

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

# PC Alamode

TECH ISSUE

[www.alamopc.org](http://www.alamopc.org)

February 2010

\$5.00

**Computer performance considerations**  
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**Is it time to switch to 64-bit Windows?**  
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Manipulation Program)**  
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# Alamo PC Organization

Alamo PC Organization is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase its members knowledge and effective use of personal computers through presentations, instructional programs, other membership services and access to the expertise of other members.



To register for a Class (when resumed), Study Group or Sr. Comp classes call:

Registration number **210-736-0700**

If you **can't access your issue** of *PC Alamode* or have questions about your **membership** e-mail:

[membership@alamopc.org](mailto:membership@alamopc.org)

If you have questions about Alamo PC call:

Alamo PC office number **210-736-0700**

If you have comments about classes call

Linda Bianchi **210-561-2278**

If you have questions about advertising e-mail

Joseph de Leon  
send e-mail to [editor@alamopc.org](mailto:editor@alamopc.org)

Please send change of address and other correspondence to:

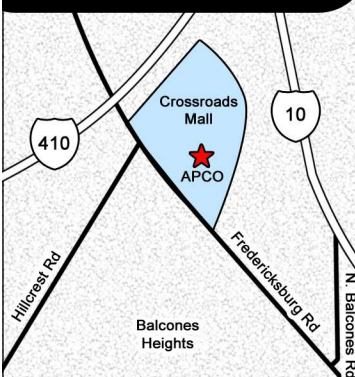
**Alamo PC Organization**  
**PO Box 65180**  
**San Antonio, TX 78265-5180**

## Meetings

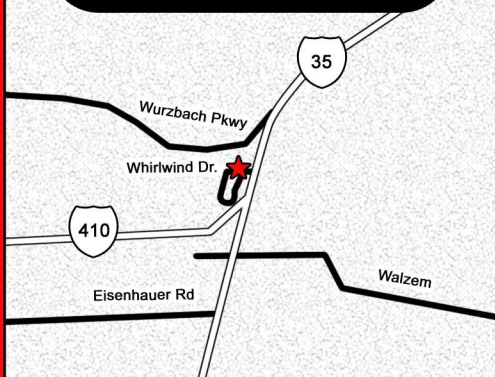
**Monthly program meetings** are normally held the second Monday of the month. Unless otherwise specified, meetings are held at 4888 Whirlwind Drive, located near the intersection of Loop 410 and IH-35 North starting at 7:00PM. Open to all members and the public.

**The Board of Directors meets** normally on the Tuesday prior to the monthly General Meeting. The BoD meets in the food court located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 6:30PM. Any changes will be announced via the Voice Mail/Hot Line (736-0700) and on the Calendar of Events and/or Web site. Open to all members.

**Alternate Meeting Location:**  
**Crossroads Mall**  
(see page 3 for map of Crossroads Mall)



**General Meeting Location:**  
**4888 Whirlwind**



## Feb. Calendar

**Tuesday Feb. 2, 2010**  
Board of Directors meeting  
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall  
Loop 410 at I-10 (see map)

**Monday Feb. 8, 2010**  
General meeting  
7 PM 4888 Whirlwind  
Loop 410 at I-35 (see map)

## Board of Directors

|                |                  |                            |                            |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| President      | Bill Klutz       | 532-9122 (Home)            | president@alamopc.org      |
| Secretary      | David Steward    | 662-8606 (Home)            | secretary@alamopc.org      |
| Treasurer      | Billy Samples    | 646-0047 (Home)            | treasurer@alamopc.org      |
| Education      | TBD              |                            | education@alamopc.org      |
| Operations     | Cary Hall        | 736-0700 (Learning Center) | learncenter@alamopc.org    |
| Marketing      | TBD (Steve Tech) | 675-2880 (Home)            | marketing@alamopc.org      |
| Communications | TBD              |                            | communications@alamopc.org |

## Executive Service Officers and other important numbers

### Office Center, 4888 Whirlwind

|                             | 736-0700            | FAX 736-0032               |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Office Center Manager       | Cary & Jean Hall    | 736-0700 (Learning Center) |
| Past President/Programs     | David Steward       | learncenter@alamopc.org    |
| Member Records              | Steve Tech          | dsteward@texas.net         |
| Public Relations            | Susan Ives          | membership@alamopc.org     |
| Product Review Coordinator  | TBD (David Steward) | suives@texas.net           |
| Study Groups Coordinator/Ed | Linda Bianchi       | reviews@alamopc.org        |
| Special Projects            | Joe Brazell         | education@alamopc.org      |
| Registrar                   | Linda Bianchi       | projects@alamopc.org       |
| Webmaster                   | Mike Bianchi        | Registrar@alamopc.org      |
| Lab/Network Administrator   | Gary Grieve         | Webmaster@alamopc.org      |
| Trade Shows                 | Steve Tech          | netadmin@alamopc.org       |
| APCUG Representative        | David Steward       | stephentechnr@yahoo.com    |
| Editor, PC Alamode Magazine | Joseph de Leon      | dsteward@texas.net         |
|                             |                     | editor@alamopc.org         |

For Study Groups and Classes, phone: 736-0700

### Crossroads Mall (lower level)

(See page 2 for map to Crossroads Mall)

Target

Entrance

New York & Company

Entrance

Radio Shack

Entrance

Water Fountain

Lower Level

Entrance

Norris Convention Center Red Oak Ballroom

B

Rainbow

Former AlamoPC Resource Center

A

Food Court

Entrance

The Bijou Crossroads

Entrance

### Alternate Meeting Location

We may meet in several different locations in the mall. Sometimes at the Convention across the hall from our former Learning Center (A) of in the Norris Convention Center (B) near Target. Sometimes we don't know until the day of the meeting. It would be a good idea to check the website (alamopc.org) or call (736-0700) before you come.

For more information call 532-9122

### Regular Meeting Location

4888 Whirlwind Drive  
See page 3

# Tech Issue

## Making your computer better

### departments

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# PC Alamode

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### Featured this month

Computer performance considerations  
Hard drives, connectors, performance and you  
Optimize your PC  
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Is it time to switch to 64-bit Windows?

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#### EDITOR

Joseph de Leon

#### INTERIM PRODUCT REVIEW COORDINATOR

David Steward

#### ADVERTISING

Joseph de Leon

**PUBLICATION SUBMISSIONS:** Please check with the editor regarding submitting ads. **Deadline for submissions is the first of the month preceding publication,** e-mail to:

[editor@alamopc.org](mailto:editor@alamopc.org)

Joseph de Leon, Editor, PC Alamode  
[editor@alamopc.org](mailto:editor@alamopc.org)

### product reviews

Book: Build it. Fix it. Own it.  
Book: Speed it Up  
Hardware: Garmin Nuvi 765 T  
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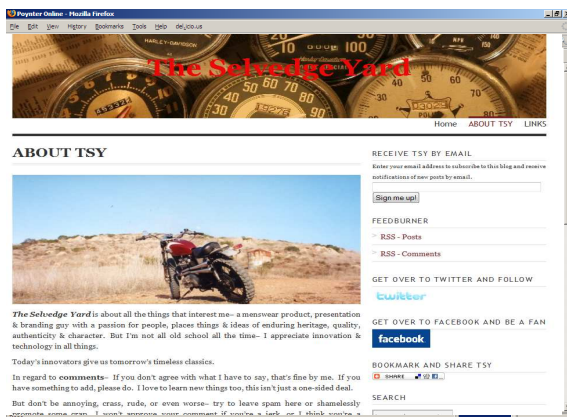
#### Ad rates effective January 2005

| Rate frequency.                                                                    | 1 x   | Per insertion |       |       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|
|                                                                                    |       | 3 x*          | 6x*   | 12 x* |
| Full pg. (7 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> " w x 9 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " h)   | \$274 | \$260         | \$246 | \$238 |
| Half pg. (7 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> " w x 4 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " h)   | 144   | 138           | 130   | 121   |
| Half pg. (3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " w x 9 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " h)   | 144   | 138           | 130   | 121   |
| Quarter pg.(3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " w x 4 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " h) | 74    | 72            | 64    | 62    |
| Bus. card (3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " w x 2" h) **                            | 43    | 41            | 39    | 37    |

\*Consecutive months

\*\*To be paid in advance

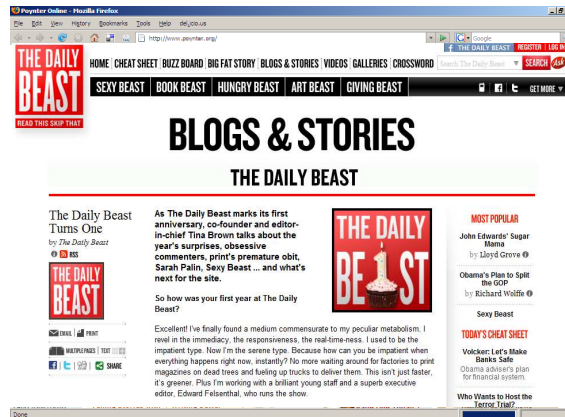
# PC Alamode Links List



## The Selvedge Yard

<<http://theselvedgeyard.wordpress.com/>>

This blog covers the author's passion for people, places things and ideas of enduring heritage, quality, authenticity and character. It features commentary on style, icons and popular culture of years past illustrated with fabulous vintage photos.



## The Daily Beast

<<http://www.thedailybeast.com>>

The Daily Beast takes its styling from tabloid newspapers, but covers politics, current events, style and entertainment in a smart and far-reaching way. Unique features, such as Big Fast Story, which shows how different aspects of a news story are connected, make this a must-read site.

This month's issue, which is dedicated to technical topics, could very well be one of the last PC Alamodes you will read. Take a look at the president's message on page 7 for all the grim details.

I hope we can continue as long as possible. With your help, we can extend the length of time we can keep going.

I hope you will enjoy the offerings in this issue. They include ways to make your computer faster, the ins and outs of hard drives and an explanation of the merits of swithing to a 64-bit computing environmnet.

On tap in our review section, we have a cool review of a hot GPS unit and a review of one of my favorite new pieces of software, The GIMP.

I still use Photoshop alomost daily, but I often use this open-source gem when I'm workong on someone's computer who doesn't have Photoshop installed. It installs in moments and it very intiutive. I hope you'll try it.

As with anything related to computers, it's best to experiment, keep track of your progress and share what you've learned with others. That's what the spirit of Alamo PC has stood for and I hope it will continue to impact your computing life for as long as you click a mouse.

Best wishes!

**Joseph de Leon, Editor**

<[editor@alamopc.org](mailto:editor@alamopc.org)>



**Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC**

Joseph has worked in the graphics industry for more than 10 years.

# President's Message

Bill Klutz

## "February" - Groundhog, Hearts, President's, Ash, & "Ending?"

This month has a few more things of interest than is usually the case in any given month: 2nd - Groundhog Day: Not a sequel to the movie! It grew out of a German superstition (legend) that essentially said, "If a hibernating animal (groundhog) casts a shadow on February 2nd, winter will last another six weeks. If no shadow is seen, spring will be early." In modern day, the legend now combines with an animal (groundhog named Punxsutawney Phil, living in a Pennsylvania town with the same name), who is used to predict future weather in accordance with the legend - (based on seeing or not seeing his shadow); 8th - Boy Scout Day: Celebrating 100 years of scouting in America; 14th - Valentine's Day: Hearts and candies (sweets), plus cards and perhaps some flowers; 15th President's Day: Established to honor all presidents of this country, present and past on the third Monday in February; 16th - Fat Tuesday/Mardi Gras: The Tuesday before Ash Wednesday when Lent begins and many individuals give up things (including food items) during the period of Lent; 17th - Ash Wednesday: The 7th Wednesday preceding Easter, and the beginning of a segment of religious days for many and Lent begins.

Due to rent expense (although much reduced), declining membership (about 230 at last count), waning interest in the organization and General Meetings (only 16 present in January), and shrinking finances (less than \$2K available to pay remaining expenses and anticipated expenses), February may also mark the final month for the member's access server to be functional, as we will terminate the internet access service on that server at midnight on February 8th. At present, the Alamo PC magazine will cease to be published after the February issue and after the 8th, access to the PC Alamo materials may cease. We are hopeful that an alternate solution can be found available soon. The Main "Home Page" server will be unaffected, and will continue to be available although it may eventually have to be maintained in a "caretaker" mode.

Our rental space has been paid through April, and based on funds available then, an evaluation will be made about additional time. (With remaining funds being as low as they are, it looks like an Organizational presence will only be able to be maintained for a few more months in 2010.)

These actions will allow Alamo PC to pay existing and new short term bills, and may provide some funds for the rent to be continued past April of this year.

The January BOD meeting was held, with only four members (Me, David Steward, Steve Tech, and Billy Samples). The focus of the meeting was on the future of the Alamo PC Organization and actions that appeared to be necessary in the next few months. One thing that was again stipulated was that an attempt to maintain an Alamo PC Organization presence should be pursued for as long as possible. With that in mind, our location and General Meetings will continue thru April 2010. In the interim, options will be addressed and a more long-term solution will try to be found, so that monthly meetings (even if ad hoc) of interested individuals can be held.

At the January General Meeting David Steward provided a program and answered related questions. He also touched on some other items of general interest to the 16 people in attendance. Questions were also forthcoming about Alamo PC and the Organization's future. Answers were provided as information was available, and proposed thinking and actions were also discussed. Those present seemed to understand the difficulties leadership is faced with, given the expenses and declining membership. Some even indicated they were surprised the leadership had been able to keep the organization functioning until this year.

It is the next to the last day of January and David Steward has indicated he will be the presenter for the February General Meeting (8th). Since he has not provided any information on what he will cover I can only hope he has something interesting and beneficial worked out for the meeting. The meeting, unless otherwise noted on the web site, will be at our current office location (4888 Whirlwind, in NE San Antonio). It is once again in David Steward hands, so we will have to wait to see what actually transpires! Since things can change, even at the last minute, check the website for the latest information about the General Meeting.

As I have said in many preceding messages, overall interest in User Groups at the corporate and membership level continues to wain. As I also have pointed out in many previous messages, this fact is confirmed by the ever declining Alamo PC membership (only about 11 new members since November 2008), plus the fact we have not had a full compliment of board members (at least one vacancy) for the past four years.

*Continued on page 8*

With the declining number of individuals who are currently serving the organization in a board member capacity, and who have been willing to continue serving, I have said, “the future of OUR organization appears to be dimming rapidly.” That, coupled with the fact that declining membership has caused declining funds to allow the organization to continue as it once was, it looks like it won’t be long before the “lights go out” on an era.

Since almost all of our new members were previously obtained from walk-in traffic at the Learning Center (when we were in Crossroads Mall, and that luxury no longer exists due to our move) we have suffered. And, remaining members have not been as helpful, as hoped, in obtaining new members. So, the point has arrived when remaining funds will no longer allow the Alamo PC Organization to continue operating for very much longer as a Organization. Things may only continue in an ad hoc status, and only with the same loyal few who have appeared month after month at the monthly General Meeting

As I said last month, I have been a member of Alamo PC since the early 90's, and have tried to serve the Organization in various capacities. In 2003 I was nominated as “President Elect” and began serving in that capacity in October of that year. In October 2004 I became “President” and have continued to serve in that capacity, since no one has indicated a desire to be “President Elect” or “President.”

When formed, the mission of Alamo PC was stated as “to increase its members knowledge and effective use of personal computers through presentations, instructional programs, other membership services and access to the expertise of other members.” Over the years that mission has been accomplished, albeit with declining effectiveness. I say that because individuals born since Alamo PC was founded in 1983 have grown up with computers, most individuals who were about 25 then were associated with computers through their jobs, and those who were about 50 have moved to the 75 year figure and many of that grouping are no longer with us. I have spoken of this over the past few years as one of the primary reasons for our decline in membership. I believe the more focused reason, however, is the lack of General Meeting interest, primarily because of a lack of long term scheduling and available information about the presentations. I am sure I would have disagreement from one or more on that statement, but I believe it a primary cause if not THE primary cause.

As, I have said before, “the future of OUR organization ... [rests] ... in the hands of its members (however few they may be). Whether WE continue (or not) depends on OUR interest and involvement. A Board of Directors cannot keep an organization going without members.” For this organization, it primarily depends on membership renewals and/or financial support. Without those, we can not meet our financial obligations and additional ‘business decisions’ will be forced that will ultimately affect everyone involved. “Business decisions” have been made and soon “it will be like the loss of a friend or family member, and will impact those in the community desiring to learn about computers or improve their computer skills.”

Thanks for allowing me to try and serve each member, although I have some misgivings about my service to the Alamo PC Organization. Anyone having questions regarding any area addressed or any matter pertaining to the Alamo PC Organization, and future proposed plans may refer them to [membership@alamopc.org](mailto:membership@alamopc.org) (Steven Tech) or to me at either one of the following: [president@alamopc.org](mailto:president@alamopc.org), or privately at [wkklutzjr@juno.com](mailto:wkklutzjr@juno.com)). We will try to provide information relating to the request.

## February Program

Bill Klutz

It is the next to last day in January, and David Steward has scheduled himself to be the presenter for the February General Meeting. So, unless I hear otherwise, the meeting location will be at our current office location (4888 Whirlwind, SAT). Since things can change at the last minute, please check the Alamo PC web site ([www.alamopc.org](http://www.alamopc.org)) for information on the meeting and the location. Make plans now to come and bring some friends. As always, we hope to have an interesting presentation.

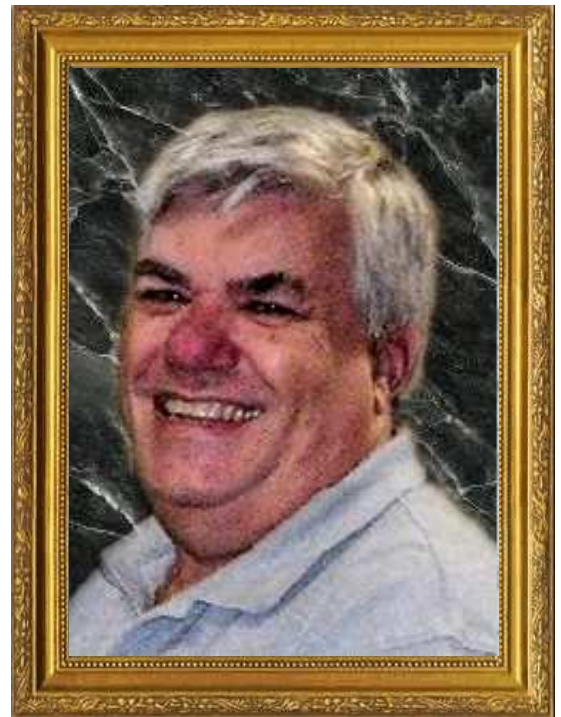
## Volunteer of the Year

Bill Beverley



## Volunteer of the Month

Neil Shaver



### **Computer Briefs** *With Bill Beverley*

## Change the Start menu to classic

Does the new Windows XP Start menu take up too much space on your desktop? You can easily change the look back to the Windows Classic Start menu by following these steps:

- Right-click the Start button, and then click Properties.
- Click Classic Start menu.
- Click the Customize button to select items to display on the Start menu.

By default, selecting the Classic Start menu also adds the My Documents, My Computer, My Network Places, and Internet Explorer icons to your desktop.

ComputerFest is a collection of local and statewide dealers under one roof offering rock-bottom prices on all your computer needs. All of our dealers are independent wholesalers, so each conducts business separately. Most of the dealers will accept credit cards, but with cash you can usually get the best deals. And new products are almost always backed up with a warrantee, so you and your wallet can always feel comfortable with your purchases.

## What you can find at the show:

- New Complete Systems
- New Hardware
- Newest Software Titles
- Printers, Monitors, Scanners
- Ink-Jet Recharge Kits
- Imaging Devices
- Internet Services
- Used Hardware
- Multimedia Upgrades
- Shareware
- Diagnostic Equipment
- Cables & Connectors
- Bare Bone Systems
- Computer Related Books
- Refurbished Systems, Monitors

### Location:

Live Oak Convention Center  
8101 Pat Booker Road  
San Antonio, TX.

### Show Dates:

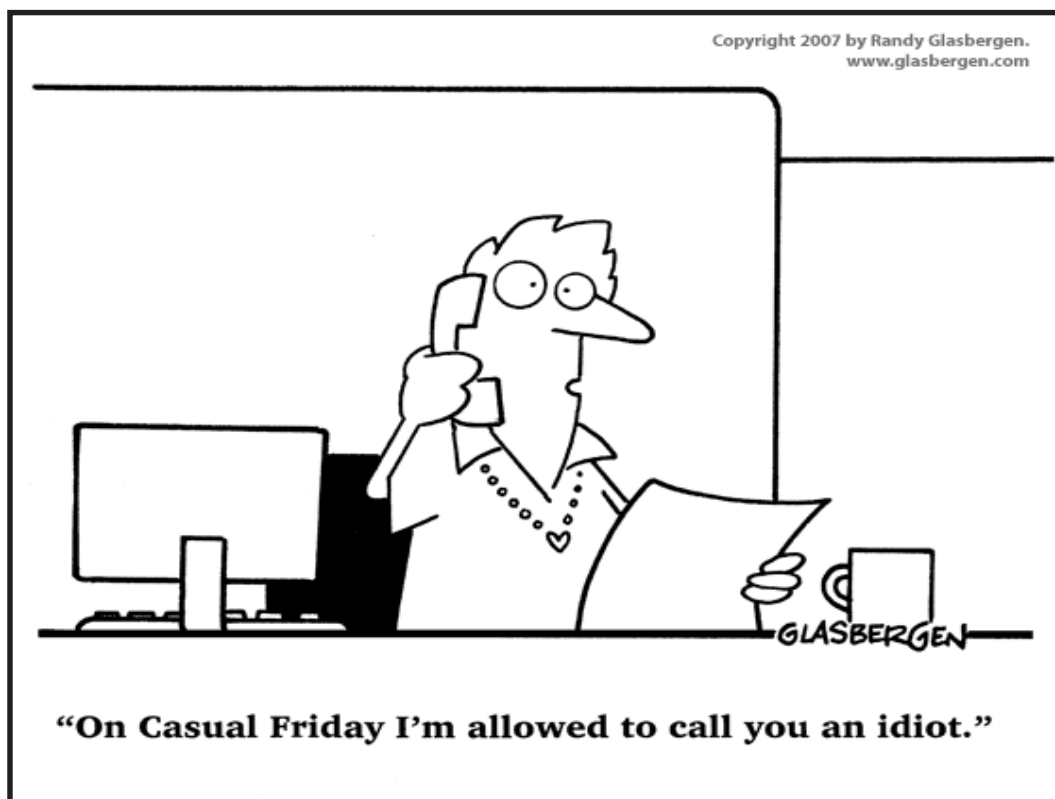
Dates to be announced

more info at <http://www.pcshows.com/>



# Funny Bytes

Ken Nash & Randy Glasbergen





## E-mail

### Bill Beverley, Alamo PC

Bill is retired military and an intermediate computer enthusiast who has been an APCO member for seven years. He has contributed for the past six years.

### Junk Mail

Everyone should be concerned about identity theft and take precautions to protect the data on our computers. Protecting your computer is a great place to start, but identity thieves can victimize you in your mailbox. For example, criminals may reply to a pre-approved credit card offer sent to you. ProQuo <<http://www.proquo.com/>> makes it easy for you to opt out of unwanted mail. Once registered, you can forget about a number of mailing lists. You can also have your name removed from online databases.

### Internet Service Provider (ISP)

When you signed up for an ISP you agreed to allow this service to read your email or keep you from visiting sites it deemed inappropriate. ISPs can block you from web sites and they have the right to read your emails and look at the sites you visit without a wiretap order. They can also shut you down for using the connection too much and creating traffic problems which can slow down your whole neighborhood because of the large volume of cable users. There is an up side to these rights. ISPs need to identify and stop subscribers who use their connections to send spam emails. These rights are a reminder to never draft an email which you might not want read by many other people.

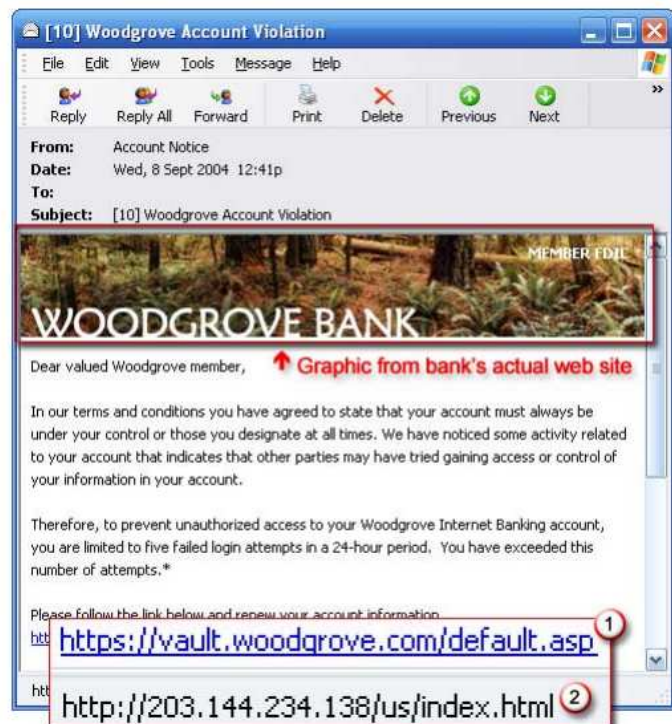
### Phishing

Phishing is a type of deception designed to steal your valuable personal data, such as credit card numbers, Windows Live IDs, other account data and passwords, or other information. You might see a phishing scam:

- In e-mail messages, even if they appear to be from a coworker or someone you know.
- On your social networking Web site.
- On a fake Web site that accepts donations for charity.
- On Web sites that spoof your familiar sites using slightly different Web addresses, hoping you won't notice.
- In your instant message program.
- On your cell phone or other mobile device.

Often phishing scams rely on placing links in e-mail messages, on Web sites, or in instant messages that seem to come from a service that you trust, like your bank, credit card company, or social networking site. Phishing e-mail messages take a number of forms. They might appear to come from your bank or financial institution, a company you regularly do business with, such as Microsoft, or from your social networking site. Spear phishing is a targeted form of phishing in which an e-mail message might look like it comes from your employer, or from a colleague who might send an e-mail message to everyone in the company, such as the head of human resources or IT. For details, see Spear phishing: highly targeted scams. Phishing mail often includes official-looking logos and other identifying information taken directly from legitimate Web sites, and it may include convincing details about your personal information that scammers found on your social networking pages. The main thing phishing e-mail messages have in common is that they ask for personal data, or direct you to Web sites or phone numbers to call where they ask you to provide personal data.

The following is an example of what a phishing scam in an e-mail message might look like.



*Continued on page 14*

To make these phishing e-mail messages look even more legitimate, the scam artists may place a link in them that appears to go to the legitimate Web site (1), but actually takes you to a phony scam site (2) or possibly a pop-up window that looks exactly like the official site.

Here are a few phrases to look for if you think an e-mail message is a phishing scam. "Verify your account." Businesses should not ask you to send passwords, login names, Social Security numbers, or other personal information through e-mail. If you receive an e-mail message from Microsoft asking you to update your credit card information, do not respond: this is a phishing scam. To learn more, read *Fraudulent e-mail that requests credit card information sent to Microsoft customers*. "You have won the lottery." The lottery scam is a common phishing scam known as advanced fee fraud.

One of the most common forms of advanced fee fraud is a message that claims that you have won a large sum of money, or that a person will pay you a large sum of money for little or no work on your part. The lottery scam often includes references to big companies, such as Microsoft. There is no Microsoft lottery. "If you don't respond within 48 hours, your account will be closed." These messages convey a sense of urgency so that you'll respond immediately without thinking. A phishing e-mail message might even claim that your response is required because your account might have been compromised.

What does a phishing Web site or link look like? Fake, copycat Web sites are also called spoofed Web sites. They are designed to look like the legitimate site, sometimes using graphics or fonts from the legitimate site. They might even have a Web address that's very similar to the legitimate site you are used to visiting. Once you're at one of these spoofed sites, you might unwittingly send personal information to the con artists. If you enter your login name, password, or other sensitive information, a criminal could use it to steal your identity.

Here's an example of the kind of phrase you might see in an e-mail message that directs you to a phishing Web site: "Click the link below to gain access to your account." HTML-formatted messages can contain links or forms that you can fill out just as you'd fill out a form on a Web site. Phishing links that you are urged to click in e-mail messages, on Web sites, or even in instant messages may contain all or part of a real company's name and are usually masked, meaning that the link you see does not take you to that address but somewhere different, usually an illegitimate Web site.

### Single Email Address

If you are a snowbird and live in one state but temporarily locate to another because of winter conditions and have different Internet Service Providers in each location but only want to use one email address, then this tip is for you. There are free email services such as Gmail or Yahoo. There is also a free email program called Thunderbird at <[www.mozilla.com](http://www.mozilla.com)> that looks, functions, and acts like MS Outlook as well as having the same setup options. There is a portable version that one can download and install on a removable USB flash drive. You download and install portable Thunderbird to your flash drive, set it up with your account information, then simply plug the flash drive in any computer's USB port.

### SPAM

Just a word to the wise. E-mail petitions are NOT acceptable to Congress or any other municipality. To be acceptable, petitions must have your full address and valid signature. Also, you should beware of "prayer chains." Almost all e-mails that ask you to add your name and forward on to others are similar to that mass letter years ago that asked people to send business cards to the little kid in Florida who wanted to break the Guinness Book of Records for the most cards. All it was, and all this type of e-mail is, is to get names and "cookie" tracking info for telemarketers and spammers to validate active e-mail accounts for their own purposes.

Any time you see an e-mail that says forward this on to 10 of your friends, sign this petition, and you'll get good luck, or whatever, it has either an e-mail tracker program attached that tracks the cookies and e-mails of those folks you forward to, or the host sender is getting a copy. Each time it gets forwarded the originator is able to get lists of "active" e-mails to use in spam e-mails, or sell to others. Spam has become an epidemic. More than 90 percent of all e-mail messages are spam. You can fight this problem by installing a good spam filter on your computer. There are several free ones Kim Komando's web site. SpamBayes - <<http://www.komando.com/downloads/category.aspx?id=4442>>; Spamato - <<http://www.komando.com/downloads/category.aspx?id=2236>>; MailWasher - <<http://www.komando.com/downloads/category.aspx?id=2167>>.

### Transferring Email Addresses to new ISP

Your browser may not support display of this image. There are a few ways to transfer your e-mail addresses to a new provider. However, all of the following methods may not work for you. It just depends on the tools your Internet Service Providers offer. First off, you don't need to transfer your mail to the new account. Download it to your computer. Instead of being on the old provider's server, mail is stored on your machine. You'll need an e-mail program to download your mail. Outlook is the most popular e-mail program. But, you can use the free Thunderbird. You could also use the e-mail program built in to Windows. WinXP



## From the Deals Guy

### Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

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@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>> for past columns and some interesting articles.

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](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.

*Continued on page 16*

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.

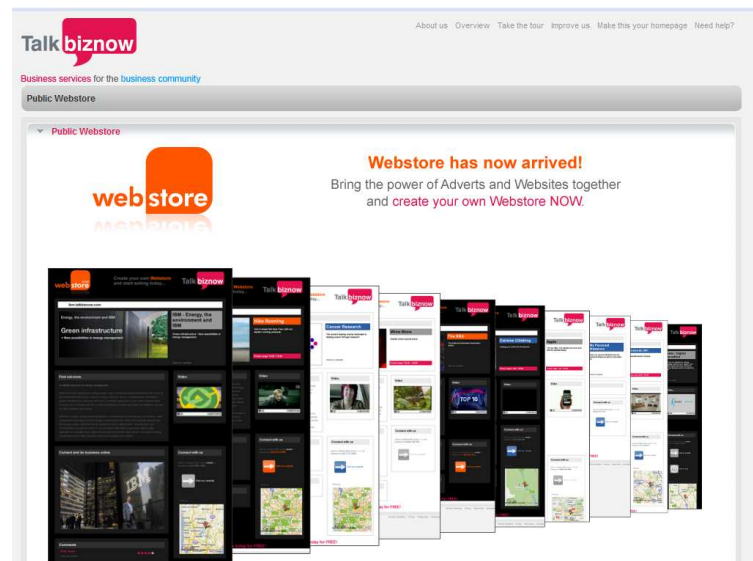
### **\*Be Warned About Those Nasty Web Sites**

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](mailto:bobclick@bellsouth.net)>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.



# The Computer Workstation

## John R. Chait D.C. , Sarasota PC User Group

Dr. Chait is a practicing chiropractor in Sarasota and is the SPCUG ergonomic consultant. As an avid computer enthusiast, Dr. Chait knows first hand how important proper interaction between the user and their PC can be. He stresses this in his ergonomic tips column and his lectures. <drchait@hotmail.com> For more ergonomic tips, visit <<http://chaitchiropractic.com/links/Ergonomics/>>

The importance of Computer Station design increases with the amount of time spent at the computer. As a general guide anyone who spends more than two hours a day in front of a PC should take special care to ensure the Computer Station is user friendly.

Ideally the chair, terminal and keyboard height should all be fully adjustable. When this is the case, the chair should be the first piece of furniture adjusted to fit the person operating their PC. Once the chair has been properly adjusted it should be used as a reference point for all further adjustments. With the feet firmly planted on the floor and the upper body in a neutral position, the monitor and keyboard position should then be adjusted. Finally additional computer accessories including mouse or trackball, wrist supports and copy holders should be correctly placed. If the work surface height is not adjustable, the chair should be fitted to the Computer Station and a footrest provided to support the feet if needed. Specific guidelines for these adjustments are outlined in the following sections.

### Chair

Computer users tend to spend most of their day seated. To provide comfortable support for each particular individual, the following features are important:

- \* Easily adjustable chair height from 17-21 inches.
- \* Seat pan large enough to provide support for thighs and buttocks, but not pressing the back of the knees
- \* Seat pan with a waterfall edge at the front to avoid pressure on underside of the lower thigh
- \* Easily adjustable seat pan tilt
- \* Easily adjustable back rest tilt and height providing lumbar support
- \* Easily adjustable arm height
- \* Sturdy base with five legs and casters
- \* Breathable material and dense foam that gives way no more than 1 inch.
- \* Many work surface heights are adjustable; in this case the chair is the first piece of furniture adapted to fit the user.

### Chair Adjustment

1. Stand in front of the chair. Adjust the height so that the highest point of the seat is just below the knee cap.
2. Sit so that the clearance between the front edge of the seat and the lower part of the legs just fits a clenched fist.
3. Adjust the angle and height of the backrest of the chair so that it supports the hollow in the lower back.
4. Adjust the seat pan tilt to a comfortable position.

A chair should be adjusted many times during the day. This will help to relieve muscle tension in specific muscle groups while loading others. If the work surface height is not adjustable, position the chair so that forearms are parallel to the floor, while keying. If necessary, provide a foot rest to support the legs and reduce strain on the lower back.

The monitor or screen of a computer should be positioned so that the top line of text is at eye level while seated. Distance from the eyes to the screen should be approximately arms length. Greater distances may contribute to poor posture, if the user leans forward to see the information on the screen. So adjust your computer font to be able to read it at arms length. In Windows XP, use your display properties appearance tab to make these adjustments. Set it for extra large fonts.

The monitor should be placed directly in front of the PC User, with a maximum of lateral angle of 30 degrees. Tilting the monitor so that the screen is vertical is also important as this position may reduce glare. These adjustments to the monitor help keep the neck in a more neutral position, minimize muscle fatigue and reduce glare.

**Keyboard** -- A Computer Station should accommodate the keyboard on a separate and adjustable surface. The keyboard holder should be long enough to accommodate a pointing device or mouse pad directly beside the keyboard and at the same height. It is important that both the keyboard and the keyboard holder be kept as flat as possible. This places the wrist in a more neutral position minimizing muscle strain.

The keyboard should be positioned at a height which allows the shoulders to be relaxed, the upper arm relaxed and close to vertical, the lower arm horizontal and the wrist straight.



## Moving From XP to Windows 7

### Vinny La Bash , Sarasota PC User Group

Vinny (SPCUG President in 1996-97-98) is a retired IBM'er and teaches computer part time at the Sarasota Vocational Technical Institute. <labash@spcug.org>

Third party Windows applications are rarely examined in this column, but CrossLoop is too good a utility to ignore. Trying to walk someone through a computer problem over the telephone is often an exercise in frustration. There is no substitute for seeing what is actually on a user's screen to find out the root cause of a problem.

Vista has a built-in support tool known as Remote Desktop, but far from making the process easy, it has a tendency to confuse those with no technical background. Remote Desktop makes it rough on those who don't know how to handle the added complications of firewalls and routers. CrossLoop, which is a free remote support utility, could be an excellent solution.

CrossLoop shields users from tricky situations involving communicating through routers, firewalls, and other potential obstacles. Setting up a communications session between two computers physically separated, but connected through the internet, is reduced to a process hardly more complex than turning on your TV. Those concerned about security can relax. CrossLoop uses something called TightVNC which safeguards data with 128 bit encryption.



Crossloop is useful for people who want to train or support others remotely. If you're an experienced web surfer, for example, and need to show someone how to access a disk drive or retrieve a lost document, CrossLoop allows you to take control of their computer screen, and show them exactly how to do it.

Hard core geeks may not be satisfied with CrossLoop. It's not complicated enough. It works better than most similar commercial utilities, and your technically challenged friends and relatives will find it aggravation free.

You can download the program without charge from <http://www.crossloop.com>. The site has a video that demonstrates how to install and use the program which is very helpful for technophobes.

Once you're up and running, the interface presenting itself is a model of simplicity which effectively masks the complexity behind the scenes. As mentioned earlier, security and remote control is handled by TightVNC. VNC stands for Virtual Network Computing, and is a very well designed software tool that easily allows remote access to Operating Systems with a graphical interface. The technical specifications say you need Windows 98 or higher. A broadband internet connection is also a requirement. Dialup connections won't work. Drive space, processor speed, and memory requirements are negligible given the general power of today's computers.

Another benefit of TightVNC is the built-in 128 bit encrypted security. When you begin a communications session, the program generates a new 12 digit access code. The access code then generates the encryption codes giving you an additional layer of security. Not bad for a free utility.

Running the program is so easy it's almost boring. As you can see from the illustration, the interface is simple and straightforward. Assuming you started the session, the next step is to communicate the access code to the person you are communicating with. You can do this by email, telephone, screaming into the next room, etc.

After starting the session, your friend types the access code into the box and clicks Connect. When the Connect button is clicked on both sides the two PCs are linked.

This method of troubleshooting a remote PC eliminates all the hassles of trying to interpret what an inexperienced user is attempting to explain. It's difficult to imagine anything less complex than a one button interface. With 128 bit encryption built in, it's tough to beat.

Other applications that make such connections possible have been available for years, but nothing I've seen makes it as simple as CrossLoop.

## So-called 'Easter Eggs' in programs

Crack one open. "Did you ever marvel at the engineering of an egg? What else makes an egg so fascinating, you ask? Enjoy these web sites, from real eggs to man-made eggs, including the "care and feeding" of eggs!

1.I hope you don't think computer programmers are dry as bones and boring as cactus. The fact is, sometimes they will just outright surprise you. Buried within many software applications are delightful, little, hidden, amusing tidbits called "Easter Eggs". Some are ordinary and others will amaze you. Several seasons of "Lost" have eggs. Learn where to find them at: [www.eeggs.com](http://www.eeggs.com).

2.Next time you crack a farm fresh egg, think about the road it traveled from the hen pen to your plate and all the stuff along the way, plus egg safety. Surf to: [www.aeb.org](http://www.aeb.org).

3.OK, before you read #5 and for those who are chronically egg-chef challenged, the eternal question is now answered here, plus egg selection, separating, poaching (eggs, not deer), etc. Yah, yah, I know, real men don't "separate" eggs, but this site will show you how, for those times when you are alone! Surf to: [www.fabulousfoods.com/school/csingred/eggs.html](http://www.fabulousfoods.com/school/csingred/eggs.html) or [www.joyofbaking.com/eggs.html](http://www.joyofbaking.com/eggs.html).

4.And now for something completely different. Magnificent manmade eggs, courtesy of Mr. Faberge of Russia. Surf to: [www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/faberge/fmain.html](http://www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/faberge/fmain.html).

5.The flames of your passion, or whimsy, will explode because there is an egg recipe for all occasions, all tastes and all people. Surf to: [www.recipelink.com/rcpeggs.html](http://www.recipelink.com/rcpeggs.html)



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# Tech Issue

## Making your computer better

# Computer Performance Considerations

Written by **Gary Bentley**, Editor, SouthWest International Personal Computer Club (TX) Throughput, [www.swipcc.org](http://www.swipcc.org), [bentley.gary@gmail.com](mailto:bentley.gary@gmail.com)

When I evaluate what might be done to maximize the performance of a computer system, whether that be a system already in use or one I might be specifying for order (i.e., specifying the hardware with a particular level of performance in mind for the intended application) I look at several key factors.

*Continued on page 20*



The most critical factor is how much system RAM is available (if you are ordering a new system then you can also order faster RAM and be cognizant of addressing issues). I will state flatly that, all factors being equal, the more RAM available, the faster your computer system will operate. In the same vein, if you want to make full use of that system RAM, get an external graphics card with its own RAM so you don't force your system to share RAM with the video display.

If you are specifying a new computer, get the fastest FSB (front side bus) speed you can afford with the microprocessor and then match the RAM bus speed to take advantage of that high bus speed. Don't let a computer maker fool you with a low system price while handing off old slow RAM to you when the motherboard and processor would support faster bus speed RAM. New systems will always use DDR RAM, so that should not be a consideration (and older systems will not be able to use it). Don't be confused by discussions of virtual memory and page files.

If you have a large amount of RAM (1 GB or more with Windows XP—3 or 4 GB with Vista, the OS memory hog of all time), your system will rarely need to page out process memory onto the hard drive paging file. You can check that in Task Manager (hit CTRL SHIFT ESC or CTRL ALT DEL or right click the Task Bar and select Task Manager) by looking at the Performance tab and the Physical Memory Total in conjunction with the Commit Charge. The Physical Memory Total is the amount of RAM you have in your system. The Commit Charge is the total memory allocated to programs and the operating system. If the Commit Charge (Total or Peak) doesn't exceed the amount of RAM, then the hard drive pagefile is rarely if ever being used and your system should be running at full RAM speed without hard drive performance issues (except when loading the OS and starting an application, etc.).

You can also use Performance Monitor (Start, Administrative Tools, Performance) and look at the Memory, Pages Output/Sec parameter. Even if the amount of committed memory exceeds available RAM, if the actual Pages Output/ Sec is low or zero most of the time (quoting Microsoft) there is no significant performance problem related to available RAM. I doubt there would be any reason for the typical home user to require a 64 bit computer in order to utilize sufficient RAM.

The second most critical factor is the performance of the hard drive, i.e., the amount of utilization of your hard drive (present or anticipated for the application), the speed at which the drive platters rotate, and the speed of the interface to your hard drive. You never want to reach 50% of capacity of your hard drive. The more data you have on a hard drive the farther the disk drive read/write head has to move inward on the spinning platter to get to the data (on the average).

This increases the seek time, the time required for the read/write head to position itself over the desired concentric data track on the spinning disk platter. So, use a hard drive with sufficient storage that you do not exceed 40% or so of the storage capacity (high performance server hard drives often are destoked or short stroked, i.e., limited to 40% or less so as to keep the data on the outer edge of the platters where it can be quickly reached). Once the read/write head reaches a track then the rotational speed of the platter comes into play, introducing latency, the time required for the desired sector of the track to rotate into position beneath the head. How do you reduce latency? Get a hard drive that spins as fast as you can afford. Most desktop hard drives now spin at 7200 RPM (don't let them slip you a 5400 RPM drive on your desktop or your laptop!).

If your drive has a slower RPM, you can increase performance by purchasing a 7200 RPM drive. Note that high performance server drives spin at 10,000 and 15,000 RPM, but those drives are expensive. If you are evaluating a replacement drive (or specifying the hard drive in a new system), look at the access time parameter for the drive. This will generally be around 11 milliseconds for 7200 RPM





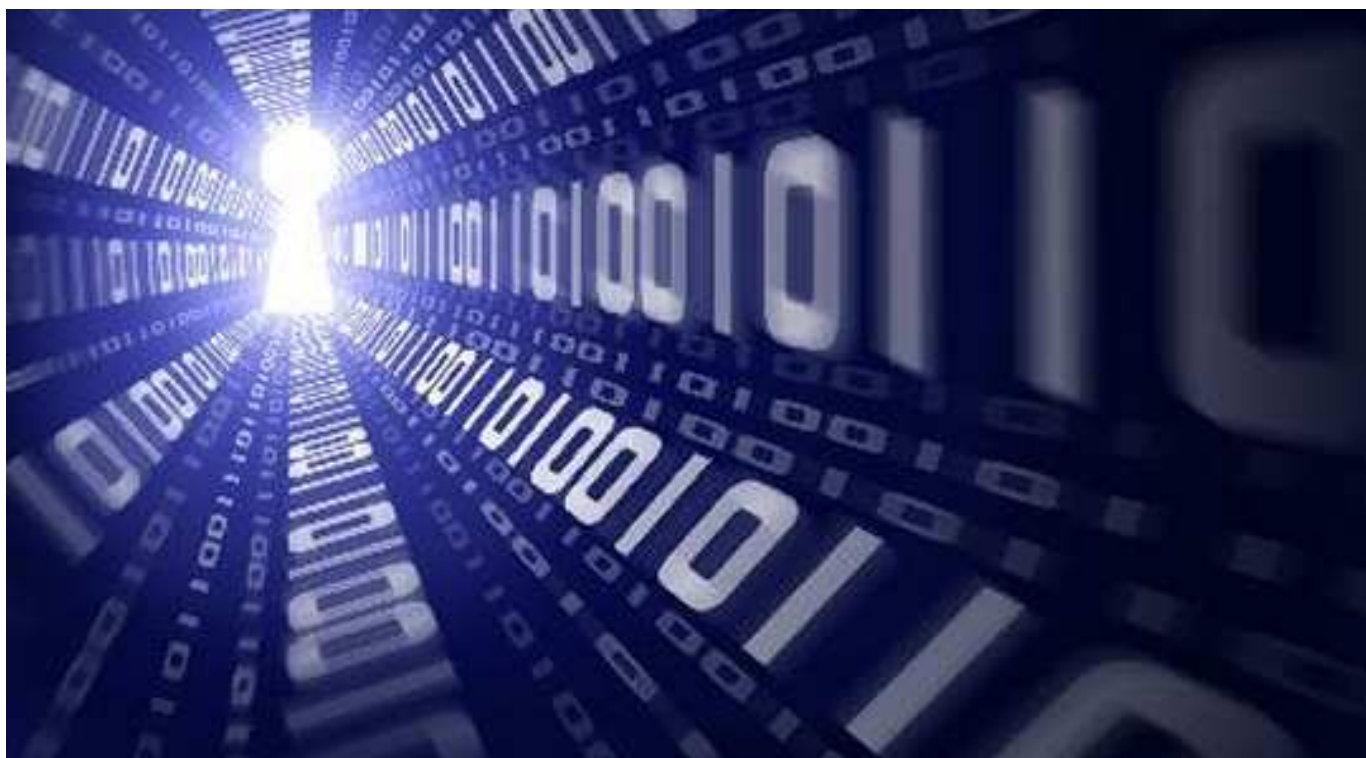
desktop PC ATA/SATA drives. The access time will include seek time and rotational latency. As for the type of interface, ATA drives (which peaked at around 133 MB/sec interface performance, setting aside internal data rate of around 60 MB/s and PCI bus rate considerations) are no longer offered, so you will see SATA (serial ATA) drives in a new computer.

I wouldn't bother attempting to replace an ATA drive in an old PC with a SATA drive. You would need a SATA controller card as well as SATA drive and you might as well just purchase a new computer. The current SATA interface rate is 3 Gbps (the initial SATA interface was 1.5 Gbps), i.e., 3 gigabits per second. That translates to approximately 300 MB/sec. However, the actual rate that the read head can read the data off the spinning platter of the drive is closer to 100 MB/sec (the internal data rate). You therefore can benefit by having a drive with a large cache memory, where a large amount of data has been read internally by the hard drive before the interface is accessed, at which time the interface can burst perform at the full interface speed of 3 Gbps/300 MB/sec. I note that even the expensive server grade SCSI and SAS drives have about that same external interface transfer rate, i.e., 300 – 320 MB/sec, so their increased performance is coming directly from the high rotational speeds (10 – 15 K) and fast seeks, giving access times of 3 – 5 ms vs. 11 ms or so for desktop SATA drives. Defragmenting your drive regularly will help keep the drive operating at peak efficiency.

A less critical factor is the speed of the microprocessor itself (FSB considerations aside as they relate to RAM access speed). A faster microprocessor or a dual or quad core processor will allow applications, their processes and threads to execute faster (to actually run the microprocessor instructions of which a program is composed) once the instructions and data reach the microprocessor.

So, if you have processing intensive applications like video or music (studio) production and editing (or scientific number crunching), faster and more core processors will speed things up considerably, but only if you have plenty of RAM and a high performance hard drive.

*Mr. Bentley studied electrical engineering at the University of Texas, began working in the electronics industry in 1978 with GTE Network Systems (Lenkurt), then software engineering with various startups in the 1980's, designing and implementing, among other things, pre-Internet email communications systems multitasking on Intel platforms and MSDOS PC's. 1984 - 1986. Gary now provides Information Technology consulting services in the El Paso, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico areas. Gary has edited and contributed articles to the award-winning Southwest International Personal Computer Club monthly magazine, "Throughput", since December, 2003.*



# Hard Drives, Connectors, Performance and You

## Performance Drives May Be Worth the Price

**Written by Ira Brickman**, President, ICON PC User Group, Inc., New York, The ICON Graphic, Newsletter of the ICON PCUG, [www.iconpcug.org](http://www.iconpcug.org), [president@iconpcug.org](mailto:president@iconpcug.org)

You buy a new computer and you're pleased that it is faster than your old one. You spend time keeping it fast. You keep crapware and malware away. You add memory. After a time, as your hard drive fills up, you decide to replace it or add another hard drive. After all, the price of hard drives is relatively low. They are less expensive than ever. So you make sure you get an inexpensive, reliable brand.

But did you know that with the right new hard drive, your computer can be noticeably faster? Most manufacturers decide on hard drives the same way you do, if you do what is described in the paragraph above. In average-priced desktops and notebooks alike, OEM's find reliable, inexpensive drives; drives that are smaller than the largest drives available. Most people aren't aware of this because that new processor, memory and larger drive are so much faster than their old computer.

So with a little understanding of specs and some real-world benchmarks, you can do more for your computer than add more storage space when you buy a new hard drive.

First some information about the specifications and standards for various kinds of interfaces used to connect hard drives. Newer computers use internal SATA-connected hard drives. The old internal connection for hard drives was IDE and was called ATA.

It is now called PATA. The P stands for "parallel." The "S" in SATA stands for "serial."

When drives are connected externally, directly to your computer, your choices are USB, Firewire, and the newer eSATA (external SATA.) USB is virtually on every computer. The currently faster Firewire is more common on Apple computers. Newest desktop PC's often can include an eSATA connection. Slowest to fastest, here are the theoretical maximum speeds for the fastest versions of these interfaces:

**USB 2.0 – 480 Mbps**

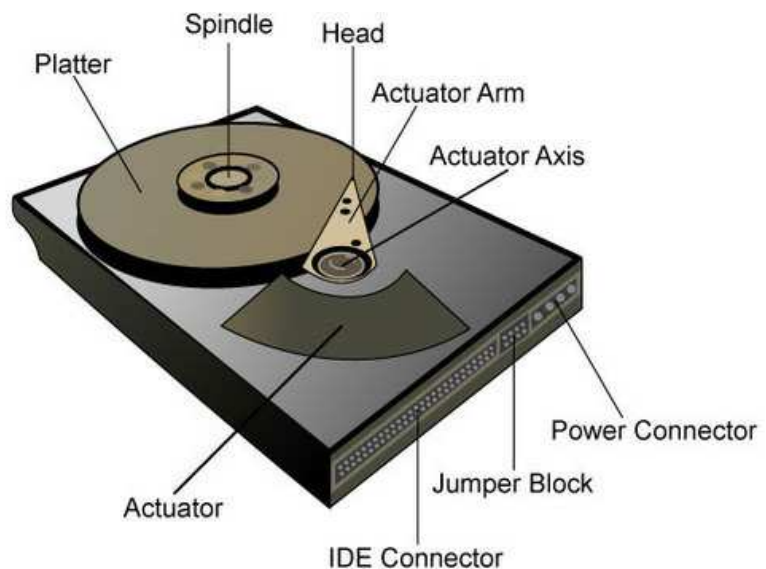
**FireWire 800 – 800 Mbps**

**PATA – 1.6 Gbps**

**SATA 3.0 (and eSATA) – 3.0 Gbps**

Based on these theoretical numbers, SATA is nearly twice the speed of PATA and nearly eight times faster than USB. In the real world, however, drives don't transfer data at nearly those speeds. Performance of things like your CPU, support chips, memory and what your computer is doing while data is being transferred, act to throttle maximum speed.

You can add any or all of these connections to both desktops and notebooks. If they aren't there already in your computer, you can install a controller card. In a desktop that has SATA, adding eSATA is simply buying a cable – one end connects to the SATA controller on the mainboard, the other end has a female eSATA port. Connecting an SATA drive ex-



*Continued on page 23*

ternally, then, requires no special electronics or interface in an external case, unlike the electronics required for USB. Internally-connected SATA drives function as fast when externally connected by eSATA.

OK... the above is necessary to understand my recent real world experiences replacing a hard drive on my one-year old Vista notebook. It focuses on SATA drives since those are now the standard included in all desktop computers and notebooks. My notebook came with a 2.5" 250 Gb Seagate SATA internal drive. At the beginning of the year, Seagate began shipping 500 Gb notebook drives. Like most modern notebook drives, they both rotate at 5,400 rpm and have an 8mb cache. More recently, Seagate began shipping premium notebook drives that rotate at 7,200 rpm and have a 16Mb cache, including one with a 500 Gb capacity. I bought that premium drive, hoping the added cost would translate to a significant increase in performance.

Using an external case with an eSATA connector and an eSATA PC Card inserted into my notebook, I used Acronis True image to clone my old hard drive onto the new drive. Even with the faster interface speed, it took well over an hour to finish.

Before I replaced the notebook drive, I decided to experiment. I copied to the new larger, hopefully faster drive, 35 Gb in 340 files ranging in size from 20Mb to nearly 1 Gb, using the eSATA connection. Next, I deleted the files and did it again using the external case's USB connection. Then I switched to a smaller USB external drive with a 5,400 rpm, 60Gb PATA drive with a 16Mb cache and copied the same files:

Finally, I swapped out the old 260Gb for the 500Gb drive, re-booted, and tried the same transfers with the with the 250Gb SATA drive installed in the external case. Here are the results (rounded to whole numbers):

|                           |                      |                    |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>500 Gb SATA drive:</b> | <b>260 Gb SATA:</b>  | <b>60 Gb PATA:</b> |
| <b>eSATA 38 Mbps</b>      | <b>eSATA 32 Mbps</b> | <b>USB 8Mbps</b>   |
| <b>USB 25 Mbps</b>        | <b>USB 21 Mbps</b>   |                    |

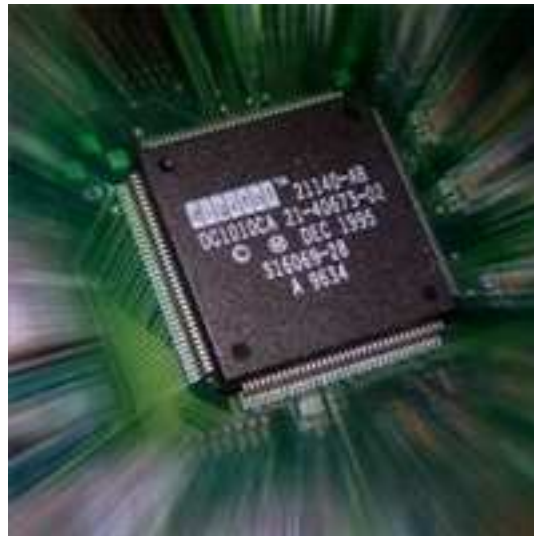
Comparing apples to apples, looking first at the USB results, it is clear that SATA drives have a clear speed advantage over PATA drives even though some of the slower PATA USB results can be attributed to the IDE to USB interface in one external case vs. a faster SATA to USB interface in the other. Comparing the SATA drives, the increased rpm and cache are responsible for a definite increase in overall speed since the case was the same in both instances. This test revealed more than an 18% increase in speed. Interestingly, the Vista "Windows Experience Index" scored the old drive at 5.3 and rated the new drive 5.9 – an 11% increase. Benchmarks like this, and single tests like my file transfer experiment, share the same limitation: they don't reflect drive performance for all real world circumstances.

So what about my real world experiences? With the new 500 Gb drive installed in my notebook, I experienced faster booting times and a noticeably "snappier" performance. Opening a "My Computer" window, for example, seemed to have eliminated a delay I had gotten used to. Web pages seemed to open more quickly in Internet Explorer. Microsoft Word loaded more quickly. These are perceived, not measured, results. But when it came to running Photoshop, I was delighted to see it load in ten seconds, not the 25 seconds I'd bemoaned (and timed) for the past year!

Keeping in mind that my notebook is now working faster, and has more storage than when I bought it, that makes the added price of the new drive worthwhile to me. And with the old drive in an external case, I can now image my notebook drive pretty quickly using eSATA. Hopefully this article and a little research on your part will benefit you similarly when you purchase a new hard drive.



# Optimize Your PC



**Written by Jon Jackman**, President, Fox Valley PC Association,  
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I saw an e-mail from PC World inviting me to speed up my slow PC. This directed me to a link for a “free scan” of my computer using PC Pitstop Optimize 3.0. Recently, we had a discussion at our general meeting of slow system performance, so I decided to give it a try and document the effort here. It may postpone an inevitable Windows re-install, but we will see.

The scan yielded some interesting results and offered to do it for me if I purchased the program (for about \$30.) I looked at the results and wondered how I might be able to do this manually for free? I looked around on Google and found some step-by-step guides on basically accomplishing the same things that PC Pitstop’s Optimize would do if I paid the \$30. I ran the program and it began to scan my system. Interestingly it ran 3 scans of my Download speed. Not sure what that was about. It then displayed several pages of results: Junk Files, Internet Settings, Startup Programs, Registry Fixes and Performance Tweaks. When I reboot, it reminds me of what it can do to make things run better by displaying red messages. I will try some manual fixes and watch to see if the start-up scan gets progressively greener.

Looking at what Optimize tries to do I first decided to run CCleaner, a free program that has been a recent DOQ offering (2009 DOQ-2). Alternately, you can download it from [www.ccleaner.com](http://www.ccleaner.com).

## Junk Files

The first Optimize Results screen listed the junk files that I could safely delete. In my case, Optimize listed Temporary Files, Recycle Bin and Internet Caches. Using CCleaner in the Cleaner option under the Windows tab, files for Internet Explorer, Windows Explorer and System are listed by default, so I ran the “Analyze” tool. I was reminded to close Firefox to enable the Internet Cache to be cleaned as well. After several minutes it was complete and it said that ANALYSIS COMPLETE - (526.859 seconds), 555.9MB to be removed. (Approximate size). As a comparison, Optimize indicated that 729 MB would be cleaned. I ran the “Run Cleaner” option.

## Internet Settings

The second Optimize Results screen looks at Internet Settings and explains that they may be tuned for faster throughput and may provide a substantial increase in Internet performance. In my case, my connections (HTTP, TCP/IP and Firefox) had no recommended adjustments. However, you may try using the Optimize free scan yourself and see that you have some that are recommended. In that case, you may try to Optimize your settings manually. Search Google for “TCP Optimizer”, download and run it. Select “Optimal”, then apply. Look around carefully and see what else you might optimize.

You will need to reboot.

## Startup Programs

When Windows starts up it automatically loads a number of programs, many of which you may not need. As you install more and more programs, this list can continue to grow. In my situation, there were several Startup Programs that Optimize considered “unnecessary.” (You could run the free scan and see what it says about your system.) The ones listed on mine were: InstallShield Update Service (2 instances), Adobe Acrobat SpeedLauncher, QuickTime Icon and Realtek HD Audio. Using

CCleaner I went to Tools and then selected Startup. I looked at the programs that Optimizer 3.0 suggested and right clicked on them and chose “Disable”.

## Registry Fixes

Programs sometimes leave incorrect information behind in the registry, either because they uninstall improperly or because the files associated with the entries have been moved or deleted. Cleaning the Windows registry would hope to keep your PC in working order and keep the system running at peak performance. Using CCleaner, select Registry and then “Scan for issues”. You can then choose to Fix them. Afterwards, not too many of the Optimize findings were changed.

## Performance Tweaks

Optimize made some recommendations to adjust some settings in the Registry. Using the suggested tweaks I searched the Registry and made the adjustments to the keys that I could find, although not all of the ones recommended could be found. As always, back up your registry first! (CCleaner would have done that prior to fixing the registry in the step above.) Start, Run “regedit”, then Edit, Find and enter the string. Right click and adjust the value.

## Additional Fixes

Use Auslogics Registry Defrag

Defrag your hard drive!

Uninstall Optimize 3.0... You might want to reinstall it and run a new scan after you have done all of these steps to see if you made progress.

You should see a faster booting, faster running machine!



# Speed Demons

**Written by Bill Roman, Advisor to the Board of Directors,  
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There is an issue that I feel must be addressed, since the issue continues to come up on a regular basis. As a PC technician I constantly get asked why the clients' computer has become so slow, and if there is anything wrong with it.

The first thing I tell the client is that there are two main culprits that contribute to a PC becoming very sluggish. The first being lack of RAM memory. This answer usually elicits a quick response from the user that they "only do e-mail, Internet and word processing" or some similar response. I then go into a discussion with the user that there are two kinds of memory in a computer: hard drive storage, which holds all their music, pictures, documents, etc. and RAM, or working memory. A user could have plenty of hard drive space to store all of their documents and stuff, but when they don't have enough RAM, the computer will, over time, become slower and slower.

Why you ask? When the computer was originally purchased (usually somewhere between 2 and 5 years ago) Windows XP, in this case, required about 512MB of RAM to run properly. As Windows critical security updates and service packs are installed, as well as upgrades and updates to all sorts of programs used on a daily basis (antivirus, Internet Explorer, AOL, Adobe Reader and Flash Player, printer updates, etc), the programs NEVER get smaller, always bigger.

Now, several years later and the programs being used are double or triple in size, but the computer is the same one with the same specs as when it was purchased. Adding more RAM memory is a quick, cheap way to improve performance to an aging computer, and extend life before a replacement is in order. Windows XP should have at least 1024 MB (1GB) of RAM to run properly, and Windows Vista (32bit) needs 3GB of RAM. More is not better in the case of Vista for technical reasons I will not go into in this article.

"This is only half the battle. The other half is to beat down what I will call the "moochers". Years ago when I would inspect a computer for sluggish performance, it was usually because of a rogue game that was installed. Back then quite a few games adopted the theory that the only reason you owned your \$3000 or \$4000 computer (yes, it was that much back then, even more depending on how far back you go) was to play some ridiculous \$49 game. The game would change many settings that allowed the game to work properly, but made it miserable to perform simple tasks like type a letter.



*Continued on page 27*

Now, in 2009 every program under the sun assumes that they are the main focus, and must be given priority at all times. What does this mean to you, the end user? Each time when an upgraded revision of Adobe Reader comes out it always wants to include the new “MSN Toolbar” or “Yahoo Toolbar” etc. This adds unnecessary junk to your browser, which slows down getting online. In addition, many of these programs load an additional program when Windows starts to speed it up when starting it. This is just lousy practice that is a very poor substitute for tight efficient programming. If the program was small and lean there would be no need for “speed loaders,” which make your computer take an exorbitant amount of time for Windows to start.

Not to pick on, but a classic example of this is how much Apple’s iTunes has grown through the years. iTunes 6 which was released in January 2006 was about 35MB in size. iTunes 7.5 was 52MB and iTunes 8.1 (the current release) is now up to 70MB. The program is twice as large only three years later, and loads a number of programs when Windows starts to aid loading this memory hog.

What to do about this? In short be mindful when installing updated programs to unselect add on toolbars and, if available, to kick them out of starting up when Windows loads. I have discussed at our local computer club meetings to do your best to keep running processes to a minimum. By clicking control, alt, delete once (with no programs active) will bring up the task manager and show how many processes are running. A good number for Windows XP is less than 35, and for Vista it’s about 45.

Startup Cop and the free CCleaner utilities have the ability to disable or remove programs from starting, but I would check online in a Google search before disabling anything unless certain. I do hope this article sheds some light on the subject of pokey computers. Remember, it’s not so much the hardware as it is software that kills a computer! Until next time!

## Computer Briefs

With Pim Borman

### Turning Off Your Computer

Choose the Turn Off option when nobody else will be using the computer until the next morning. Windows XP saves everything, and tells you when it’s okay to turn off your computer. (Sometimes it turns it off for you.) When you choose Turn Off Computer, Windows clings like a sleepy cat, tossing up these three options:

**Standby:** Also called Hibernate on some laptops, this option quickly saves all your work and puts the computer in virtual sleep -- a delicate mode between on and off. Avoid it.

**Turn Off:** Choose this option when you’re done for the day. Let you -- and your computer -- get some real sleep. When Windows XP leaves the screen, turn off the computer and the monitor, if Windows XP doesn’t do it automatically.

**Restart:** Only choose this option when Windows XP screwed something up: Several programs crashed, or Windows seems to be acting awfully weird. Windows XP turns off and reloads itself, hopefully feeling refreshed.

When you tell Windows XP that you want to quit, it searches through all your open windows to see whether you’ve saved all your work. If it finds any work you’ve forgotten to save, it tosses a box your way, letting you click the OK button to save it. Whew!

You don’t have to shut down Windows XP every night. In fact, some people leave their computers turned on all the time, saying it’s better for their health. Others say their computers are healthier if they’re turned off each day. However, everybody says to turn off your monitor when you’re done working. Monitors definitely enjoy cooling down when not being used.

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# Registry Cleaning

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Perhaps the greatest necessary evil in the Windows operating system is the registry. It was designed by a cyber-masochist as the brain behind all versions of Windows that controls their every function. Regardless of what procedure you undertake in Windows, it is almost certain that there are numerous entries, often coded or otherwise illegible, residing in this huge database that makes it possible or not to accomplish. From earliest startup to final shutdown, Windows is completely dependent on the integrity and proper functioning of the registry.

From this introduction it is clearly evident that the registry is nothing to be toyed with lightly by mere mortals. Yet every computer owner is constantly using, modifying and often tainting its contents in some way. It is little wonder that, in time, the registry can easily become a source of computerized grief. A contaminated, corrupted registry is perhaps the most common cause of a computer's slowdown, errors, or malfunction.

Now you would think that Microsoft, having designed this masterpiece, would have figured a way to keep it continuously in tune. No such luck! Fighting the battle of the registry is a task left to 99.5% of computer owners who know less about the registry than the secrets of the Universe.

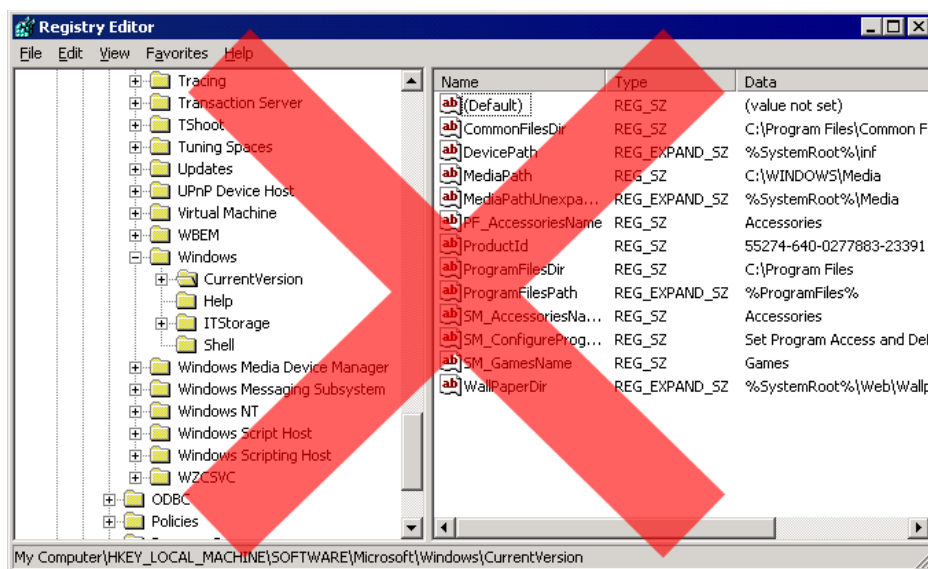
Capitalizing on the economic opportunities in demystifying the necessary cleaning and tuning of this mystical database are a bevy of software designers and publishers that promise to easily and quickly do the job that no mere mortal is either capable or desirous of accomplishing. It is not surprising that the result is a very mixed bag of success, with many registry cleaners making the cure considerably worse than the disease.

How then is one to choose from among the vast array of registry cleaning software to select a product whose functions are way outside the proper scrutiny of which most computer owners are capable. Chance and luck unfortunately play a large role in choosing. Another is by recommendation, experience and common sense, a little of which I can perhaps, respectfully, offer.

In the course of several weeks or months, I install, uninstall and try lots of different software. Why not? A free trial version of almost everything is commonly available today. The result is that in time my registry is likely to become more of a mess than yours (without discounting the mess that is more than likely to already exist in yours).

I have looked at a sizeable number of trial versions of commonly available registry cleaners. Over a period of years and experience I have selected the same one consistently as my choice.....Registry First Aid, from Rose City Software ([rosecitysoftware.com](http://rosecitysoftware.com)). The most important reason is that it does the job thoroughly, and very much most compelling, safely!

Most of the registry cleaners I examined were very fast, finding a sizeable list of registry errors in just a few minutes. Registry First Aid (RFA) is slower than many of the others largely because it's the safest! It is the only one I have seen that not only produces a categorized



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list of registry errors that need, it also provides an accurate reason for having selected each and every error. I have spent many hours looking into the validity of its reasons for hundreds of its selections and I have yet to find one that was incorrect. I am satisfied that RFA is right on the money with each and every one of its suggested corrections.

RFA offers to scan 11 different categories of registry components. Some frequently turn up little to no problems, while others (especially "invalid application paths") found more than 2,800 errors in my registry on my last scan. The errors are carefully sorted and color coded as either completely safe to remove, remove with caution, or confront with extreme caution. The reason for each is explained with every item, something no other registry cleaner I have seen does.

In some cases errors are listed for incorrect paths or locations, and RFA offers to put them in a properly valid placement, also something I have seen only in RFA.

After presenting its list of discovered errors and their suggested corrections, RFA permits you to select those errors you wish to have it correct. It also permits you to view any error directly in the registry itself if you wish. Before making corrections, RFA will back up the registry in case you wish to later undo and restore its condition prior to corrections. Talk about safety, these are all virtues I have not seen offered fully in any other registry cleaner.

RFA also provides a number of other very useful registry-related functions. A registry search feature will quickly find any reference you offer, perhaps to leftovers of uninstalled software. A registry defragment feature will permit your computer to run faster and more efficiently. A variety of plug-ins are offered, and registry backup jobs are safely stored for possible use at your selection.

I have offered an explanation of why registry cleaning is important and why my selection to do the job is RFA. I recommend a visit to the Rose City Software website where you can download a fully functional trial copy of RFA 7.0. If you select to purchase, you will find the cost very reasonable. If you have a previous version, you will find the latest filled with many nuances (including a great new interface) listed on their website that make the upgrade more than worthwhile.

A word of wisdom is possibly in order. There is almost nothing that you can do with your computer from the moment you turn it on that does not bring some degree of risk or ignores the necessity for caution. Merely receiving email can provide unseen dangers. Any procedure that modifies your operating system in any way can particularly present a serious problem. Registry cleaning is such a procedure. While not doing registry cleaning when necessary can seriously effect and degrade computer performance, the cleaning itself is also not without risks. Although I have stressed the safety I have found associated with RFA, bear very much in mind that computer users need to constantly be defensive. Before undertaking registry cleaning, be sure to make a full backup of your computer in addition to the registry backup that RFA itself will make. Creating a system restore point prior is also a good idea. Prevention is a far sight better than repairing!



# Is It Time To Switch To 64 Bit Windows?



**Brian K. Lewis, PhD**, a member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida, [www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org), [bwsail@yahoo.com](mailto:bwsail@yahoo.com).

In my February 2008 article in the Monitor comparing 32 bit and 64 bit computing, I was still advising caution for those wishing to upgrade. Today every new computer is capable of running a 64 bit operating system. As a result there are many voices saying if you have the capability to run a 64 bit operating system, you should take advantage of it. Microsoft had previously indicated that Windows 7 would be available only in a 64 bit version. However, they now say both 32 & 64 bit versions will be sold. There some speculation in the computer industry that Windows 8 may only be 64 bit. So it appears to be time to reconsider the move to a 64 bit operating system (OS). There are many advantages for 64 bit over 32 bit, but in order to better understand them, we need to take a brief look at how these will affect your decision.

To start with we should recall a little history. In the early days of personal computing the processors instruction sets were designed for 8 bit “words”. This was the data size that could be used to express a single character. A bit is either a “1” or a “0”. Eight bits were then referred to as a “byte” and that was considered a computer “word”. In those days the CPUs we had were the Intel 8080, the Zilog Z80, Motorola 6800, and the MOS Tech 6502. These were all 8 bit processors with 8 bit data paths. The Apple I/II/III and Commodore Pet all used the 6502. IBM designed the first x86 CPU which was called the 8086 and it was a 16 bit processor. However, when IBM produced their first personal computer in 1981 it used their 8088 processor which was an 8 bit version of the 8086. The next step was to the 16 bit processor with the 80286 processor in 1984. The software changes rapidly followed this advance. The change to 16 bit processing allowed the central processor and the data bus to transfer data in increasingly larger sizes, referred to as double words. The 32 bit processor arrived in 1989 followed by the 64 bit in 2005. As this history shows, the 64 bit computer is just one more generational step in processing power. In addition, a computer “word” is now considered to be 16 bits, not 8 bits. So a 64 bit processor can handle a quadruple word (4x16). Naturally, the increase in the width of the CPU/data path does increase processing speed.

Every time the hardware has changed, there has been a delay while the software manufacturers play catchup. Applications have to be rewritten to take advantage of the hardware changes including the new instructions in the CPU instruction set. Only then can the application take advantage of the added processing power. Although Windows has been available in a 64 bit form since XP was released, its adoption has been quite slow. Many software manufacturers did not make 64 bit versions of their applications. This coupled with the limited acceptance of Vista has markedly slowed the shift from 32 bit to 64 bit. Another factor in this process is the development of 64 bit drivers for peripherals such as printers, scanners, graphics cards, wireless modems, network cards, etc. Microsoft has also indicated that Windows 7 will not install 64 bit drivers unless the software is “Microsoft Certified”. Some manufacturers have obtained certification for some of their 64 bit drivers. For example, my Brother multi-function machine has a certified driver for 64 bit Windows. If you don't have a 64 bit certified driver, your peripheral will not work under Windows 7. Neither Vista64 nor Win7-64 will accept 32 bit drivers. Something to check out before you pop for a 64 bit OS. However, if you are buying an upgrade version of Windows 7, several of them are supposed to come with both the 64 bit and 32 bit versions in the box, but not in the OEM versions. This specifically applies to the Home Pre-



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mium, Professional and Ultimate versions (as of this writing and may be subject to change by Microsoft.).

Another advantage of a 64 bit processor is in its memory management. By now I would hope that everyone understands that the 32 bit generation of computers can address a maximum of 4 gigabytes of RAM. This is the maximum number of addresses that can be handled and is calculated from  $2^{32}$  or two to the thirty-second power. This includes addresses needed by the system as well as the data. A 64 bit processor can address  $2^{64}$  addresses or roughly ten billion more than the 32 bit processor. The catch here is that both the hardware manufacturers and Microsoft have imposed limitations on the addressable memory. Generally, new personal computer's are limited to 128 GB of memory or less. Some manufacturers configure their laptops for a maximum of 4 GB of RAM. Windows OS software is also highly variable in its limits. Some versions of Vista limit addressing to as little as 8 GB (Home Basic & Premium). It is expected that these limits will be raised in Windows 7. For the present, these levels should be more than adequate for most people. If not keep in mind that it is the Ultimate versions of Vista and Windows 7 that have the maximum addressing ability.

The next thing to consider is the software compatibility. Just because you have a new operating system, no one really wants to have to upgrade all their software from 32 bit to 64 bit. For that reason both Intel CPU's and AMD CPU's are not true native 64 bit processors. They are, in fact, hybrids. By this I mean that they allow 32 bit code to run in an emulation mode. Consequently, 64 bit Windows has an emulation mode, Windows on Windows, which allows 32 bit software to be run. WOW intercepts system calls to the operating system made by a 32-bit application and switches the CPU to 32 bit mode. It can switch the CPU between 32 bit and 64 bit as needed. This also allows the 64 bit AMD/Intel CPU's to run a 32 bit OS. The only true 64 bit, non-hybrid operating systems for PC's are found in Intel's Itanium processor (IA64) and the various 64 bit versions of Linux. Systems using these CPUs will give you all the benefits of 64 bit computing, but require all 64 bit software. Windows WOW64 also allows for some 32 bit software to run on the IA64 CPU by converting 32 bit calls to 64 bit.

Windows XP, Vista and Win7 contain large numbers of dll files. These are system libraries, many of which are loaded into memory when the computer is booted. In the 64 bit OS, these libraries can not be used by 32 bit software so instead, there are duplicate libraries written in 32 bit code included in Windows. Microsoft has devised a system so that these libraries can co-exist on the hard drive and in RAM without overwriting the files or accessing the wrong file so that 32 bit code can be run under the 64 bit OS. Sounds good, doesn't it? Yes, it does work, but with some caveats. Adding an emulation layer does slow the overall processing of software instructions. Also, there is an increase in the amount of memory (virtual memory included) needed for the additional 32 bit libraries that are loaded along with the 64 bit dlls at boot time.

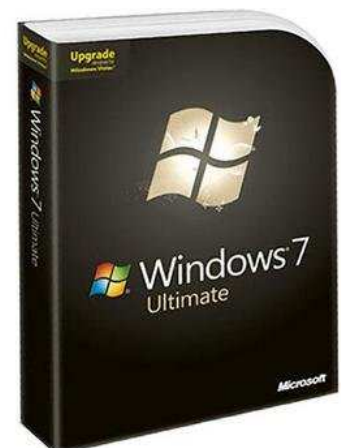
There are other problems, but to a somewhat lesser extent as it affects fewer software applications. Some 32 bit applications still use 16 bit loaders. Since Windows 64 does not support ANY 16 bit code, these applications will not run, unless Windows can transparently substitute an installer with 32 bit code. Hopefully, all 32 bit software will eventually have 32 bit loaders or be replaced with 64 bit code. Additionally, some 32 bit software requires the use of 32 bit drivers. These drivers will not run on any 64 bit Windows platform. So until the drivers are available in a 64 bit form, these applications can't be used with Windows 64.

Another consideration is that any utility software that works at the hardware level must be 64 bit. This generally includes anti-virus software and other anti-malware products. Those few manufacturers I have checked do have 64 bit versions of their applications available. This includes some which provide free utility applications. This is just one more item that should be checked before you decide to move to a 64 bit OS.

If you decide you want to upgrade to the 64 bit version of Windows 7 when it is available, then you have several more things to consider. No matter which 32 bit Windows version you are currently using, you will have to do a "clean" install of the 64 bit version. That means backing up your data to an external medium and formatting your hard drive or at least a part of it (one partition). You can install Windows 7 in a new partition and dual boot with it and your current Windows version. Or you can install the new version in the space reclaimed from your old version. Either way you will have to reinstall software and drivers. Then you can restore your data. Only if you upgrade to the Windows 7 32 bit version from Vista can you do an "in-place" upgrade. If you are still running XP you have no choice but to do a clean install to convert to the 64 bit version. Of course, if you buy a new computer with the 64 bit Windows 7 installed that reduces your problem to just installing applications and data from your old computer.

I have already pre-ordered a 64 bit version of Windows 7. So, you see, I have answered the question I posed in the title of this article. When it arrives, in October, I will be installing it, then testing drivers and applications. You probably won't see any of my experience until the December Monitor. In the meantime, I have obtained a 64 bit version of the Linux OS, Ubuntu. Over the next few months I will be installing and testing it on my computer. So you will be seeing more about 64 bit computing. I hope it will help you as the entire industry continues to move into a fully 64 bit era. Just think, the next move, in a few years, will probably be to 128 bit computing!

*Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years, developing software and assembling systems.*

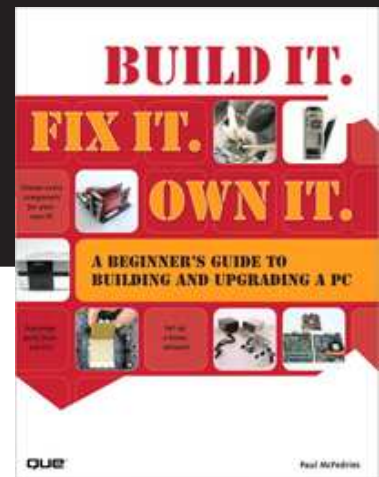


## Book Review

Build it, Fix it, Own it: A Beginner's Guide to Building and Upgrading a PC

Published by Que

A review by Joe Mizer, a member of NOCCC (North Orange County Computer Club, CA), [www.noccc.org](http://www.noccc.org), [editor@noccc.org](mailto:editor@noccc.org)



This book, published by QUE, is a good guide to understanding a PC from the inside out. Building a PC is easier than selecting stereo and video entertainment equipment for your home; you decide on the features you want and the performance level desired. In both situations the components inside a PC such as the mother board, memory, disk drives, optical drives, sound cards, and video cards all have standard interfaces and when connected, become a PC inside the case you selected.

This book is targeted for beginners with the desire to build a PC from scratch. The book is laid out in two parts; the first part is about getting to know your PC. The chapters cover in detail the options and decisions to be made when selecting a motherboard, and CPU, memory type and size, drives, audio and video options, networking, parts and building skills. The author in a step-by-step approach discusses the choices available with each of these components and how to guarantee your selections will operate as a fast and reliable system. This book was an introduction into the technology changes that have occurred since I last built a system from scratch. My understanding of the latest hardware options, are clearly much different from the past. In fact, many of the performance changes make the devices more than just updated versions of those available only a few years ago.

In a careful step-by-step journey, the book explains the technology so you will really understand the choices you need to make when selecting the parts for your new computer and how to get the best deals on the parts you decide on. My favorite chapter in the first section is chapter six which introduces the reader to networking and security without the complex technical discussions which are normally included with networking. The second part of the book puts all of the details discussed in part one into action by designing five computers, each as a project / chapter and aimed at different jobs. Chapter 10 Building a Basic Business PC explains goals and expected requirements as well as how to select components and to overcome problems you will probably encounter. A detailed assembly section answers a lot of the expected questions, and gives a check list procedure to actually use when powering up a new machine for the first time. Chapter 11 is on Building a home theater PC. This project builds a computer which connects to your television either analog or digital, your audio system, cable box, gaming interface, and other digital and analog devices. Chapter 12's project is Building a high performance computer. Chapter 13's project is Building a Killer Gaming PC, and Chapter 14 covers building a Building a Budget PC.

The most important reason for building a new computer is the chance to configure it exactly as you want it - you can have a blazing fast machine or an average business computer. You can have the best audio or the standard small speakers, and the best of all internal components, or not. You also get to select the operating system of your choice, which in my opinion is not any version of Vista. As you can guess I do not like the Vista operating system, and really I do not know whether Vista is the problem or just that I am out of date again. This is why I am now going to read "Windows Vista" by Steve Johnson and see if I can I learn to do things the Vista way.

Avoiding only one mistake will easily save you more than that amount. I recommend this book because since I last built a system, so much has changed in the hardware available, I was just plain not up to speed on selecting the best stuff. With this book at my side, even though I skipped the chapters on salvaging parts from old computers and renovating old computers because I just don't like to reuse old parts. I now feel I know the questions to ask and where to get advice when making the necessary decisions to build a new system, hopefully it will be faster and live longer.

This book is available from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), the publisher (<http://www.informit.com/store/product.aspx?isbn=0789738279>) And, of course, your local book store. The list price is \$29.99 USA. ISBN-13 978-0-7897-3827-1

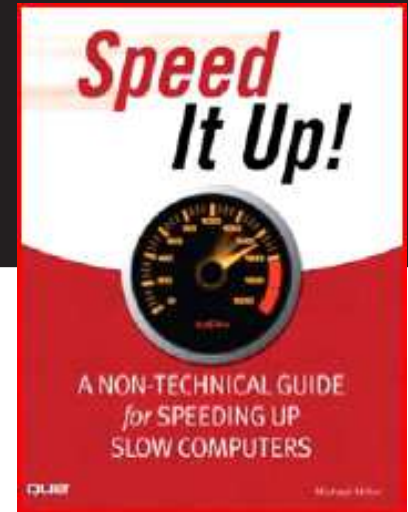


## Book Review

Speed It Up! A Non-Technical Guide for Speeding Up Slow Computers

Published by Que

A review by Gordon Strickland, Member, NOCCC (North Orange County Computer Club, California), Orange Bytes, [www.noccc.org](http://www.noccc.org), [editor@noccc.org](mailto:editor@noccc.org)



Almost anyone would like his computer to run faster. This book may therefore be regarded as being aimed at a very wide potential readership. It discusses measures for restoring the performance of a computer whose performance has degraded from what it was originally and hardware modifications to enhance its performance perhaps even over the original. However, if the measures discussed in the main part of the book will not yield sufficient improvement, the author also includes a final section offering guidelines for buying a new computer. The specific discussions in the book are applicable primarily to machines running Windows XP and Vista, although some of the material would also be applicable to earlier versions of Windows. Apart from some hardware issues, there is little applicable to Linux and Apple machines.

The book is organized into an introduction, eighteen chapters, and an appendix. The chapters are grouped into six sections, with titles that I will abridge as follows: Quick Diagnosis, Simple Speedups, Power Speedups, Upgrading Your PC, Internet and Network Speedups, and Buying a Faster PC.

Under Quick Diagnosis, the author rightly notes that the perception of performance degradation can be very subjective. He describes instances where acquaintances thought that their machines were slowing down, when in fact that had not really

happened. Perceptions of degraded performance are particularly apt to occur when an older machine is asked to run new, demanding software. Windows Vista and some of the newer games can be very problematical in this respect. The author then discusses various symptoms of actual performance degradation, and emphasizes the importance of doing a thorough backup before moving on to the tasks of repair and enhancement.

The Simple Speedups section deals with removing spyware and viruses, cleaning out unnecessary programs, optimizing the hard disk, and making Windows go faster. The Power Speedups section discusses cleaning the Windows registry and reinstalling

Windows from scratch (“when all else fails”).

Under Upgrading Your PC, the author discusses hardware upgrades such as adding more RAM, installing a larger hard disk, upgrading the video card (perhaps particularly beneficial when going to the more demanding versions of Vista), and installing a faster CPU. This last measure is sometimes possible with machines that are of fairly recent vintage. Alternatively, the author suggests that one can provide for a new CPU by also

installing a new motherboard, but this would seem to get one into the area of the final section, Buying a Faster PC.



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The appendix, entitled “PC Performance Resources,” consists of useful lists of available software packages for the performance of the various optimization and repair tasks discussed in the previous text. For instance, under “Registry Cleaners,” ten

different programs are listed, including a number of free ones.

Other categories of programs presented include General Performance Suites, Benchmarking, Startup Optimization, File Cleaning, Hard Disk Optimization, Internet Speedup, and others. Altogether, the appendix lists 61 programs.

By way of criticism, it is curious that there is no discussion of the possibility of reflashing (reloading) the BIOS of a machine. This procedure, admittedly only for the more courageous user, might provide important benefits where the originally loaded BIOS contained bugs, had become corrupted, or did not provide proper support for software or hardware developed since the date of the originally loaded BIOS. The author misleadingly states (pg 166) that the BIOS is loaded into ROM that cannot be written to, but this is not true in modern machines. Indeed, some BIOS's can be reflashed even from within the Windows operating system.

With the printed book, the purchaser also receives, for 45 days, access to a free online edition of the book. Presumably the access period can be extended for a fee, if the user desires. The object here seems to be to make the book more convenient to use when one is already working at the computer. I tend to prefer to use a printed version of a publication in such situations, if it will stay open at the page you are consulting

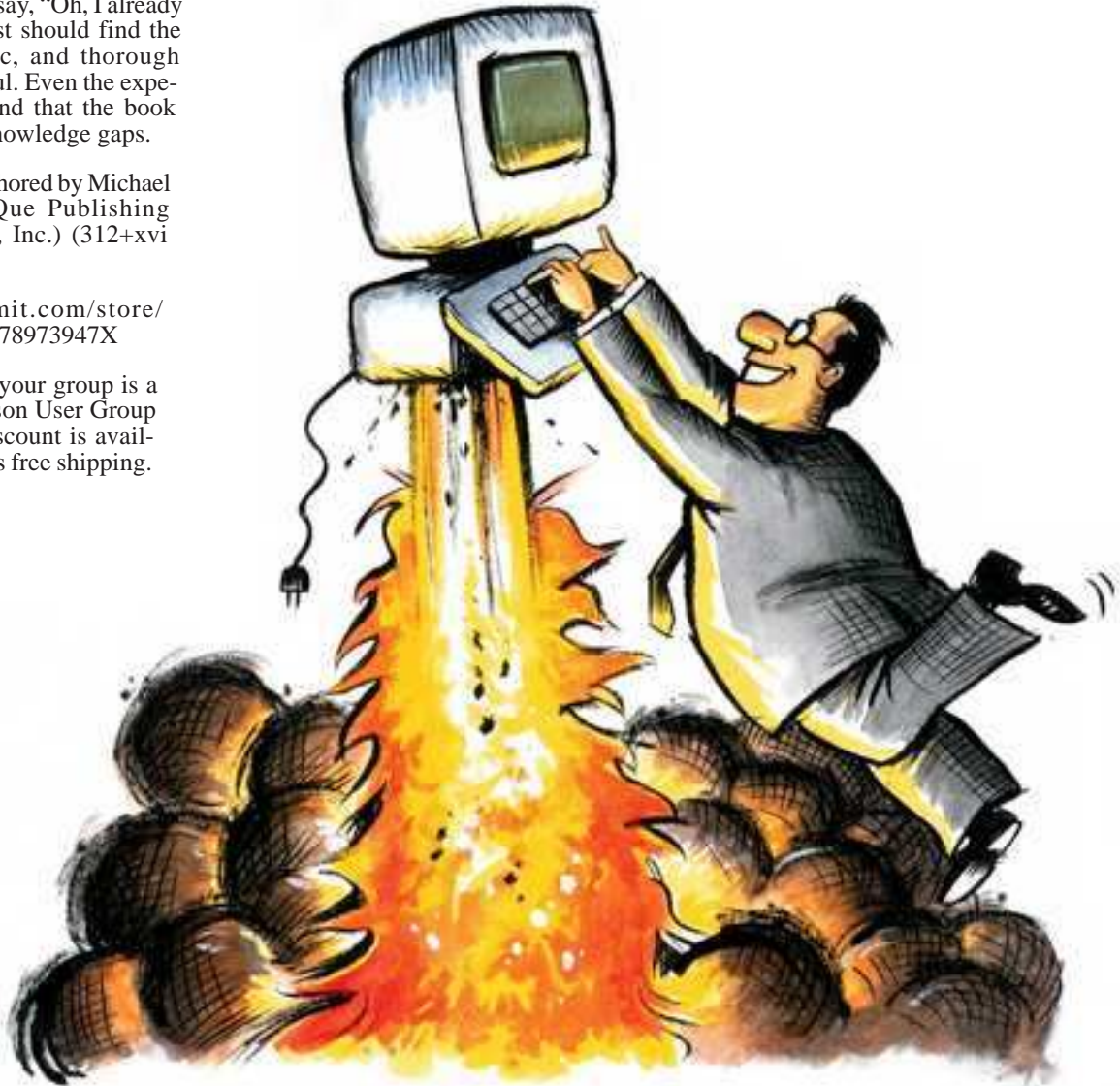
while typing at the keyboard. Unfortunately, the book is assembled with the now near-universal “perfect” binding (was there ever a more outrageously misleading terminology?), and therefore is quite likely to change pages, or close, spontaneously. Depending on your monitor size and other factors, the online version might be more convenient in some situations.

I thought that the book was very informative and potentially useful. The experienced user, opening up the book at random and examining a particular topic, might be inclined to say, “Oh, I already knew that,” but most should find the detailed, systematic, and thorough coverage very helpful. Even the experienced user may find that the book fills in occasional knowledge gaps.

The 2009 book is authored by Michael Miller and from Que Publishing (Pearson Education, Inc.) (312+xvi pages).

<http://www.informit.com/store/product.aspx?isbn=078973947X>

List price is \$22. If your group is a member of the Pearson User Group program, a 30 % discount is available to members plus free shipping.



## Software Review

Adventures in GPS navigation: Garmin Nuvi 765 T

Published by Garmin

A review by Douglas Agee, past president of the Southwest International Personal Computer Club, El Paso, TX, [www.swipcc.org](http://www.swipcc.org), [dougagee@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dougagee@sbcglobal.net)



This past June, I received a GPS navigation unit (Garmin Nuvi 765 T) as a father's day gift. As soon as I opened the package, however, I was informed that I had only a few days to checkout the unit before the store's return period expired, so I quickly reviewed the Quick Start Guide and put the unit through a few simple navigational exercises, which it passed with flying colors.

The unit seemed intuitive and user-friendly enough because it was easy to enter a destination address and navigate to the destination. Another plus was the unit's feminine persona—let's call her Gretchen—who consistently upstaged my backseat drivers by telling me in a pleasant voice precisely when and where to turn to get to my destination. Soon, however, I began noticing some unfamiliar icons on the display, icons that were not fully addressed in the Quick Start Guide. So I downloaded the owner's manual from the Garmin website—all 74 pages—and things really got interesting. I discovered that the Nuvi was not only a GPS navigational system, but also

a traffic information system that provided real time traffic updates via its FM receiver a bluetooth device that enabled me to wirelessly connect with my cell phone for "hands free" calling an MP3 media player that enabled me to listen to music via the unit's internal speaker, Bluetooth headset or the vehicle's stereo speakers an accessory computer that allowed me to compute my vehicle's fuel economy, make monetary conversions, check the time in different cities around the world, consult bilingual dictionaries, create custom routes, view slide shows, and accomplish a host of other things.

In other words, this new GPS system was an amazingly versatile onboard computer, one with a fair learning curve. In order to acquaint myself with its features and capabilities, I decided to carefully study the owner's manual, rigorously checkout the unit for a month or so and document my experiences in Throughput.

In this review, I'll discuss the unit's features and capabilities as well as my experiences on a recent vacation trip. I'll also talk about some of my frustrations in downloading the Garmin software necessary to obtain software and map updates.

Introducing the Nuvi. The Garmin Nuvi 765T is one of about 30 models in the Nuvi series with navigational capabilities that enable you to find your way from point A to point B virtually anywhere in the US. Before you embark upon your destination, you have to mount the unit on your windshield or dashboard and plug it into your cigarette lighter. When the unit turns on, it loads its software and map database and then admonishes you—for safety reasons—not to attempt to enter route information or manipulate the unit while driving. The next screen to appear has several touch screen icons that enable you to operate the unit and to assess its operational status (battery status, GPS Satellite signal strength, Bluetooth status and current time).



To select your destination, you simply touch the "Where To?" icon on the screen. The next screen to appear will give you several options to specify your destination. For example, you can touch the "Spell Name" icon and then type in a specific street address, city and state. Or you can touch one of the other icons and select from "food," "fuel," "lodging," "shopping," "transit," etc. The next screen will display all of the optional selections available. Once you've selected your destination, you simply touch the "Go" icon. Immediately you'll see an onscreen map showing you the streets at your location and Gretchen, in her mellifluous voice, will tell you precisely when and where to turn to get to your destination. It's just that simple.

En route, you'll see onscreen indications of the estimated arrival time, your vehicle's location and speed, and the local speed limit. If you fail to follow Gretchen's directions or accidentally miss a turn, Gretchen will inform you that your route is being recalculated, and will promptly give you the new turn-by-turn instructions. If there is a traffic alert along your route, the Nuvi 765 T, which comes with a lifetime traffic subscription, will display a circular yellow or red icon, which you can touch to obtain

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more information on the alert. (Note: Only Nuvi units with the “T” designation come with a lifetime traffic subscription). If the alert indicates an extended delay, the Nuvi will calculate an alternate route if one is available. And, of course, Gretchen will let you know!

Vacationing with the Nuvi. As mentioned earlier, I took the Nuvi along on a recent vacation to see how it would perform. I specified my destination by entering the address of the San Diego motel that I’d booked earlier in the month. The Nuvi immediately established the route—from my residence, to Trans Mountain Road, to I-10 West, to I-8 West, to San Diego, to the motel—in a few seconds. Along most of this route there wasn’t much for Gretchen to do except to remind me to turn onto the Interstates and to “keep left” when traveling through the cities of Las Cruces, Tucson and Yuma.



To liven things up a bit I decided to play some songs on the Nuvi’s MP3 player—songs I’d copied to a Micro SD card, which I’d inserted into the Nuvi’s SD card slot the night before leaving El Paso. With the Nuvi you have the option of listening to the songs via the Nuvi’s embedded speaker, via a Bluetooth headset or via your vehicle’s stereo speakers. If you want to use your vehicle’s stereo speakers, you can have the Nuvi automatically select an FM channel for you and then you can tune your FM radio to the selected channel. You can also manually tune the FM transmitter using a four step procedure in the Owner’s Manual. It’s best to set this up before you embark so you won’t be manipulating the Nuvi en route!

While en route to San Diego, I made several phone calls using the Nuvi, which I had paired with my cell phone using the Bluetooth wireless capability. This enabled me to carry on “hands free” conversations. To make a call, I touched “Phone” on the Nuvi’s screen, entered the number and then touched “Dial.” To receive a phone call, I simply touched “Answer” on the Nuvi’s incoming call screen and conversed via the Nuvi’s internal microphone. The Nuvi’s internal microphone and speaker are loud enough for everyone in the vehicle to carry on a conversation with the other party, eliminating the hassle of having to pass the cell phone from person to person. To end the call, I simply touched “End” on the Nuvi screen. During these conversations, my cell phone never left its case.



The trip from El Paso to San Diego was uneventful and not much of a challenge for the Nuvi or for Gretchen. The desert between Tucson and Yuma was bone dry and the outside temperature was a scorching 107 degrees. The saguaro cacti looked as if they had been torched and appeared to be praying for rain. The Nuvi, which was in direct sunlight for a portion of the trip, was warm to the touch, so I fashioned a makeshift paper canopy to fend off the sun’s rays. This worked well for the duration of the trip.

Upon descending the mountains into the San Diego area, Gretchen and the Nuvi came to life again. The Nuvi continuously displayed the number of miles to the next waypoint and Gretchen intervened constantly, telling me to “keep left” or “keep right” along Interstate 8 West. Traffic on the Interstate was heavy and the situation very stressful, with California drivers zipping along at breakneck speeds in lanes to the right and left of me. But Gretchen was unperturbed, calmly telling me when and where to exit the Interstate and guiding me to my destination through a maze of streets in the Motel Circle area. The Nuvi’s navigation was absolutely flawless!

Over the next three days, I visited Sea World, Old Town, the Birch Aquarium in La Jolla, and some relatives who were house sitting in Point Loma. The Nuvi never made any mistakes, but I missed turns on a couple of occasions and the Nuvi had to recalculate the routes to get me back on track. The recalculations were accomplished in seconds and time lost was minimal. The only thing that was a bit disconcerting was Gretchen’s pronunciation of La Jolla, which she pronounced La “Jola” instead of La “Hoya.” One other minor issue involved traffic information system reports, which occasionally reported traffic delays on routes where there were no discernable delays.

Updating the Nuvi. After returning to El Paso and reviewing all of the documentation that came with the Nuvi, I decided to register the unit on the Garmin website. This was necessary to obtain periodic software and map updates. When you buy a Nuvi, you’re entitled to one free map update if you register your Nuvi within 60 days of first using the unit. The maps on the Nuvi were at least a year old and a free update was available, so I embarked on what turned out to be a seven and one-half hour adventure.

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After registering the Nuvi on the Garmin website, I had to download a Garmin Communicator Browser plug in before I could download the map update. I downloaded and installed the Garmin plug in without any problems but when I attempted to download the map update file, I was unable to do so because of insufficient memory on my hard drive. To increase the available memory, I eliminated several programs until I had about 3.4 GBs of memory available. I was then able to download the map file, which was a little over 2 GBs in size (compressed), but this took a couple of hours. When I attempted to install the map update, I was again informed I had insufficient memory—that at least 3.6 more GBs would be required. This would have required me to re-partition my computer's hard drive, so I decided to install the plug in on my wife's computer, which had sufficient hard drive space.

However, I was unable to download the plug in on my wife's computer and had to call Garmin technical support for assistance. I waited over 30 minutes for the techie and talked to him another 20 minutes before I was finally able to download the file. Unfortunately, I was unable to install the plug in and get it working properly.

So I decided to move the map update file to my wife's computer and see if I could uncompress the file and install the map on the Nuvi. The map update file was an executable file that opened a Map Update Installer, which expanded the file and installed the map update on the computer. Then the installer prompted me to connect the Nuvi and transfer the map data via the USB connection and install the maps on the Nuvi. Although it took a couple more hours to accomplish this, I finally succeeded.

**Other Nuvi Features.** As noted earlier, the Nuvi has a number of other features of interest to travelers.

If you get lost, you can find out where you are by touching the “tools” icon, then the “where am I?” icon. The unit will indicate your position in latitude, longitude and elevation and will also show you the nearest address as well as the nearest intersection. You can also quickly find the nearest hospital, police station or gas station by touching the appropriate icon.

If you need to convert from English to metric units (or vice versa), you can touch the “conversions” icon and convert distances, speeds, temperatures, areas, weights, volumes and currencies.

If you want to find out the current time in another city in the world, you can touch the “world clock” icon. The time is shown for three default cities, but you can change the city by touching the screen and typing in the name of the new city.

If you need to translate from English to another language (or vice versa), you can touch the “language guide” icon and then select the languages (Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese). You can scroll through the Oxford English dictionary to the word you want to have translated and you'll be shown the foreign equivalent. By touching the pronunciation icons, you can actually hear the English and foreign pronunciations. Unfortunately, the dictionary included with the Nuvi is a sample dictionary with a limited number of entries. You'll have to access the Garmin website to obtain a fully functional dictionary—at an additional cost!

If you need to do some routine computations, you can touch the “calculator” icon and do some quick addition, subtraction, multiplication or division.

If you want to get an estimate of your vehicle's fuel economy when traveling to a particular destination, you can touch the “ecoRoute™” icon and enter the requested data (fuel type, estimated city mpg and highway mpg, fuel price etc.). The Nuvi will then compute your vehicle's average fuel economy, carbon footprint and the cost of the fuel consumed on the trip.

**Final Thoughts.** The Nuvi is an amazing piece of equipment although I'm still learning how to efficiently use some of its features. For the most part, however, it is relatively easy to use and its navigational performance in the situations I've encountered has been flawless. As mentioned earlier, I've had some problems updating the maps and I'm still not certain why the plug in failed to install on my wife's computer. The only other problem I've experienced is that the letters on the “QWERTY” keyboard are fairly close together and I sometimes have trouble accurately entering addresses.

The original price of the Nuvi 765 T was around \$480 but I've seen lower prices, including Costco's current online special of \$280. Many of the lower priced GPS units made by Garmin and other manufacturers don't have all of the Nuvi 765 T's features, so if you're interested in purchasing a GPS unit, I'd advise you to compare features and prices on the Internet or checkout the current issue of Consumer Reports magazine (September 2009), which compares ten of the latest GPS units.

*Douglas Agee has been a member of the Southwest International Computer Club (SWIPCC) in El Paso, TX for over 12 years, serving as the Photo editing SIG team leader for several years and club president for three years. His hobbies include reading, photography, photo editing and computers. Before retiring from Federal Civil Service, he worked as a physical scientist and missile engineer at White Sands Missile Range, NM and an electronic engineer at Ft. Bliss, TX. He has a BS degree in Mechanical/ Aerospace Engineering from the University of Southern California.*



## Software Review

GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program)

Published by none, open-source software

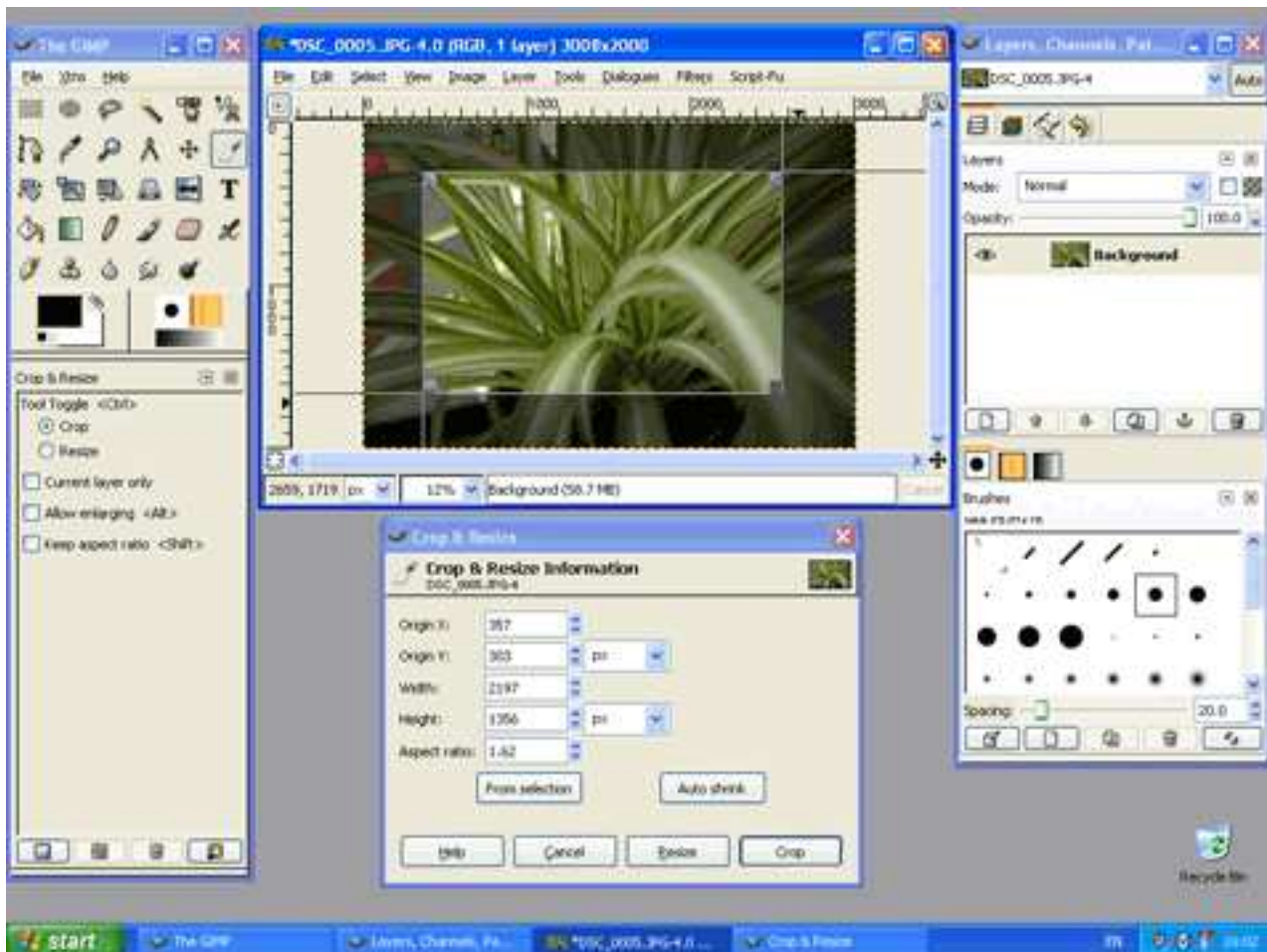
A review by Paul Braget, President, OMUG (Olympia Microcomputer Users Group), Olympia, Washington, <http://olymug.org>, [president@olymug.org](mailto:president@olymug.org),

It is awesome what one can do with a camera today. With a camera in hand and a photo manipulation editor/program (application), one could only imagine what may be next on the to-do list. It enlarges our world, especially with open access to various editing tools. One of the tools that will work with multiple platforms (e.g. Windows, Mac, Linux, Unix) is the GIMP.

GIMP (The GNU Image Manipulation Program) is a free software raster graphics editor. Primarily, GIMP is used as a tool for photo manipulations, such as resizing, editing, and cropping photos, combining multiple images, and converting between different image formats.

I was first introduced to this graphical program by a fellow student while working at the resource center (computer lab) at South Puget Sound Community College in 1997. It allowed us to work in the graphic arts field without spending tons of cash.

In the media, this popular application caught the attention of many in the photography field. As a popular application, GIMP is regularly reviewed and criticized, the reviews often targeting the fitness of GIMP for use in professional environments; for



example, GIMP is often cited as a replacement for Adobe Photoshop. Even though comparisons to Photoshop are of regular occurrence, the maintainers of GIMP state that GIMP does not aim to replicate Photoshop.

A Google search for “Gimp vs Photoshop” in quotes currently shows 8,750 hits on my Ubuntu Machine (8.04) using the FireFox search option. I’ve been seeing this flame war going on since the turn of the century. A use of a program should not be judged by (flame wars) quantity (or how many sold), but should be utilized for its quality (price vs performance).

Photoshop costs around \$700 these days, and GIMP is free, so of course if cost is a main factor you’re going to swerve towards GIMP. But—and you knew there was a ‘but’ coming—it’s not that simple. Photoshop has two leads over GIMP: (1) patented features, and (2) the interface that everyone is used to. Most especially, GIMP is out of the running for professional print shop editing, thanks to the patent lock on industrial features such as color correction and CMYK. GIMP can emulate these features with work-arounds, or it can get sued, and that’s all there is to it.

A common misperception is that GIMP lacks many more features that Photoshop has. In fact, with the exception of features that depend on patented algorithms, Gimp is 99% on par with Photoshop in capabilities. It’s just that Photoshop users try Gimp, are immediately lost in the different and somewhat baroque interface, and leave in terror. Having the features doesn’t do you much good if you can’t find them!

Oki-doki, now that the comparisons have been made short and sweet, one might ask, “Where can I find this Graphical Image Manipulation Program?” It comes with the Ubuntu operating system as part of a packaged deal. Or the links below will guide you to your favorite operating system platform.

—**Installers for GIMP on Windows:** <http://gimp-win.sourceforge.net/stable.html>

—**GIMP on OS X:** <http://gimp.lisanet.de/Website/Download.html>

—**GIMP for a variety of Linux Distributions:** <http://www.gimp.org/downloads/>

—**GIMP for Unix:** <http://www.gimp.org/unix/>

For help in getting started with GIMP, online tutorials abound:



—**Regular tutorials:** <http://www.gimp-tutorials.com/>

—**Video tutorials:** [http://sixrevisions.com/graphics-design/gimp\\_video\\_tutorials/](http://sixrevisions.com/graphics-design/gimp_video_tutorials/)

—**Special tutorials:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9EfZFfFhyg&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5cmNwgJ91w&feature=relate>



| February 2010                                                                             |                                                                                            |                                                                                                                    |           |                                                            |                                                 |                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Sunday                                                                                    | Monday                                                                                     | Tuesday                                                                                                            | Wednesday | Thursday                                                   | Friday                                          | Saturday                                               |
|                                                                                           |                                                                                            |                                                                                                                    |           |                                                            |                                                 |                                                        |
|                                                                                           | 1                                                                                          | 2<br>Board of Directors<br>Crossroads Mall @ the Food Court<br>6:30 - 8:30 P.M.<br>(Members are welcome to attend) | 3         | 4<br>High Growth Stock Investing (a/r)<br>6:30 - 8:30 P.M. | 5<br>Small Business Server<br>8 - 10 A.M. *PRR* | 6<br>MCSE Study Group (Adv)<br>8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*  |
| 7                                                                                         | 8<br>General Meeting<br>@ 7 - 9 P.M.<br>Presenter:                                         | 9<br>Alamo Coders (DotNet, Web<br>Development Technologies) 7 - 9 P.M.                                             | 10        | 11                                                         | 12                                              | 13<br>MCSE Study Group (Adv)<br>8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR* |
| 14<br> | 15<br> | 16                                                                                                                 | 17        | 18                                                         | 19                                              | 20<br>MCSE Study Group (Adv)<br>8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR* |
| 21                                                                                        | 22                                                                                         | 23                                                                                                                 | 24        | 25                                                         | 26                                              | 27<br>MCSE Study Group (Adv)<br>8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR* |
| 28                                                                                        |                                                                                            |                                                                                                                    |           |                                                            |                                                 |                                                        |
| AlamoPC Organization                                                                      |                                                                                            |                                                                                                                    |           |                                                            |                                                 |                                                        |

PRR = Pre-Registration Required

# The Learning Center

Alamo PC Organization classes and study groups

## HGSI Study Group

The premise of the HGS Investor SIG is, "Knowledge becomes stronger when passed on to others." We have created an environment for continuing education and open discussion between well informed members and guest speakers in matters of using Fundamental and Technical Analysis for the buying and selling of equities.

**Contact:** Maynard Burstein

<maynardb@juno.com> 735-3288

**When:** 1st Thursday, 6:30-8:30pm

**Where:** Contact Maynard for location

**Pre-registration:** Call Maynard

**Technical Rating** ★ - ★★★

## Private or Semi-Private Tutorials - \$

Develop your skills at your own pace and at a time that fits your schedule. Introductory private tutorials for one, two, or three students. Choose from:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Basic Computer Skills, or
- Keyboarding/Typing

**Contact:** Learning Center (210) 736-0080 or 736-0700

**When:** Days and hours are arranged between the student(s) and teacher.

**Where:** Learning Center

**Fees:** 1 student: \$35 per hour, 10 hours for \$300. 2 or 3 students: per student—\$20 per hour, 10 hours for \$150

**Pre-registration:** Yes—call or visit the Learning Center

**Technical Rating:** ★

## MCSE Advanced Study Group

The MCSE Advanced Study Group is designed for those who already have their MCSE certification.

Since space is limited and the subject matter is advanced, membership is restricted. Please contact Larry Lentz before attempting to attend.

**Tuition fee:** Cost of any books and registered tests.

**When:** Every Saturday morning from 8:30 am to 12 pm

**Where:** Communities in School, 1616 E. Commerce

**Study Group Leader:** Larry Lentz, (210) 826-8188

## Small Business Server Study Group (SBS)

This is a forum for discussion and presentation of topics related to Microsoft's Small Business Server. The target audience includes, computer consultants, small business owners, and network administrators. The meetings begin with a "Taco Social" from 8 to 8:30 am followed by our presentation. Please contact Larry Lentz before attempting to attend.

**When:** First Friday of the month from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

**Where:** Flexware, 10444 Gulfdale (about block off Isom)

**Contact:** Larry Lentz for information and registration. Phone (210) 826-8188. Visit the group web site at <http://www.LentzComputer.net/SBS>.

### Technical Content Ratings

★

For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.

★★

Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.

★★★

Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.

★★★★

Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.

# Help Numbers

Can you help a new member with a new computer? Are you proficient in software not listed? Can you help with a title currently showing only one volunteer? Call Linda Bianchi at 226-2460 or email her at <education@alamopc.org>.

**1** Look down the list for the software program you need help with; note the number in front of the title.

**2** Then look down the list to the right for the corresponding number for the person who may be able to help you.

Please observe the times given by the volunteers name to call for phone help.

## Step One

- 1 Computers for Beginners
- 2 Windows 98
- 3 Windows XP

### Microsoft Office

- 4 Word
- 5 Excel
- 6 PowerPoint
- 7 Publisher
- 8 WinFax Pro

### Corel Office

- 9 WordPerfect
- 10 CorelDraw
- 11 Quattro Pro
- 12 Paint Shop Pro

### Photoshop

- 13 Adobe Photoshop

### Internet and E-mail

- 14 Internet Basics / ISP Connection
- 15 Web Page Development
- 16 Internet Explorer
- 17 MS Outlook Express
- 18 Opera
- 19 Mozilla
- 20 Dreamweaver
- 21 .Net
- 22 Flash
- 23 RoadRunner

### Open Office

- 24 OpenOffice

### Financial

- 25 Quick Books
- 26 Quicken

### Auction Online

- 27 eBay

### Genealogy

- 28 Family Origins for Windows
- 29 Genealogy

### Communications / Management

- 30 Time&Chaos
- 31 Act
- 32 Goldmine

### Data Base

- 33 Access
- 34 AlphaFour
- 35 dBase
- 36 Paradox
- 37 MySQL

### Networking

- 38 Networking

### Other

- 39 Hardware / Setting Up A New PC
- 40 Maintenance and Security
- 41 Home Help

## Step Two


| Expertise                                 | Name                | Phone    | Availability                    | E-mail                        |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1, 5, 6, 3, 12, 23, 26, 38, 41)          | John Bolton         | 658-3060 | 6pm-9pm M-F                     |                               |
| (1, 3, 14)                                | Joe Barth           | 696-5783 | 7pm-9pm Tu, Th, Sat             | jbarth@swbell.net             |
| (2, 3, 4, 16, 17, 23, 29, 38, 39, 40, 41) | Bruce Cramer        | 865-2933 | 9am-3pm M-F, Sat                | service@pcpro4u.com           |
| (3, 5)                                    | Bill Eastridge      | 223-8743 | 10am-6pm M-F, Sat, Sun          |                               |
| (4, 15, 17, 33)                           | Bill Hudson         | 490-6513 | 7pm-10 pm M-F, Sat, Sun         | bhudson3@satx.rr.com          |
| (4, 9, 14, 27 )                           | William Hudson      | 824-6910 | 3pm-8pm M-F, Sat                | rwsh@earthlink.net            |
| (19, 24, 30, 37)                          | Chris Montgomery    | 490-2415 | 7pm-9pm M-F / noon-6pm Sat, Sun |                               |
| (3, 16, 17)                               | Ted Ressler         |          |                                 | catechist@gmail.com           |
| (1, 3, 14, 16, 17, 40)                    | Don Robinson        | 497-3737 | 9am-5pm M-F, Sat, Sun           | dl7266@swbell.net             |
| (10)                                      | Stephen Tech, Jr    | 675-2880 | 5:30pm-9pm M - F                | stephentechjr@yahoo.com       |
| (9)                                       | Cynthia Thompson    | 655-1058 | 7pm-9pm M-F / 10am-4pm Sat, Sun | cynthom@satx.rr.com           |
| (4)                                       | Christel Villarreal |          |                                 | christel.villarreal@gmail.com |

If you are unable to find help in the list above, consider contacting the desk staff volunteers at the Alamo PC Computer Learning Center. 736-0700 or 736-0080. 10am - 4pm M-F, Sat Remember these volunteers are all levels of expertise and some may not be able to answer your questions, but may be able to find someone who can.

# Classified Ads

E-mail your ad to the Editor, PC Alamo at: [editor@alamopc.org](mailto:editor@alamopc.org). Copy deadline is 10th of month preceeding publication. Classified ads are free to members of Alamo PC.

**Wanted** Classified ads from members of Alamo PC. It costs nothing and it's a good way to sell or buy any computer-related item.



100% gray cotton golf shirts with pocket and embroidered full-color

**Alamo PC logo**

Available at the Learning Center in a wide variety of sizes.

**\$20.00**

Call the Learning Center at **736-0700**

# Alamo PC Organization has your Number!

Your membership number entitles you to a full year of membership privileges. Established in 1983, this non-profit, all-volunteer organization is dedicated to helping members keep up with trends and technologies.

## Monthly Meetings

Every month you can attend a presentation meeting, which is open to our 2,500 members. Local and national companies provide the first glimpses of new products and discounts on existing products. There are also drawings for FREE hardware and software.

## Award-Winning Magazine

When you join Alamo PC, you'll receive its award-winning magazine, *PC Alamode*, each month. You'll learn of group activities and you'll enjoy the reviews of new products from your fellow members. Regular columnists will give you insight to this fast-paced, dynamic industry. As a member, you can sell your outgrown stuff in our FREE Classified ads section.

## Special Interest Groups and Classes

Alamo PC offers more than 30 Study Groups and classes on specific software programs for beginners to expert. These small groups typically meet once a month in one of our two hands-on computer labs or classrooms and provide an opportunity to get answers in an informal setting. There are groups for word processing, Web design, graphics and programming and even study groups to help you get Microsoft Certified. You can attend as many SIGs as you'd like and, as you become experienced, even lead one!



## Internet ([www.alamopc.org](http://www.alamopc.org))

Alamo PC is on the Internet, and more importantly, Alamo PC can help you get on the Internet too. If you're already on the Internet, attending one of Alamo PC's Internet SIGs will help you to become a savvy Internet surfer.

## Alamo PC SeniorComp

Are you age 45 or older and not into computers or the Internet yet? Let us help. Contact Alamo PC today and sign up for the very next class. Classes are hands-on at a pace to match your learning style.

## Expert Help

Deadlocked with a computer problem or question? Get access to personal help from expert Alamo PC members. Just call! If you need someone to diagnose hardware and software problems, try "THE DOCTOR IS IN," a free clinic where members bring in their computers and allow our experts to help diagnose and often fix many PC ailments.

## APPLY FOR YOUR NUMBER -- JOIN NOW!

To join, return the application below or sign up online at [www.alamopc.org](http://www.alamopc.org). Your \$45 dues covers your entire family!e. You may use your credit card or send your personal check. If you need more information, call (210) 736-0700. Shortly after joining, you'll receive a membership card entitling you to all rights and privileges and discounts. **JOIN TODAY!**

**GIFT MEMBERSHIPS NOW AVAILABLE: Call 210-736-0700 for details.**



### Membership Application -- Apply for your number today!

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. This information will be kept in confidence - it will be used for planning purposes only

FIRST: \_\_\_\_\_ MI \_\_\_\_\_ LAST: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE H: \_\_\_\_\_ W: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_

EMPLOYER: \_\_\_\_\_ TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Please accept my membership for: ☐ 1 year -\$25

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

Method of payment: ☐ Check ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ EXP DATE: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to Alamo PC Organization and mail to: **Alamo PC, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX 78265-5180**

**IMPORTANT** ☐ I do not authorize Alamo PC Organization to release my name address and phone to selected vendors

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# Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

## *Renew Now!*

Isn't it about time for you to consider all the benefits of membership with Alamo PC? Renew your membership before the year is over!

For more information call the Learning Center at  
210.736.0700



## **Consider A Matching Donation, or a Donation To Alamo PC Organization**

Increasing members knowledge and effective use of personal computers, and providing other membership services and access to the expertise of other members, does not happen without an associated monthly expense. In recent months, although member dues and ads have offset the majority of the required monthly expense, and cost-saving measures are constantly being reviewed, the total amount of monthly funds generated has been less than the monthly expense. The shortfall has had to come from reserve funds, which have been severely depleted. We would like to offer everyone the opportunity to help rebuild the reserve fund.

If you employer has a "Matching Donation" program, please consider that you can double a donation amount by participating. All donations are tax deductible and can be dropped off at the Alamo PC Learning Center in Crossroads Mall (near the underground parking entrance, accessed from Fredericksburg Road) or mailed to **Alamo PC Organization, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX, 78265-5180**. Checks, Money Orders, etc., should be made payable to **Alamo PC Organization** and identified as "Donation."

On-line donations can be made at <<https://training.alamopc.org/donations>>. If you do not have on-line access, credit card donations can be made by mail if you legibly provide the following information on a piece of paper: Full Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Phone Number (to verify you want your card charged), Name of Card, Card Number, Card Expiration Date, Donation Amount, and your usual Signature. Please help us keep our membership dues low, meet our monthly expenses and rebuild the reserve fund.

