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Faster Computer Ready to speed up your computer? Let's start with the easy, free methods. A well-groomed hard drive gives the best speed performance when reading or writing data. A hard drive, with its moving parts, is the critical bottleneck that limits computing speed. Over time, a hard drive gets cluttered; slightly damaged; disorganized. Free tools are built into your operating system to keep your hard drive running at peak performance.

Run the Disk Cleanup function on the Tools tab occasionally to remove unneeded temporary files. Temporary files clutter up your hard disk. They are

Tips for a Faster Computer

by Bob Rankin



created when programs are installed and when you surf the Web. Programs which automatically save data while you're working, such as word processors, also create temporary files that may linger when they are no longer needed.

Check your hard drive for errors in the file system and bad sectors about once a month. This disk error check takes time and you can't use the computer while it's running, so plan to run a disk check while you have something else to do. To run a disk check in Windows,

- * Right-click on a drive in My Computer and select Properties
- * Click on the Tools tab and then Error-checking: Check Now.
- * Check the box to automatically fix file system errors.
- Optionally, check the box to check for bad sectors and mark them as "do not use." This will more than double the time required to run the complete disk check.
- Click Start. You will probably have to reboot to start running the disk check.

Defrag your hard drive. On the Tools tab you will also see the Defragment option. Data files get fragmented over time, with parts of a file written to different physical areas of the disk. The read/write head must move more than absolutely necessary to read the whole data file; this takes longer and wears out your drive faster. Run the Defragment option at least once a week. You can continue computing while it's running. My article Defrag Your Hard Drive has more details on your options for defragging.

More Tips For a Faster Computer

The Windows registry also gets cluttered and fragmented over time. The registry is a database of tens of thousands of settings that Windows needs to keep track of. When you add, remove, delete, or move programs and data, the registry can fill up with inaccurate or obsolete entries. Run a free registry cleaner such as RegClean whenever you do a major installation or uninstall, and about once a month.

All of these routine maintenance tasks can be run with one click using the free Advanced System Care from Iobit. It also finds and removes spyware and does a lot more to keep your system humming at peak performance.

Run Windows Task Manager to see what programs are running in background. Disable or uninstall background programs that you don't need; they just slow processing down. See my article Windows Task Manager for more help understanding and using Task Manager. To control which programs automatically start when you boot up, see Startup Programs.

Hardware upgrades can boost performance beyond system maintenance improvements. A faster CPU might be the first thing you think of, but it's actually the least efficient performance boost from a cost/benefit standpoint. Upgrade your CPU when you buy a new machine. To get more bang for the buck from your existing computer, replacing a 5400 rpm hard drive with a 33 per cent faster 7200 rpm drive is an excellent investment. Adding more RAM can help, too. For tips on how to select, buy and install RAM, see Adding Memory.

A computer that "feels" faster is good enough for most people. If you want to know quantitatively how much your computer's performance has improved after making these tweaks, grab a benchmarking program such as Performance Test. It will test the performance of your hard drive, RAM, CPU, and other components before and after changes; compare before and after to each other and to "average" comparable systems; and tell you what's improved and what could still be improved.

Be careful when downloading performance-improvement software from the Web. Some malware is disguised as free performance-enhancing software when in fact it snoops your hard drive for personal information and uploads it to bad guys, or installs hidden software that turns your computer into a robot slave distributing spam. Stick to well-reviewed programs with many satisfied users.

From the 6 January 2010 issue of TOURBUS. To subscribe go to <http://internettourbus.com/tickets.html>.

Why the Need to Reboot after Updating Windows?

by Susan Bradley
Windows Secrets

Not so long ago, Microsoft promised that fewer Windows patches would require restarting the system to complete their installation. Microsoft clearly hasn't delivered on that promise, so PC users need to take steps to ensure that they don't lose data due to unexpected post-update reboots.

Let's face it, we all hate rebooting. At best, rebooting requires that you start your work session over. At worst, if you've set Windows to update automatically, any open documents may close without giving you a chance to save your information.

In 2005, Microsoft started talking about a new restart manager to be built into Vista to ensure that fewer operating-system and application updates would require a reboot. In an Eweek interview at the time, Jim Allchin, former Microsoft co-president of the Platform Products and Services Group, boasted how much this technology would change the game.

But Microsoft's promises of fewer or no reboots were a lot of hot air. For example, let's look at Internet Explorer, although the same idea holds for any software you update.

When you update IE, the new software is written to disk. Any old code (such as dynamic link libraries or DLLs) already active in system memory usually remains untouched. Only when you restart do you flush out all the old code and load the new, updated software from your hard drive.

This is why in my experience, virtually all IE patches still insist on a reboot. Without a restart, you're still running the old code that contains whatever flaw the update was designed to correct.

And don't think that using Firefox gets you a pass on these updates: You have to update Internet Explorer because Windows uses IE for many other purposes. Thus malware can still reach your system through IE whether you open the program or not.

[Windows Secrets prefers that reprints use just the first section of a story then point you to the rest of the article online. The rest of this article may be found at: <http://windowssecrets.com/comp/100114/>]



The Case of the Missing Gigabytes

Q. I have a Dell, 160GB hard drive. While checking the size of the drive in My Computer, I discovered that my C: drive has three partitions: a 71MB, a 4.27GB, and a 144.67GB. Adding those three together, I get a little over 149GB, so there seems to be approximately 10GB missing. Where did it go?

A. The apparent discrepancy is caused by differences in the units of measure associated with megabytes and gigabytes, one unit being rounded off, and the other not being rounded off. (Anybody getting a headache yet? If not, keep reading.)

Disk capacity is measured using decimal kilobytes (KB), megabytes (MB), and gigabytes (GB). In decimal units, 1KB equals one thousand bytes, 1MB equals one million bytes, and 1GB equals one gazillion bytes -- okay, okay, just kidding. It equals one trillion bytes. But for file sizes, memory, and just about everything else computer related, for some strange, mysterious, and eternally confusing reason, we use binary kilobytes, megabytes, and gigabytes. In binary units, 1 KB equals 1,024 bytes, 1MB equals 1,048,576 bytes, and 1GB

equals 1,073,741,824 bytes.

To convert your disk's 160GB decimal to binary units used by the rest of Windows, you have to divide by 1.073741824. Let me see if I can do it in my head. Nope. Not a prayer. Breaking out the official Mr. Modem simulated plastic slide rule (with faux Naugahyde sheath), the result is approximately 149GB -- which is close enough to what you calculated. So when all is said and done, there really are no missing gigabytes. Mystery solved.

Q. I've been a subscriber of your excellent weekly newsletter for years, but I've never seen this question addressed: I suffer from RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury), so I have to find keyboard shortcuts for most of what I do at the computer. When reading articles online, every Web site requires a mouse to click the "Next Page" link. How can I move to the next page by keystroke instead of mouse click?

A. Using the Web pretty much assumes you are using a mouse, though that does pose a problem for many people in your situation. There is a way around it, however, by pressing the TAB key. Repeatedly pressing the TAB key will move from one link on the page to the next. When it reaches the link you want (such as "Next Page"), press ENTER to execute the action. SHIFT+TAB reverses direction through the links which may be faster if the link you're targeting is near the bottom of the page. Pressing the END key takes you to the bottom of a page; the HOME key takes you to the top.

Q. I have one telephone line and dial-up access to the Internet. Is there a way for me to be notified of an incoming call while I'm online, so I can go offline and answer the phone?

A. BuzzMe.com (www.buzzme.com) is a service that will display a window when an incoming call arrives, so you can then decide whether to accept the call or reject it. There are several BuzzMe services available that range in price from \$14.99 per year to \$47.90 per year. The BuzzMe Notify service provides notification of incoming calls. Complete information can be found on the BuzzMe.com Web site.

Q. Sometimes I receive an email of an appointment in Outlook. Is there a way to forward this to myself on a certain day so that when I open my email, it will serve as a reminder?

A. After you compose or prepare to forward a message, instead of clicking Send, click the Options button (on the Send menu bar). Under Delivery Options select "Do not deliver before:" Date/Time options will appear from which you can select and schedule the date and time when the message should be sent. Close the Options menu, then send the message. The email will be saved in your Outbox and will be sent when the date and hour match the scheduled date and time selected.

Mr. Modem's DME (Don't Miss 'Em) Sites of the Month

AllMyFaves

A colorful, NASCAR-like search engine that includes what AllMyFaves considers to be the best sites in each of 41 categories. The categories aren't listed alphabetically, which would be helpful, but AllMyFaves gets an "A" for originality, regardless. Try it a few times and it will grow on you.

www.allmyfaves.com

Seafood Watch

A program of the Monterey Bay Aquarium (oh, the irony), created to raise consumer awareness about the importance of buying seafood from sustainable sources and to provide reliable fish facts to help us make informed purchases. Use the Seafood Search to find your favorite seafood's rating. Ratings range from "Good" to "Call the paramedics!" Each fish selected includes a consumer note, health alerts, and a summary. Hint: If you're planning to have giant scallops tonight, you might want to think twice about that. Ixnay on the allopsscay.

<http://tinyurl.com/22r7zn>

For plain-English answers to your questions by email, plus great computing tips, subscribe to Mr. Modem's award-winning WEEKLY newsletter. Subscribe using Promo Code 1046 and receive a free month with your six-month subscription! To view a sample issue or subscribe, visit www.MrModem.com.



From The DealsGuy

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click

Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

Our bank, Washington Mutual, was recently taken over by Chase via the FDIC. Our checking and a small savings account were with them, and a Home Equity Loan of just a few thousand. Although our original purpose for the HEL fell through, we had eventually borrowed a small amount for home improvements. We opened the HEL three years ago and have never been late or missed a payment. We usually pay a substantial amount on the principal as well as the monthly interest, but on a few occasions, we only paid the monthly interest, which you can do on a HEL. Shortly after Chase took over, we received a letter from them with two forms they wanted signed to enable them to get copies of our IRS returns for the last two years. They also demanded that we furnish them proof of our income.

I was appalled at the intensity of their demand and decided to ignore it; after all, our record is unblemished, and our FICO score is over 800 and we weren't asking for more money, so I didn't feel we were doing anything wrong? I expected to hear from them by phone, but instead, the next month brought a letter demanding we pay the loan off and there would be no financial penalty for early payment. I also ignored that one. I guess I could have paid it off, but paying money back to your savings does not always happen as planned, so I'm just continuing to pay on the loan, wondering what their next move will be. Am I some kind of criminal?

They then discontinued our credit line, which really doesn't matter to me. Now they're hitting us with extra fees for each payment, called "back dating fees." I've tried complaining to a couple of state agencies, but neither office has responded. My feeling is, beware of dealing with Chase. We're changing our checking to another bank, and since our utilities are automatically withdrawn, we're communicating with them to change bank accounts. The utilities tell me many of their customers are also complaining about Chase.

Interesting Reading

Everyone is interested in Flash Memory technology these days, but few end users really understand what it's all about. *Information Week* had an interesting article that explains some of how it works along with the shortcomings, and what the future might bring. This article might fill in some blanks, but it's written for IT people so read it carefully. Sorry for the long URL, but some readers dislike tinyurls. They tell me they want to know where they're going when they click a URL. <<http://www.informationweek.com/news/storage/systems/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=219501231&queryText=Howard%20Marks>>

Another interesting article in IW is about "The Internet of Things"; keeping track of all kinds of things, using RFID tags, and other types of information tags. It covers different topics and problems not covered in the RFID article I gave you recently, and might give you something to think about. <<http://analytics.informationweek.com/abstract/25/1343/Virtualization/monitoring-technology-creates-internet-of-things.html>>.

Oops, Nobody Home

In my November DealsGuy column, I wrote about an interesting 3D address book with a discount. Two of my readers have told me they tried to order it, but were unable to do so, or even get a response to e-mail. We both tried to contact the PR person that I coordinated it with, but to no avail. They don't seem to respond at all and I have no idea why. I have that problem a lot with vendors who send out announcements for a new product, but when that happens I don't usually use that item, but in this case, I had several communications with the person and she assured me everything would work fine. I guess those things happen, but I can't help but feel bad. I'm still trying to contact them.

Need to Uninstall Something?

Mike Ungerman <<http://musings-from-mike.blogspot.com>> (interesting site) of Central Florida Computer Society <<http://www.cfcs.org>> suggested Revo Uninstaller as his favorite product for program removals <http://www.revouninstaller.com/revo_uninstaller_free_download.html>. User Group members in Florida will remember Mike as the founder of the Florida Association of Computer User Groups (FACUG). He put his own money on the line in the hopes that FACUG would be a success that first year, and it has been a resounding success every since, with the help of many other people.

Here is an excerpt from the Revo Web site: “Revo Uninstaller includes; Junk Files Cleaner, Windows Tools, Auto Run Manager, Browsers Cleaner, MS Office Cleaner, Windows Cleaner, Evidence Remover and Unrecoverable Delete tools! You can reach all these tools from the ‘Tools’ tool bar button of Revo Uninstaller.”

Another of Mike’s recommendations, Belarc Advisor is a popular product for analyzing your system, but Mike suggests a similar program, SIW — System Information for Windows, that, in his opinion, presents the data in a more manageable format <<http://www.gtopala.com/>>. Check their Web site to find out about its many features and download the freeware version. This is an impressive program.

Be Warned About Those Nasty Web Sites

Hewie Poplock <<http://www.hewie.net>> of Central Florida Computer Society alerted his Windows SIG to this valuable utility, <<http://linkscanner.avg.com>>. Some of the nastiest malware could download unknowingly from innocent looking Web sites, so a timely warning might help. I recently mentioned Site Advisor from McAfee, and Site Hound from FireTrust to warn you about undesirable Web sites. They turn your browser red and warn you about possible malicious code. Also check out LinkScanner from AVG Technologies. They acquired this product a while back, which used to sell for \$29.95 before they bought it, but now it’s free. It works with Windows 2000, XP, Vista and Windows 7. It’s also OK on either 32 bit or 64 bit systems. It’s a plug-in for IE-6 or later and also works with Firefox.

Can’t Make up a Web Site for Your Business?

Look into this Announcement!

Talkbiznow will offer a free online storefront with the launch of Webstore, a service that enables businesses, start-ups and charities to create their own micro-Website promoting products on the Internet. “A Webstore, which can be created for free within eight minutes, dramatically cuts the time and costs required to set up a well-designed business website, which often costs users between £10,000 (\$16,000) and £20,000 (\$32,000) to build.” The biggest use of the new service is expected to come from Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) who are already turning to Talkbiznow in the current tough economic conditions as a low-cost and technologically efficient way to reach new markets, recruit staff and create partnerships.

Talkbiznow users can design their own Webstore and choose audio and video promotional tools to help ensure that each micro-website is tailor-made to meet their specific business brand. Each Webstore will have its own URL address, available to all Internet users. Visitors to a Webstore can pay for products and services via PayPal, the online payment system. The accessibility of Webstore reflects the philosophy of Martin Warner, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and co-founder of Talkbiznow, who is committed to offering services for free, empowering SMEs with the technological bandwidth to compete with large corporations.

Warner says: “Webstore represents a unique, non-technical experience to market yourself. Talkbiznow members will be able to create their own storefront. Businesses, charities, events and personal profiles will all be reachable outside the network itself. A Webstore will effectively function as an online business card.” Webstore users choose between elegant off-the-shelf templates to define their product, service, event or brand; also advertise prices and describe their industry. Browsers will find each micro-website intuitively easy to navigate with a Webstore acting as a portal that lies between an advertisement and a business website. Users

will be able to upload videos about themselves, or their business, from their smart phones and upload them to the page.”

Talkbiznow enables its users to network, promote, collaborate with each other, and do business online. Services include web conferencing, voice conferencing and file storage facilities. Users can also use the business social network as an online portal to market and advertise services to other users.

For further information on Webstore, call + 44 (0)20 7233 7578, or check the Talkbiznow URL at <<http://www.talkbiznow.com>>.

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <bobclick@bellsouth.net>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

Tales From The Trenches: Skip The Trapeze

by Gregory Anderson
Smart Computing

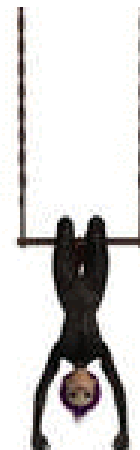
We all have to view PDFs (Portable Document Format) from time to time, and along with everyone else, I use Adobe Acrobat Reader to open and read the documents that come across my email and browser. Reader works well enough that I'm willing to deal with its constant background presence and endless updates. I'm not here to knock Reader into the net unless, of course, you have suggestions for free and seamless replacements. Then I'm all ears.

Every once in awhile, though, most of us encounter a need to make our own PDFs. The format is incredibly helpful when you want to control the formatting of a document, such as a résumé or a newsletter. It's also useful in preventing casual editing of important documentation. It's much harder to edit a PDF (by accident or by design) than to change a Word document. PDFs also generally offer better compression than other formats for documents with lots of graphics, especially when you're dealing with images embedded in word-processing docs or spreadsheets. Finally, PDFs offer near-universal compatibility. Almost everyone has Acrobat Reader, so you won't have to worry about whether a client has the right version of PowerPoint to see your presentation.

When the need strikes, most people either shell out a few hundred bucks for Adobe Acrobat, hunt down a friend with a copy installed, or just give up on the idea. One alternative I've used in the past is a scanner. Most software bundled with scanners offers the option to save scanned material in PDF format. So, if you have a party invite or budget report that you want to preserve or protect, you can print a hard copy and pass it through your scanner into PDF format. Make sure to print and scan at high resolutions to limit degradation of quality. It's not the most elegant of solutions, but for a long time, it was about the only use I got out of my scanner.

A couple years ago, I discovered an even better solution: freeware. One nice thing about PDF is that it's an open format; other applications (besides Acrobat) can create PDF files, as well. Some, like the Acrobat application itself, offer premium features such as collaborative document reviewing and page bookmarking for a price (anywhere from \$100 to \$300). However, there are several upstarts happy to provide free basic functionality to those of us who only need to create simple PDFs every once in awhile.

My personal standby is PrimoPDF (free; www.primopdf.com). The program is free for personal use, it provides a variety of output options (including screen, print, or high resolution), and it installs as if it were a printer. One nice thing about the “virtual printer” model is that the software only runs when you need it. It's as easy to use as a printer, too. Just select PrimoPDF instead of your normal printer. The program loads,



you pick a destination path for the file, and anything you print will come out as a PDF.

I'm sure there are other options out there, and perhaps even some better ones. What have you found?

From the December 2009 issue of Smart Computing. Vol.20 Issue 13, Page(s) 92 in print issue. Gregory Anderson is a regular contributor to Smart Computing and several other technology publications. He keeps a sharp eye (with the help of thick glasses) on computing trends and enjoys working with geeks of all stripes—most of time. Share your tales of formatting frustration with Greg at gregory-anderson@smartcomputing.com.

Broadsides

by Ron Broadhurst

Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc., FL

Dear friends,

These ideas are compiled from years of accumulations from various magazines, books, on-line sites and my own personal experience. I claim neither originality nor ownership to any of its contents. My only intent is to share the various “tips, “tricks” & “hints” in hopes of helping & maybe enhancing your computing experiences. They are all intended for anyone who uses a PC.

It is for beginners as well as advanced users. Enjoy and use as you will.

Set Your Windows So They All Have The Same View

If you like to see lists of your files in a certain way—as large icons, for example, or with detailed information—Windows XP lets you set your view options for all your folders at once the way you want them. On the Tools menu in Windows Explorer, click--Folder Options.

- ▶ Click the View tab.
- ▶ Set the view for this folder the way you want it to be for all folders.
- ▶ Click Like Current Folder, then click Yes to confirm, and click OK.

Search for Information Right from the Address Bar in Internet Explorer

You can quickly search for information on the Web using the AutoSearch feature in Internet Explorer 6 in Windows XP:

- ▶ In the Address bar, simply type “go” or “find” or “?” followed by a keyword or phrase, and then press ENTER. Your search results will soon appear.

Note Internet Explorer searches for your word or topic using only one search service. If you don't find what you need, click the Search button on the toolbar and try using different search services.

How to Display the Animated Screen Character in the Search Option

- ▶ Click Start, and then click Search.
- ▶ In the Search Companion dialog box, click Change Preferences.
- ▶ Click With an animated screen character in the How do you want to use Search Companion box. The screen character is displayed in Search Companion.

Changing Time Clock 24hrs..12hrs or Reverse

The desire to change the time format in the system tray clock is a fairly common one and finding the setting can be challenging. Click Start | Control Panel. If you're in XP native view, click “Date, Time, Language and Regional Options.” If you're in Classic view, click Regional and Language Options. Click the Customize button, then click the Time tab. In the drop down box for Time Format, choose h:mm:ss tt or hh:mm:ss tt. The “tt” stands for A.M./P.M. The selections that begin with capital H cause the clock to display military (24 hour) time.

How to Configure Device Manager to Show Detailed Information

Sometimes when you're troubleshooting problems with various devices and components, you would like to see information such as the hardware ID of the device or its firmware revision or other information that

is not available in Device Manager. You can configure Device Manager to display more detailed information than is displayed by default. Here's how:

- ▶ Click Start | Run.
- ▶ Type cmd.exe and press Enter.
- ▶ Type set DEVMGR_SHOW_DETAILS=1 and 3.press Enter.
- ▶ Type start devmgmt.msc and press Enter to open the Device Manager console.

Now a Details tab will appear in the properties for each device. This tab contains the additional information that you may need.

Use the Desktop Cleanup Wizard in Windows XP

To start the Desktop Cleanup Wizard:

- ▶ Right click anywhere on the Desktop
- ▶ Select Properties at the bottom
- ▶ Click the Desktop tab
- ▶ Then click Customize Desktop. The Desktop Items dialog box is displayed.
- ▶ Under Desktop cleanup, click the Run Desktop Cleanup Wizard every 60 days check box
- ▶ If you want to run the Wizard immediately. Click Clean Desktop Now. The Desktop Cleanup Wizard starts.
- ▶ If you do not want the Wizard to run at all, uncheck the check box.

Restore Icons That Have Been Removed from the Desktop in XP

This article describes how to restore the My Computer, My Documents, and My Network Places icons after they have been removed from the desktop.

In Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition and Professional, the new Start menu is enabled by default. When the new Start menu is enabled, the My Computer, My Documents, and My Network Places icons are removed from the desktop.

- ▶ Right-click the Desktop and click Properties.
- ▶ Click the Desktop tab.
- ▶ Click Customize Desktop.
- ▶ Click the General tab, and then click the icons that you want to place on the desktop.
- ▶ Click OK.

Add Fields to the Details View of Folders

You can add other columns to the Details view of the files contained in Windows XP folders, such as Comments, Description, Category, and many others. To add new columns:

- ▶ Right-click the column header of the files list, and then click one of the fields listed, or click More.
- ▶ In the Choose Details dialog box, you can reorganize the order of column headers, specify column widths, and add columns to display details for the files in that folder.

When you click the new column header, the width of the selected column is displayed in pixels in the Choose Details dialog box.

From the The Space Coast PC Journal, December 2009. This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (shiron (at) cfl.rr.com).



A Computer in Your Pocket:

a Review of the iPod Touch

by Nancy De Marte
Sarasota PCUG, Florida

Decades ago, the technology community was predicting that someday computers would be integrated into our everyday life – in cars, phones, refrigerators. This idea seemed far-fetched to us conservative PC users. What we couldn't imagine was a device the size of a playing card that could perform almost all the functions of a desktop computer. But it's true. A few months ago I bought one of these magic items, an iPod Touch.

The original iPod has been around since 2001 as a portable device produced by Apple and acting primarily as a media player with excellent tone quality. The iPod Touch, introduced in late 2007 as a non-phone version of the iPhone, is also a media player, but does much, much more. Besides listening to my favorite songs through headphones while at the gym, I have used my iPod Touch to surf the Internet, read my email from my Verizon and Yahoo accounts, check my stocks, store and view my digital photos, and play a variety of interesting and brain-boosting games, all without spending a penny beyond the purchase price of the iPod Touch.

How could I do all those activities on something which weighs only 4 ounces and has a 3.5 inch screen? First, let's look at what is required to make the iPod Touch perform: a Mac or PC with an XP SP2 or higher operating system and a 2.0 USB port, a free account with iTunes, and a Wi-Fi connection. The PC is needed to recharge the iPod, to download and install your iTunes application from www.iTunes.com, and to visit the comprehensive iTunes store, where you can download free and paid little applications (called "apps") for your iPod Touch.

The iPod Touch comes loaded with several basic applications, including the Safari web browser, Mail, a photo gallery, a notepad, calculator, stocks, and weather. But that's only the beginning. At last check there were over 80,000 free applications available in various categories at iTunes, such as utilities, news, sports, and games. For a total of less than \$5.00, I have downloaded several games, including the old Pac Man; media links such as the Weather Channel, MapQuest, and Shutterfly; podcasts, which are free video or audio recordings of public media broadcasts, and some unique items such as a piano which really plays on the built in speaker. For a small fee (\$.99 - \$20.00), you can purchase songs or albums, online books, TV show episodes, and movies to rent or own.

Each time you connect the iPod Touch to the computer, iTunes opens and automatically "syncs" your iPod Touch; that is, makes sure the same music and apps which are in your library are also on your device, including ones you have just purchased or downloaded. Since I have copied my favorite songs and albums from my own audio CD's to iTunes, they also get synced each time at zero cost.

The most amazing part of the iPod Touch is the "touch." Except for a bar on top to turn on the iPod Touch and a button to open an application, all other tasks are performed by merely touching or dragging your finger across the screen. To see a thumbnail photo in full screen, just touch it. Turn the iPod Touch from vertical to horizontal to see a screen image horizontally. Enlarge the text in email or a web page by touching the screen with two fingers and gently drawing them apart to zoom in or together to zoom out. When you have finished reading an email message, just touch the recycle bin at the bottom of the screen and the message flows into the bin. The device also has an on screen keyboard to enter text or write an email. If you aren't a "texter," as I'm not, using the keyboard took a little getting used to. But I'm improving each time.

To access the Internet with iPod Touch, you need a Wi-Fi (wireless) connection. In our home, we have a wireless network for our two computers. The iPod Touch senses this each time it's turned on. When we were on vacation in the mountains, I found a friendly general store and restaurant with a public wireless connection. Since I don't store personal information on this device, I was able to read my mail safely while

sipping a cup of tea.

So what are the disadvantages of the iPod Touch? The downside for many people will be the initial cost. Recently the cost for a second generation iPod Touch with 8GB storage capacity like mine has come down because a third generation version is available. But even so, it costs around \$200. However, once you own it and set it up, there are no more fees for Internet or any other function unless you choose to purchase music or applications. And with your own music and photos, plus free applications from the iTunes store, you can have a lot of enjoyment for just the purchase price.

There are more and more of these handheld devices on the market all the time. I chose not to purchase an iPhone because currently its phone functions require you to subscribe to the AT&T network. Since my family and many friends have Verizon as their cell phone carrier, I didn't want to switch. Someday soon, it appears that these restrictions surrounding cell phones will be lifted. Then I may look into an iPhone, which has all the capabilities of an iPod Touch and more. For now, though, I'm happy with my iPod Touch.

What are RSS Feeds?

by Constance Brown

President, Canton Alliance Massillon Users Group, OH

What are RSS Feeds? According to the Wikipedia, "RSS (most commonly translated as 'Really Simple Syndication' but sometimes 'Rich Site Summary') is a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works such as blog entries, news headlines, audio, and video in a standardized format."

Let's see whether we can translate that into everyday language. Most of us have favorite sites or blogs we visit regularly - perhaps news, genealogy, weather, or other types of sites that are updated regularly. Instead of having to click on bookmarks to navigate between sites, or typing the URL of each site, it is much faster to have one location that posts links to the latest updated information. That is done by subscribing to an RSS Reader. Both Yahoo & Google offer readers, and there are other choices as well.



I subscribed to the Google Reader by visiting www.google.com/reader. Because I already had a Gmail account, I was able to login immediately and add subscriptions. That is done in one of two ways: clicking on an icon or copying code by clicking on the URL of the feed and pasting it in Add Subscription on your Google Reader home page.

Let's walk through two examples. We'll start by clicking on Add Subscription. A search bar opens that allows us to search for an RSS Feed. I will type The Repository and click Add. Links pop up on the right side of the screen, one of them titled The Repository. Next I will click the + sign by Subscribe. I am then given the option of adding the link to a folder. I want to create a new folder titled News, so I will click Add to a Folder and select New Folder. A screen pops up that allows me to name the folder. Super simple!

Let's look at a different example. In this case we want to add a link to The Christian Law Association at <http://www.christianlaw.org/cla/>. While browsing their web site, we find an orange broadcast symbol that stands for link to an RSS Feed. When we click on it, a page of code pops up! No need to panic! We will click on the URL and copy it (I use Ctl + C), open the Google Reader, click on Add Subscription, paste the URL in the search box, and click Add.

Some sites let us add a subscription by simply checking an icon that says Google Reader. We click the link and a window pops up that allows us to login to our account and add the link.

In the future it is simple to go to www.google.com/reader, login, and view updates. We can indicate that we want all messages older than one day to be marked as Read. Now only today's unread links are bold. We can organize links into folders. Yes, we can unsubscribe and we can add new subscriptions, change the folders in which they are stored, view the links as lists, share, search within links, and more.

Why not try it using this technology. You will get the latest information in one easily accessible place, thus maximizing precious time.

From The Memory Map, September 2009 This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (constance (at) mystepco.com).

Keep it Clean! Diskeeper 2010 at Your Service

by Margaret Hatcher

Houston Area League of PC Users

Diskeeper Graphic Utilizing a new defragmentation technology called IntelliWrite, Diskeeper 2010 intelligently writes files to the disk to prevent up to 85 percent of fragmentation from occurring, the company claims. It is the latest release of a top-notch disk defragmentation utility, with new features designed to allow the application to be configured easily for a true set-it-and-forget-it experience. The new Diskeeper prevents fragmentation before it happens. Sound like hocus-pocus? Read on.

Diskeeper also optimizes file placement for fast access utilizing its I-FAAST technology. The jury is still out on this feature – I prefer all folders in one place and files in another. Windows will change locations each time you defrag if you don't set it up correctly.

The benefits of Diskeeper include improved system performance from faster file reads and writes. By curtailing the excessive I/Os associated with fragmentation, wear and tear is reduced on the drive, resulting in extended hardware life.

Do you have an SSD drive? DO NOT defragment it. Doing so might compromise the integrity of the drive.

The program includes a unique Set It and Forget It feature with Smart Scheduling, that, once set, runs invisibly and fully automatic in the background. In addition, the Frag Guard feature helps prevent fragmentation in your most important system files. Additional features include boot-time defrag, priority settings as well as the ability to defrag multiple disks automatically and simultaneously while system is in use. Yes, there are many features. For the novice, it is no problem. Just accept the default settings. I did, and never looked back.

At first glance, it looks like Diskeeper offers one key improvement from last year's release, a new feature called Intelliwrite, which Diskeeper claim "prevents the majority of disk fragmentation from ever occurring, dramatically improving Windows system performance."

A small percentage of fragmentation is not preventable and will be eliminated by Automatic Defragmentation. The combination of IntelliWrite and Automatic Defragmentation will keep your system running at optimum performance in the most effective and efficient way possible.

You can schedule your defragmentation for times when your away from the computer or you can use the manual defragger when your system feels sluggish. But beyond basic defragmentation functions there are a number of advanced options to increase system efficiency. Use Boot Time Defragging to defrag your hard drive at start up. While it slows down your boot time, your computer should run more smoothly overall. I-FAAST defragging sequences files in conjunction with the automatic defragger. Diskeeper keeps your swap file at the front of the disk, which makes transferring information considerably faster – swap file is virtually unknown, yet has a high impact on system performance.

Slow performance and disk wear and tear are kept to a minimum because Diskeeper is constantly checking the disk to ensure fragmentation is virtually eliminated before it happens. Because the application is always running and loads as a Windows service, there is no need to watch the defrag process to ensure completion or to keep the screensaver from kicking on.

CONS: The current version does not support a 2TB drive. As disks grow and become cheaper, this limit will need to be examined and likely be increased or removed. On most systems, this limit will not pose a problem today, but who would have thought of a 1TB three years ago!

Performance-wise, users will experience faster read/write times, as data will be better organized on disks.

Better data organization results in more free disk space.

All of the hassles Diskeeper eliminates and performance benefits it offers seem like they would do a number on system resources, but with Diskeeper's InvisiTasking technology, the opposite is true. InvisiTasking runs transparently in the background in real time, allowing Diskeeper's other technologies to do their jobs with no impact on system resources, even during heavy traffic.

Diskeeper is well suited to users seeking better system performance and willing to pay a little extra for the experience. I have used Diskeeper for four years and have found no equal. Visit [www .diskeeper.com](http://www.diskeeper.com) free 30 day trialware and further info, updates, etc.

Margaret Hatcher is a HAL-PC family member who is the office manager of a large, multi-location real estate firm.

TweakNow PowerPack 2009

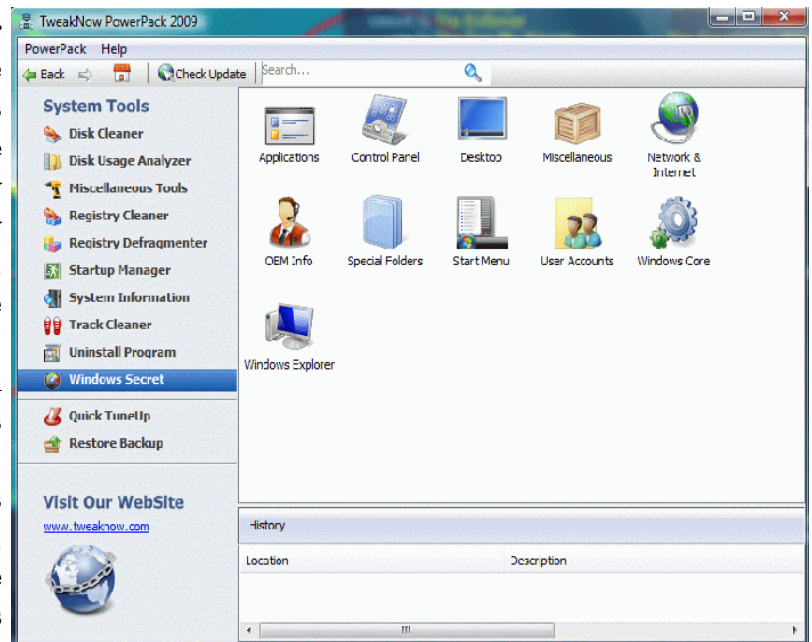
by Ira Wilsker
APCUG

A Comprehensive Free Utility for Windows

Regular readers of this column are well aware that I am a utility junkie. I like downloading PC utilities in the never-ending saga of trying to improve PC performance and reliability. There are many very good performance utilities out there, both free and commercial, which will likely improve the functioning of the PC. Sadly, there are also some utilities that are downright dangerous or are scams that try to separate the desperate computer user from his money. Still, I have this insatiable desire to try these utilities and see what they can do. For safety and security reasons, I always have a current backup of my critical files just in case something goes wrong, which has inevitably happened to me more times than I am comfortable to admit.

I subscribe to several software email lists and RSS feeds where I get the latest software news and information on new releases and updates. One British list that I subscribe to via RSS is Download Reviews (www.v3.co.uk/downloads), and its sister site Download Junkie (www.downloadjunkie.co.uk). These websites are excellent sources of software news, including occasional announcements about some prominent commercial software publishers that sometimes release full versions of their commercial software at no charge, but which are only available free for a very limited time.

I recently read a review of a free utility that piqued my curiosity, TweakNow PowerPack 2009 (www.tweaknow.com). Being the skeptic that I am, I had this inner drive (addiction) to download it and try it. The reviews about it were very positive, and I searched several of the independent computer magazines' online editions, and found some complimentary reviews of TweakNow products. Verifying that my backups and security software were in order, I installed TweakNow PowerPack 2009 on my Vista 64 machine, as it is more software finicky than my XP machine when it comes to software utilities. I was pleasantly surprised to have TweakNow install smoothly and quickly on the 64-bit machine. The version that I downloaded and installed was 1.6.0000 Beta 2 which appears to be stable and fully functional. It is explicitly written for Windows XP, Vista (32 and 64), and Windows 7 (32 and 64). The interface is clean and intuitive with an even



dozen menu items listed on the left side under the heading “System Tools.” Clicking on an item in the left menu opens the main window with a more detailed selection of functions.

TweakNow

At the top of the list is “Disk Cleaner” which selectively searches all attached drives for obsolete and useless files, freeing up space on the hard drive. It has never failed to amaze me how much clutter I often find when I work on others’ computers, and this utility is good at finding that clutter. The “Disk Usage Analyzer” graphically displays the makeup of the directories on the hard drive along with information on the directories. “Miscellaneous Tools” has six tools which can be used to control the processes running on the computer, optimize the memory (many pundits claim that this function is unnecessary), and control how CDs autorun.

As we install and uninstall software and hardware, the Windows registry becomes bloated with outdated and obsolete entries, which at worst can lead to substantial degradation of performance, conflicts between components, and other maladies. Some self-proclaimed computer experts tout that the registry should be cleaned periodically, or at least monthly, to remove the debris and outmoded entries that may be the source of many computing problems. As a safety precaution, it is good practice to create a system restore point or otherwise backup the registry before doing anything to the registry, just in case something goes wrong. The “Registry Cleaner” integrated with the TweakNow PowerPack is also available as a freestanding utility from the tweaknow.com website. Scanning the registry for errors may take a few minutes, and this software uses a green shield icon with a white checkmark to indicate those registry items that are likely safe to delete. As items are written to and deleted from the registry, gaps are created in the file structure which waste space, and may lead to slower booting and shutdown. Included with TweakNow is a Registry Defragmenter which will remove the gaps from the “hives” or sections of the registry, making it smaller and more efficient.

Many computers are slow booting and sluggishly running because too many items are loaded when the computer is turned on, and this consumes system resources. While Windows has a “geekish” MSCONFIG utility that can be used to control what loads when the computer is booted, the Startup Manager in PowerPack makes the process easy by simply unchecking the box adjacent to an unwanted item. If the user changes his mind later, or finds that an item unchecked is desired, simple re-checking the item will load that item at the next boot.

Sometimes it is necessary to know explicitly what is in your computer in terms hardware and the operating system. The “System Information” component displays the hardware components model numbers, firmware versions, driver builds, and other technical information that may be critical to have when repairing, updating, or upgrading the computer, as well as details about the build and version of Windows.

Personal privacy is an issue that many of us are concerned with, and the PowerPack has a “Track Cleaner” which will delete temporary internet files, cookies, cache, and other internet tracks left on the computer. PowerPack can clean tracks left on Internet Explorer up to version 8, and Firefox up to version 3.5, as well as those tracks left by Windows itself. While somewhat redundant with Window’s own Add/Remove utility, PowerPack has a capable “Uninstall Program” function that can be used to uninstall any no longer wanted programs.

One of my favorite features in TweakNow PowerPack 2009 is the “Windows Secret” utility which has eleven sections each containing tweaks that can be used to improve the performance of Windows, enhance the appearance of the desktop, secure the control panel, customize the start menu, and control the way that the Windows Explorer file manager appears and functions. Well over 100 tweaks are available with this “Secret” utility. For those who just want to improve performance with minimal effort, the “Quick TuneUp” offers a single click way to perform the basic tune-up functions, such as cleaning the registry and removing hard drive clutter.

I will be the first to admit that I have made many mistakes when fooling around with computer settings. What is nice about TweakNow is that it automatically makes a backup of whatever was changed, enabling the user to restore or un-do what was done. This is accessed by clicking on “Restore Backup” which shows

a directory of the changes implemented, and a single click will restore the selected changes.

TweakNow PowerPack 2009 is a very capable free utility that can do much to enhance the performance of a PC. TweakNow is about to release a low-cost “professional” version with even more features for XP, Vista and “7,” but with a bargain price of only \$10. The free version of PowerPack 2009 is quite capable; I eagerly look forward to see what TweakNow can add to a professional version.

OAG Joins the Facebook Generation(s)! Part 1

by Mike Morris
Front Range PC Users Group, CO

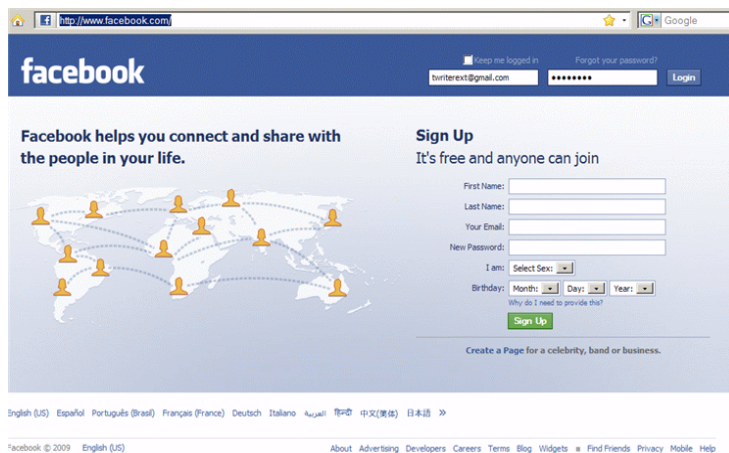
Hello everyone. I am writing to you as the Old Analog Guy again (a reminder: the acronym is OAG and is pronounced “ogre”).

You may find it surprising that this OAG has signed up for a Facebook account. I certainly surprised myself. However, I decided it was time to explore this...whatever it is when an **older** cousin sent me a message saying “check out my photos on Facebook.” With help from my 17-year-old grand niece, I think I have figured out (at least some of) the basic mechanics of using this social network.

I don’t claim to understand the motivation behind the popularity of (electronic) social networks. The interests of advertisers in this phenomenon, are, however, very clear (more on that in a moment). The origins of this phenomenon (at least for Facebook) are in the east coast (US) universities around 2003 – 2004 (connect to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook> for more history and discussion of this company). According to that Wikipedia article, “...within the first month [of launch], more than half [of] the undergraduate population at Harvard was registered on the service.” In 2005, Facebook launched a high school version, and in 2006 it was offered to the general public (everyone over the age of 13).

OK, I understand the interest in having friends and sharing conversation with friends. Even this OAG has a few friends (I think). What I **don’t** understand is this willingness (compulsion?) to share (almost) every last detail of your life in a public (or “semi-public”) way. That seems analogous to running around in a football stadium without any clothes and with 100,000 (or 60,000,000—the number of US Facebook users estimated in May of 2009*) screaming fans watching. And, of course, in today’s world, it has risks.

The current version of Facebook allows you to control what information to enter (and display). So...I am now a Facebook registered user, and I think I may have learned a little about how to use it,



and, perhaps ... possibly ... maybe ... a glimmer of understanding of why it is used.

The first page you see when you connect to Facebook is this:

To register you need to enter the usual contact information, plus gender and birth date. Your birth date is the **ONLY** personal information (other than gender) that you are required to enter (and you can arrange so that it is not visible to anyone).

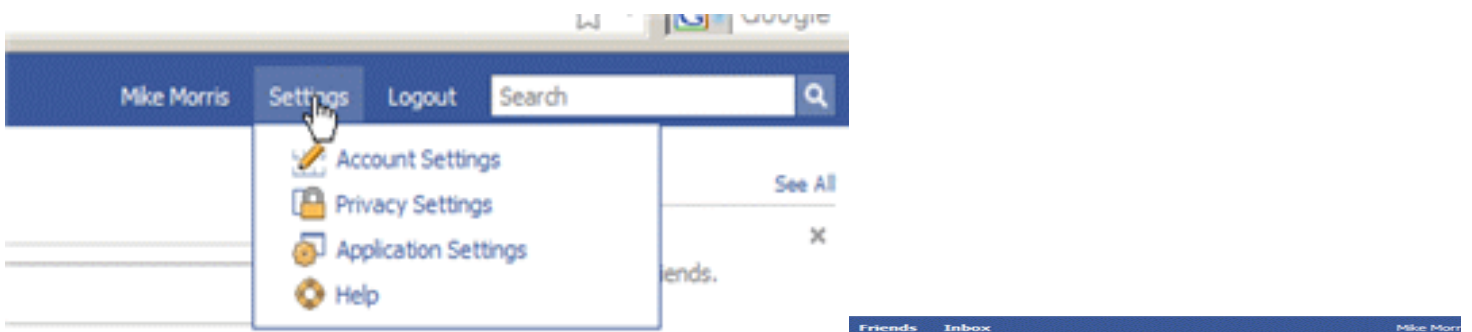
Once you register and log in, you are connected to

your “home page.” Here is what my homepage looks like at the moment:

Probably the first item that catches your eye is that large “670.” Yes, that is an advertisement, and advertising is the “fuel” that drives the social networking phenomena. So, if you find any or all of the ads objectionable (even for just being there), then you are, I am sorry to say, not a candidate for the “Facebook Generation” (I hope you are not too easily offended—after all every Google search results page has advertising). The ads (and “Suggestions”) change every few minutes, I think.

Before I go on with my description of the homepage—or any other page—I need to call your attention to the “Settings” button at the upper right of the page. If you use your mouse to move the pointer over that button, you will see a list of 4 choices:

Now click on the “Privacy Settings” choice, and you obtain access to a list of privacy controls:



There are several categories of these settings.

- ▶ Profile
- ▶ Search
- ▶ News Feed and Wall
- ▶ Applications

You can also block a name and/or an email address from this page.

Here is how I have set my Profile privacy settings:

I have limited access to everything to “Only Friends” (another clue that I am still very much an OAG and have not made the transition to “Digital Man”).

The choices are:

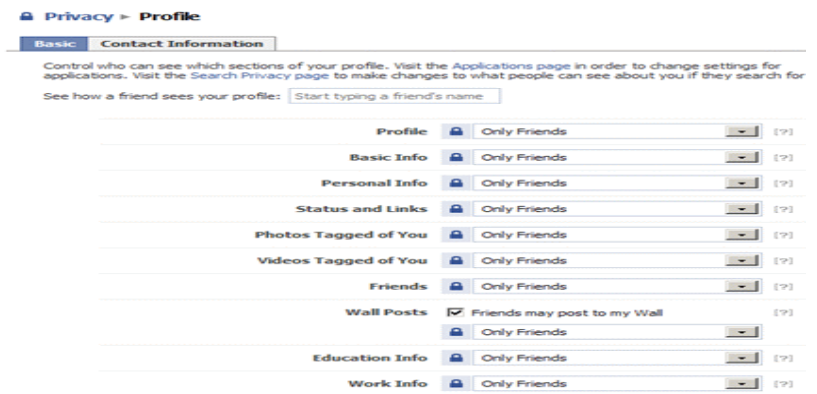
- ▶ Only Friends
- ▶ Everyone
- ▶ Friends of Friends

I have limited access to “Only Friends” for all information, including Contact Information and Search Visibility. If your reaction is “...but no one will be able to find you,” my response is that my “friends” will find me.

For more information on Facebook privacy settings, connect to <http://arstechnica.com/web/news/2009/08/meshing-social-networking-and-privacy-on-facebook.ars>.

Note that there are privacy settings for “News Feed and Wall.” Well folks, you need to learn the language.

News Feed is, as far as I can determine, the primary function of your homepage, and the Wall is another name for your Profile page. I will talk about those two pages in Part 2.



January's President's Column

by Steve Staub, President

I hope everyone had a fun-filled holiday and is ready to tackle the new decade. I regret to inform our members that our Secretary Sarah Blankenship has resigned. She states things have changed in her life and she cannot make the two meetings a month to take minutes. The meetings she was able to attend she did an excellent job of reporting what went on at our meetings. I am asking for someone to volunteer to take minutes at our business planning meetings and general meeting until our next election which is in June. Please let a member of the board know who you are. If we get four members to come forward each would only have to make one report.

January Planning Meeting Minutes

Our January planning meeting started by reviewing our December general meeting. The meeting was at the Penfield Library. We did our fun version of Computer Jeopardy. We had only 13 members in attendance so instead of having 3 contestants, we split the room in half and played 3 rounds. I believe all had fun.

The next topic was, is everything ready for our January general meeting. Everything is in order for the presentation of GIMP by Charles Profit.

Upcoming programs and locations. February and March we will be in the Brighton library. We then made sure everything is ready for our January 16th newsletter printing and assembly.

We then covered our latest standing committee, publicity. Charlotte reported she was able to get notices of our meetings in area penny savers, *D&C*, and *Computer Link* magazine. Good work Charlotte.

We finished the meeting by thanking Sally for letting us use her house for our planning meetings and for baking the very delicious cookies.

January General Meeting Minutes

6:30 pm. We started our meeting with Help's Half Hour (Q & A) with Carl Schmidtman. Thanks Carl for running it.

7:00 pm. We went into our business report. I reminded the members to check their address area of their newsletter for their expiration date. We are encouraging our members to wear their membership cards. Up to date membership cards will be on the table. Card holders and straps will also be there. I then mention we would like a permanent location for our general meeting. This would eliminate last minute changes and confusion of where we are. Anyone knows of a presentation or presenter contact Mike Lavelle, our program chair, so he can follow up on your suggestions. Our SIG leaders gave reports. Check inside front cover for time and locations. Charlotte Baker; our publicity person's efforts to get us into local publication are working we had two guests who saw her notes about us.

7:20 to 8:40 pm. We had our presentation GIMP. This is the second time Charles Profit has presented. Each time he has done an excellent job. GIMP is a freeware paint program. This program is similar to other draw programs but it's free and, through it's LINUX, it works on all operating systems. Charles, thanks again for an excellent presentation.

Three members renewed, James O'Cross, Dan Rothfuss, and Carl Schmidtman and we welcomed a new member, Dan Phelps.

The Lighter Side

A friend of mine was typing up his resume and listing his experience with different operating systems. When the Word spelling/grammar checker came across "Windows ME and Linux," it was quick to suggest that "Windows, Linux, and I" would be more appropriate.

Thank Steve Bass for this.



Rest your coffee cup or notebook on the Laptop Steering Wheel Desk

Laptop Steering Wheel Desk/Baby Changing Table

Available on Amazon <<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B000IZGIA8/ref=nosim/pibmug-20>>, this is the coolest device for diligent workers who like to stay productive during their commutes. There are over 430 very creative reviews. The best one so far...

"I read some 4 and 5 star reviews by those who used this device successfully to change a baby while driving. On that basis, I bought one. I put my baby on it and drove for over an hour. It did not change. Same baby. I am glad it worked for some people but I will be returning mine."

Sally's favorite was this one by S. Kelly.

"I loved my Laptop Steering Wheel Desk so much I got one for my 90-year-old mother. She is an avid crossword puzzle fan and now she can work on them while she is driving back and forth from bingo at the senior center. One cautionary note, be careful of those jerks that stop at yellow lights, my poor mother rear ended one and the airbag drove the desk back into her stomach which ruptured her spleen, well after a short down time I'm glad to say she is back on the road and cranking out those *NY Times* crosswords once again. Thanks Laptop Steering Wheel Desk you have made my mother's life more complete."

To sign up for TechBite's free Steve Bass Technology newsletter go to <<http://www.techbite.com/>>.