

The Aspect Diary



We had a dreadful example of sales-speak sent to us in August. They wanted to “learn about our business roadmap ... & explore potential synergies”. Shudder. But at least it was spelled correctly. We read the news online sometimes & can only assume the journalists dictate their words to the PC & then never check them. How else do you account for ‘a weekend immune system’ or a ‘grizzly murder’ (OK, barring bears actually being involved, which they generally aren’t in Wales).

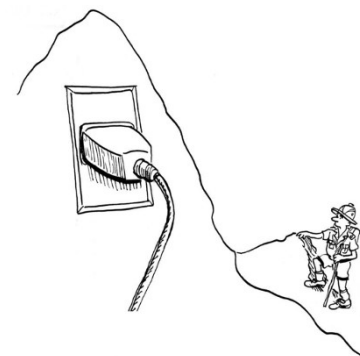
Speaking of spelling, we were on the phone to a well-known computer manufacturer’s support line recently. We had to spell out our end user’s email address, which we did, phonetically. It included the word ‘Cardiff’. The support tech rang back shortly afterwards to say the email had bounced, & could they re-check it with us. Seems they’d put an ‘E’ in ‘Cardiff’. Quite where, we can’t imagine. We’d like to say that once the spelling got sorted out, the whole process went swimmingly but ... no. Mostly it just circled the drain for days on end.

Probably everyone has an opinion on the new 20mph speed limit, but here in Bridgend, we’re convinced the council members were given a box of drawing pins with a speed written on each one & were all blindfolded while they stuck them in a map. You can imagine the conversations when the blindfolds came off.... “oh, now come on, I’d put a 20mph there & you’ve got it going to 30 up there, that’s fine, that’s fine, but then you’ve stuck in a 50mph sign 20 yards later!! Oh & look by there ... really? You’ve got a 20 there, a 30 there, 40 there & then a national speed limit one there. On a half-mile stretch of road!”

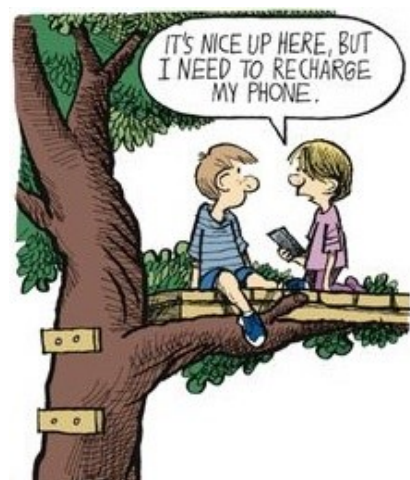
An email turned up in Oct from the “United Church”, telling us we might be surprised to learn we were one of only 10 people being chosen to help a Spanish woman who lost her family in an accident. We certainly were, as we’re pretty sure they’d have sent the email out to tens of thousands of people, who probably all – if they had any sense – deleted it. It was an excellent sob story though, with Bible verses quoted for extra verisimilitude (look it up).

Well that’s it for another issue. We said the Ch-word 4 times on the front page, so we’re not going to mention it again. Let’s just say we’ll see you next time!

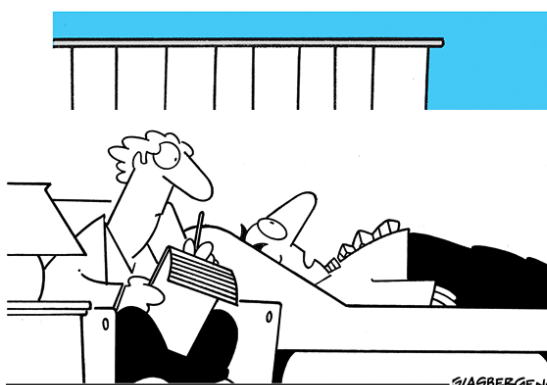
The Last Laugh



He had finally found the source of the internet.



I didn't have time to protect my identity so I gave them yours.



“Ever since I signed up for Twitter, I get the feeling that people are following me!”

The Aspect Newsletter

Issue 60 - Autumn 2023

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I'll be watching you ...

Don't panic, it's OK. We do 'monitor' client computers, but not to the point of actually watching what you're doing all day. It's just not that interesting to us. Well we say that, but there was that one time, many moons ago, when a client had evidently forgotten or not noticed we were still connected to his machine and working remotely on it, and proceeded to begin typing an *extremely* explicit email to his girlfriend. There didn't appear to be a good time to wave the mouse and advertise we were still there, watching in horrified fascination (and it was 'we' - the engineer in question called us all over to see), so we waited till the user had finished and clearly gone away from the PC before carrying on. We're not sure if he realised afterwards, but nothing was ever mentioned. We *are* sure his wife should've kicked him to the kerb though.

Welcome one and all to the Autumn newsletter. So it seems we had autumn in summer, and a blast of summer in autumn. Daffodils for Christmas, anyone? Also, this is issue 60. 60! For those of you amazed we manage to keep churning these out, we can assure you nobody's more surprised than us. And even though we said last time that we much prefer the summer and autumn editions as there's no real deadline, this one is getting perilously close to the Christmas one. Good job the Christmas story was already written back in January! (Hands up who's depressed at getting three mentions of Christmas in one paragraph? Four mentions, including that one).

We shall leave you to enjoy Hallowe'en, Guy Fawkes and all things autumnal!



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Registered in England & Wales
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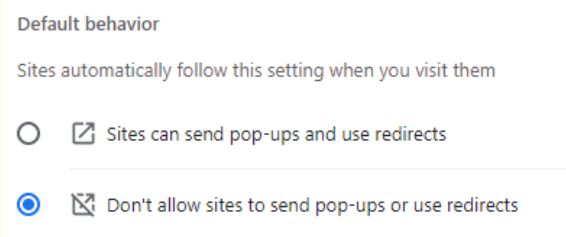
AspectBC FAQs

A website I use all the time isn't working properly. I can login, but when I click on things, nothing happens, or I get an error.

Difficult to know whether the site itself is at fault, but we'd suggest trying a different web browser first. So if you're using Chrome, say, try Microsoft Edge or Firefox instead.

I'm being plagued with pop-up messages. How do I get rid of them?

You've probably got them because you accepted cookies on a dubious website. Just saying! Anyway, in Chrome, right at the very top on the very far right, there's three vertical dots. Click on those. Choose [Settings](#) from the drop-down menu. Now choose [Privacy and Security](#) from the left-hand menu. Then, from the menu in the middle (you do kind of have to chase these options all over the screen), choose [Site Settings](#). From the next menu, choose [Pop-ups and redirects](#). Choose to not allow sites to send pop-ups or use redirects:



I've got to take part in a Teams meeting, but I don't have Teams installed on my computer.

If you've been *invited* to a Teams meeting, you don't need to have Teams yourself. You only need it if you want to initiate a meeting and invite other people.

We have had a staff member leave, and I've been given access to their mailbox, but it only goes back a year. How do I get the rest of it?

By default, you will only see a year. Pulling down all the mail can get unwieldy. But there's a couple of ways you can access older mail. One is to login in to Office online, using the person's email address and password. That'll give you their entire mailbox. Or, within the mailbox you can see via your Outlook, you could try *searching* for the thing you need - if it can't find what you want in the year that's available, it'll ask if you want to search the server as well. Hopefully that should give you what you need.

Penguin Power!



Later in the newsletter (page 6), we've told you about the demise of Windows Server 2012, which means any system running it needs to be retired, or you run the risk of it being a security vulnerability.

If this affects you and - more importantly - if the prospect of stumping up for a new Windows server brings you out in a cold sweat, but at the same time you're wary of using pure Cloud-based file sync'ing systems, then you might want to consider Linux as an alternative to a Windows server (hence the penguin, which is its logo). Linux, if you're not aware of it, is an open source operating system.

Open source means *free*. Ah, we see we have your attention now.

To be clear, you do still need a machine for Linux to run on, so this is not a completely cost-free option. But a significant portion of a new server's cost is the operating system and client licences, so any saving there has to be welcome, surely.

Admittedly, if all you do is share files, then there is always the option of a network attached storage device (NAS), which is basically just a bunch of disks. But a Linux server would be much more versatile.

First question - will a Linux server be suitable for every business? No, it won't. We'd need to look at your particular situation and how you operate.

Next question - assuming you can have a Linux server, will it seem weird for the users? Nope. They probably won't even notice they're not using a Windows server. You still have a single login to access it, and it has pretty much the same Group Policy options as you'd get with a Windows server.

If this is of interest to you, but you have questions (and we'd imagine you might), please get in touch.



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).

Crypto-viruses

We went through a spell in these newsletters when it seemed like we were warning you in every edition about the dangers of crypto-viruses. Can we stress that just because we haven't mentioned them for a while, it doesn't mean they've gone away. If anything, they're ramping up again.



To remind you how these viruses manifest themselves, they basically encrypt your files, locking you out of them. The virus begins on one machine (the one that downloaded or opened it) and will infect the local files first before spreading outwards to every file that computer is able to see on the network. So speed is of the essence. As soon as you realise something is wrong - and it should be very obvious - get the machine off the network and shutdown immediately. Yank out the network and power cables if you have to. Ordinarily, that's not something we'd recommend, but these wouldn't be ordinary circumstances.

With the best will in the world, mistakes can happen, so if you do accidentally open something you shouldn't have and strange things start happening, don't stick your head in the sand and hope no-one realises it was you. It will become blindingly obvious it was you when the investigation starts, as your machine will be the only one whose local files are encrypted. So come clean and flag it up as fast as you can. The faster it's spotted and remedial action can be taken, the better.

Crypto-viruses are also called ransomware, because the hackers want to be paid to un-encrypt your data. We're quite proud to say that none of our clients who've ever been attacked has had to cough up. We've always got them back up and running. You really don't want to pay the hackers - it only encourages them.

The Importance of Being Backed Up

In reference to the piece to the left about Crypto-viruses, can we make a point of explaining how we've managed to get our clients up and running without paying a ransom?

BACKUPS. Backups, backups, *backups*. Can't stress how important they are. Do remember as well that it's likely only your server(s) that get backed up, so if you're keeping anything important on your local PC/laptop, it's probably not being backed up as a matter of course. If your drive fails, or you get a virus, you may lose everything on the machine. We do offer a cost-effective backup solution for local machines, so give us a call to find out more about that.

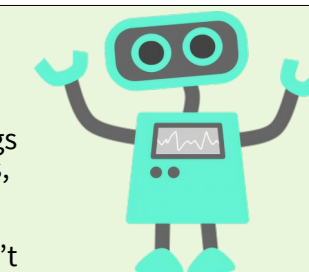
Remember as well, though, that you should be carrying out test restores from time to time - you don't want to be finding out when the proverbial hits the fan that in fact your backups haven't been working as well as you thought!



Is anybody actually there?

Microsoft have developed an AI assistant that can summarise Teams meetings for people who'd rather not join in (so, most people?) It can also draft emails, graphs, presentations and more. In tests, **Microsoft 365 Copilot** rather worryingly managed to applaud a new project and declare excitement at being involved, despite nobody actually having read the proposal. It also isn't made clear anywhere in the email thread that it was generated by a ChatBot, which is a bit of a no-no under current regulations.

The product will be embedded into Microsoft's Office apps, and will be available from 1 November. It's stated intent is to eliminate drudgery ... but there are obvious concerns that what it will actually eliminate is workers.



You know you're getting old when ...

.... someone sends you an emoji and you have no earthly idea what it's supposed to indicate.

What turned up was this  Excuse me, what?



Squinting at it didn't help, so we enlarged it ...

Yeah, still got nothing. So we resorted to Googling it. Apparently it's one of the "Ninja Cat" series - Ninja Cat Riding A T-Rex.

We say again what? What does it even *mean*? We understand the usual emojis - I'm sad, I'm angry, I'm disappointed, I'm happy, I'm sick, I'm ... a Ninja Cat riding a T-Rex?

Ah! Wait a minute! If you hover over an emoji, it'll give an explanation of it! Problem solved! So this is *Dino Cat*.

Super. Thanks.

Help us to help you

We have mentioned before that the more information you can give us about an issue, the better. Screenshots, error messages, they all help. (An email saying "I have an issue with my PC" ... not so much).

But sometimes you overlook the most important bit:- how we actually get hold of you. If you're in the office, all fine and good, but if you're working from home and email us for help, it'd be helpful if you remember to include a mobile number so we can talk to you.



We can email you, or even do a live chat, but neither is as productive as actually talking to you.

End of the line for Windows Server 2012 and 2012 R2

10 October saw the end of support for Windows Server 2012 and 2012 R2. That means if you've got a server still running either of those operating systems (or, God forbid, something even earlier), it's a security vulnerability. There won't be any more security updates for it and so it's really time to replace any affected servers. (If you *should* still be running an even older operating system, then can we say it's really-really-really-really time to replace it. With bells on).

We'd be happy, nay, thrilled, to quote you for a new server, but we'd also be looking at your existing set-up to see if there's any room for consolidation. Perhaps you have another, newer server that could be upgraded to handle the extra load by means of virtualisation - that means having more than one 'virtual' server living on one physical server. So no extra *machine* to buy, but possibly just some extra innards.

Or maybe your situation is such that you don't really need a 'file server' per se. We would look at that too. Maybe just a method of central file sharing would do you.

Give us a call if you'd like us to review your particular situation and offer up some options going forward. We'd also draw your attention to our column on page 2, which presents a different option that might interest you.



Aspect Answer Smash!

And back we go to Richard Osman's *House of Games* for inspiration.

The final round in every one of his quizzes is called *Answer Smash*. You get a picture plus a word clue, and you have to smash the two together. For example, if our picture category was vegetables:

 + Dutch seaport (and a song by *The Beautiful South*) = **CARROTTERDAM**
(Carrot + Rotterdam)

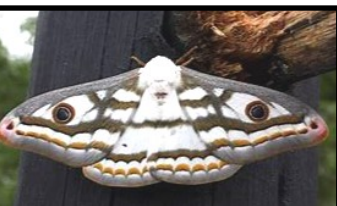



Got it? The end of one will be the beginning of the other. But there could be any number of letters overlapping. (And if you don't recognise the picture, you can always try working from the clue instead).

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

First picture category: Birds

				
Sugary, spun confection sold at funfairs	Arm joint between wrist and shoulder	Game of Thrones character played by Maisie Williams	Irish comedian, star of <i>Father Ted</i> and <i>Death in Paradise</i>	Shakespearean tragedy set in Roman times

Second picture category: Insects

			
James Bond film starring Sean Connery, with title sung by Tom Jones	Actress who played Roz in <i>Frasier</i>	Famous cat and mouse cartoon duo	Large houseplant, popular since Victorian times, often derided as "middle-class"

Third picture category: Garden Items (and to ring the changes, it's clue first, picture second)

Actor who played Dr Watson to Robert Downey Jr's Sherlock	Landmark situated between Trafalgar Square and The Mall	Singer who had hits with <i>Poker Face</i> and <i>Bad Romance</i>	Best Actress Oscar winner for <i>Shakespeare in Love</i>	1987 film starring a very young Christian Bale
				

The difference between
genius and stupidity?
Genius has its limits.

My boss calls me "The Computer".
Not because of my calculation skills,
but because I go to sleep when left
unattended for 15 minutes.

My internet
stopped working
for 5 minutes.
Met my parents.
They seem nice.

What is similar to Windows
but can instantly detect
the cause of most common
computer problems?
A mirror.

"... and now more on that theft
from the Apple store. Police
confirm around \$25,000 of
merchandise was stolen, but
they're hopeful of getting both
computers back."



Computer and car
salesmen differ in that
the latter know when
they are lying.

Who is General Failure, and
why is he reading my disk?

Vassilly's Blog

Wed 2 Aug

August already, loyal fans, and weather is still bleah. I know I am tell you in last issue that I am learn rollerbladings, but bad weather is put me off. Is not at all because I am balance like three-legged giraffe with rickets.

Thurs 3 Aug

Telecommmmms Boss Man is need help with job and is tell me I am right 'kat for it. I am look at rain pouring down windows and oooh! also lightning! Wait, wait, wait. Job is outside, isn't it? I am hope to hide till he is have to go without me, but I am run out of hiding places at Aspects - Boss Men is find them all.

Wed 30 Aug

Is end of August already and not even beginning of summer. Sergei is not take winter vest off yet. (He is also not wash it yet. Smell is enter room five minutes before he is. Is he ever retire?)

Tues 5 Sept

Summer! But is too hot now. Whiskers is droop and is too much effort to be working. (Payrolls lady is ask what is excuse rest of year). Sergei is take off winter vest now, and also tie. But he is still smell like polecat's armpit.

Thurs 14 Sept

I am help Telecommmmms Boss Man with job. Once again, he say I am perfect 'kat for it, so first I am check weather. Hmmm, is not raining. We are get to site and is look very normal, but then he is pull out ladders. Long ladders. He is thank me for volunteering to be on roof of kabin. No-o-oo, this is not sound at all like me. Unless I am not well? Yes, I am very not well. I should go sit in van for a bit. Maybe a few hours. Or so. Next thing, I am find myself on roof and Telecommmmms Boss Man is climbing back down ladder! I have been 'katnapped! Is maybe not raining, peoples, but there is draught up here that is go straight to unmentionable 'kat bits.

Tues 26 Sept

IT Boss Man is have bad back, so he is ask for help loading van. Box is not very big and he say it is just batteries. Huh, OK. I am stroll up and wrap paws around it ... aaarghh! I am turn around, lean against it and dig heels in. Unnnnnggggghhhhh! Pant ... gasp ... IT Boss Man is say to put back into it. Ha! Yes, then we is both being crocked up! Is no way this is box of double-A's. IT Boss Man say no, is battery pack for UPS. What, it is power the brown vans? He is shake head and walk away. Engineer Gareth is load it on van while I am go for very careful lie down.

Tues 17 Oct

Payrolls lady and IT Boss Man is back from short holidaymabobs. You are maybe notice over years that I am not write blog when she is not here. This is because she say I am need constant supervisings. I know she is always say I could cause troubles with labels. What? Oh, libels. Huh.

Wed 18 Oct

Apparently new storm is coming, and weather-peoples is say we have month-worth of rain. Oh. Can we choose which month? I would like May's. It was OK.

Wed 24 Oct

Cold! Sergei is put both vests back on and if you is ask me, he is still not wash them. He say smell is keep germs away. It is also keep colleagues away and is give nasty shock to delivery drivers. Payrolls lady say it is like physical presence now, and she may have to enrol it in pension scheme.

Wed 1 Nov

I am have excellent idea for trick or treatings last night. I am go with Sergei! (Is OK if you is upwind). Never mind sweets, peoples is give money to make him go away! On subject of going away, is time to be stopping for this issue. Is Novembers now and I am going to have big struggles to find enough excites to pack in between now and end of year. But I am the 'kat for it! Later, loyal fans!!



The Helpdesk of HORROR ...

It's a bottomless pit



"There's something wrong with this projector. Everything is BLUE!"
"That can happen if the VGA cable is loose or damaged. Can you check to make sure both ends have all their pins and that the cable is secure?"
"I've checked the cable! There's colour on the screen, but everything is tinted blue! Even the white areas are blue!"
"Hang on, are you using a screen or a wall to project on?"
"A wall! A screen is too much hassle."
"What colour is the wall?"
"Blue! Just tell me what I need to change to make things show up the right colour!"
".... Physics?"

"Yes, I did say to open the computer tower, but I meant for you to unscrew the panel using a screwdriver well yes, I would agree with you that the computer is now open, but seeing as how you opened yours with a blowtorch, it's safe to say there's not much more you can do at this point no sir, I will not be taking the blame for this."

"Sir, your MacBook seems to be stuck."
"Yeah, it's been caramelised."
"It's been ... what?"
"I was making caramel and it got all over my fingers. I needed to reply to a message on my MacBook, and it got all over the keyboard. Then I tried wiping it on the side of the MacBook, thinking I'd clean it up later, but I forgot. Then I closed it and it got left in the sun, so I think the caramel has sealed it closed. Can you fix it?"
"I don't know. We've never worked on a candied Apple before"

"I've got a software issue."
"Oh, I've seen this before - you just need to logout and log back in again."
"Can't you just push the big button?"
"What button?"
"The button you press to make problems go away."
"I don't have a button that will do that. Really, just logout and back in again."
"Oh, it's working!"
"Yes, I thought it might."
"Seriously though, you pressed the button, didn't you?"

"OK, type 'A' and press Enter."
"Didn't work."
"What did it do?"
"Nothing."
"Try it again."
[hearing faint clickety-click noises]
"Wait, what are you typing? It's only supposed to be an 'A'."
"Ohhh. I typed 'A-a-n-d-p-r-e-s-s-e-n-t-e-r.'"
"But didn't that give you an error message?"
"Yes, but I didn't think that's what you meant when you asked if it did anything."

"Right, so remember when I explained what a tab was, and what a browser was?"
"Yes."
"OK, I need you to open another tab."
"And what will that do?"
"It will open another window so you can look at the Internet on two separate tabs."
"No! That will download a new Internet! I can't afford two Internets!!"

"OK, sounds like you've got two cables at the back of your computer mixed up. It's a simple fix. I just need you to take the white cable out and put it where the red cable is, and take the red cable out and put it where the white cable is."
"Can't you ... I don't know ... fix it from there?"
"No, you need to change the wires from where you are."
"But I get confused easily by this stuff."
"Sir, I can advise from here, but I can't physically move the wires for you."
"Well I bought this from you, and I paid for the full technical support option! This doesn't sound like full technical support!"
"Sir, you're asking me to reach through the phone and move the wires from here, at this call centre, thousands of miles from you."
"Well is there a level of support I could upgrade to that will do that?"

"My password isn't working!"
"OK, let's try a few troubleshooting questions."
"No! I'm a retired computer programmer! I don't need your troubleshooting. Put in a tech ticket immediately!"
[Turned out the Caps Lock was on]

"My mobile phone isn't working."
"Oh ... this looks like water damage, or some other kind of liquid."
"Wow. How did that happen? Do you think maybe when I got back from the bar last night and plugged in the charger at the motel, they'd got their electricity and water pipes mixed up and injected water into my phone?"
"..... No."