COVID-19 Corona Virus – How I.T. Can Help – Telecommuting

https://www.pccomputerguy.com/Tech-Tip-Telecommuting-Overview-COVID-19-Corona-Virus

With the Corona Virus (COVID-19) now being declared a pandemic and cases continuing to climb there has been a lot of talk about "Tele-commuting." Tele-Commuting is the process of using technology to continue working without going into the office. We thought this might be a good time for us to look at some of the various ways technology can help. This will be focused on people that don't have a large I.T. infrastructure already in place; as these companies already have such technologies deployed. This is for people that don't have access to enterprise-level tele-commuting already in place; micro-businesses, small businesses and sole-proprietors.

Tele-Commuting and other supporting technology we will discuss include

- Remote Accessing computers
- File Sharing / Cloud file storage
- Browser Sync
- Web Video and Audio Conferencing software
- Phones / Communication
- Secure Chat Rooms for open-ended communication
- Supporting Hardware/Software (Phones, Cameras, Microphones, Scanners, Apps)
- VPN's

Remote Access

Video: https://youtu.be/Ps3mlVTtTQc

Perhaps the most important and critical aspect of tele-commuting is the ability to remotely and securely access your office computer(s). There are dozens of good software options to pick from; some of which can be expensive. What this software does is allow you to view your remote/work computer from home, as if you were sitting at your desk at work. You see the screen of your work computer, use the mouse, keyboard and sound just as you would any computer.
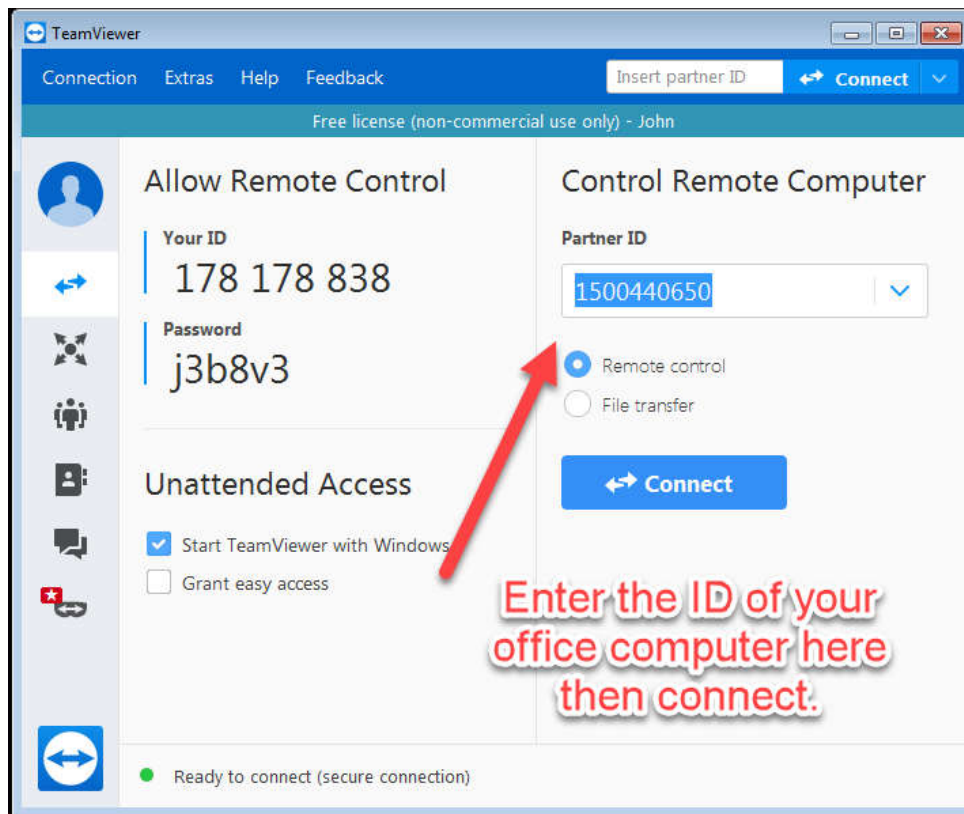
Teamviewer is a great, free remote-access tool (for non-commercial use). Teamviewer is fairly easy to get setup and running with secure remote-access to your remote computer. We use this software extensively for our remote-support service. For you to get this running, you'll need to download, install and properly configure it on your work/remote computer. You'll then need to install it on the computer you are going to access work from.

Installation / Configuration of Teamviewer

1. You'll need to download Teamviewer on both your "From" and "To" computer (aka host / Client). You can get it from https://www.teamviewer.com/en-us/teamviewer-automatic-download/
2. Install the software on your Host/Work computer
    a. Choose the option for unattended access – and personal/non commercial in our example.
    b. Hit the finish/install button
    c. Setup a good strong password in the unattended access window that pops up
    d. Note your ID. You MUST know this to connect into the computer.
3. On your home computer, or whatever computer you are "dialing from"; download and install teamviewer. Since you are not needing to connect INTO the home computer, you can simply choose the default install without the unattended access.

Once all that is done you're ready to rock! You simply open teamviewer on your home computer, then on the right hand side enter the ID of your office computer, hit connect and type in the password. You now have access to everything on the office computer, as if you were sitting in front of it.

Page 2

Phone: 317.883.PCCG (7224) or 866.653.6748
Indianapolis, Carmel, Fishers and surrounding Computer/Phone/Network Support
Web: www.PcComputerGuy.com ● Email: Nick@PcComputerGuy.com

File Sharing / Cloud Storage

Video: https://youtu.be/0-3dcO3dLSI

Our next item to discuss is file sharing. While you can access your files on the work computer using TeamViewer remotely; you may have an easier option to work remotely. If your work is primarily using documents such as word or excel; and you have that installed on your home computer – then Teamviewer may not be necessary. Instead you can save your files "on the cloud". "The Cloud" is simply a marketing term that means on the internet. There are a number of services that work really well for making files available anywhere you have internet access. Some of these are OneDrive (by Microsoft), Google Drive, DropBox and Box.

The concept for these services is fairly simple. You install the program that creates a special folder on your computer. Anything you put in that special folder, automatically gets uploaded to their server. Once it's on their server that file then is accessible anywhere via a website, or the app installed on another system. My preference for this is OneDrive; so we will use that for our example.

Installation:

1. Go to OneDrive.com
2. If you have a Microsoft account already, sign in with that. If not, create one.
3. Once logged in you'll see your web-based OneDrive files.
    a. If you have Windows 10 – click start then type "OneDrive". You just start typing and it will go into a search, you don't need to click in any search box.
    b. If you have Windows 7 or any other OS, you may need to download and install OneDrive. You can get that from the link on the bottom left of the OneDrive website ("Get the One Drive App").
4. Follow these same steps on your second computer you want the files to be accessible to. Be sure to sign in using the same username and password – so that your files will match.
5. On either computer – simply MOVE (not Copy) things into your OneDrive folder. Be sure to create folders so that you can keep things organized.

As a side note – some services actually download a copy of the file into your computer; while others don't. There are pro's and cons to each method – and all of the software allows you to choose which method you prefer.

- Having files downloaded to your computer allows for faster access AND off-line access. If you are on a flight, and the files have been downloaded, you can still work with them. Once you get connected to the internet again, your files will be

updated to the cloud storage. This however does take up space and if you have a small, or nearly full hard drive might be a problem. That's rarely an issue though.

- Having the files stored in the cloud only, and not downloaded saves hard drive space; however you won't have the ability to work with them if you are not online.
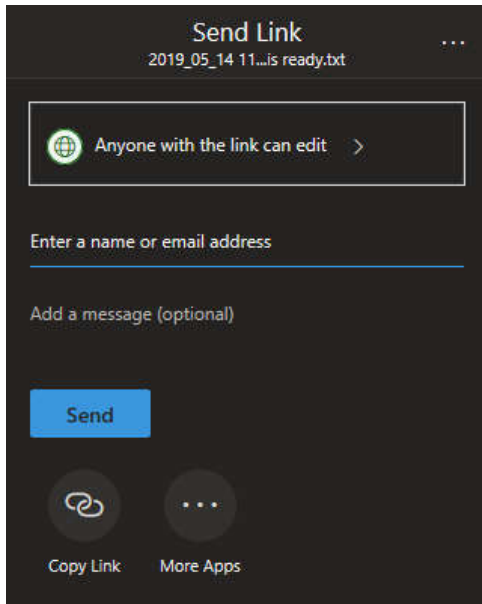
That covers the core functionality of you being able to access files from work at home. You can also do some more neat things with cloud-based storage systems. You can right click on the files or folders and choose "share". When you do this, a link gets copied into your computers clipboard (the memory). You can then paste that link anywhere your heart desires; in an email, word documents, chat programs etc to allow friends/family or co-workers to have access to those files/folders. You can't email your sister 200 pictures of your vacation; but you can share a OneDrive link that would allow your sister to view and download them. You can even choose an option to allow those that have the link to edit said files/folders, which is useful if you are collaborating on a project.

Browser Syncing

Video: https://youtu.be/PMhXgRn3TB4

This tip is a fairly simple one. Almost all modern browsers have a sync function – that can save all of your browser settings, bookmarks, extensions and passwords to an online account. Most, if not all of these encrypt the data which provides a layer of security, protecting your data. While I have my preferences of whom I am willing to store information with, and who I won't – in general you should be fine with any of the big names. Firefox, Brave, Chrome, Edge, Opera, Safari and Vivaldi all support syncing. This is useful in that you can create a work profile on your home computer that has all the same websites and passwords for you to sign in to with ease. It's also nice to create a separate profile so that you can keep your work and personal life separate. We'll cover a couple here, but you can find instructions for your browser simply by googling "Your browser syncing".

Firefox: Currently one of my two preferred browsers due to their strong stance on privacy and security. Firefox encrypts all of your data that you sync with their servers; so that even Firefox employees can't see any of your data. To setup Syncing on Firefox:

- Click the icon of a person in the top right near the close to the red X.
- Click "Sign in to Firefox"
  - (You may want to create a separate account to keep work and personal things separate. You can switch between them by clicking that same person icon)Enter your email address.
  - If you don't have an account – it will take you to account creation
  - If you do have an account it will prompt for your password
- Click the various items you want to sync (probably everything)
- Watch all of your data from your initial browser appear in the second browser you signed in to.

Chrome Syncing:

- Click the person in the upper right near the X and the 3 dots
- Click "turn on Sync"
  - You may want to create a separate account to keep work and personal things separate. You can switch between them by clicking that same person icon
- Sign in if you already have a google account (like gmail – though you can also choose to use your own non-gmail address)
- Click the "Yes I'm in" on the turn on sync page that follows.
- Watch all of your data from your initial browser appear in the second browser you signed in to.

Web and Phone Conferencing – Meeting Online

Video: https://youtu.be/RLPWt1k65dE

Online meeting and screen sharing is a huge market. There are a lot of options to choose from. It would be impossible to have an in-depth understanding of all of the options out there; we'll focus on a couple that we know well: GoToMeeting and Skype.

GoToMeeting like many of the web meeting platforms has a free limited version and a paid version. The paid GoToMeeting monthly runs only $14 bucks, and allows up to 150 people to participate in the meeting (likely way more than you'll need). The free GoToMeeting allows up to 3 participants and has a limit of 40 minutes for the meeting.

Phone: 317.883.PCCG (7224) or 866.653.6748
*Indianapolis, Carmel, Fishers and surrounding Computer/Phone/Network Support*
Web: www.PcComputerGuy.com ◆ Email: Nick@PcComputerGuy.com

As a side-note IndyVoIP, a division of PC Computer Guy is a partner of Jive Communications, which is owned by LogMeIn – makers of GoToMeeting. For those that use our top-rated cloud-based Voice over IP Phone systems, GoToMeeting can be added on for FREE! We think that's pretty amazing considering it's already one of the lowest cost systems, yet the absolute best for reliability and quality. Contact us if you are a IndyVoIP/PcComputerGuy phone client to have us enable your GoToMeeting features. If you are not a IndyVoIP client, give us a ring. We're not pushy sales people, we're tech guys with a passion for setting up these awesome cloud-based phone systems. Odds are high that we can provide something better than what you currently have for less. 317.732.VoIP (8647) – you can also check it out at www.IndyVoIP.net. Our systems include just about anything you can imagine at all-inclusive simple, low pricing.

To create an account simply go to www.GoToMeeting.com and click the "Start for Free" button.
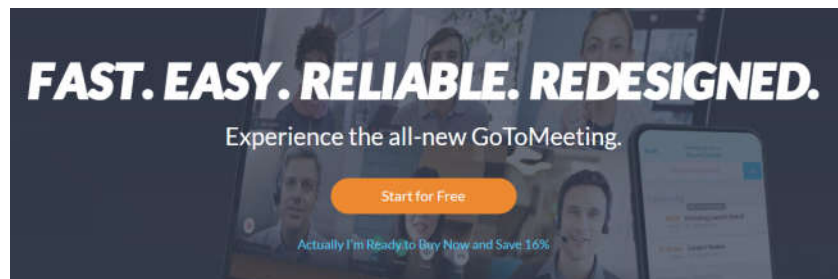
After you've created your account – sign in and you'll see a screen that has information on how others can join your conference. You can copy that link and email, text, call or send on a messenger pigeon that link.
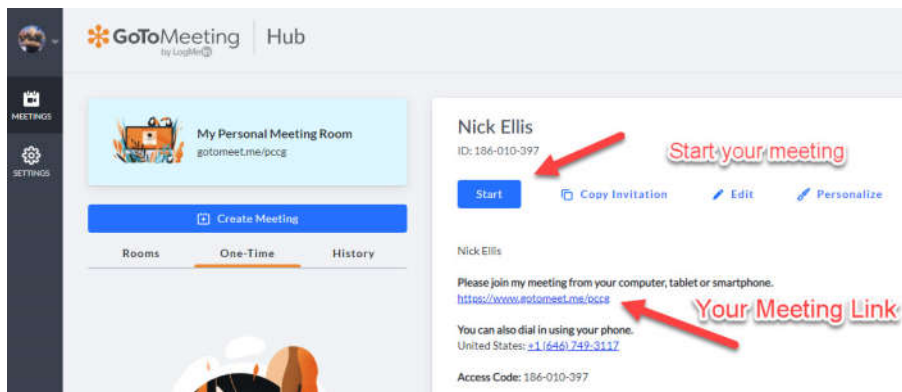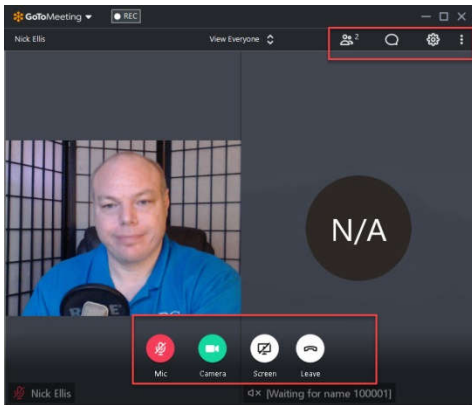

You can start your meeting, and once that's going whomever has the link you provided will be able to join your meeting. You'll be able to see each other, share your screen or specific application and do just about anything you would do in a face-to-face meeting. It's fun and easy to use – and again free for up to 3 users, or people that have our www.IndyVoIP.net phone systems.

Page 6

Phone: 317.883.PCCG (7224) or 866.653.6748
Indianapolis, Carmel, Fishers and surrounding Computer/Phone/Network Support
*Web: www.PcComputerGuy.com ● Email: Nick@PcComputerGuy.com*

Meeting in Progress

Bonus points: Have a good webcam and microphone. We've all had that annoying experience of the person on the speakerphone with terrible echo that makes it difficult to understand what they're saying. If you are doing a web conference, a good webcam will produce a nice crisp-clear picture. Sometimes they have a good mic that has noise-cancelation and other features, but it's more likely to be a problem. If you are going to host a lot of meetings, having a headset with a mic might be best. I use the Logitech C920 which is about a $100 webcam. There are many good webcams out there; if you are going to be using it often, it is definitely worth it to spend a little money on it. I'd say nothing less than $50. You can also pick up a headset/mic combo for about $25-$30. Using this instead of your speakers and a webcam for audio eliminates annoying feedback and echo.

Skype Another option:
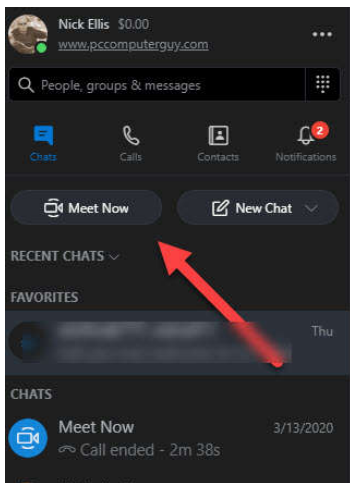
Skype has a newer feature called "Meet Now". For the first 60 days it allows 10 people to hold a conference with "meet now". After that it's $2 per user per month, or the free plan limits you to 3 people.

The "Meet Now" in skype allows you to share your screen and do things similar to GoToMeeting.

You could also just do a skype group call allowing up to 50 people to video chat, however it doesn't have all of the features of "meet now". It does have screen sharing though, so that may be all you need.

Phone System

Having a modern cloud-based phone system opens virtually unlimited possibilities. Cloud-based Voice over IP technology can do a lot of amazing things; pretty much offering the equivalent of what a $80,000 PBX system can do. One great thing is as it's cloud based, you don't have any equipment you need to maintain, worry about programming or repair. There are a lot of names in the hosted-VoIP arena such as Ring Central, Vonage, 8x8, nextiva, Jive and more.

IndyVoIP is a subsidiary of PC Computer Guy – and we partner with Jive Communications. We've worked on most of the various platforms and in our opinion Jive blew away the competition. It generally costs less, has better reliability and quality – and US based support that will do all they can to meet your needs.

Most VoIP systems can provide similar functions – we're going to look at this specifically through IndyVoIP's system (www.IndyVoIP.net) ; just know you can probably do the same thing with another provider.

Telecommuting means you need to still be able to communicate as if you were in the office. That means you need the ability to make and receive calls from the business. Most of us would like to keep our personal phone numbers to ourselves, otherwise you will find you're on the clock 24x7x365.

So with IndyVoIP you can download and sign into an app on your Android or iPhone. Doing that allows you to make and receive calls as if you were in the office. The person on the other end won't have any idea that you are not at your office desk.
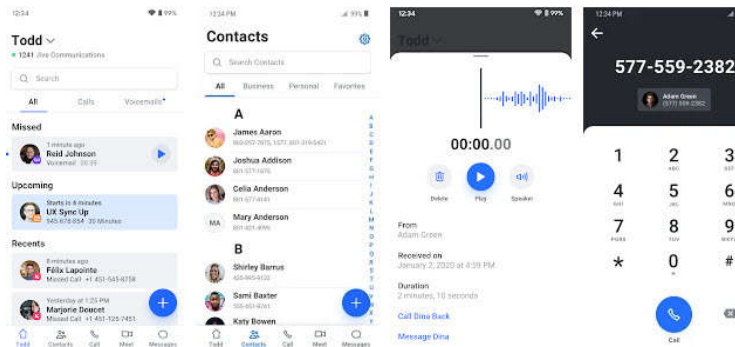
(GoToConnect App on Android)

Another way you can partly accomplish your phone communication needs is with call forwarding; or simul-ring. Call Forwarding is available on just about every phone line these days. Simply search the internet for "Call forwarding + Your Phone Company name" – and you'll find what you need to do to forward calls. You can then have calls that come into the office, forward to your home phone. The caller won't know any difference. Unfortunately you can't MAKE calls from the office phone with call-forwarding. If you do need to place calls, but don't want people getting your home or cell phone you can put callerID block on an outgoing call. For most phone providers that means you dial *67 then the phone number. Simul-ring is a VoIP Feature that will ring your office phone as well as any other phone number you specify at the same time.

Another feature of Voice over IP Phone systems is that your physical desk phone simply needs a connection to the internet. The phone doesn't care where you are. So you could take your desk phone from the office, bring it to your home, plug it in, and you're ready to rock!

For our IndyVoIP clients we have a video that shows you how you can setup these features. Click the links to view the videos.

1. Simul-Ring (aka Fine Me / Follow Me)
2. Call-Forwarding
3. Desktop App (Make calls from your computer)
4. Smart Phone App

If you don't have such a system in place and are interested in upgrading your phone/communication system visit our site at www.indyVoIP.net for more information, pricing and a list of just some of the features we can provide. Also as mentioned in the previous section of this Telecommuting Series – GoToMeeting web conferencing is included at no extra charge.

Chatrooms – Open Communication

Video: https://youtu.be/FuivcDw6CRM

It's nice to have an open line of communication with employees, vendors and customers. There are 3 great, free platforms you can use to keep your people up to date and share resources. Slack, Discord and Telegram. Each of these platforms has pros and cons – so worth exploring. They're easy to setup and use. We'll focus on the one I prefer: Telegram.
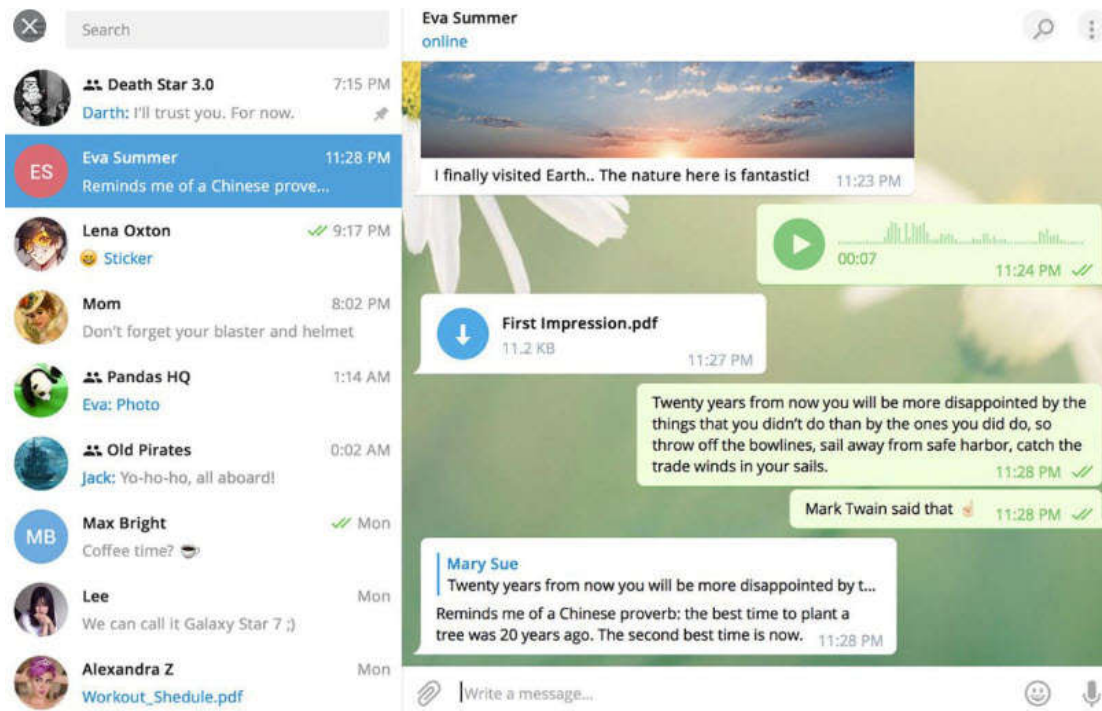
Telegram is free – always a great price. Telegram can make use of good strong encryption – which is our primary reason for using it.

Telegram Application – Available on PC/Mac/Android/Iphone

To start we need to visit www.telegram.org, download the application and install it. You'll create your account after which you can then create a chat room for your company/group.

Creating a Private Group for your company/employees takes a few seconds. Random people can't join, as it's by invitation. To do that…

1. Click the 3 bars in the upper left
2. Click New Channel
3. Give it a name - then Next
4. Choose Public or Private Channel
5. Click Save
6. From there you can invite employees to the chat

Notifications and alerts can be pinned, 1 on 1 chats can be initiated between employees and files can be shared securely with Telegram. Administrators can also boot unruly people.

While you're at it, pop in on the PC Computer Guy Telegram Channel and say hi!

VPN's

Video: https://youtu.be/EikpDPXuQWk

Phone: 317.883.PCCG (7224) or 866.653.6748

Indianapolis, Carmel, Fishers and surrounding Computer/Phone/Network Support
Web: www.PcComputerGuy.com ● Email: Nick@PcComputerGuy.com

You may have heard commercials about VPN's and the security they can provide. What VPN's do, is create a secure link between your computer and the VPN server. Without a VPN, there's the possibility of your information being read/intercepted as it travels through a number of routers over the internet before getting to its final destination. For example if you are on a McDonalds wifi connection, it's potential that McDonalds, or other people can hijack your data. While it's not quite as insecure as people make it sound; it is true that it's not ideal. I use a VPN whenever I'm connected to public wifi; in fact I use a VPN even at home to prevent tracking and spying on my internet usage.

VPN's also can serve another function; they can provide a link to your office, as if you were in the office. Say for example you have a printer in the office that can do some fancy collating. If you are at home you typically wouldn't have access to that printer. But if your office has a VPN server setup, you could connect to that VPN, and then it's as if you are in the office. You'd have access to that printer in the office, network storage drives and anything else your computer in the office has. Now if you are using Teamviewer – you already have access to much of that. The VPN allows you to get access to those things without needing to use remote desktop. A VPN also can allow you to bypass blocks setup on public wifi. This is because the public wifi wouldn't be able to see any of the traffic as it's all encrypted; and therefore can't block things. At a museum in Indianapolis – some of my video chat applications don't work if I'm just using their free wifi. However if I fire up my VPN, suddenly I CAN use my video chat applications, because their wifi has no clue what data is moving through the network.

So VPN's

1. Provide a layer of security and privacy, especially on public wifi connections.
2. Allows your computer to appear as if it were connected in the office; but you're at a remote location, if you have a VPN server setup in your office.

My VPN Provider of choice is [Private Internet Access (PIA)](). Their service is very inexpensive, and allows you to use it on 5 or more devices at the same time. We leave our VPN connections on 24/7. I purchase it for a full year at a time; which then makes the cost a mere $2.85/month.

If you decide to sign up for VPN service, please consider using our referral link at www.pccomputerguy.com/vpn - it costs nothing extra and helps support making these videos!

Closing Thoughts

Seeing the daily news of the Corona / Covid-19 virus can cause quite a bit of fear. That fear is justified. But we also have some great resources and tools we can take advantage of to help defeat this threat to human-kind. From the great medical advancements to Tele-commuting to prevent the spread of the virus, we will win in the end. We've all got to help each other and play our part during this crisis. I hope this guide helps you manage and continue to work from home,

socially distancing ourselves for the short term to slow the spread. Our current capabilities with telecommuting, web conferencing, cloud based Voice over IP phones and file storage are just a few of these excellent tools that will allow us to march on. With the threat to our economy, now is a critical time for us to continue to work remotely for those of us blessed with that option.
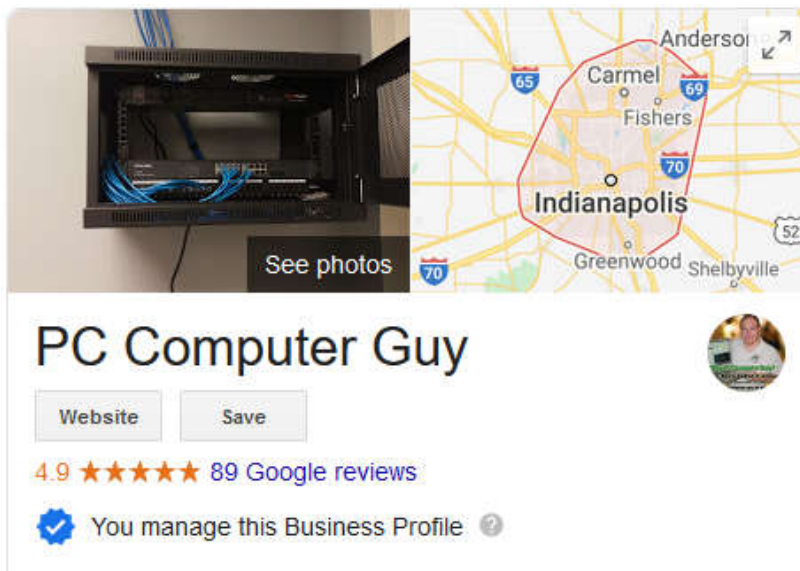
Make sure you use good strong passwords to keep things secure. Bitwarden is an excellent password manager that would allow you to create extremely strong passwords, unique passwords for every site, while you only need to remember your master password. It's an open-source software that has been audited by security firms and passed with high praise.

Watch out for scammers. Sadly there will be people that come up with new ways to take advantage of the situation and try to steal your savings. Be cautious, and don't let unsolicited strangers into your computer. Be careful if you look for support; google the number you are dialing and ensure it's a legit phone number.

Keep a good Anti-Virus on your computer, as we will be even more dependent on our home systems to allow us to telecommute. We recommend Norton, or the built in Windows defender on Windows 10; however there are a number of other good ones out there.

Disinfect your keyboard and mouse! These are some of the germiest surfaces that exist in your house. Do the same for your phone's handset and smart-phone.

If you should find yourself in a situation where you need I.T. support; be it setting yourself up for remote access, removing malware from your computer, training and education, investing in VoIP Cloud based phone systems or just about anything else, we at PC Computer Guy will be glad to help. We have the ability and often support clients across the country, and even internationally with our remote-support tools.

317.883.7224 (call or text)

866.653.6748
www.PcComputerGuy.com
Telegram: t.me/IndyPCCG

Take care of yourself, your family and your community. May God bless us all.

Phone: 317.883.PCCG (7224) or 866.653.6748
Indianapolis, Carmel, Fishers and surrounding Computer/Phone/Network Support
Web: www.PcComputerGuy.com ● Email: Nick@PcComputerGuy.com

Feel free to distribute this article to whoever can make good use of it. I only ask that a link be provided back to our site, specifically the first page of the Telecommuting Tech Tip

https://www.pccomputerguy.com/Tech-Tip-Telecommuting-Overview-COVID-19-Corona-Virus

Phone: 317.883.PCCG (7224) or 866.653.6748
Indianapolis, Carmel, Fishers and surrounding Computer/Phone/Network Support
Web: www.PcComputerGuy.com ● Email: Nick@PcComputerGuy.com