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Next Meeting

Tuesday July 8

Abby Stokes will discuss Navigating the Ever
Changing Landscape of Technology

Contents

Don't forget August's picnic, Geek Olympics, and silent auction.

2TB of Cloud Storage – Free!

by Phil Sorrentino
Sarasota PCUG, FL

Well, now that I have your attention, let me tell you how you can accomplish this without any trickery or dishonesty. (Remember, 1TB is equal to 1,000 GB) Wouldn't it be nice to have all of your pictures, videos and documents available to you whenever and wherever you want it? Cloud storage is a great way to accomplish this. Cloud storage is available from many sources like Skydrive, Google Drive, SugarSync, Dropbox, etc. Some of these cloud services give you from 2GB to 7GB of free storage and then you pay for additional space (Skydrive provides 7GB free). With over 100GB of pictures and more than double that

amount of videos, this could run into quite an expense using one of the commercial cloud storage services.

The cloud service I'm suggesting is your own computer system with an additional external (or internal) 2TB hard drive. You don't have to use a 2TB drive if you don't need that much storage. Maybe you have an old 300 or 500GB hard drive around that would do the trick. The size of the drive is not that important. What is important is that the information on that drive will be available to you wherever you are. The software that makes this incredible benefit possible is called Teamviewer. Teamviewer is available for your PC, and the Teamviewer App is available for your smartphone and/or tablet; both the PC software and the App are free for personal use. (Though the App can work on a smartphone, a 4 or 5 inch display is really too small. If you try this on a smartphone, I think you will find that the objects you will want to control will be too small when you try to use your finger to select these objects. It really works well on a larger display, so I will be limiting my discussion to a tablet with at least a 7 or 8 inch display. It works great on a 10 inch display.)

For this arrangement to work, you install Teamviewer on your home computer, you install the Teamviewer App on to your tablet, and then you leave your home computer on whenever you want access to it and the hard drive. Because I've limited this to tablets, the tablet will have to be in reach of a Wi-Fi network because most tablets only have Wi-Fi. Wi-Fi networks are typically found in many places such as homes, airports, libraries, Starbucks, Panera Bread, shopping centers, and some McDonalds.) If your tablet has cell phone capability then you don't have this restriction.

Teamviewer is a software package used for remote control, desktop sharing, online meetings, web conferencing, and file transfer between computers. It runs on Windows, Apple and Android operating systems. The basic features of Teamviewer are similar to Crossloop. The intent of that article was "Assisting another member with a computer problem," but if you'll remember it was stated that "CrossLoop provides a quick, easy, and completely free way to give another member, a friend, or a relative, access to your computer." This remote control feature is also part of Teamviewer, and Teamviewer has the App for tablets that allows these devices to act as remote controllers. As it says on the Teamviewer website, "Teamviewer allows you to control computers remotely via the internet, as if you were sitting right in front of them." The home computer desktop appears on the tablet and you can interact with your home computer by using various touch-screen gestures to control the home computer and its software. Just start Windows explorer on your tablet with a double tap, (once your home computer desktop appears on the tablet) and then navigate to the Drive you have designated as "Cloud Storage," and navigate to the folders and files of interest. To show a picture, just double tap on the file in question. You can even start a video or music and it will be streamed to your tablet, for your enjoyment. (The video will only be acceptable if you have a fast uplink at home.)

To download Teamviewer for your computer, just go to www.teamviewer.com and click on
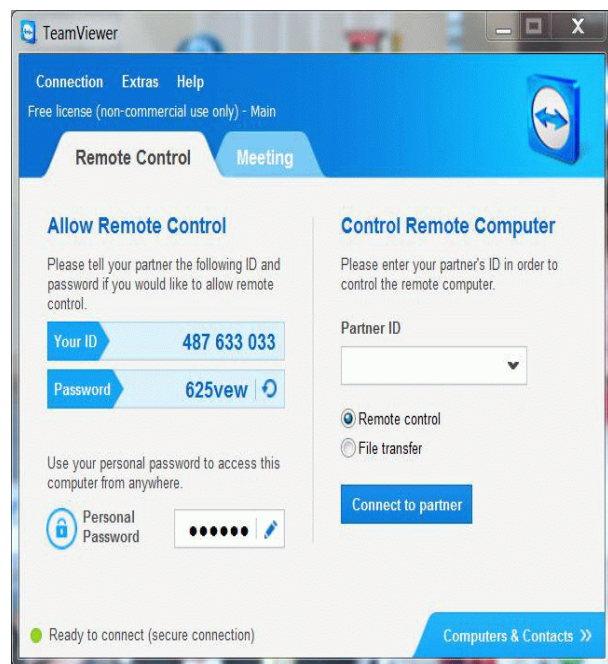
the Download button. To download the Teamviewer App for your Android tablet, just go to the Google Play Store and touch the Magnifying Glass to search for "Teamviewer," and then download the App. The Teamviewer App logo is as shown here:

Teamviewer Logo

After Teamviewer has been installed on your PC, start it and you will be presented with a window that gives you a "Your ID" and a "Password" for this Computer. This ID is what you will need when you are attempting to remotely control this PC. (The "Partner ID" would be used if you were going to attempt to control another PC from this PC. That might be the subject of another article.) The last item needed is the "Personal Password." You can use the "Setup unattended access" wizard by clicking on the pencil icon in the Personal Password box, or you can just assign a personal password by entering a password that you desire into the Personal Password box. I would suggest you use the wizard, at least the first time. Once you have the Personal Password setup you are ready to allow remote control, or Unattended Access, as the wizard calls it.

Teamviewer on the PC

The last thing to do is set up the tablet for remote control, or "unattended access of the PC." After the Teamviewer App is installed on the tablet, start it by tapping it's icon. This will bring up the Teamviewer remote control screen. Enter the "Your ID" number that was as-signed to your PC and tap Remote Control. Teamviewer will make a connection with your PC and display an Authentication window (if it doesn't, your tablet may not be on the Wi-Fi network). Enter your "Personal Password" into the password box and tap OK. The first time this is done you will see a screen of Touch interactions as a primer for tablet control; just tap Continue (and check the "Don't show this dialog again" if you don't want to see this screen again.) After you tap Continue, your PC desktop will appear on your tablet. There is a box on the bottom right that indicates you are using Teamviewer; flick the box to the right so it will be out of your way. Now you can operate your computer just as if you were sitting in front of it. The only difference is that there is no keyboard, but you can use the tablet virtual keyboard by taping on the keyboard icon on the bottom towards the left, whenever it is needed.
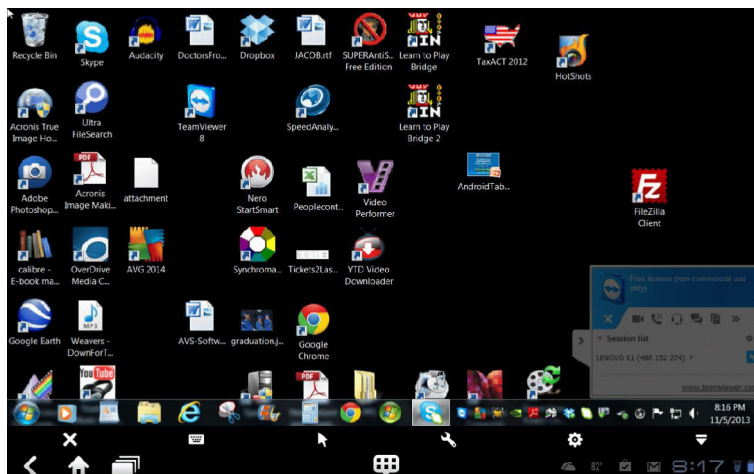
Tablet showing the PC Desktop

Now to get to your data, just open the Windows Explorer and navigate to the drive and open any of the folders and files that are now part of your 2TB cloud storage. Make sure you close everything and save any changes you made before leaving Teamviewer. To leave Teamviewer and close the connection, tap the big X on the bottom left, and then go back to your home screen.

Now, how is that for 2TB of cloud storage with no monthly storage charge?

Move Photos from Smartphone to PC

Q. Can you recommend a simple program to move pictures from my Android phone to my Windows 7 computer?

A. You really don't need a program or an app to do that. Instead, follow these steps and you should be all set: First, connect your smartphone to your computer using the USB sync cable that came with your phone or is available at any Radio Shack. Once connected, a USB icon will appear in the Notification area of your phone. Drag the Notifications bar down, then tap it. Next, tap USB Connected > Mount.

On your computer, click Start > Computer or My Computer. The micro-SD card in your phone will be recognized and listed as a Removable Disk. Double-click its icon to open it. Double-click the DCIM folder > DCIM > Camera. From this location you can copy all pictures and videos taken with your Android phone to any folder on your computer.

To disconnect the Android phone, go to the Notifications area and tap the USB sign to disconnect. That's all there is to it, and no app required!

Q. When I send a new email and click To: a list of previous addresses appears. How can I remove individual, unwanted addresses from the list? I am using Outlook 2007.

A. Start typing the name or address you want to remove when composing a new message. Then use the down arrow key to highlight the undesirable entry and press DELete.

Q. I'm tempted to try out a free junkware removal tool that I got an email about. What's your take on these types of programs?

A. There is nothing inherently "wrong" with programs of this type, but philosophically, I don't use them. My feeling is that unless a system is experiencing a problem that I am attempting to resolve, what's the point? In other words, if everything is working well, you're not going to make it run "weller" by throwing more software at it. And every additional piece of software carries the risk of potential conflicts, not to mention the underlying concept of "free." With virtually any "free" program, there is always a price to be paid. I would also steer clear of any offer that appears out of the blue. You can call that type of email anything you want, but it's still spam.

I'm very much an advocate of the old "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" philosophy. I have 11 systems here running all versions of Windows, Mac and Linux and they run happy as clams – if clams are truly happy – and never give me any problems. The computers, not the clams. Clams are nothing but trouble.

So that's my take on it. Without question, you are the boss when it comes to your computer and you can try anything you want, but if you ask me if I would install it on any of my systems, the answer would be "Absolutely not." When it comes to unsolicited, free programs of that ilk, just remember the old axiom, "Beware of geeks bearing gifts."

National Geographic: Education

This site is filled to the brim with teaching and related educational resources. Along the top of the page you will find a navigation bar with the categories Teaching Resources, Reference and News, Mapping, Media, Collections, Get Involved and Geo-Literacy. You will also find lots of interesting tidbits on the main page. Check out the Fast Fact section, the scrolling featured topics and Quote beneath the navigation strip. Below those you will find featured content from each of the categories on the navigation strip. This is an excellent resource for anyone interested in science, social studies, or geography.

http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/

Public Art Archive

This site is home to a vast database you can use to search for public art exhibits in the United States and Canada. You can search by Artist, Collection, Material, Title, Venue, or Year. Once you find a place or artist or collection you would like to view, click the image or the title link and you will be whisked away to that page, where you will find additional information about the artwork, its location, as well as more images and a map of the area.

www.publicartarchive.org

Twinkies Facts

The Twinkie, long recognized as the cornerstone of any well-balanced diet, was created in 1930 by James Dewar, a plant manager at the Continental Baking Company. From its humble beginning as " Twinkie Fingers," today more than 500 million Twinkies are produced every year. Despite urban legends that suggest the shelf life of a Twinkie is measured in decades, the actual shelf life is 25 days per Twink. Before he departed for the Big Cupcake in the Sky at age 88, Mr. Dewar said that the secret to his long life was to "eat Twinkies every day and smoke a pack of cigarettes." What, no bourbon?

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Be Careful of Buying Old Versions

by Sandy Berger
CompuKISS

Don't be fooled by a cheap price on a product. It may be last year's model. While sometimes this is okay, for others it is a real rip-off. Here are some examples that you may want to read. Remember being a savvy consumer is essential in today's high tech world.

In the recent past, when a new version of a product was introduced, the old versions were removed from the retailer's shelves. So when you went into the store, you were sure of getting the latest and greatest version of each product.

But times have changed. Now the manufacturers are keeping their old versions available right alongside the newest models. In some cases, the product names have changed enough that the average person can easily tell the new from the old. For example, the iPad Air is Apple's newest full-sized iPad. You will see that Apple is also still selling the older iPad 2 model. In this case, the name actually changed and the marketing will usually indicate which is new and which is old.

In many cases, however, the name of the product doesn't change. There are often several versions of the same product with the same name or similar names selling at different prices.

Take the iPad mini, for example. Apple recently introduced a new, improved version of that product. The cheapest current version is selling for $399. So when Walmart advertised the iPad mini for $299 and it offered a $100 gift card with that purchase, it seemed like a fantastic deal. However, Walmart was selling last year's model in that ad. They didn't have to stipulate anything other than "iPad mini" because both last year's model and the latest version are both simply called "iPad mini." The same is true for devices from other manufacturers, as well. The Microsoft Surface tablet has an original version and a newer updated version. If you purchase a Nexus tablet, you will find a version from last year right alongside the newest 2013 version that was just released.

The newer versions almost always have improved functionality and new features, but buying last year' s model is not necessarily bad. To be a smart consumer, however, you need to know exactly what you are buying. It is always wise to ask if you are purchasing the latest version. Even better, take the time to research the older version and compare it spec-by-spec with the newest version. That is the only way to know if the price difference is worthwhile for you.

Luckily, the Internet make such research easy. Right on the Apple website you can find a comparison for the two versions of the iPad mini. The newer iPad mini has a much improved screen resolution and a faster processor but the main specifications of the device remain the same. If you don't care that much about the screen clarity or the speed, the savings may be worthwhile.

You may not always need to purchase the latest and greatest version of each product. Only you can determine exactly what you need and which features you will use, and which you can do without. Doing research on the products can be time-consuming, but it is a worthwhile endeavor that will help you find the perfect device at the right price.

When it comes to high tech gadgets, being a savvy consumer is essential. You need to be "in the know" so you can make an informed decision on whether you would rather have the best device currently on the market or a little extra money in your pocket.

I Want It Now!

by Greg Skalka
Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA

This may sound like the utterance of a tantrum-happy young child, but it also seems to be the mantra of the modern computer and technology user. Our popular culture today is all about instant gratification, and this is spilling over into our technology. Everyone wants instant access to information, communications, finance and commerce wherever they are and no matter what they are doing. While this is a rather tall order, tech companies are doing their best to grant us this wish. We are getting more connected and interconnected all the time. While this can provide great benefits, increasing our knowledge and security and saving us time and money, it can also be detrimental to us in many of the same ways. Are we trading away important aspects of our lives like privacy and individuality for speed and convenience?

The engine that drives all the increases in convenience in our lives is the Internet. Computers and tablets are powerful devices but are of relatively little use if not connected to the Internet. The Internet is the connection medium through which all our modern communications and access to information flow. The telecommunication (phone) system was once the most powerful and far-reaching network in the world, but its demotion can be seen in the low percentage of time that the typical smart phone user spends in voice calls. The average smart phone is now being used mostly to check email, monitor social media, play games and provide directions, functions which utilize the Internet. Our desire for increased

connectedness and higher connection speeds continues to be met by our service providers, be they cable, telecom or cellular. The promises of online conveniences like streaming entertainment, security camera monitoring and video conferencing cannot be met without broadband Internet connections that are always live. Remember the days when you had to wait until the home phone line was free so you could use your modem to make your dial-up Internet connection? A down or even slow connection is now exasperating to the individual and death to a business. Today almost anyone in the United States can have a broadband connection. Cable companies have upgraded their systems, the phone companies have added fiber and the cellular providers have upped their "G's" or generations in data networking capabilities. Even those living off the beaten path in rural areas outside the reach of cable can get broadband through satellite connections, using technology developed by our local company, ViaSat. All this capability comes at a price, however.

Naturally users were not satisfied to be connected only at home, so our tech industry gave us laptops to travel with. We wanted more portability, so they gave us Wi-Fi, tablets and smartphones. All this new stuff meant we had to buy more hardware (often of multiple kinds for multiple needs) and probably also get a cellular data plan. Now most connected folks pay around $100 combined for home broadband and cellular data, and even more for a family. Though connection speeds keep increasing, so too do rates for service. Comcast buying Time Warner Cable can't be good for consumer costs. And we in this country pay more and get less bandwidth than a lot of other countries. Some countries may not have good water or sewer systems, but even the poor there have cell phones and five bars. We are getting Google Fiber in an additional 34 major U.S. cities soon, however (but still not in San Diego; I want it now!).

We couldn't get online while onboard, so the airlines are rolling out more in-flight Internet access (for a price). Google knew we'd find tablets and smartphones were not convenient enough, so they developed Google Glasses, and others are working on their own wearable computing devices. Our homes and appliances will soon be connected to the Internet (the IoT, or Internet of Things), so we can monitor our homes remotely and have our fridge tell us when we are low on milk. What these new devices will cost us in privacy and other social and civil issues is yet to be determined.

We wanted instant access to our money and finances, and so the banks gave it to us. Now we can get cash anytime from an ATM machine, make purchases without cash by using credit or debit cards and get instant access to our account information at any time. If we want to deposit a check right now, we don't even have to drive to a bank branch or ATM. We can now just take a photo of the check with our smart phone and deposit it through a banking app.

With all of our financial information available online, it was just a matter of time before criminal

elements took notice. Now you have to protect and remember lots of unique and complex passwords for all the banking, e-commerce and other online accounts you use, so you can keep your money and identity safe. Unfortunately it is not only in your hands to protect. Financial institutions and merchants that store your information on their computers can be targets for data theft. There is a lot the institutions could do to increase security, like multi-factor authentication and smart chip credit cards, but these things cost money. A few things they have been doing to help prevent fraud are useful but put the onus on the account holder. Most bank and credit card companies encourage their customers to set up alerts on their accounts to help flag suspicious transactions. I have set these up on my accounts and find them very useful.

I have my credit cards alert me, through an email and/or a text message, when a purchase is made without the card being presented to the merchant, as in an online purchase. This can help alert you to fraudulent account activity as soon as it happens. My Visa card is set up to send me an alert when a gas pump purchase is made. I use this card often at a particular low-cost gas station and am amazed at how quickly I am notified. After I swipe my card, enter my zip code and press the Enter button on the pump, I can't count to five before I feel my cell phone vibrating in my pocket with a text informing me of the transaction and location. That is pretty cool!

When we want to purchase something, we want it now. E-commerce has allowed the shopper to buy a much wider array of products online than is typically available in neighborhood stores, often at much lower prices. The one advantage for brick and mortar stores is the instant gratification of walking out with your purchase. Online merchants are working hard to minimize delivery time, offering one or two-day delivery for a premium. Amazon's Prime service provides two-day delivery for many items for an annual subscription fee. Amazon knows we want even more and is looking at using predictive algorithms to pre-position products you are likely to purchase in local warehouses and is even working on 30-minute delivery of small items by autonomous flying quadcopters. I can't wait (but I'll bet it won't be cheap).

Taco Bell is working to fulfill our desire for fast food right now. They plan to introduce a mobile ordering system later this year. Through their mobile app, already tested in five locations in Orange County, customers can place an order with the closest Taco Bell location and pay through their phone with credit or gift cards. The order can be picked up in-store or at the drive-through window, and the app will use GPS location to let the store know when the customer is near, so the order is ready and freshness is maintained. I'm not sure I want Taco Bell to know how far I am from their restaurants. Other chains are working on mobile apps of their own.

There goes more of our privacy in exchange for quick eats. When we want to watch a movie, we no longer have to wait to buy or rent a DVD (or Blu-ray) or go to a theater. We can watch our entertainment streamed to our computer, tablet or smart phone the instant we want it, in almost any location we choose. We can easily stay connected with our friends through social media like Facebook, allowing us to share our activities and see what everyone else is doing. Unfortunately, when watching other things happening becomes too convenient, doing things yourself can get pushed aside and lots of time can be spent in watching the Internet world go by, with little to show for it.

When we miss our far-away loved ones, we can not only speak to them, we can also see them, and at reasonable costs. The Internet has brought us VoIP, or voice over Internet Protocol, and along with it lower rates (often free) for long distance phone calls. Programs like Skype provide video calls at reasonable costs. And for those of us that can't wait until the

afterlife to converse again with our deceased loved ones, a new start-up, Eterni.me, promises to help. Through access to a dead person's online interactions (chat logs, social network information, emails), they claim to use artificial intelligence algorithms to construct an avatar or virtual person that the living can interact with. It could be like online chat with a dead person. To satisfy our need for instant interactions with help lines and tech support, companies are working on similar avatars with artificial intelligence (even more intelligent than Siri). When we need to talk to a person right now, the avatar would be there and not even require a salary. It would be good if they got to the point where I could not tell if I was talking with a person or a machine. It would be bad if they got to the point where I could not tell if I was talking with a person or a machine.

All these advances in convenience and quick access come at the cost of our data security and privacy. We can get quick answers to all our questions, get directions and compare products online, but we must realize that the Technology, computers and the Internet will continue to try to provide what we want (though perhaps not what we need), as long as there is profit in it somewhere for someone. Hopefully we can learn to use these advances for the betterment of ourselves and others, appreciate them, and not become like spoiled children crying "I want it now!"

Google and Bing and merchants are all keeping track of what we are asking for and about. Seeking online information about sensitive topics or items might create undesirable associations in the data they hold about us. And while a lot of tech jobs have been created due to the Internet, there have also been some job losses. Just ask the former bank tellers, video rental clerks, encyclopedia salespersons and retail store workers that lost their jobs due to the effects of the Internet.

From the February 2014 Issue of Drive Light*, newsletter of the Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA.* Courtesy of APCUG.

Fun and Knowledge with YouTube

by Jim Cerny
Sarasota PCUG, Florida

Whether you have a tablet, smart phone, or any kind of computer, YouTube is one application that can, all by itself, really justify the purchase of your device. YouTube can be found on the internet at youtube.com (that's easy to remember, right?) or you can download the free YouTube application for any device. Since Google has acquired YouTube, it can also be found on the Google web site (it used to be Google videos).

YouTube is your access to millions of videos made by almost anyone who wants to make them available to you for free. Many of the videos are fantastic and some are just a waste of time. But YOU decide. You search for the videos you want to see simply by entering your search criteria (regular English words) in the search box. Do you have a favorite entertainer? Just enter their name and you will have access to hundreds of their videos. How about a home improvement project? Just enter what it is you want to do and see a video of how to do it. Almost anything you can think of, there is probably a video on that subject on YouTube.

Here are just a few examples of fun things to see and explore on YouTube: Famous people, science experiments, college lectures, cartoons, news, products, companies, cooking, travel, painting, and, well just about everything.

The only thing it seems that YouTube does not give you is fairly recent free movies and TV shows. If you searched for a movie or TV show by its title, YouTube will probably only show you the "trailers" for free. However, YouTube does offer some movies and TV shows for a price. But the real fun for me is seeing all that is available to you at no cost whatsoever – and you

do not have to join anything.

You could think of YouTube as the ultimate "window to the world" and all that is in it by just using your computer or device. Why read a printed article or view pictures? YouTube can SHOW you what other sources only TELL you. Click on the right-pointing arrow to play the video. You can click on any point on the progress bar to go to that point in the video. And you can click on pause (usually the double vertical line symbol), just like you used to do with the old video VHS tape players. After clicking on "pause" you can go back to the list of videos just like you do with Google. Some videos may have a short advertisement the plays before the real video starts.

There is really no limit to what YouTube has to offer. I have yet to search for something that did not have some kind of video to watch on that subject. So do not limit your imagination either. Here are just a few things I have found – each of which can provide hours and hours of videos:

· Enter your favorite game and learn how to play the game or sport better.
· Enter "How to…" and learn a new skill or improve the skills you have.
· Tour your favorite city, park, or attraction.
· Ride all the roller coasters you want, at any park, and never have to wait in line or get dizzy.
· Attend a class lecture at a famous university.
· View long-forgotten videos of famous people and entertainers.
· View videos of how to use your digital camera or tablet or any device or contraption.
· See dangerous stunts, magic tricks, and stupid jokes.
· Discover new things about your favorite hobby.

So don't hold back – be adventurous and explore the world! Your brain will thank you for it.

Courtesy of APCUG.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Puts 400,000 High-Res Images Online and Makes Them Free to Use
http://www.openculture.com/2014/05/the-met-puts-400000-high-res-images-online.html

PC Browser Wars Intensify:
Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Chrome
by Ira Wilsker

With Microsoft Windows still the top selling and most widely used desktop and laptop operating system, it is inevitable that the integral Microsoft Internet Explorer initially becomes the predominant web browser. Often known by users as "IE" or "The Big Blue **E**", Internet Explorer is built into Windows, functions as an integral component of the operating system, and is very difficult to remove or uninstall. Since Internet Explorer comes with all domestic version of Windows, and many users happily browse with it, many of those users see no apparent benefits of installing and using one of the major browser competitors, such as Google's Chrome browser or Mozilla's Firefox. There are dozens of other lesser known, but generally very good browsers for the PC such as Opera, Safari, Maxthon, Sleipnir 5, and others. According to the website Net Market Share, as of May, 2014, Internet Explorer still has 58.17% of the desktop market share, followed by Chrome with 17.73%, Firefox 16.81%, Safari

5.72%, Opera 1.16%, with the remaining 0.42% using lesser known or undetectable browsers.

I am frequently asked the question, "I have been using the Internet Explorer that came with my computer. It seems to work fine, so why change?" For the many millions using Windows XP, the answer is simple - Microsoft has not released any major evolutionary new versions of Internet Explorer for XP in quite a while, and will not be releasing any compatible new versions of IE in the future. The older versions of Internet Explorer, especially IE 6, which is still widely used on may XP powered desktops and laptops, has multitudes of known vulnerabilities, which can make the computer susceptible to a plethora of security risks including hacker attacks, malware inserted by purloined websites, identity theft, and other endemic online perils. For those Windows XP users still unaware, it might come as a shock that as of April 8 this year, Microsoft officially stopped releasing material updates and support for XP; no more Internet Explorer updates will be available to XP users, even though browser based security threats continue to evolve and spread. Users of newer versions of Windows, including Vista, Windows 7, and Windows 8 have been able to download and install newer versions of Internet Explorer, each new version of IE being more secure and feature rich than the earlier version it replaces, but the absolute newest versions of Internet Explorer are primarily released for Windows 8 users. It is a well known and documented fact that many of the users of the newer versions of Windows have not installed all of the Windows updates pushed by Microsoft; several of these skipped updates included security patches and enhancements for Internet Explorer, leaving those users vulnerable to web based threats, as well as foregoing any browser performance enhancements that may have been released by Microsoft.

For users of Windows XP the only current alternatives to the obsolescent Internet Explorer that is installed on their machines are any one of the major alternative browsers, all of which are free, and offer superior security and performance enhancements over the Internet Explorer that they are currently using. The most heavily promoted and widely used of the alternative browsers that will run on Windows XP, as well as on all of the newer versions of Windows are Mozilla's Firefox and Google's Chrome, along with small but loyal followings of the Opera browser, and the PC version of Apple's Safari browser.

Considering the dynamic and rapidly changing content and technology of the internet, new web based features and functions are becoming more widely used on countless websites, which often require an updated browser in order for the user to take advantage of these new features. Sadly, the technology available to hackers, crackers, cyber thieves, and other miscreants has also evolved rapidly, with new internet based cyber threats constantly appearing and trying to take over our computers using devious new means. One significant advantage that Firefox and Chrome have available to the user, but not as readily available to Internet Explorer users, is the very frequent release and automated (optional) updating of the installed third party browsers. In recent months, both Chrome and Firefox have released significant new versions of their respective browsers on average about every six or seven weeks, along with frequent patches and updates every few days. While some consider these frequent updates and patches of Firefox and Chrome as a minor annoyance, they do generally provide the user with enhanced functionality and speed, better protection from newly discovered web based security threats, and other functional benefits. Unless a Windows XP user downloads and installs one of these updated third party browsers, and uses it to the complete exclusion of Internet Explorer, the XP users continuing to use the older version of Internet Explorer are becoming more vulnerable to web based attacks, a fact not lost on cyber crooks.

The latest versions of Firefox and Chrome are much improved over earlier versions in terms

of features, speed, security and privacy. Both are available to anyone for free, can run on almost any versions of Windows from XP (SP2) or later, and can be installed in addition to any other browsers already installed. Installing a browser on a computer which already has Internet Explorer (or any other competitive browser) is non-destructive, and competing browsers can coexist on a computer without interference. One nice feature when installing any of the newer browsers is that they can import favorites (bookmarks), cookies, passwords, and other information from the other installed browsers, without hurting the older browser or its information. Opening the new browser after the install process makes all of the favorites (bookmarks) and other information from the older browser immediately available. Many users of older versions of Internet Explorer notice an instant improvement in speed and compatibility using the newer browsers, when compared to the older IE. What users of the newer alternative browsers do not immediately notice are the enhanced security and privacy features incorporated in the newer browsers.

Firefox and Chrome are in a virtual war for supremacy in the alternative browser market, each claiming that its new versions are better, faster, or safer than their competitors' products. While there are several published speed and security comparisons of Chrome and Firefox, a careful reading of the statistics, as well as anecdotal information, indicate that they are both fast, secure, and overall excellent browsers, far exceeding in all aspects the older versions of Internet Explorer, and very competitive with, if not surpassing, the newer versions of IE.

Firefox, available for free download from mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/desktop had been my personal favorite for several years being used almost exclusively, but recent versions of Chrome have started to become attractive to me, as Chrome handles some of the websites that I frequently use (such as my webmail) better than Firefox, but Firefox is still my browser of choice on most other websites. To be honest, I am equally comfortable using either of them, and still only rarely use my updated Internet Explorer. Chrome is available for free download from google.com/chrome/browser.

In terms of the actual published performance statistics, the latest versions of all of the big three browsers claim to be the fastest, safest, and most feature rich of the pack, but other than the websites of the browser publishers themselves, the independent comparisons of the latest browser versions when taken as a whole show no clear overall winner, other than in almost all of the comparisons, both Firefox or Chrome (or both) outperform the latest Internet Explorer from Microsoft. One problem in comparing relative performance is the machine and software on which the browsers are being tested. With billions of PCs in use, each of which is somewhat unique as they have different processors, memory, video capabilities, installed software, and countless other variables, users on different machines can honestly report different levels of performance with the same browsers.

Here are my recommendations: If you are still running Windows XP, even with good security software, use your Internet Explorer for only two more tasks; once to download the latest version of Firefox, and the other to download the latest version of Chrome (links given above). After both of these browsers are successfully downloaded, install them, and then retire Internet Explorer, never to be used again. It does not matter which of the two new browsers are installed first, as both will in turn import all necessary information, bookmarks/favorites, and other content from the obsolete Internet Explorer on the XP machine. Try Firefox for a while, and then try Chrome for a while, and make your own decision based on your own experience and personal preferences. Do not be shocked if the differences and improvements between the newer browsers and the obsolete version of the Internet Explorer installed on your XP machine are startling, in a positive way. These new browsers may have a short learning

curve, but after a little while, their superiority over the old IE will become clear to the user.

If you are running the newer Windows operating systems of Vista, Windows 7, or Windows 8, even if your Internet Explorer had recently been updated, download both Chrome and Firefox, install them, and give them a try, alongside your Internet Explorer. As have millions of your predecessors, you may also find that these alternative browsers may be superior to your Internet Explorer. If you absolute despise one or both of your newly installed alternative browsers, the Windows Add/Remove Programs function works fine in removing these browsers from your computer.

Being free downloads, and only taking minutes to install, there is no significant risk in trying an alternative browser; but you may find that one or both are superior to the Internet Explorer that came with your computer.

WEBSITES:

http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-web-browser.htm

https://www.google.com/chrome/browser

http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/desktop/

http://www.kbzk.com/news/google-hits-microsoft-where-it-hurts-the-browser

http://www.netmarketshare.com/browser-market-share.aspx?qprid=0&qpcustomd=0

http://web-browsers.findthebest.com/compare/2-3-4/Mozilla-Firefox-vs-Chrome-vs-Internet-Explorer

http://www.wikivs.com/wiki/Firefox_vs_Internet_Explorer

http://www.wikivs.com/wiki/Chrome_vs_Firefox

Multitasking: the Big Myth

by Diane Fahlbusch
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Multitasking became the highly touted skill to possess back at the start of the millennium. The business world thought that more work could be accomplished with the same amount of people with this method. However, do we really all mean the same thing when we say it? Can one learn how to multitask? And, the most important question, does multitasking make one more productive? Well these questions have been the focus of numerous studies worldwide spanning over a decade. They have yielded some interesting results.

Multitasking is actually defined as performing more than one task simultaneously. An example of this is holding on a conversation while typing an email to a business associate. According to Earl Miller, a professor of neuroscience at MIT, we just cannot focus on more than one thing at a time. However, many people use the same expression to describe performing one task at a time, and then switching to another one quickly. Working in one program on your computer, and then switching to a different program in another open window is a common example. This is actually called "task switching," but it is often lumped under the category of multitasking.

Another statement is that one must "learn to multitask." This is true to a certain extent – all activities are learned. But "learning to multi-task" is the wrong expression. What it really means is learning tasks so well that you do not need to concentrate to perform them properly. Think back to when you were four or five years old and just learning how to tie your shoelaces. You needed to concentrate and could not focus on anything else. But now you probably could NOT tie your shoelaces if you *actually* concentrated on doing it. However, when at least one task requires you to concentrate to accomplish it, multitasking is not necessarily happening. One is typically not doing either task well. As an example, most people listen to the radio while driving. But can you actually name the songs that were played, or remember the words? (Even

when not attempting to multitask, most people do not pay attention to the lyrics. Think back to when the President Ronald Reagan quoted "Born in the USA" in a patriotic speech, and missed that it was *not* a patriotic song.) The more prevalent example is driving and talking on the cell phone. In spite of the laws that have been passed, people still do it.

But can one improve one's multitasking ability? "According to David Strayer, director of the applied cognition lab at the University of Utah, who studies multitasking in the fertile realm of distracted driving, 'ninety-eight percent of people can't multitask—they don't do either task as well.' … And he found that, sure enough, the very structure of the supertasker brain looks different than those of 98 percent of us. 'These brain regions that differentiate supertaskers from the rest of the population are the same regions that are most different between humans and nonhuman primates,' says Strayer. In other words, the brains of supertaskers are just that much further away from those of apes, 'the leading edge of evolution,' says Strayer. Specifically: 'Certain parts of the frontal cortex are recruited in an interesting way,' says Strayer. In fact, these areas show less activity when multitasking than do the same areas in normal, human, mammalian, non-alien-overlord brains like mine. And it's distinct—you either efficiently recruit this region or you don't. You're either a supertasker or you're not."[1] So much for learning to multitask! So what about giving task switching a try? Here are some fascinating facts.

"In the brain, multitasking is managed by what are known as mental executive functions. These executive functions control and manage other cognitive processes and determine how, when and in what order certain tasks are performed. According to researchers Meyer, Evans and Rubinstein, there are two stages to the executive control process. The first stage is known as 'goal shifting'" (deciding to do one thing instead of another) and the second is known as 'role activation' (changing from the rules for the previous task to rules for the new task).

Switching between these may only add a time cost of just a few tenths of a second, but this can start to add up when people begin switching back and forth repeatedly. This might not be that big of a deal in some cases, such as when you are folding laundry and watching television at the same time. However, if you are in a situation where safety or productivity are important, such as when you are driving a car in heavy traffic, even small amounts of time can prove critical."[3]

This gives a greater perspective about what one is actually doing. But what about enhancing the ability to task switch? Switching between rote tasks is relatively simple, but when the tasks become more complicated, the results are quite interesting. This finding is pretty much a no-brainer: "Recent research also proves that as we get older the brain is less able to focus on more than one task at a time, and takes longer to switch between tasks."[2] According to the Harvard Business Review from a study conducted by the Institute of Psychiatry, trying to focus on more than one task DECREASES your productivity by 40%, and lowers your IQ 10 points. The study also found that excessive use of technology also reduced workers' intelligence. Other studies have shown that multitasking/taskswitching reduces one's mental abilities TWO TIMES the effect of smoking marijuana, or the equivalent of losing a full night's sleep. It also increases one's stress. And of course the all famous talking on the cellphone while driving, even with a hands free device, decreases reaction time the equivalent of a blood alcohol level of .08%. As a side note, having a conversation with a passenger is only slightly less distracting, as per insurance industry statistics.

But this finding is actually shocking. "In a 2009 study, Stanford researcher Clifford Nass challenged 262 college students to complete experiments that involved switching among tasks, filtering irrelevant information, and using working memory. Nass and his colleagues expected that frequent multitaskers would outperform nonmultitaskers on at least some of these

activities. They found the opposite: Chronic multitaskers were abysmal at all three tasks. The scariest part: Only one of the experiments actually involved multitasking, signaling to Nass that even when they focus on a single activity, frequent multitaskers use their brains less effectively."[4]

My mother always said, "Do one thing at a time. …Turn the television/radio off and do your homework." She was so right, and ahead of her time. So this adds up to some very harsh realities. Multitasking is a "hardwired" ability for 2% of the population, but a giant myth for 98% of the population. Additionally, tasks requiring the same cognitive ability can NOT be performed simultaneously, such as watching a movie and responding to emails. (Both require visual and linguistic cognition.) Most people are actually task switching. This is fine when the activities are simple tasks that are well learned and do NOT require the same cognitive ability. The more one attempts to task shift, the worse one gets, not to mention damaging to overall mental functioning, perhaps permanently. One final conclusion from multiple studies is that the people who insist that they can multitask are the WORST at it. Does this sound like anyone you know?

[1]This is Your Brain on Multitasking" by Garth Sundem, February 24, 2012, www.psychologytoday.com

[2]"Think You're Multitasking? Think Again," by Jon Hamilton, October 2, 2008, www.npr.org

[3]The Cognitive Costs of Multitasking," by Kendra Cherry, March4, 2014, http://psychology.about.com/od/cognitivepsychology/a/costs-of-multitasking.htm

[4]Don't Multitask: Your Brain Will Thank you," by Issie Lapowsky, April 17, 2013, http://business.time.com/2013/04/17/dont-multitask-your-brain-will-thank-you/

From the May 2014 issue, ICONPCUG*, newsletter of the ICON PC User Group (ICONPCUG), Long Island, NY.*

Computer Problems Plague Everyone, Even Me

by Sandy Berger
CompuKISS.com

Why do things change on your computer? One day everything comes up just as it normally does. The next day, you can't get on the Internet, the icons are in a different place, and/or your program is working differently. Well I am here to tell you that everyone has problems like this – even me! Here's the whole story!

When weird things happen on the computer, most people immediately blame themselves saying, "I must have done something to make this happen." The truth, however, is that in the computer world changes can happen without your having done a thing to cause them. This was really brought home to me this week when I had several "problems" with my own computer.

When I sat down to work on the computer last Monday, the icons for my password manager and several other shortcuts that I use regularly were no longer on my browser toolbar at the top of the screen. On Tuesday, when I opened my Quicken program, the numbers and text was twice as large as normal. On Thursday I tried to play some music and found that iTunes was no longer working. On Friday I found that my CD drive, which I hadn't used for months, was no longer working.

Now, it is unusual for all of these things to happen in one week, but it is not unusual for them to happen. I did not do anything to cause any of these changes. So what happened? Well the simple explanation is that the computer is run by millions of lines of code. As you work on the computer, add files, and download programs, things change. Even installing updates from the manufacturer causes changes. Sometimes these changes, even if they are aimed at making a certain part of the computer better or more secure, can adversely affect other programs and

other computer operations.

Although these types of changes can produce huge frustrations for the end user, the first thing to learn is that you probably didn't cause the different behavior and that, if you remain cool and calm, you can often correct the changes. Here's how I got through my aggravating week.

To find the missing icons, I had to look carefully at the screen where they normally appear. I found two arrows next to where the icons normally appeared. Low and behold, when I pressed the arrows, the missing icons cascaded down. To actually solve the problem, I simply put my cursor on the area next to the arrows until it turned into a double-ended arrow. Then I dragged that to the left and my icons appeared and remained on the screen.

Quicken was another disconcerting item. For several days, the text and numbers appeared larger one time and smaller the next. To be honest, I never found the cause, but luckily it all went back to normal and has stayed that way.

Why in the world would iTunes stop working? I had no explanation, but I did have an easy solution. I simply reinstalled the iTunes program. It was aggravating and a bit time-consuming to have to do so, but after I did, everything went back to normal.

The most vexing problem was my CD drive. Last time I used it, it worked fine. Now wasn't working. It did not appear in My Computer at all. A trip over to the Device Manager showed the CD drive with a yellow exclamation meaning that it was not working properly, which I already knew. I tried a few things like uninstalling the CD driver and rebooting, but had no success. I knew that this could be a hardware problem. Perhaps the drive itself had stopped working. I also knew, that it could be a software problem. Since the driver and filters from the operating system are used to run the CD drive and other peripherals, I decided to check that out first. I headed over to the Microsoft website where I found a Microsoft tool called "Fix It." I used it to troubleshoot and correct the problem. There are multiple Fix It tools, and the proper one can be a bit hard to find, but Fix It checked out the software, found the problem, and helped me quickly solve the problem at no cost. That sure beat having to purchase and install a new CD drive.

Well, now everything on my computer is back to normal. At least for the moment. The moral of the story is that, unfortunately, we have to expect glitches when working with computers. The best thing that you can do is to keep your eyes open for possible solutions, learn as much as you can about how your computer works and be bold enough to troubleshoot small problems. I keep my Sherlock Holmes hat ready for use at any time. You may want to do the same.

Courtesy of APCUG.

Society News
Help's Half Hour Notes
by Jan Rothfuss

Q: A member has a door that has popped open and will not now stay closed.

A: It is a PC card slot and he should not need to use it. Once it is firmly closed by pushing it in past the slot, he will not have to use it.

Q: What is Spy Hunter – a malware piece? How can you get rid of it?

A: It is a legitimate program that will ask you for money to maintain it. If you want to stop it, go to Add/Remove Programs and uninstall it.

Annual Geek Picnic

Tuesday, August 12th
Carmen Clark Lodge in the Brighton Town Park
Arrive at 5 pm, Eat at 6 pm
Bring a Dish to Pass
Last name: A-I munchies, J-R salads, S-Z desserts

The club will supply the meat, coffee, tea, and soda.

Reservations necessary: Contact Steve Staub by either e-mail srstaub1@rochester.rr.com or by phone (585) 429-9877 and leave a message on my machine, or in person at a club meeting by August 1st. Please give me the following information: first name of everyone coming, and what meat they want (red hots, white hots, cheeseburgers, or spicy Italian sausage. I will collect $5 per person on arrival or at the meeting.

We will have our famous silent auction—the proceeds will help us cover the cost of the picnic and strengthen our bank account.

Cash or check must accompany your bid before you can take your winning auction item.

Directions: Brighton Town Park is located between East Henrietta Rd. and South Clinton Ave. at 777 Westfall Road.

The Lighter Side