

# Utilizing fact checking sources on the web

We all have our little routines at home. When I arrive back at the house, my goal is to get my timesheet done on Quickbooks right after I greet my wife and kids. This way, what I had did during the day is still fresh in my head so the accuracy of the time slices at the sites along with the task details are more exact and comprehensive.

After that is completed and I'm hopefully smiling at the revenue I generated during that billable day, next on the pre-dinner agenda is to scan my primary e-mail on Microsoft Outlook that is constantly running on my main Windows desktop computer.

I leave it up and running with Outlook downloading email all day long so when I look at it around 6pm all the messages have been downloaded with all the SPAM filtered out by CA AntiSpam.

It takes just a couple of minutes to quickly view the several dozen critical messages that need my immediate attention about work related issues. After that I do a secondary pass of personal e-mails, vendor notifications, and the latest rumor e-mails on political subjects or current events.

With the red-hot election era we are now entering the political e-mails are flaming with all sorts of claims, rumors, and breaking news alerts. I am on numerous email alert mailing lists, viral video distributing teams, and a frequent recipient of mass political e-mailings.

This is because I subscribe to several political newsgroups, conservative websites and have been making contributions to many Tea Party candidates that



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are currently infiltrating and hopefully taking over the wimpy Republican Party I have been fussing about for so long.

Over the years, I have learned the hard way to be very careful about which e-mails to forward to my email distribution

list. I almost got fired for sending out a political email fourteen years ago when Clinton was up for re-election, but I have a cooler boss now.

You most likely have received forwarded e-mails claiming this and that about political figures with something they said, did, or are about to do. So many of these political hot-potato e-mails come into our Outlook or Yahoo email inboxes and we forward them along to our own distribution lists because the subject is hot at the time or the message it conveys mirrors our interests or political standings.

It is very tempting to quickly forward those topical hand grenade e-mails onto your friends, family and co-workers but we all need to pause, evaluate the validity of the content, try to verify the data points, and then decide if what you are sending is first of all true and secondly if it is appropriate for those on your list.

My level headed wife has been trying to get me to do

this for over a decade now and I have been getting better at it after getting burned a couple of times sending out relayed e-mails that turned out to be hoaxes or incorrect interpretation of the facts. I could swear she was from Missouri the 'Show Me' state since she demands proof from multiple, established and reliable sources before she buys into anything, which is good — annoying, but good.

Back in January, I got an e-mail claiming President Obama used the teleprompter just to talk to the kids at Graham Road Elementary School in Falls Church, Va. The e-mail even had a picture of the dual teleprompters in front of the elementary classroom's chalkboards.

It looked very convincing and since President Obama seems to constantly use teleprompters at nearly every public speaking engagement it looked like the real deal. Turns out he did talk to the kids at that school but in a different room without those pictured teleprompters.

They were later used in the original room in the photo while he was delivering a scripted speech to Associated Press reporters with no kiddos around.

Now, I'll be the last one to defend this president who is leading our nation down a socialist abyss, but trying to nail him on a falsehood is flat wrong. Trust me, there is plenty of true and verifiable negatives on this guy

to go around so we do not need to forward viral e-mails that are false and make the senders look like idiots.

So how do we tell the accurate messages from the bogus ones? That is when the work kicks in that requires time and effort. First try to find the original mainstream media sources of the news or event on their network websites. Though I see the vast majority of the mainstream media as very left wing biased, if they have the same information that is negative to the liberals, heck it must be true.

The same can be said if a bad news story about a conservative is being talked about on the more balanced Fox News Channel. Yes, FNC has Hannity, O'Reilly and my favorite Glenn Beck, who all lean strongly to the right, but that same network also has Alan Colmes, Geraldo Rivera and Juan Williams who are screaming liberals.

If the old dinosaur media sources do not have the information that backs up the claims in the e-mail you are thinking about forwarding, then utilize the fact checking sources on the web like Snopes.com, UrbanLegendsOnline.com, FactCheck.org, ScamBusters.org or Tru-

thorFiction.com.

Many can claim, demonstrate or whine that some of these online fact-checking websites also have a political bias. I for one think Snopes.com does tend to defend the left and for sure does extensive analytical research to take apart and discredit most of the e-mail and Internet stories that are negative about President Barack Hussein Obama.

My recommendation is to use all of them or at least three to get a quick consensus to see if what you are about to send out is accurate. If all the above mentioned sites have found that your email was based on falsehoods then hit the delete button rather than the send key.

Also If you have someone

sending you stuff that is an obvious hoax or just plain wrong, simply reply (not reply/all) back to the sender with links to those fact checking websites to help him or her learn what you have learned.

Bottom line: In just over a month one of the most important elections in our country's history will determine either its demise or recovery so go armed with the facts not the unfounded Internet rumors.

Next week's column: Windows 7 backups.

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