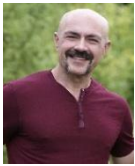


## NewsLetter

## HAPPY NEW YEAR

Lets Make This Year Better – It's A New Year – Coordination. The Key to Success - Winter Blue's – Malware Awareness – Start the New Year with..

*Happy New Year! Now let's actually make this year better — without adding to the usual cycle of “New year, new me” delusions.*



You've *definitely* heard it before: “This is the year I'll finally start that diet!” or “I swear, this is *the* year I go to the gym every day.” And every year, it's the same old story — New Year's resolutions are popular, but most people abandon them *as soon as they start*. In fact, research suggests that up to 80% of New Year's resolutions fail within about a month of starting.

So before you vow to become a new sensation athlete or a kale-only dieter starting January 1st (spoiler: that rarely sticks), let's be real for a moment. Most big, ambitious habit changes don't actually *happen* on January 1st — they fizzle. Experts even say there's no solid evidence that starting at the beginning of the calendar year makes you more likely to succeed than starting on some other random Tuesday.

And that's okay! Rather than diving head-first into habits that take months — sometimes up to *a year* — to really stick with consistency, let's do something *strategic first*. Habit formation itself isn't instant: depending on the behavior and the person, research finds it can take about two months or even longer of repetition before something feels automatic.

So here's a gentle—nudge: don't start with dieting and exercise. Start with your *workflow* and *environment*. Those are smaller wins that *actually matter*, and they set the stage for successful habit change later.

Here's how to prep for a *productive* year

**Clean out your email**

Have you been ignoring that inbox like it's your tax return? Now's the time. Unsubscribe from newsletters and services you haven't read since before your last birthday. Those \$10–\$20/month subscriptions add up — and that's *money* you could use toward something worthwhile later.

**Organize your files and desk**

A cluttered desk makes for a cluttered mind. Sort those stacks, toss what's obsolete, and make sure your space reflects the professional you *say* you want to be.

**Clean out your file folders**

Not the physical folders — though do that too — but your digital ones. Sort photos, remove duplicates, rename things so they're findable, and archive the stuff you don't need every day. You'll thank your future self when you're not frantically searching for that one file from last spring.

## Sort your photos

Organize your photos into albums so you can actually *see what you've done this past year* instead of letting them languish in a sea of "IMG\_0001.jpg" forever.

All of these tasks might sound mundane compared to *starting a new fitness regime*, but they matter — and they give you something *realistic* to accomplish in the early weeks of the year. And here's the key: once your environment is clear and functional, your mind is free to focus on the bigger things you *actually* want to build.

Think of it like clearing the workshop before starting a major project: you wouldn't start building a house in a junk-filled garage, right? And besides, once you're not paying for unused subscriptions and your workspace is streamlined, you'll *actually have the time and money* to invest in the habits you want later — whether that's fitness, learning a new skill, or finally mastering that hobby you've been talking about for years.

So go ahead...

Start the year by *prepping*, not punishing.

It's the smarter, saner path — and your January self will thank you when you've already won *one month* without having to "be perfect."

**Happy New Year — may your inbox be empty and your productivity high!**

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## It's a New Year



As we step into a new year, it's a great time to refresh not just our goals but also our digital habits. Technology continues to evolve rapidly and so do the tactics used by cyber criminals. A little awareness goes a long way in staying protected.

### **Staying safe from AI-powered bad actors**

Artificial Intelligence is being used for good in many ways but unfortunately scammers use it too. Be especially cautious of:

- emails, texts or even phone calls that sound urgent or too perfect. AI can mimic writing styles, impersonate coworkers or even worse, your voice. There was segment on the news the other night about AI generated phone calls that can capture your voice, even if it is one word. That is correct, all you have to say is just one word, like "hello" and the AI generated caller can replicate your voice almost exactly. And, if that isn't enough, AI will also capture your breathing. This new tactic allows the bad actor to recreate your voice and then contact friends or loved ones to alarm them that you may be in danger or are in need of money.
- Unexpected attachment's or links, even if they appear to come from a trusted source.
- Requests for passwords, password resets, even requests for verification codes. The Saratoga Bridges IT department will never ask you for these.

When in doubt, pause and verify through a second method (like a phone call to the sender). Slowing down is one of the best defenses.

## Did you know ?

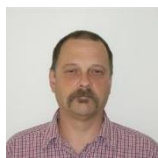


Every year in the first week of January I watch the Terminator and every year, I see that we are getting closer and closer to that type of technology. Could be good, could be bad. You decide. One thing I do know is, if I get a \$20K raise, I'm adopting (buying) Neo. Neo is a humanoid robot, that can be a personal assistant that you can talk to and train to do tasks such as loading a dishwasher and folding laundry. I suppose that I won't need that "Roomba" vacuum cleaner anymore. I should actually get rid of it just in case Neo becomes offended.

**Have a Happy and Safe New Year to come and please don't forget to change your passwords.**

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## Coordination. The Key to Success



Actor and director Woody Allen is credited with observing that "80% of success is just showing up." I would contend that some of the remaining 20% is coordinating with others. Knowing where our colleagues are is an important part of this coordination. We have a tool staff can use to help coordinate with one another called the Sign Out Utility. Click the link with this name on the green menu bar of our SharePoint employee portal page and you will see this page:

The screenshot shows the SharePoint interface for the Sign Out Utility. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for TECH SUPPORT, MAINTENANCE, MAIL, UKG, SIGN OUT UTILITY, TRAINING, THERAP, HUMAN RESOURCES, and ZOOM MEETINGS. Below this, there is a section for Kurt Freeman with a "Sign in/out" button. The main content area is titled "List of staff currently signed out" and contains a table with columns: Name, Time out, Home location, Destination, Off, Returning time, and Description. Below the table, it states "There are no items to show in this view of the 'List of staff currently signed out' list." On the left side, there is a "Calendar" section with an "Update" button and a "See full report" button. A red text overlay at the bottom of the screenshot reads: "Staff who use this utility can keep their colleagues informed about their whereabouts."

There is a Sign in/out button on the left side of the page that leads to a form you can use to share where you are going and when you will return. There is even a box to check to let others know you are off. This way, if someone sends you an email and you don't respond, they can check the Sign Out Utility to know you are taking some much-needed R&R and not just ignoring them.

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## **Beating the Winter Blue's and Beating Your High Score**

**2026** has arrived, and with it comes winter, bringing its cold temperatures and freeze warnings. Let's see if I can help lift the winter blues.

As we finish our workday and head home, we often find ourselves sitting in front of the TV, flipping through channels for hours to avoid the endless commercials. Instead, why not play some games with your family? There are many fun board games to explore. New games are released all the time, and classic ones like UNO and Monopoly are still just as enjoyable today.

Playing games on your phone is another great option since we always have our phones with us. You could try some single-

player games or play online with friends. New PC games and puzzles are released regularly for your home computer, gaming consoles, and iPads.

## Malware Awareness: Why “Free” Downloads Can Be Costly



In today’s digital world, cyber threats don’t always arrive as obvious pop-ups or suspicious emails. Increasingly, malware is hidden inside things that seem harmless—or even helpful—like free yearly calendars, recipe collections, printable coloring books, planners, or activity sheets. While these downloads may look like a quick win, they often come with serious risks.

### What Is Malware?

Malware is malicious software designed to harm devices, steal information, or give attackers unauthorized access to systems. Malware can take many forms, including viruses, ransomware, spyware, and keyloggers. Once installed, it may run silently in the background, collecting sensitive information such as passwords, emails, or personal data—sometimes without the user ever realizing it.

### Why Free Downloads Are a Common Trap

Cybercriminals know that people love free, useful content—especially things that appear family-friendly or work-related. Free calendars, recipes, coloring books, and planners are often shared on social media, email chains, or unfamiliar websites. Unfortunately, these files can be used as a delivery vehicle for malware.

#### Common risks include:

- Malicious PDFs or Word files that run hidden scripts
- Compressed ZIP files containing infected content
- Fake download buttons that install unwanted software
- Links that redirect to credential-harvesting websites

Because these files don’t look suspicious, users are more likely to download and open them—making them an effective attack method.

### How This Impacts Work and Personal Devices

When malware is installed, it doesn’t just affect one file—it can impact the entire device and even the organization’s network. Potential consequences include:

- Stolen login credentials
- Unauthorized access to email or cloud systems
- Data breaches involving sensitive or confidential information
- System **slowdowns**, crashes, or lockouts
- Spread of malware to shared drives or other users

Even personal downloads on work devices can put organizational data at risk.

### How to Stay Safe

To protect yourself and the organization, follow these best practices:

- Avoid downloading free content from unknown or unverified websites
- Do not open attachments or links from social media posts or emails unless the source is trusted
- Be cautious of urgency (“Download now!” or “Limited time!”)
- Report suspicious links or files to the IT department instead of testing them yourself

If you need resources like calendars or printable materials for work purposes, contact IT—we’re happy to help find safe, approved options.

### When in Doubt, Ask

Cybersecurity is a shared responsibility. If something feels “too good to be true,” it often is. Taking a moment to pause before clicking can prevent hours—or even days—of disruption.

Stay safe, stay informed, and when in doubt—don’t download it.

## Happy New Year! 🎉



*We made it to another year—so why not start it off on the right foot by getting organized and making the most of each day? What better way than starting the year the SharePoint way?*

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### Start the New Year with SharePoint

SharePoint is designed to make collaboration easier and more efficient. Here are a few helpful reminders:

#### Improved Document Management

SharePoint remains our central hub for storing, sharing, and collaborating on documents. Please remember to:

- Use version history instead of saving multiple copies
- Share links, not email attachments
- Follow established naming conventions to make files easier to find

#### SharePoint Sites Refresh

Several department sites have been updated to improve navigation and layout. Please take a moment to review your team's site and let IT know if:

- Content updates are needed
- Permissions need to be adjusted

#### Quick Tip

Use SharePoint Search to quickly find files, people, and pages across all the sites you have access to.

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#### Security Tips & Reminders

- Stay alert and watch for phishing emails
- Never share your password or MFA codes
- Remember: IT is on call 24/7. If something looks suspicious or just feels off, don't hesitate to reach out!

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#### Did You Know?

The VCR was released on January 1, 1971. I remember growing up watching my favorite movies on VHS—and forgetting to rewind them! Fast forward to today, and we can instantly stream whatever we want with the click of a button.

Technology is a revolving door—always changing and always improving. Stay connected, stay informed, and let's make the most of it together in the year ahead!

**Here's to a productive and successful New Year! 🚀**

# The Funny Page will return in 2026

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