
Sample Content

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Introduction

I am a content writer with several years of experience and a proven track record in delivering for clients in technical and technology-related fields. My background is in software engineer with a decade of professional experience in development and project management. Many firms have valued my technical expertise to create authoritative and engaging content which enhances their brand.

My personal focus is on creating concise, memorable, and informative content which builds trust and promotes the brand. Over the last four years, I have produced content for businesses ranging from small local companies to Fortune 500 firms. Each business and publication requires a unique approach with varied content and voices to meet the needs of the brand.

Whether writing articles, blogs, social media posts, white papers, or ebooks; my passion is in communicating stories well and generating value from my work. I personally enjoy writing about complex and challenging topics for a lay audience in a way which delivers the message in a way that is easy to understand and digest.

A small selection of articles across a variety of subjects and clients is included here. These range from my core skillset in tech to personal interest projects.

If you feel my voice and experience could be an asset to your brand then please don't hesitate to get in touch.

I.T

With a long and varied career in software, technology, and I.T; the transition into writing about the many various facets of technology was a natural one. Many businesses have appreciated strong, authoritative content which breaks down complex topics into understandable segments for a non-technical or business-oriented audience.

For a variety of I.T focused clients, I have produced informational articles, social media content, advertorials, and ebooks designed to educate clients while promoting IT services.

DIY IT: It May Cost More Than You Think

Educational article targeting small businesses. Designed to bring technical services to the attention of the reader. Builds trust and authority with a call to action which proved successful on the campaign it featured.

Owning a business is every bit a passion as it is a living. Business owners are used to working hard, putting in long hours and serving in a wide variety of roles to get things done. This approach allows owners to get ahead and succeed in the business world, but when tackling their IT demands many successful businesses can begin to struggle.

Being willing to work harder than the competitors and focus on getting the job done are key components to establishing and maintaining a successful business. In IT however, the very same process that drives a business ahead can begin to hold services behind.

As a business begins to expand and grow; their IT demands grow too. Often, the IT networks of organizations are built from consumer-grade components bought in the very early days of the firm.

These parts are often purchased on a lean starting budget to meet the immediate needs of the business. Commonly, the setup of a startup firm is intended for a far smaller company that serves far fewer customers.

Designed for use around the home, consumer solutions placed in a business environment often run into practical and technical limitations that slow things down surprisingly fast.

A growing business needs a network that can keep up. Consistent and testable backups, server upgrades, and commercially capable components are critical to ensure IT services meet commercial demands.

As a business outgrows its IT network the growth and abilities of the firm becomes increasingly hampered by poor IT performance. Slow systems that fail to meet the demands of a successful, busy firm prevents future growth by getting in the way of day-to-day operations.

Many companies start out with complete systems that work for now but find out the hard way why IT setup demands professional expertise.

Complete IT solutions require thorough planning to ensure a business makes efficient use of its resources. Setting up a system that meets business level demands requires knowledge and experience.

When parts are added, replaced, and removed from the system compatibility issues between new and existing components need addressing. As setup requirements change, new demands are made of both the technology and network. The impact of each change made to the system needs careful planning to maintain and improve on system performance.

Missing or mislabelling just a single component can have dire system consequences. Lightning fast, premium hardware upgrades can be bottlenecked by slower technologies added and forgotten deep in the system. A thorough system plan ensures the entire system is optimized to extract the maximum performance from every component.

In some cases, legacy technology installed incorrectly or left to go out of date remains in the system. Sometimes these weren't the right technology for the job to begin with. Such installations can pollute the entire system. Chronic and undiagnosed IT issues can be caused that may go undiagnosed for years to come.

In many cases, a difficult problem can be almost impossible to diagnose after the fact. Many 'smart' devices available on the market today are capable enough to fail into a state that maintains operations in a compatibility mode that drastically reduces capacity. Such a device may keep a technology running but choke crucial bandwidth or functionality that could go unnoticed without a professional setup.

In this area, professional experience and an expert eye pays its own dividends in IT.

Troubles with technology cost businesses money every day the firm is running. Getting the right set up the first time is far less expensive than daily loses.

For many firms, the loss of money and time caused by IT issues are compounded by unavailable services causing a hit in the reputation of the business too. For almost all firms today IT can be considered a critical component in operations.

If temporary issues prevent you from accessing resources, sending out crucial and time-sensitive files, or getting services to customers then the impact to the business can be more than just financial.

Many in business today are adept at handling technology and experts at finding solutions to some of the most challenging problems associated with running a company. However, one of the largest considerations a business owner has to make is how best to manage the time and resources of the firm. For many, time spent tinkering with frustrating computer glitches and IT troubles is valuable time away from crucial business operations.

Like many CEOs and business owners, you very likely started your business because you have a passion, knowledge, and talent in your particular field. Whether you cook the best food in town, are the most skilled tradesperson in the book, or have a knack for complex finances; your own unique business is something that only you can manage.

Likewise, IT knowledge is the reason we got into business. Setting up networks, managing technology, and looking after businesses is our passion.

Knowing what makes a great fitting IT solution that can grow and expand takes time, practice, and study. It's exactly what we have focused our business around achieving for you.

Use your skills and your time to run your operations wisely. Leave the tech to us. Give us a call today to get on top of your IT demands.

Are Registry Cleaners/Optimizers a Good Idea?

687 words

Educational article targeting residential clients. Designed to inform and interest clients in the technician's services with a call to action.

You have likely been alerted by popups while browsing the web. These, often flashing, advertisements claim your computer has more than a thousand errors requiring urgent attention to fix. Perhaps helpfully, these popups offer a solution to cure your computer with a click of the mouse. Buttons marked "fix now" appear to offer a simple fix to all your computer troubles.

These advertisements are often described as Registry Cleaners, PC Optimizers, or by a few other names that attempt to convince the user they will somehow clean, improve, and organize their home PC. Within the IT industry they are known as "scareware". They are software designed to convince you that your computer has problems it might not have.

Are They Trustworthy?

Almost all popups and advertisements that use banners saying "Fix now for free" are not trustworthy at all. They are little more than a scam attempting to take your credit card details, PC data or both.

At best these programs might claim to scan your computer and show a convincing list of plausible sounding computer problems. Using this, they will ask for payment to "fix" these problems to get your PC back in shape again.

At worst these advertisements can be downright malicious. Some may attempt to use fake warnings and scare tactics to trick customers into installing spyware on their own computers.

When installed, spyware will attempt to steal information in the background. Attackers may use this technique to steal usernames, passwords, emails, and credit card details. Sometimes the first sign a user has that something is wrong is when a virus scan detects software doing something it shouldn't be.

Do I need to clean the registry/Windows?

The Windows system and various applications installed on your PC do leave files on stored your computer. These files can stay behind or go out of date even after the application that initially made them has been removed. These files can use up a little space on the hard drive and generally cause minor clutter within the system.

Despite the large amount of "scareware" and fraudulent computer cleanup scans out there, legitimate applications designed to clean your system do exist. This can be something we cover and is often done as a single small part of a complete computer tune up.

Keeping up with out of date files and freeing up unused space is worthwhile and can be considered "good housekeeping". The vast speed boosts many online advertisements claim to unlock by simply moving files around are almost always false.

The home computer however, is commonly upgraded and can be boosted by more conventional means. If the speed of your PC is no longer up to the task, there are ways in which we can unlock far greater gains than simple housekeeping chores.

PC Boosters

Relatively low-cost hardware components such as memory can often be added to boost the speed of even an older PC and unlock a new lease of life. Upgrading the computers RAM can double the working memory available to the operating system.

With extra memory, many programs can keep more information available to work with. This upgrade reduces loading times and increases the computers ability to run more programs at once.

Another common speed boosting upgrade involves how we store and load data from the computer. Switching from an older style mechanical hard drive to a modern Solid State Disk (SSD) can bring down the startup and loading time of any PC.

Loading data from the hard drive is very often the slowest part of a computer, the bottleneck in an otherwise very fast system. Because an SSD does not use any mechanical components the time to access the disk is nearly instant when compared to older, mechanical hard disks.

Safe Speed Boosts

These upgrades offer boosts in speed to rival a modern system at only a fraction of the cost originally paid for the computer. Upgrading the RAM, swapping to an SSD, or doing both will provide an instant, dramatic, and safe improvement to the speed of your PC.

If your computer is running slow give us a call to arrange a real and professional cleanup.

Protect Your Firm Against Zero Day Attacks

Educational article targeting small to mid-size businesses. Designed to interest readers in a technician's services with a call to action.

Protecting your business against the latest IT threats should always be a top priority. Updating antivirus and patching your operating system is a great way to start. What happens, however, when a threat appears at your door before security firms have had a chance to catch it?

A security threat that exploits a previously undiscovered vulnerability in the computer is known as a zero-day threat. The name "zero-day" is designed to imply how long since the vulnerability was discovered. The term also indicates that system developers have had zero days to fix it.

A newly discovered attack might be packaged into a computer virus or worm. This will allow it to spread far and wide while inflicting the maximum amount of damage possible. When spread successfully, a new exploit has the potential to reach hundreds of thousands of computers before an operating system or anti-virus update can even be issued.

There are a number of ways we can protect your business or lessen the damage from a zero-day attack.

Preventative security

The number one way to mitigate the damage from any attack to your system is to prevent it from happening in the first place. Maintaining a good firewall and up-to-date antivirus is the best step you can take to ensure the security of your system.

A firewall, monitoring traffic in and out of your network, reduces unauthorised entry over the network. Even without knowing the exact nature of the attack, suspicious activity travelling in and out of the system can be stopped.

The same is true of modern Antivirus. Even when it can not identify the specific zero-day threat from its virus database; it can often identify malicious intent from learned behaviour in the system.

A Locked Down Network

Should a zero-day threat make it into your network, our next goal should be to limit its effects. By restricting user access to only essential files and systems we can limit the damage done to the smallest number of systems.

Good security policy dictates that each account should only have full access to the systems needed to complete the user's job. For example, users from the accounts department shouldn't have access to sales department databases.

In this way, the damage of a single compromised account is limited to only the network area it operates in. Such limited impact should be easy to control and can be reversed with regular backups.

Good Data backup

Whether your entire network has been exploited or only a small area has been affected; good data backups are your protection against major lasting damage. Having a good backup means having the procedures in place to both create regular backup copies and make sure they can be restored at a later date.

Reliable and well-tested backups are worth their weight in gold. Knowing your data is safe and your system can be recovered is peace of mind against even the most highly destructive zero-day attacks.

Intrusion Protection

While the precise methods of a zero-day exploit can't be known in advance, a network intrusion protection system (NIPS) can monitor the firms' network for unusual activity.

The advantage of NIPS over a traditional antivirus only system, is it does not rely on checking software against a known database of threats. This means it does not need updates or patches to learn about the latest attacks. NIPS works by monitoring the day-to-day patterns of network activity across the network.

When traffic or events far out of the ordinary are detected action can be taken to alert system administrators and lock down the firewall.

Devices such as USB drives and mobile devices can all introduce threats to the network. They can often make it past the firewall because they are physically introduced to the system.

NIPS protects against threats introduced to the network from both external and internal sources.

Full Cover Protection

Used in combination these techniques can prevent, protect, and mitigate against the kinds of threats that even the top security firms haven't patched yet. We think it's important to keep your firm secure whatever it might come up against in the future.

If you could use help protect your business against online threats, give us a call today.

Repair, Upgrade, or replace?

Educational article targeting residential clients. Designed to interest clients in the technicians services.

Like many valuable things we buy, new computers suffer from wear and tear over time. Our computers are particularly vulnerable as we have placed more and more demands on them every year. New machines have got faster, quieter, more reliable, and more capable over time. At the same time our own computers have begun to slow and sometimes even stop performing altogether.

There are many ways to address the problem of a PC which isn't quite performing up to the task anymore. Whether frustratingly slow or no longer working; we are happy to take a look. when you bring your computer to us we will diagnose the condition and find a solution that works for you.

Often times the simplest solution works best. A complex problem sometimes only needs a simple repair to get your home computer up and running like new again. Whether a small replacement part, loose wire, or bad connection; we will find and fix the problem to give your familiar, home machine a new lease of life.

Many computers come to us running slowly, taking a long time to start up, or freezing when trying to load files and programs. Often owners have reached breaking point and become convinced the machine is fit for only the scrap heap.

In many cases, the problem can be pinpointed to a bottleneck in the system. A single, seemingly trivial, part can be holding up the entire system. Amazingly, upgrading just that one component can make the whole machine run like new again.

Adding memory can provide extra space for programs to run faster. Adding an updated, faster hard drive can allow files to be retrieved without delay. In both cases, a low-cost single component can provide a cost-effective solution that makes an old machine like new again.

In some cases, computer succumb to more major faults. A critical part, difficult to replace, may stop working altogether.

A failure of the motherboard for example, the backbone that all other components connect to, can be expensive, if not impossible, to fix. Typically, with the fast-paced and ever-changing nature of computing, a motherboard will only house computer parts that were manufactured around a similar time.

A motherboard is almost certain to be incompatible with components built just a couple of years before or after its own design for example.

Occasionally even a motherboard failure can be resolved too. In these cases we strive, whenever possible, to find a replacement board of the same generation that will work alongside existing components. The result is a cost-effective solution that keeps cost down by saving replacement parts.

In cases where a like-for-like replacement motherboard is not available, many parts of the computer may have to be replaced at the same time. Often replacement costs in these cases can get close to, or even exceed the cost of buying a new machine.

We would always give advice where it makes sense financially and practically to consider replacing an old machine.

Often, in this respect, a home PC can be considered a little like a car. Sometimes a simple, non-expensive, easy to replace component such as the window wiper can fail. While a crucial part to be used for driving; it would be silly to suggest replacing the vehicle once it has worn out.

A window wiper may be low-cost and simple to replace, but if the engine were to wear down or break the solution may not be quite as simple.

Attempting to make a 30-year-old car as fast, safe, and reliable as a brand new model generally doesn't make any financial or practical sense. Sometimes the best course of action to save money and avoid breakdowns is a more up to date vehicle.

In computing, many of the same rules hold true. The best solution in each case is always tailored personally to fit you and your own computer.

Bring your machine in to us or give us a call to discuss your computer issues. We'll keep you informed about your machine and advise on the best course of action to get you up and running as quickly as possible.

Finance

Previous work in technical fields led me to a strong working relationship with Fin-Tech firms looking for capable content writers for other niche topics. I was able to utilise my background, research skills, and experience creating informative content to research and produce deliverables for a client urgently requiring high-quality output.

Contract For Difference (CFD) Explained

Introductory article into one particular finance product offered by the client. Contributed to a wide knowledge base in finance trading. Designed to break down a relatively complex product to an interested lay audience.

Some think of CFDs as a product too complex to deal with, others consider them an ideal way to hedge their portfolio or make bold predictions on market outcomes. CFDs are a window to large profits or equally large losses in a short space of time. It's important, not only to understand the risks and rewards but to fully understand what a CFD is and know precisely how to use it.

In short, a CFD is one of several forms of derivative trading which enables speculative trades on the prices of constantly moving global markets. A CFD enables you to trade on the rising and falling of shares, commodities, currencies, indices, and treasuries.

A major benefit to CFD instruments is the ability to trade on margin. If you believe prices are due to fall, you can sell (go short) or buy (go long) if you believe that prices are about to rise. You can use CFD trading to hedge a portfolio and insure your profits during short-term market downturns. In addition, CFD instruments are taxed differently to their underlying assets and can be more tax-efficient for some traders.

How CFD Trading Works

CFD trading is distinct from certain other types of trading (shares, currencies, and commodities for example.) CFD does not involve buying or selling the underlying asset. CFD traders instead purchase and sell units of an instrument which indicates whether you believe prices will rise or fall in the future.

CFD instruments often include currency pairs, commodities, shares, treasuries, and stock indices. For each point of movement the instrument changes to your favor, you will gain multiple units of your chosen CFD. Where the price shifts against your previous predictions, you will make losses.

Considering Margin And Leverage

A CFD is what is known as a leveraged product. A leveraged product is one which only requires a low percentage of the entire trade value to be deposited to open your position. Known as trading on margin, or margin requirement, this enables you to amplify your profits (and your losses) by basing them on the complete value of your CFDs position.

Traders utilizing the power of a leveraged product to amplify their gains should take extra care with their positions. Losses can quickly exceed the amount originally deposited to enter the trade.

While an excellent tool to increase profits, the same level of magnification applies to losses too.

Costs Associated In CFD Trading

CFD products involve some fees, terms, and jargon that traders of physical shares may not yet be familiar with. While they may make some wary of working with the product, these break down simply and provide a better understanding of the process and results of trading with CFDs.

Holding Costs:

Positions still open within your account at the end of the trading day will incur holding costs. This cost can either be positive or negative according to your current position.

Spread:

Trading CFDs means you are required to pay the spread. The spread is the difference in the purchase price and the selling price of the product. You always enter a trade using the quoted purchase price and exit it using the given selling price.

A narrow spread means just a small price change in your favor will bring you closer to profit and a move against your position, a loss.

Market Data Fees

Trading or viewing price data for CFDs requires market subscription charges to access the relevant data. Fees for access to this data will typically be charged at various rates according to your data provider.

Commission:

CFDs are subject to commission charges when trading. These costs can typically be subject to a minimum charge for smaller trades and often calculated as a percentage from the entire position exposure.

It's important to remember that commission charges are incurred both when you enter and when you exit a trade too.

CFD Trading examples

To understand CFD trading and get a feel for how it operates, let's take a look at some simple examples.

Going Long

Consider a UK company, ACME trading at 94 / 100 (This means 94 cents is the selling price and 100 cents is the purchase price). The spread for this particular trade is 6.

You may consider that the company is doing well recently and decide the price is likely to rise in the near future. You want to create a long position on the firm by purchasing 5,000 CFDs at 100 cents. If commission charges are priced at 0.10%, with no minimum in this case, then an additional charge of \$5 would also be applied.

You may factor in commission charges into your total profits and losses at the end of the transaction.

The margin rate for ACME is 3%, meaning you are only required to initially deposit 3% of the trade value as position margin. In this trading example you will create a position margin of \$150 ($100c \times 5,000 \text{ units} = \$5,000 \times 3$

Both profits and losses will be based on the entire position value. Therefore, you may gain or lose much more than your \$150 margin at the end of the trade.

First Outcome: a profitable trade

You predicted the movement of the market correctly and the price of ACME rises to 104/110, you are ahead of the curve. You can close your position by selling at the new sell price of 104. Commission charges are incurred at the exit of a trade, so an additional charge of \$5.20 will be incurred ($104c \times 5,000 = \$5,200 \times 0.10$

The initial price has moved in your favor by 10 cents. The opening price started at 94 and the closing, or current sell price, rose to 104. If you multiply this shift by the amount of units purchased (5,000) you can calculate your trading profit of \$500.

To calculate your entire profit, subtract commission charges incurred entering and exiting the trade ($\$5 + \$5.20 = \$10.20$). On closing your position, your total profit comes to \$489.80.

Second Outcome: losing a trade

There is, unfortunately, a second possibility to your trade. You may have backed the wrong company at the wrong time, or the right company at the wrong time. In this case, assume your initial prediction was incorrect and over the course of a week, the value of ACME drops to 90/96.

If you believe the price may continue to drop, you could wish to limit future losses by selling at the new price of 90 cents and close the trade. In this case the commission charged at the exit of the trade will total \$4.50 ($90c \times 5,000 \text{ units} = \$4,500 \times 0.10\%$).

In this trade, the price moved against you by 4 cents from 94 (purchase price) down to 90 (current price). If we multiply this change by the number of units purchased (5,000), your loss on the trade is \$200. If we add commission charges on top (entry: \$5 + exit: \$4.50), your total loss for the transaction is \$209.50.

Short Selling CFDs

One of the benefits of CFD trading is it enables selling an instrument you believe is going to fall in value. In this case, you can profit from predicting a falling market.

If you correctly predict a fall in price, you can buy back the instrument at the new, lower price to turn a profit. If your predictions turn out to be incorrect, if the price rises, you will incur a loss on the trade. Similar to our previous example trades, your losses on short selling a CFD can exceed your initial deposit.

Using CFDs to hedge your physical portfolio

CFDs can be an excellent way to hedge physical shares in your existing portfolio. If you are already invested and think those shares are liable to lose some value in the short-to-medium term, you can choose to hedge using CFDs.

By using short selling, you can make a profit by predicting short-term downward shifts which will offset losses from your current portfolio.

If, for example, you hold \$10,000 worth of physical ACME Corp shares in your current portfolio; you could take out a short position or choose to short sell the same value of ACME Corp using CFDs.

In this case, were ACME Corp's share price to lose value in the market, the losses incurred within your share portfolio could be offset from the profits you make in your CFD trade. Closing out your CFD will secure your short-term profits as the downtrend comes to a close. When the value within your physical shares begins to climb again, your profits will be secured by gains reached using your CFD.

CFD hedging is currently a popular strategy for investors, particularly those operating in volatile markets.

CFD Trading

Whether looking for new strategies to hedge your portfolio or find more avenues to exploit the markets for profit, a CFD is an instrument that opens up new doors into the markets.

The benefits and unique opportunities that are provided by a CFD can work to the advantage of a market-savvy trader. Their leveraged effect can boost profits and hedge your portfolio. But remain cautious, they can bite back and incur larger than normal losses too.

With background knowledge, a little more awareness, and a brush up on the terms and technicalities; you could be ready to dive into the world of CFD trading and open up entirely new avenues.

Choosing The Forex Broker For Your Needs

Introductory article designed to draw an audience new to Forex trading.

The market for Forex brokers is so crowded, so diverse, and so competitive that simply choosing the right broker for your needs is one of the most challenging decisions you can be required to make as an investor. Knowing precisely what to look for, and the pitfalls to avoid is the number one choice you can make to put your mind at ease and ensure you pick the right broker for your needs.

The critical qualities that sets apart a great broker from a mediocre one differs for every trader in the market. Some care only about commissions, prices, and spreads, other value security above all. Your perfect broker may be different from everyone else.

Here we discuss the vital qualities you need to look at when choosing between a great forex broker that will meet your needs and one you should leave to the side for later.

Security

The single most important characteristic of a reputable and safe broker is maintaining a high degree of security. A bank, or established financial institution, demands as much data security as physical security in the modern day. Handling vast quantities of money and transactions every day, a good forex trader should employ as much information security as an online bank.

Nobody would think to hand over thousands of dollars to an individual on just a promise of being a legitimate enterprise. No trader should blindly hand over cash to a new broker either.

Fortunately for traders, verifying a forex broker's credibility is a quick and straightforward task. Regulatory agencies and licenses separate trustworthy brokers from fraudulent outfits.

Each country has its own regulating body and its own set of standards for verifying forex brokers. The list of countries below shows each corresponding body.

- United Kingdom: The Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)
- United States: The Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CTFC) and National Futures Association (NFA)
- Australia: Governed by the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC)
- Switzerland: The Swiss Federal Banking Commission (SFBC)
- Germany: Governed by the Bundesanstalt für Finanzdienstleistungsaufsicht (BaFIN)
- France: Brokers report to the Autorité des Marchés Financiers (AMF)

- Canada: The Investment Information Regulatory Organization of Canada (IIROC)

A savvy online trader, before even considering investing in one or more brokers, would make sure their chosen broker is registered with the appropriate governing body listed above. Checking the broker's license number against records held by the issuer of that license is efficient due diligence that all traders should do. Just this one five minute check can potentially save your entire investment fund further down the line.

Transaction Costs

Regardless of the currency you trade, the broker you use, or the trades you make; a currency trader is always subject to some degree of transaction costs. For experienced traders it's simply a fact of life, a financial cost they can factor into the cost of doing business.

Every time you enter into a trade, you are be required to pay the spread or commission for that trade. Like most transactions, you should shop around for the best rates you can find before choosing the right broker.

A tight spread is where the purchase price and the selling price are close together, meaning only small price movements are required to make a big difference on your transaction.

If, for example, you require a tight spread, you should review all the available options with competing brokers to find a price that puts you in profit fastest. Finding the right balance between security, transactional costs, and service is a difficult act, and what works for one trader may not work for someone else.

Decide on the kind of broker you want to find, how you would like to get into profit, and find a selection of brokers that could meet your needs.

Depositing And Withdrawing Funds

A good forex broker makes it easy to deposit additional funds and easy to withdraw your earnings with minimal hassle. Often, issues withdrawing funds are one of the first and most obvious signs that a seemingly reputable broker is not all that they seem from the outside.

A good broker has no good reason to make receiving your own funds difficult or time-consuming. The purpose of a broker should be to merely hold your funds to facilitate trading on your own account. A good broker holds funds with a reputable financial institution, providing guarantees that protects your money in emergency situations.

Brokers make their share of money from transactional costs discussed here. Profits belong solely to you, the trader linked to the account. A broker that holds up funds, slows down withdrawals, and holds on to profits is most likely committing bad-faith business practices and should be avoided at all costs.

Trading Platform

The broker's platform is where the vast majority of online forex trading takes place. This means that their trading platform should be user-friendly, easy to understand, and stable too. Even a great interface is of little use to traders if it intermittently goes down for maintenance or crashes at critical moments.

When shopping around for the best available broker, always look at what their trading platform offers you. Compare the user-interface, available features, and find out what other traders say about the service online.

Some typical features that traders like to have on a reliable platform are a free news feed, charting and technical tools that are intuitive, and an information feed that presents all the information you need to conduct a trade.

Execution

A broker should always fulfil your order at the best available price.

In typically stable market conditions, your broker should always be able to fill at the market price listed when clicking the "sell" or "purchase" button on the platform. Surprise events, major news releases, or unexpected announcements may cause higher price fluctuations than normal, but these events are the exception rather than the rule.

In normal market conditions, the price at which you click "buy" or "sell" should be, at least, very close to the price you pay for the transaction. For many traders, the speed in which orders are filled is critical to the profits or losses made on the trade.

Just a few pips price difference in either direction can make a huge difference to that trade. Instant execution can reasonably be the make or break selling point when choosing your broker.

Customer Service

While it would be enticing to think that life with the ideal broker will run perfectly smoothly with nothing ever going wrong, life very rarely works that way. Given a long enough relationship and large enough number of trades, something will inevitably be broken or otherwise go wrong eventually.

Whether an unavoidable third party issue, or mistake on the part of the trader or broker, it's highly likely you will need to contact customer service at some point in the relationship. The critical difference between the right broker and the wrong one lies in the way they respond to both the major and minor issues.

When you do need to contact support, it's important to know that the service representatives receiving calls, chat messages, or emails are knowledgeable, helpful, and can fix common issues.

This aspect of a competent broker can be one of the hardest to verify ahead of time. It's often one of the most important too. Fixing time-sensitive issues in a fast and efficient manner can make huge differences, particularly on large accounts. Customer service competence is at least as important as a broker's performance on executing trades.

Some highly reputable brokers who have performed excellent on trade execution, platform usability, and price, have had notoriously terrible support in the after sales department. These firms can be as easily disregarded as the least secure of the bunch.

Pay close attention to what other traders say online about every broker's customer service desk. The difference between terrible and great may well one day be the difference between profits and loss.

Choosing Your Broker

When considering all these competing factors to find the broker who fits your needs, it can be almost overwhelming at first. But considering these major points discussed above: security, performance, reputation, platform, and customer service can help you categorize the top performers and make sense of what you want going forward.

A tiny time investment in the early days of your fund may well pay some of the largest rewards you will ever receive in your entire portfolio.

Broker Review: Capex (Formerly CFD Global)

Article designed to add value and information to clients portal.

Founded in 2016, brokerage firm CAPEX is a well regulated and fully licensed firm offering highly capable trading platforms, multiple account options, tight spreads, and excellent support. The brokerage, which changed its name from CFD global in June 2019, is open 24/5 and represents an excellent choice for many new and established traders.

CAPEX offers services globally though focuses on regulation and operations within the European Economic Area (EEA). With a large number of available instruments, free webinars, and tight spreads, traders won't find themselves short of options for operating in the European markets.

The firm is said to operate a strict "safety first" policy on everything it does. Boasting some of the highest possible standards with regards to security and data protection, CAPEX keeps client funds in segregated accounts within trusted and established financial institutions.

About The firm

Based in Cyprus, CAPEX falls under Cyprus Securities and Exchange Commission (CySEC) regulations. Fully MiFID compliant, the investment firm and its clients are fully protected under the Investor Compensation Fund (ICF). The ICF framework is committed to returning money to clients where a brokerage firm has gone bankrupt for unforeseen reasons.

These regulations and guarantees can assist in putting traders at ease with where they deposit their money. Traders should always take care to consult details of the compensation scheme and regulatory body before investing with any particular broker.

The license number for CAPEX under CySEC is 296/16. This license applies throughout the EEA. The firm is additionally registered with, though not licensed by, the UK's Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), Poland's Komisja Nadzoru Finansowego (KNF), and Germany's Federal Financial Supervisory Authority (BaFin).

Trading Platforms

CAPEX offers two trading platforms which are designed to simplify day-to-day business for traders while covering all their possible needs. Both are well matured and highly robust, capable of serving the needs of even the most advanced traders in the markets.

The CAPEX web trader allows its users to access markets with any device from anywhere in the world. The platform is compatible with all major web browsers, including mobile devices and tablets. Remarkably, it loses none of its vast functionality when accessed from mobile or small-screen devices.

Every trading instrument from the downloadable platform is available from the web service too. The tools on offer boast an incredible range of trading utilities and indicators that will vastly assist efficient trading. Around 90 indicators are available through the web platform without needing to be downloaded to the device.

Varying chart styles can be added and used through the web interface and online help is available at just the touch of a button.

Users who access the web platform are granted access to the additional utility, Trading Central too. Using trading central, traders can access intra-day analysis as well as up to the minute recommendations from a top financial analyst. Live quotes and additional information are also available from the web trader to provide traders with everything they need to make good decisions from wherever they use the platform.

The web interface is easy to use, intuitive, and simple to learn. Traders can even make use of one-click trading, purchasing assets straight from the charts.

CAPEX offers its flagship MT5 trading platform for download to customers too. Available through the firm's website, the platform has evolved far from its previous MT4 offering of the past. Traders have found it simpler to create custom indicators and access expert advice for better trading and smarter decisions.

The perks and features built into MT4 have been carried forward to its modern counterpart. The interface has been vastly improved and newly designed to be highly customizable. Advanced analytics, technical indicators, and chat templates are available now in MT5.

Historically, a high degree of automation has attracted many to the MetaTrader suite. The new platform includes trading position alerts, embedded tick charts, and EAs. The platform supports multiple payment services and instant trade execution.

Several versions of MT5 are available, including Android and iOS-based mobile device installations. Users can make use of the demo account available through the website to trade on the platform too.

Account Types

The demo account offered by CAPEX is a great opportunity, particularly for new traders, to access markets and experiment with different strategies without risking real money in the process. The demo account works across all platforms and enables traders to access the full capabilities and services the brokerage offers.

In addition to a free demo account, CAPEX offers multiple service levels to cater to traders of all levels of experience, ability, and risk taking.

The entry-level account offered by the broker is CAPEX Essential. Designed to cater to new traders entering the market, the account offers everything a trader needs to get started without the sizable deposit required for more advanced types. The minimum deposit required to access the Essential account is \$1,000.

CAPEX Essential users gain access to all of the featured trading instruments, financial research, and up-to-the-minute market reviews. Users also receive access to webinars for focused learning to help advance their trading careers.

The mid-level account, for more advanced investors, is CAPEX Original. Requiring a \$5,000 minimum deposit, traders receive the same perks as the essential account and access to the latest event analysis and trade alerts too.

The firm's top-level account, CAPEX Signature, costs \$25,000 to open and, as such, isn't suitable for inexperienced or new traders to the market. Signature users enjoy access to dedicated 24/5 support on top of the features included in the Original account.

Users looking to enter the world of trading without putting down real money first can take a "Trading Experience Test". Separate from the demo account, the TET is ideal for those looking to gain more experience before risking funds in real-world trading.

Trading Products

The selection of trading products offered by CAPEX is remarkably impressive. The brokerage offers a wide range of Forex tradable assets. Over 55 currency pairs can be traded here.

Traders are enabled to use a maximum trading leverage of 300:1. The exact amount available differs for each currency pair, a detailed list and full trading conditions are available from the CAPEX website. No commission is charged on Forex trades, and CAPEX boasts of tight spreads in comparison to competing brokers.

The commodities at CAPEX is primarily made up of silver and Gold. Leverage available here goes up to 200:1. Commodities are similarly commission free with reasonable margin requirements.

CAPEX includes over 26 global indices. Leverage in these markets also goes up to 200:1 with very tight spreads available.

The stocks section of CAPEX covers CFDs from 20 global markets. Maximum leverage is 10:1 over the 2,000 tradable stocks on offer.

Crypto tradable on CAPEX includes Bitcoin, Ethereum, Bitcoin Cash, Dash, Ripple, and Litecoin. Each of these are traded as CFDs and do not involve possession of any cryptocurrencies.

Capex Trading

With the variety of products, tools, and instruments on offer, CAPEX provides a well rounded package and stellar platform for traders at all levels of the market. For those looking to trade assets in Europe, there are few brokers as highly regarded, reputable, and secure as CAPEX.

Newly established traders could do very well to get a foot in the door and making good use of the trading tools, webinars, and expert advice on offer.

Motoring

Automotive topics rank highly amongst some of the subjects I am most passionate about. I regularly contribute articles to niche motoring publications such as Drive Tribe and provide reviews and consumer guides for local print publication.

From Gulf Oil To Mike Wainwright: A History Of Gulf Racing

Motoring history article designed to promote the brand's heritage. Targeted towards a general audience with a light interest and awareness of motorsport. Designed to invest the reader in the story of the brand and its continued involvement in motorsport through the years.

Founded in Beaumont, Texas in 1901, the Gulf Oil company grew from a single oil field into one of the world's major manufacturing firms in only a few short decades. By the 1940s the firm was one of the top 10 manufacturers in America. A booming success in the business world, the company held similar ambitions for the racetrack too.

Unknown to the world of sports car racing, the firm's huge oil success was going to translate to racing too. The Texas firm would, one day, become a name as synonymous with racing as Ford or Ferrari. The distinctive, and now legendary, Gulf Racing powder blue and marigold orange livery is one of the select few mementoes of racing that have gone beyond the racetrack and made its way into popular culture.

After resounding racing success in the 1960s, Gulf Racing made racing history when film legend Steve McQueen got behind the wheel of the iconic Porsche 917 in the cult classic film Le Mans. McQueen drove the Gulf Racing 917 to on screen success that year, sparking imaginations and creating racing dreams and new driving ambitions for generations to come. From the film's release in 1971 to the present day, the blue and orange Gulf colours have been a highlight of the track for fans everywhere.

After over two decades away, the Gulf racing car is back at the track once again. Gulf made a triumphant return to racing, first in 1995 and again in the modern era. Today, in the capable hands of Mike Wainwright and team, Gulf racing is back competing on the streets of Le Mans. Yet again, Gulf Racing is setting blistering pace and capturing the hearts of fans old and new.

Racing Heritage

Gulf Racing was first formed as far back as the 1930s. Initially, an Indy 500 contender, the Gulf Oil company of the time sought out a number of motoring avenues to enhance and promote the brand. From stunt planes and incredible feats of aviation to motor racing and incredible car innovation, Gulf Oil brought an immediate commitment to motorsport which other sponsors rarely matched.

From the earliest days of Gulf Racing the firm was breaking new ground. Early Indianapolis 500 contenders featured four-wheel drive and rear engine chassis designs. The first prototypes the firm produced were remarkably advanced, perhaps a little too advanced for the time. It would be almost three decades yet before Formula One would see rear-engined cars winning races.

The technologies and materials available for the time didn't yet match the ambition laid out by the team. The "Gulf-Miller" cars saw comparatively little success at the Indy 500 as a result. It wasn't until George Barringer drove the car at the world-famous Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah that Gulf racing proved its results could match its ambitions.

In that outing, the car broke 14 international speed records. The Gulf car clocked over 158 mph over 5k and over 142 mph for the full Indy 500 distance. The Gulf-Miller may not have been ready to race, but the team had shown they could create a machine capable of incredible speed. From their first outing, the firm had earned themselves the respect of the grid and a brand new racing pedigree was born.

Gulf Racing Off The Line

It was some time later, in 1966, when Vice President of Gulf, Grady Davis, would bring Gulf back to the forefront of motorsport in a major way. Davis, a motorsport enthusiast, entered his own Ford GT40 in endurance racing that year.

The car was liveried in traditional Gulf brand colours, dark blue with bright orange accents. Davis brought Gulf Racing to racing engineer and team manager John Wyer. Wyer had seen motoring success and a wealth of experience already, winning the 1959 Le Mans race in his 10th year running.

Both men were unknowingly embarking in a nine-year racing adventure which would turn out to be one of the most successful commercial partnerships in racing history.

In the following year, the first official Gulf Racing cars were born. In 1967 Gulf sponsored the Mirage M1 run by team manager Jon Wyer under team JW Automotive. The M1 utilised a Ford GT40 chassis with sleeker re-designed body panels and a lower roofline. Both the looks and the aerodynamics of an already beautiful vehicle were stepped up to another level.

Crucially, the brand new cars featured a new paint scheme too. The 1967 Gulf powder blue and marigold orange livery was about to become synonymous with Le Mans, sports cars, and motor racing.

The first year of racing saw the team take victory in the 1000km of Spa with legendary drivers Jacky Ickx and Dick Thompson at the wheel. The victory was a high watermark for the powder blue M1 and the beginning of even greater success for Gulf Racing.

For the next two years, the team raced Ford GT40s in their traditional bodywork shape. In 1968, the Gulf Oil sponsored cars took both the Le Mans victory and outright

championship against their arch-rivals and favourites for the crown in the Porsche 907.

Gulf racing won five races out of the ten-race season, dominating at tracks which relied on outright power and maximum speed.

The following year Gulf took their second consecutive win at Le Mans. Ickx returned to Gulf Racing alongside Jackie Oliver to take the Le Mans title in the final year of running for the Gulf Racing GT40.

A New Era Beyond The Race Track

In 1970, Gulf took to the track in the Porsche 917. Initial versions of the car had stability issues which compromised handling in its first races. The John Wyer Gulf car added a long talle section of bodywork which improved aerodynamic stability and gave the car its distinct and memorable appearance.

The 1970 season contained perhaps some of the most mixed fortunes in Gulf racing history. With one victory at Spa, the car showed exceptional pace and promise on the track. At Le Mans, the 917 battled hard with Ferrari and its sister Porsche of Martini racing; losing out in the closing minutes of the race. However, the 1970 Le Man race would also be the event which propelled the Gulf powder blue and orange livery into the hearts of race and film fans everywhere.

The race that year was also the running where filmmakers captured in-race footage for the 1971 Steve McQueen film 'Le Mans'. The film, which features a fictional account of the race, sees Steve McQueen drive the Gulf Racing 917 to victory over its closest rivals.

Already an accomplished racing driver in both cars and motorcycles, McQueen raced in the 1970 12 hours of Sebring in preparation to drive a fourth Gulf Racing car at Le Mans. Despite nursing a leg cast from a motorcycle injury two weeks prior, the Gulf sponsored Porsche 908 driven by Steve McQueen and Peter Revson finished 1st in its class and 2nd overall at Sebring.

For Le Mans, McQueen partnered with reigning Formula One champion Jackie Stewart to form what would be one of the most thrilling race teams of all time. Objections from the film studio and its insurers put a halt to the plan leaving McQueen without entry to the race.

The silver-screen running of the race, released in 1971, saw the Gulf livery reaching new heights. The iconic colour scheme became synonymous with racing and fast cars throughout popular culture. Even today, looking back at a 'golden era' of racing, the blue and orange Gulf logo is associated with incredible driving in a time dominated by exceptional cars, large personalities, and phenomenal racing battles.

The film went on to become a cult classic. A huge number of racing dreams were born in the years following its release. Many careers of racing drivers, mechanics, and team managers since can be traced back to watching Steve McQueen pilot the Gulf Racing 917 to victory through the streets of Le Mans.

At the same time as Gulf dominated racing on the big screen, new partnerships were emerging in other series too. A Gulf-McLaren sponsorship in 1968 saw McLaren rocket to the top of the championship, finishing 2nd place in their first year together.

Before long, Gulf-McLaren would too become a motor racing institution, fielding cars in Formula 1, Can-Am, and the Indy car championship to huge racing success. In just a few years at the top, Gulf had become a part of the fabric of racing heritage and even

brought motorsport even further into popular culture.

In the same year as the release of Steve McQueen's Le Mans, Gulf Racing secured four victories in the run-up to the 1971 race. Finishing first in Buenos Aires, Daytona, Monza, and Spa fans were thrilled by watching Gulf race to both screen and racing success.

The team qualified on pole for the race's 39th running. To the delight of fans, the team started strong in the early hours but lost out late into the night when a mechanical issue brought the car home in 2nd place.

Gulf Research Racing

The booming popularity of Gulf Racing was the beginning of a brand new era for the team. JW Automotive gave way to Gulf-Research Racing while regulation changes banned the 917s from competition leaving the team to return to their legendary Mirage prototypes.

With new regulations in force, Gulf leaned on its diverse motorsport pedigree to secure 3.0 litre Cosworth Formula 1 engines for its endurance series. The engines, with heavy endurance-friendly modifications, powered the Gulf sponsored prototypes to their final season of the era.

The mirage cars saw success the next year when they secured a 1-2 victory at Spa, a traditionally happy hunting ground for the team. Securing 4 points finishes from the season, Gulf Racing proved their racing credentials extended across multiple cars, manufacturers, regulation changes, and racing series too.

In the next year, the Mirage M6 gave way to the Gulf GR7. The car, still in its distinctive powder blue and marigold orange, set to racing with all the ambition and grit expected from a Gulf car. The GR7 placed second in the team's penultimate season.

Gulf's final entrance of the era, the GR8, had serious work to do to secure the legacy of a motorsport icon. Under such tough conditions only the capable hands of Jacky Ickx and Le Mans legend Derek Bell would do. The car fought Liger motorsport for the win. Both teams fought hard for the duration of the race with the Gr8 battling through the night and well into the next day to take victory by a single lap.

Gulf later withdrew from sports car racing. The team took the iconic cars off the racetrack for the final time. In its place, they left behind an appreciation for a motorsport era that only grows year after year. In just nine years of racing the team had built a love for motorsport and found new fans from all across the globe.

The legendary cars driven by Steve McQueen and racing champions are still adored to this day. It would be some years to come before the conditions and car came along which could bring racing history and the Gulf Oil brand back to the track again.

Gulf Racing: First Revival

After 20 years outside of motorsport, fans, drivers, and sponsors alike were eager to see Gulf Racing return to the track. With a strong motorsport pedigree and rich heritage full of Le Mans wins, championship titles, and Formula One trophies; a racing return would require a car capable of carrying the iconic brand and distinctive colours.

At just the right time an opportunity for Gulf Racing to reignite a decade's old partnership with McLaren racing came along. The Gulf-McLaren alliance which had brought such huge success before was rebuilt in time to enter the 1995 endurance racing season.

McLaren's F1 road car had just been released one year earlier and was widely received as one of the great road cars of all time. Designed by the hugely successful Formula One designer Gordon Murray, the F1 was billed as a racing car tamed for the road. Both fans and enthusiasts alike were more than eager to see what it could do unleashed on the track.

Murray was initially dismissive of the project, insisting the F1 was a road car first and foremost. The ambition of Gulf Racing, along with enthusiastic sponsors and drivers eventually convinced Murray and McLaren to release a select few chassis for the track.

The racing counterpart of the F1 road car was a stripped-down, lighter, and more aerodynamic version of the street-legal car. Surprisingly little had to be done to turn the road design into a winning track car. The F1s racing pedigree meant the result of the experiment was a devastatingly quick track machine. Under these circumstances and with a car capable of carrying the Gulf Racing flag, the time was right to rebuild a successful pairing.

For the first two seasons, the McLaren powered Gulf team broke with tradition by reverting to the official corporate colours of Gulf Oil. The dark blue and orange cars recreated a livery which hadn't been raced since 1966.

Under team manager Ray Bellm, the Gulf Racing brand was back to race on the streets of Le Mans. In a rain-soaked race, against stiff competition from purpose-built prototypes, the F1 GTR proved it was the right car to bring the Gulf Oil brand back to the forefront of modern racing.

Gulf Racing fielded two cars for the 1995 season. The front runner, driven by Ray Bellm, Mark Blundell, and Maurizio Sandro Sala raced straight into a podium position, finishing 3rd in class at Le Mans in its first year.

Even to this day, the GTR is still the only road-built GT car to claim victory over purpose-built prototypes at Le Mans.

Gulf racing went on to take the BPR Global endurance series the following year and crossed the line with a 1-2 victory at Le Mans the year after. In 1997 the team returned to the famous powder blue livery which brought the team to victory over 20 years previous.

The following year in 1998 the GT class was removed from the race, closing out another chapter in Gulf racing history with another highly enviable record.

Gulf's revival in the racing world was a refreshment to those who had grown up watching Steve McQueen fight off Ferrari for victory in the closing stages of Le Mans. The revival and success of the team was a story entirely fit for Hollywood itself. Two decades after their last win, Gulf had returned to the race and proven they were still capable of taking the trophy home.

The McLaren-Gulf partnership drew to a close after the 1997 season. The legendary road car had shown its phenomenal capabilities as a track machine too. Fans wouldn't have to wait long before Gulf returned to racing again however.

Gulf Oil, aware and proud of their racing heritage and credentials, marked their centenary year with a racing sponsorship in 2001. The Audi R8 went on to place first in the European Le Mans Series with team owner Stefan Johanson.

Modern Gulf

The 2008 Le Mans marked the 40th anniversary of Gulf Racing's first-ever win at the race. The firm celebrated the occasion with a gulf liveried Aston Martin DB9 in iconic blue and

orange trim. The Gulf Racing DB9 won its own class two years in 2007 and 2008. The car's final victory was particularly historic, marking four decades since their first win with a victory of their own.

In 2011 the modern Gulf Racing team was formed. Drivers Mike Wainwright and Roald Goethe formed gulf racing after initial success driving for other teams. Feeling as if they could accomplish more as both team owners and drivers, the pair brought in Gulf Racing to provide sponsorship and racing expertise at a calibre hard to find.

Both drivers brought with them a passion for vintage Gulf Racing cars and excitement for the brand. Goethe himself maintains a collection of Gulf racing cars from the original racing GT40 onwards. Describing himself as a lifelong fan since the tail end of the 1960's Goethe runs the vintage machines in classic endurance races and revival series.

Initially, the team partnered with Aston Martin in their first full season, racing the Vantage in the Gulf livery. Regardless of the car, driver, series, or race: every team to adopt the Gulf colours have shown fans are eager to get behind the team. Starting in the Intercontinental LeMans Cup, the gulf car fought across a wide variety of race series to take an armful of podiums and a race win.

As an early team victory, it proved to be an important one. The Intercontinental Le Mans is today an important stepping stone to the FIA World Endurance Championship. Wainwright's team were proving to themselves and the world they have what it takes to build a stable and successful winning team.

Wainwright has recently begun to take the team forward himself. As both team owner and co-driver, Wainwright has brought Gulf Racing back into the forefront of endurance racing once more. The team, now partnered with Porsche once again, has seen significant success with Porsche's 991 RSR.

Victory at Silverstone in 2015, and then again at Mexico are just some of the highlights listed by Wainwright in his recent driving career. To Wainwright, driving the Gulf livery on a Porsche at Le Mans is a special privilege all of its own.

As a driver, Wainwright lists the 917 or perhaps the 908 in the top of his favourite cars of all time. As with all racing drivers, his vision is set firmly forward, looking for the next race win, and next championship to conquer.

It would be a pity though, not to look back at the ground already covered by Gulf-Porsche over the years. The titles and victories won at various circuits over the decades and of course, Steve McQueen driving the legendary 917 to on-screen victory.

The team have already finished in the top 5 at Le Mans. The team have good reason to be optimistic about their future chances too. Porsche's new 911 GTE RSR has proven itself to be a remarkably fast and reliable car with undeniable race pace.

In just its first couple of outings, Porsche's latest racecar has proven to be more than just a contender for its rivals. With experienced hands at the wheel and with the right driver and sponsorship pairing, Gulf Racing's newest iteration is a serious package for its competitors.

A Gulf Between The Past And The Future

Dressed in the iconic colours of Gulf Racing, the cars continue a legacy set out by the company in the 60s and 70s. When the firm's vice president, Grady Davis, took his own GT40 racing, he couldn't have begun to imagine the success or notoriety which the team

were capable of achieving.

From their very earliest outings, the Gulf machines capture the hearts of race fans, enthusiasts, and the general public alike. From the earliest days of John Wyer and Steve McQueen to the modern team of Mike Wainwright, Gulf Racing have found fans everywhere they go.

The team have evolved in a number of new and innovative ways since their modern return to racing. Working with manufacturers such as McLaren, Lamborghini, and Aston Martin, Gulf Racing is once again at the forefront of modern racing.

The cars themselves, in the iconic paint scheme, are the most photographed vehicles on the grid. Collectively they gather more column space, social media posts, and blog entries than most of the rest of the field combined. No small part of that interest and fascination is down to the long and successful legacy which they represent.

From the 1930's four-wheel drive, rear-engine machines, to the almost unparalleled success through the 60s and 70s. From legendary drivers such as Jackie Ickx and Derek Bell to Gulf's most famous driver of all time: Steve McQueen.

The now-legendary Porsche 917 and the latest cutting edge 911 GTR share a collection of fans with a passion for the story, heritage, and beauty of Gulf Racing. As Mike Wainwright takes the team into its third consecutive WEC season, he brings with him the hopes and passions of fans all around the globe.

Interest

Outside of professional and formal interests, I like to create and write content on topics which are close to both home and the heart. I have long been a content creator as a hobby and passion at all stages of my career. This has often taken me to locations around Scotland and, at times, further afield across Europe.

In some cases, these works have found their way into publications and materials through contact from interested parties. The topics and content can be as wide-ranging as drone videography of walks and wild places to history guides and stories from the past.

St Abbs Lifeboat

A personal interest story which was later picked up by the team at St Abbs for promotional materials and marketing for the charity.

For well over 100 years the lifeboat station in St Abbs has been pulling swimmers, divers, and sailors from treacherous seas and dangerous conditions on a regular basis. Crews dispatched from St Abbs harbour have saved 230 people since opening in 1911, but the crew itself has faced more recent threats of its own.

The station was built from necessity after onlookers were forced to watch helplessly as the cargo steamer S.S Alfred Erlandsen sank on the rocks off the coast in 1907. Boats in operation at the time were dispatched from the town of Dunbar to the North and Eyemouth, two miles to the south.

Neither crew at full speed could reach the foundering ship in time. The crew of 15 men drowned just a short distance from the coastal town. The only survivor, a Great Dane that managed to swim to shore through the waves, became a loved icon of the time.

Public pressure to found a station built to critical mass until the St Abbs station was founded in 1911. The lifeboat Helen Smitten was launched, funded primarily by local business owners Usher's brewery.

A boathouse to dispatch crews was added to the site in 1915. Fully equipped and highly skilled, the crew participated in regular call-outs and saved a huge number of lives in the water.

St Abbs Water

The clear waters surrounding the coast of St Abbs are highly attractive and particularly popular amongst divers for their intense and unusual clarity. Nearby beaches draw large

amounts of seasonal tourists. The waters off the coast are regularly filled with swimmers, kiteboarders, and amateur kayakers in the busy season.

The popularity of these beautiful waters and the cliff-top nature reserve directly to the north of the village presents clear risk and danger to those looking to enjoy the shores.

For this reason, the lifeboat station has been consistently crewed for over a century. With well over 100 emergency launches, the boathouse more than earned its keep in the time since the Erlandsen sank in the beginning of the 20th century.

Closing St Abbs

Due to the high number of visitors, danger present in the surrounding waters, and historic success of the crew, it came to the surprise of many that the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) announced its intent to close the St Abbs station.

Following a five year study, the RNLI concluded Eyemouth's boat and crew could provide adequate coverage that would include the seas around St Abbs.

Public reaction to the decision was fiercely against the closure. Over 13,000 people signed a petition to reverse the decision. Station crew voiced strong objections, citing inevitable injury and potential death that could come from cost-saving at the expense of those using the waters.

In 2015 RNLI withdrew their equipment and support from the St Abbs boathouse.

It was public pressure again which drove support to create a new solution to build and crew the station in the modern day.

A New Station

A public appeal to fund and create a community-driven station was launched in response to the closure. A fund-raising campaign sought to raise €500,000 to purchase a modern lifeboat and fund the equipment and crew necessary to serve as an emergency service in the water.

The local community put their weight into supporting the project in a way rarely seen anywhere else. Barely a house, business, or car in the community isn't customised with a St Abbs lifeboat appeal badge.

Heavy public donations and widespread support flooded in from across the community. Amongst those supporting the station was local businessman and keen sailor Boyd Tunnock.

The Lanarkshire based bakery made the single largest contribution to the cause. Funding 50% of the project in a single donation, the biscuit and cake manufacturer brought a life saving boat and crew to St Abbs with the same community and business collaboration that saw the first arrive in 1911.

With such generous support and sizeable donations, a new boat was swiftly purchased and returned to the water far sooner than expected. The Thomas Tunnock, named after the firm's founder and owner's grandfather, launched in 2016 and serves the town and coast of St Abbs today.

Open Source E-Reader

Personal interest article which was later picked up for use in promoting a commercial project focused on producing a new kind of e-book.

No other simple device has the power to change the world in the way that an open electronic reader does. One with the hardware capability of the current crop of popular devices, but the software to browse freely and shop from any store. An e-reader that can be expanded on, added too and modified endlessly to the whim of its owner. Such a device yields the power to change how we both read, write, and publish for the better.

The open source reader has everything that it needs to succeed in place. The marketplace for electronic books, comics, and magazines is already well established, though fragmented by vendor. Dedicated reading devices typically connect to one or the other e-bookshops, strictly limiting the width and depth of titles on offer.

Amazon has its Kindle range, which connects the buyer directly with its own e-book marketplace and nothing else. The business case for this type of approach is obvious; every single user device sold is locked into the Amazon library and only ever a single click away from purchasing a Kindle title. Similarly popular Kobo devices run their own version of the same scheme, connecting Kobo readers to the Kobo store to purchase Kobo published titles.

In contrast with these dedicated reading devices: phones, tablets, and regular lite-computers have the power to browse and download straight to memory from any source the user desires. The trade-off comes at the hefty price of readability; no-one wants, or is expected to, read a lengthy text on an LCD or even an OLED screen.

Both Kindle and Kobo devices along with the already open BQ Cervantes offer the ability to load books, articles, and magazines with the USB connection of an available computer. There's even an exceptional, open source, software package called Calibre that will assist in managing your e-book library and sync your computer with your chosen device.

Library management, USB, and memory management are viable options and a real alternative to the locked down stores and devices on offer today. Even if the choice is made on principle over practicality. They were also the options on offer to the 2006 MP3 market too. They were options great for the time; but devices, electronic media, and people have moved on a long way since.

From a technical standpoint, the e-book offers far fewer delivery challenges than even the small and simple MP3. An entire e-textbook is a fraction of the size of even a single pop song. The low overhead of the electronic file makes them incredibly easy to transfer and can be stored by the thousand on a pittance of memory by 2018 standards. A typical e-book for all its kilobytes of storage requirements will eat up around 46 hours of reading time; making efficient entertainment use of the skimpiest of data plans.

We can guess then, the problem with e-book delivery is exclusively non-technical in nature. The issue likely exists somewhere deep in negotiations between retailer-manufacturers,

publishers, and legal departments worldwide.

Even the seemingly all-powerful Amazon have so-far failed to position themselves in a Spotify, but for music, position. An attempt was made in the form of Amazons unlimited library service. To its own fanfare, the retail giant announced that readers would be able to choose from millions of titles to read at will from its library for only a small monthly fee.

The service has so far been proven remarkably underwhelming. The library on offer almost exclusively omits titles that anyone would actually want to read. New releases, the majority of non-fiction, and nearly all desirable older titles are excluded, requiring purchase from the traditional Kindle store in their regular e-book collection.

When e-ink screens and electronic books as we know them today were showcased, many years ago, these issues seemed like ones that would be tidied up within months of devices going on sale. A decade later, devices are still locked to their sellers, titles are either unavailable or laughably expensive compared to their paperback counterpart.

Many of the issues still present in eBooks and publishing are not ones that can be solved by a new device, firm, or even just 23 parties involved. The capability exists instead however to play to some of the phenomenal strengths that the gadget is capable of providing in other areas.

An open and capable eBook reader would have the ability to select which libraries books come from at any given moment. In much the same way the Linux package manager allows ridiculously simple software installation from trusted sources; the ideal e-book reader should allow one-click downloads and browsing from a variety of source libraries added by the user.

Each publisher would be capable, if desired, of managing their own channel of titles, empowering anyone to make texts available to readers directly. An entire generation of small independent authors and publishers could be empowered to create and release anything they wish in the same way that games publisher Valve have placed their Steam platform in a position to assist and promote game developers. A brand new generation of pulp-fiction style digital magazines would be made viable by allowing publishing direct-to-reader.

The opening of the e-reader platform and availability of additional sources shouldnt be cause to exclude retailers either. Both Amazon and Kindle are more than capable of providing well curated, well stocked, digital libraries amongst the device offerings. There exists more than ample room for skilled publishers to thrive on high-quality content in the digital marketplace.

this inclusion, of course, relies entirely on both major firms opening up their stores for access, search, and purchases in a way that all but eliminates their single device model. You may well ask Apple to port their iPhone operating system to cheap third-party devices too.

The scenario that the e-book finds itself in today is one that has played out over and over again since the technology was born. The major players in the field have found themselves a comfortable, profitable position and little incentive to move. The question becomes whether the major firms are still nimble, and innovative enough to re-model their product for an inevitable future. Theres plenty of little guy firms out there hoping they arent. These are the startups and small firms taking charge and racing from behind to find out.

Amazon, even today, have done a fantastic job of enabling small publishers and authors to get books out there on the Kindle store. With the current direct publishing platform available, prospective authors can complete a book and have it with readers almost within the same day. E-books are somewhat disappointing when you realise the technology

is capable of so much more. Many people still loathe the idea of letting go of paperback copies for the look and feel of a conventional book. Without giving potential users, avid readers and literary enthusiasts, powerful reasons to make the digital leap; the huge market will remain entirely untapped.

Virtual stores could and should be teeming with weekly indie magazines featuring everything from obsessive niche interests to regular in-depth editorials. The format should be trivially capable of supporting pay what you want content, short and long form subscription periodicals, blog posts, tutorials, and far far more.

Amazon and Kobo are in a unique position to throw out their old, monolithic model and revolutionise the market on their own. They clearly have the market share, advertising space, and resource to do so. Both even have mature, capable, slick devices that can already handle the demands of an entirely new type of platform.

Eventually, either a major retailer, tiny startup, or agile firm are going to find their way into a new device that changes the way we interact with news and media. Along the way, they will inherit an entirely new marketplace of advertising and revenue that comes with the territory.

More importantly, we will all inherit new ways to reach great art, opinion, and literature that would otherwise go unread and possibly even unwritten. Finally, e-books will reach the potential that they promised in 2009.

Getting Started Gaming on Linux

Designed to add value with authoritative discussion on a reasonably niche subject matter

Just seven years ago, being passionate about gaming and passionate about Linux were two vastly different hobbies. To say you were a Linux gamer meant you once played relatively obscure indy releases, doom ports, or the penguin based Mario Cart racing clone Tuxcart. Today, many big name studios are building for the open source operating system and releasing across platforms from day one. For the end user, the result is an abundance of choice and control to run your own machine precisely how you want it. Despite the daunting looking learning curve; getting into gaming on Linux has never been easier.

Why switch to gaming on Linux

Switching to Linux, even with the abundance of games now available, can feel a little like giving yourself a social time out. Some of the highest trending titles simply can't or won't commit the resources to port their games in good time. Fortnite and PU: Battlegrounds, two of the highest trending games of the year aren't within a thousand miles of a Linux build. Without at least a Windows install to fall back on; you'll be leaving your team behind.

There is however, abundant pay-off for your self-imposed exclusion. For one: the price-point is favourable, free, but only a very slim advantage over the competition when compared to the real point of an open operating system: you own the computer.

The big 2 operating systems no longer abide by the idea that user knows best. Planning to put off updates for convenience? Shame. Didn't want them at all? Too bad. Time for an OS upgrade? Yes it is.

The modern commercial OS is like a car built for everyone; designed to be a safe, reliable, runner that will keep ticking on without services, checks, oil, or even fuel stops. Even the most oblivious user can maintain an up-to-date, safe, functioning system without needing to know their Ethernet from their dongle.

The system that I want as a gamer is entirely different. I expect to do the servicing, tuning, customisation, and far more. Otherwise I would run a games console. A PC shouldn't wake up in the morning to half a completed rendering job and updates installed 'for your convenience'. If something stinks in my own system I want the ability to change it, or simply switch to one that already has.

The philosophy behind open source is powerful and convincing, but the real driving forces that drove me to switch were the choices available for a better gaming machine.

Where to go

The first thing to consider when choosing your OS is which flavour of Linux distribution you choose to marry into. Invest your time here downloading a few major 'brands' to play with before committing to an install. By creating a live USB stick you can run each one on your own hardware without committing bits to hard drive. It's an opportunity for a test drive, a way to discover the interface options and find out the state of hardware support for your own machine.

From the dozens of Linux versions available, three major options stand out for the first time user.

Ubuntu Linux is the biggest distro on the market today. It's well-supported, friendly, and its popularity makes it well tested and easy to troubleshoot.

Linux Mint has an interface as friendly as its name. Much of the underlying system is similar to Ubuntu, both are based from Debian Linux, meaning many products and solutions for one can be brought to the other. Many newcomers choose and stick with Mint for its helpful interface and ease-of-use.

Fedora Linux is another fine choice with a smaller overall user base. With well over a million users and the work of software firm Red Hat, there is a great level of support available. RedHat Package Manager (RPM) based Fedora prides its philosophy on innovation and cutting-edge features. Though a little more intimidating than the other options mentioned, Fedora is a wonderful system to use and learn even if the curve is just a little bit steeper.

<h3>One small step</h3>

For many, a single leap of faith into the world of Linux is entirely out of the question. Apprehension strikes and many times there's at least one unsupported package where the open source alternative doesn't quite cut it. For this reason, the first foray into a Linux computer is almost always dual-booting.

Much like dual-wielding contrasting weapons in an FPS, dual-booting gives you the best options from both systems to minimise the drawbacks of each. Creating a dual-boot is as simple as selecting an option in the installer. Installing alongside windows from your live USB will allow you to choose a hard drive size that will become your Linux partition.

Licence to learn

There are certain points you must adhere to now that you've chosen to create a Linux system. Firstly, give yourself permission to screw up a little, then, give yourself permission to screw up a lot. It shouldn't need to be said but back up well before you start even thinking about tinkering with your own machine. Just because you're installing alongside Windows doesn't mean your data there is safe. Partition tables, BIOS settings, and fresh installs are almost as dirty as software gets. You're going to break something somewhere at least once.

Break, Google, fix. There is no finer, or more efficient, tried and tested cycle to learn computing. Repeat until presented with the Linux login screen. By the time you make it there, you've already come further than more than 90

To the victor go the spoils

A common misconception about Linux is that you absolutely must learn the command line for day-to-day use. Not true. Undeniable however, is that it's remarkably satisfying,

surprisingly fun, and easy.

Simply by typing "sudo apt install steam" at the terminal (Debian based distros), before entering your password, you can watch as the package manager fetches, downloads, and installs the base steam client without a further peep.

Get the most from your gaming machine

Another common misconception to open source systems is software should from then on out be open all the way. Many great open solutions exist; Blender, VLC, Audacity, and office. But excellent proprietary solutions, even on Linux, are alive and well too.

Graphics cards are a notable case and a consistent sticking point of Linux for many years previous. The open source drivers available for most cards just don't quite make the cut yet. Today, switching to the closed source, proprietary drivers are just a mouse click in the 'software & updates' menu. This is a must and will unlock the true performance of your graphics card under Linux.

Since Valve announced their support for the platform and creation of the Steam-box years ago, many organisations followed suit. Today Linux games can be found from Steam, GOG, and feature regularly within Humble Bundles. Odds are that games already in your Steam library have full support, ready to be played.

Two of the most major game engines: Unity and Unreal have been practising and improving on their Linux support since earlier than 2014. The result of which is even low-budget indy developers have managed to create ports with quick and simple tools.

It's an old trope in Linux that upcoming new year is always the "year of the Linux desktop". Realistically, support is now so good and so widespread, and the competition system so poor, I'm amazed that-amongst tech-savvy gamers at least - every year isn't more of a landmark slide towards more Linux gaming.