analogue phone service because they are 'forced to' in order to have DSL broadband service. Many people never even use their landlines for voice calls; mobile inclusive packages normally provide better value for calls and convenience for mobility. According to Ofcom, only 5% of households don't have mobile phones, but to be fair, that doesn't mean that every member of the other 95% of households has a mobile phone or that they don't still need their fixed line.

(As a by-the-way, if you're no longer getting analogue voice services across your landline, will your line rental get cheaper? Ha! No, not likely. The copper line still needs to be provided for broadband, and that's the costly part for Openreach - the actual phone service is a revenue generator).

So what will happen?

To be clear, no-one can just come along and announce your existing voice service is no longer viable, you're cut off, bye bye. If we can look at **home users** first, it's possible you may not have broadband, that you don't *want* to have it, but you do still want a landline voice service. In that case, your voice provider should be working to find a way to provide you with an equivalent service. If you *do* have broadband on an analogue line, then you'll either get a different kind of socket put in or you may get a different kind of router that a phone can plug into (if your current one doesn't have such a thing).

For **business users**, it's much less likely you won't have broadband in some shape or form, so the obvious thing to do is to switch you to VoIP (Voice over IP - basically making calls over the internet). It would be lovely if you all had access to *fibre* broadband, but while the government pledged in 2018 that everyone would have full fibre by 2025, it looks as though they might only be able to achieve upwards of 70% by then, and without some hefty investment (hello Mr Taxpayer!), full roll out might not be till 2033.

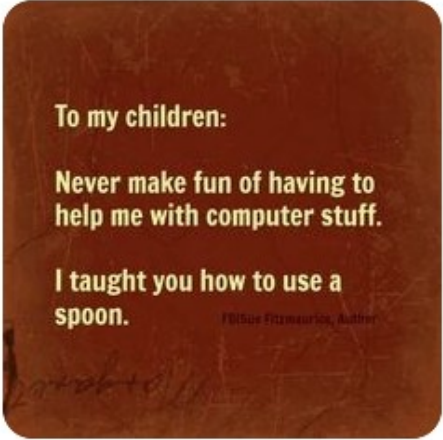
What's so great about fibre?

Perhaps it's fairer to ask about the drawbacks of copper. A single analogue phone line requires a pair of wires running all the way back to the telephone exchange. Imagine, hundreds of lines in every street; thousands going back to the exchange. If a cable gets damaged (and they can be brittle, subject to water damage etc), hundreds of clients can lose their phone and broadband and an engineer has to repair all those individual wires, one by one. One digital cable, on the other hand, can carry thousands of phone calls on its own, is less prone to issues and if it does get damaged, well, it's one cable. Furthermore (and this resonates with us in our line of business) you have the additional problem of obtaining parts for older analogue technology, plus the new engineers coming in aren't familiar with it. (Yeesh, kids these days ...)

I'm a business user - what should I do?

Talk to us. We have scalable solutions for businesses of all types and sizes, and we'll have one to suit you.



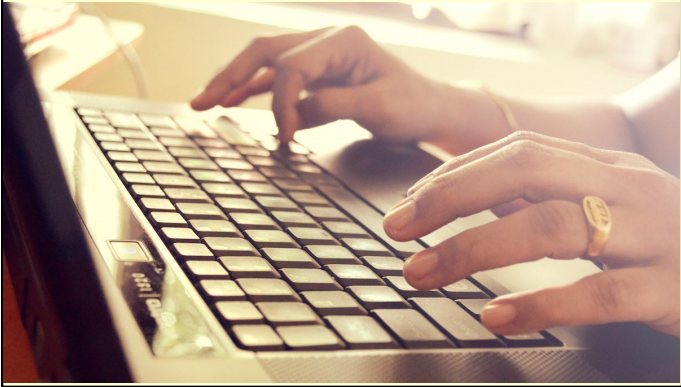


Jargon Buster #36 - 2FA

To be clear, that’s 2FA, not sweet FA. 2FA stands for 2-Factor Authentication and basically means that there’s an extra step to logging in to applications such as Office365 emails, banking or mobile phone accounts. You have to get (or generate) a code on your mobile phone or PinSentry device as an additional security step.

The reasoning behind it is that even if someone has somehow got hold of your password, they still won’t be able to access your account, unless they also have access to the other device (be it your phone, or bank card + PinSentry reader). There is an obvious flaw in the argument, mind, should you get mugged/robbed/burgled and lose the lot. This is why, for example, the password for your laptop should be in your head, and not - as we’ve sometimes seen - printed on Dymo tape and stuck to the laptop itself. (We would augment this with the analogy that you wouldn’t carry your PIN number in your wallet along with your bank card but we fear that there are people who might). But as secretive as you might be with your password, sadly we live in the world of the Key Logger - Trojans that infect your computer and can record every key you hit. The very act of typing in your password might be all it takes for someone to grab it.

Microsoft has made 2FA mandatory on high-level access accounts in Office365, such as Sharepoint or Exchange administrators, but it might become mandatory altogether. After all, they have the handy-dandy ‘optional’ BitLocker encryption feature in Windows 10 which has been known to turn itself on, unasked.



The Curse of Hafnium

No, it’s not an ancient Egyptian pharaoh. If it sounds more like a chemical element to you, you’d be right as there certainly is an element called hafnium (atomic number 72, if you care). But that’s still not the Hafnium we’re talking about.

In early March, Microsoft announced they were aware of attacks against on-premise Exchange Servers (on-premise meaning the ones that sit in people’s offices rather than being hosted in the Cloud) that targeted a zero-day vulnerability. This is basically a vulnerability at the point before it’s been patched, day zero, if you will, in the countdown towards fixing it.

It was blamed on Hafnium, a cyber espionage group with alleged ties to the Chinese government. (Uh-huh, and if we can stop you there for a second, let’s head off the Chinese Virus Take II headlines that are probably writing themselves in your heads, OK? It’s not helpful.)

As we discovered, however, rather than the announcement being a heads-up, it was more of a “best go shut the door now the horse had bolted”. The hack had already hit.

Obviously Microsoft have no choice but to announce such things when they occur, and advise how to plug the hole. Unfortunately, the cyber espionage world being what it is (ie. despicable), all that happens is that every low-life hacker thinks “yaay, new vulnerability” and puts all their efforts into finding and exploiting it before people can protect themselves. Possibly Microsoft throwing out the solution (and again, what choice do they have?) even allows them to reverse-engineer back to figure out where the hole is, we don’t know.

For ourselves and our client base, well, we weren’t hit as badly as we might’ve been even 12-18 months ago. We’ve been steadily moving clients away from on-premise Exchange into the Cloud. But good grief, it was still a headache we could’ve done without.

“USERNAME OR PASSWORD
INCORRECT.”



...WELL
AT LEAST
TELL ME
WHICH
ONE IT IS.

Song Title Links Quiz

We’re going to give you some clues to songs where the last word of one song title is the first word of the next. We’re giving you the artist, and the first letter of each word in the song title - except for that missing link word. We’ve given you an example to start you off. Some of the resulting song mixes are interesting! (NB. This will probably be a one-off quiz, as we’ve already exhausted most of the vowels!)

Fill in the answers in the grid and the column of blue squares will spell out another pair of songs with a middle link. Remember - **we’re just looking for the linking word** to be put in the grid, not the whole song title.

Answers on the website - follow the link from the newsletter page.



Pet Shop Boys WE JWHF Cyndi Lauper
= West End G i r l s Just Wanna Have Fun

Cat Stevens	FA					OMF				
ABBA	TWTI					ON				
Donovan	M									S
Elton John & Kiki Dee	DGBM									OG
Kim Carnes	BD					WAF				
The Commodores	TTA					M				
Ralph McTell	SO									C
Crowded House	DDI					TR				
Boyzone	NM					AFB				
Blondie	OWO									POMH
David Bowie	SA									OL
Lindisfarne	L									R
David Bowie	J									IAB
Sam Smith	IKINTO					SB				
Alison Moyet	AC					ITF				
The Beatles	LITSW									OTSOHS
Elton John	TBI					FG				
The Specials	TMT					HRF				
Gary Numan	AF									A
U2	WOW					CHL				
Belinda Carlisle	HIAPO									S
Kylie Minogue	ISBS									M
Manic Street Preachers	ADF					IAM				
Haircut 100	LP					NIB				
Christopher Cross	RLT					BMW				
Baccara	YSIC									W
Van Morrison	BSOT					TH				
Foreigner	CA					IB				
Elvis Costello	IDWTGT									D
Dave Edmunds	IHY									OHD
The Beatles	TT					AWS				
Sheena Easton	FYE					TL				
The Eurythmics	TMB									OH
David Bowie	JIO									ITS

Chicory Tip
The Small Faces
The Beatles
Blondie
Billy Idol
The Beatles
The Clash
Judy Garland
The Doobie Brothers
Janis Joplin
Mariah Carey
The Beatles
Christina Aguilera
Madness
Gary Moore
Paul Simon
Take That
Candi Staton
Eddy Grant
The Supremes
Michael Jackson
The Verve
10CC
Murray Head
Bette Midler
Earth, Wind and Fire
Chris Rea
Vanilla Ice
The Fratellis
Bob Dylan
T Rex
Roy Orbison
U2
Martha Reeves and the Vandellas

Vassilly's Blog

Mon 4 Jan

Greetings from lockdown – again – loyal fans. Christmas is being very low key, but I am get many interesting present now that everyone is buy online. I am get 6 different variety of Eau de 'Kat – full marks to cousin Petrov who is track down version scented with Kalahari Dung. Is bring back many happy memory, and also is full of excellents for the promoting of social distancings. You are ask about New Year resolutions? Well last year, I am decide to not waste time with negative peoples. This year, I am avoid peoples who is positive.



Fri 29 Jan

Well that was boring month.

Mon 1 Feb

Whoo-hoo! A new month ... in lockdown. Newspapers is say we are due visit from Beast from the East soon. What? How is cousin Aleksei allowed to travel? What if he is want to stay with me? He is size of four normal 'kats and is competitive eater on TV. (Huh. He think he is share my food? I am show him competitive eating).

Mon 8 Feb

Ah. Beast from the East is not Aleksei. It is coldness that is make whiskers freeze. I am put mask on to go into shop and whiskers is snap off. I am wear mask all the time now till they is grow back. Is embarrassing!

Fri 12 Feb

You is maybe wonder if I am do any work this year yet. Payrolls lady is also phone to ask. Of course, you is wonder because my work at Aspects is so full of excites and interest, and is make for blog full of thrills. She is suspect I am actually hibernate. Ahhh, I say, but if she is give me laptop, I can do Zoom thing to prove I am awake. She say (1) if she is bring me laptop, she is see right there if I am awake, (2) only 'kat she is want to see on Zoom is cute kitten that is appear in court in America and (3) ... is no #3. She is not give me laptop. Hmmp.

Tues 2 Mar

Payrolls lady say she is have brainwave. (IT Boss Man say he is wonder what is burning smell). She say is way for me to be productive Aspects team member and also do social distancings. She say I can do stock takes. At night. What? No!! Offices is creepy in the dark. Plus meerkats cannot sleep during day. (Unless is very boring day). She is ask if I am not want to be productive team member. I am! But I am not want to be getting heebie-jeebies in warehouse at midnight. (Peoples, there is acceptable maximum for number of legs on anything alive in Aspects, and it is four).

Wed 10 Mar

Someone is show me schedule for vaccinatings. Where is 'kats on the list?! I AM WANT MY JAB!! I am phone Payrolls lady and ask why is no-one think of 'kats. She say is surprising, because when she is think of stabbing someone with sharp object, 'kats is what she thinks of most.

Thurs 1 Apr

Yes, I am being quiet for few weeks, peoples. Is nothing happen! Is nearly Easter and I am not even sure if I am get heaps of chocolatenousness this year. But is some good news – Payrolls lady say we are come back to office from 12 April. Huzzah! I am miss my Aspects buddies! I am miss witty banterings. I am miss smell of bakery next door..... ohhhhhhh, bakery smells I am miss *everything*:- toilet that is flush with noise like moose in distress, kitchen tap that is spray water every way except down, yap-yap-yap all day from dog park ... sigh. Happy days, peoples, happy days.

Mon 12 Apr

We are *baaaaaack!!* I am full of excites to be out and doing, and now I will be having many tales to be thrilling you with, loyal fans! (What? Payrolls lady says this issue is done already!! I think she is do this on purpose....)

> 'Enter new password'

~ 'chicken'

> 'Password must contain a capital'

~ 'chickenkiev'

I was setting a voice recognition password for my new phone. A nearby dog barked and ran away. I'm still trying to find him so I can unlock my phone.

[On putting down a phone ...]

OH MY GOD
I HAVE ANOTHER HAND!!!

My email password has been hacked again. That's the third time I've had to rename the cat.

To whoever stole my copy of Microsoft Office:
I will hunt you down and I will make you pay.
You have my Word!

Any room is a panic room if you've lost your phone in it.

"Do you have any questions about the menu sir?"
"Yes - what font is this?"

Someone stole my external hard drive. That really got my backup.

Hell is wallpapered with all your deleted selfies

The Helpdesk of HORROR ...

A rather short foray into the terrors of support this time



"Could you reset my password please?"

"OK, just a second Right, it's Bw4789010. That's capital B, lower case w, 4789010."

"That's not working."

"Really? Read back to me what you've written down?"

"B-u-u-478..."

"No, w, not double u."

"Huh?"

"W. W for whisky."

"Ohhhhhh."

"Can you help? These instructions say to click on the hamburger menu. I don't know what that means."

"Is there a symbol up at the top somewhere, three horizontal lines on top of one another?"

"Yes. Is *that* it?"

"Yes. Supposed to look like a hamburger, see. Bottom bun, burger, top bun, piled up."

"What if there was cheese?"

"Yeah, you might be over-thinking this."

"All right then, we're looking for a symbol that looks like a speaker, down by the clock."

"No, haven't got that."

"Nothing that looks like a speaker? Maybe there's a little up-arrow you can click to see more icons?"

"No, I mean I haven't got a clock."

"But you must have. Bottom right corner of the screen."

"Nope."

"Really? Tell me exactly what you see, from the farthest right corner, going left."

"Well there's a notifications button, and then the date and time ..."

"That's it, that's the clock!"

"Ohhhh. I thought you meant, like, a clock face, with hands."

"OK, if you could type backslash, backslash, abc...."

"Wait a minute!!"

"Sorry. Are you looking for the backslash?"

"No, I'm still typing it. ...c-k-s-l-a-s-h..., right what was next?"

"Type Windows—R ..."

"How do you spell windosar?"

"I can't get on the Internet. I just get 'page not found'."

"That's OK. Near the top of the screen, do you have a little cog wheel? Click on that."

"OK."

"Now, can you choose 'Internet Options' from the menu?"

"No, I can't."

"Umm, why?"

"It's too hard. Computers are too hard. I'm sorry, I can't do it." [click]

