

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

TECH ISSUE: Microsoft Windows 7

www.alamopc.org
March 2010
\$5.00

Windows 7 is Here
page 19

Windows 7 Upgrade – My Experience
page 25



 **Windows 7**
Professional

Windows 7, thanks, but no thanks
page 29

Review: Consumer Electronics Show 2010
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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

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

Please send change of address and other correspondence to:

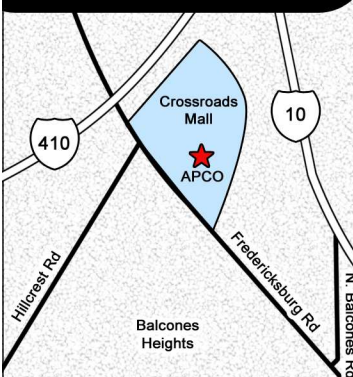
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

Meetings

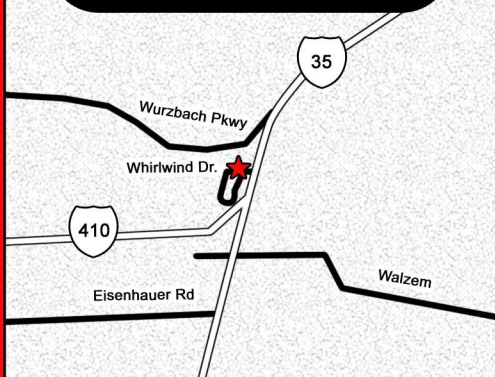
Monthly program meetings are normally held the second Monday of the month. Unless otherwise specified, meetings are held at 4888 Whirlwind Drive, located near the intersection of Loop 410 and IH-35 North starting at 7:00PM. Open to all members and the public.

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



March Calendar

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

Monday March 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

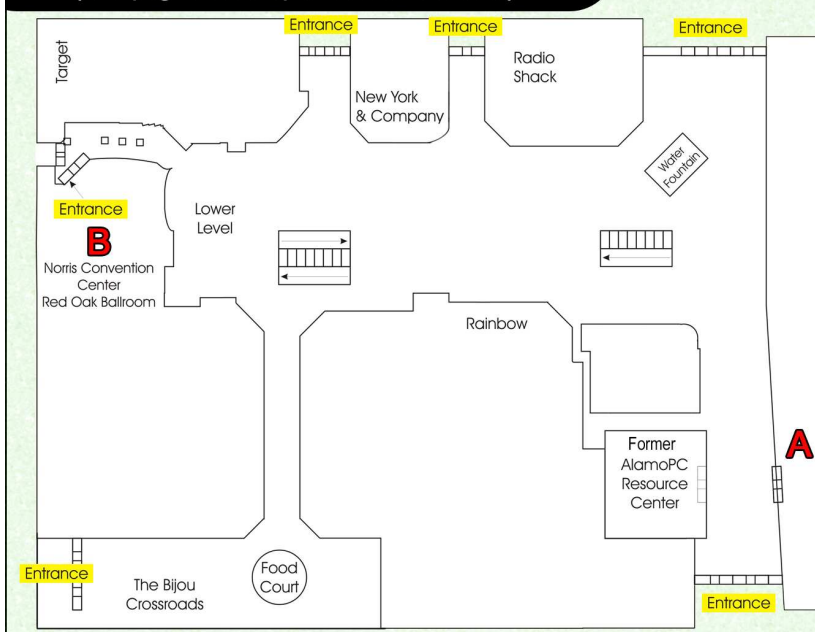
Office Center, 4888 Whirlwind

	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	stephentechnjr@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)



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

Microsoft Windows 7

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PC Alamode

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Book: Windows 7 Secrets
Book: Windows 7: Up and Running
Event: Consumer Electronics Show 2010

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EDITOR
Joseph de Leon

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David Steward

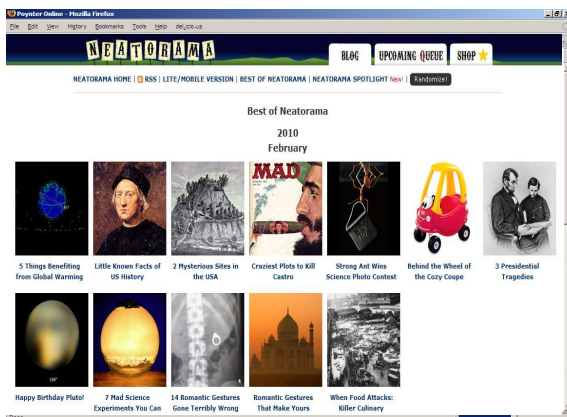
ADVERTISING
Joseph de Leon

PUBLICATION SUBMISSIONS: Please check with the editor regarding sub-
mitting ads. **Deadline for submissions is the first of the month pre-**
ceding publication, e-mail to:
editor@alamopc.org

32 Joseph de Leon, Editor, PC Alamode
33 editor@alamopc.org
35

Rate frequency.	Ad rates effective January 2005			
	1 x	3 x*	6x*	12 x*
Per insertion				
Full pg. (7 ¹ / ₄ " w x 9 ¹ / ₂ " h)	\$274	\$260	\$246	\$238
Half pg. (7 ¹ / ₄ " w x 4 ¹ / ₂ " h)	144	138	130	121
Half pg. (3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 9 ¹ / ₂ " h)	144	138	130	121
Quarter pg.(3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 4 ¹ / ₂ " h)	74	72	64	62
Bus. card (3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 2" h) **	43	41	39	37
*Consecutive months		**To be paid in advance		

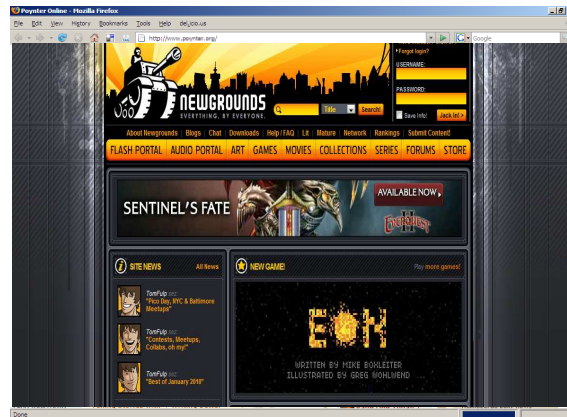
PC Alamode Links List



Neat-o-rama

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

This blog covers the neatest stuff on the Internet. Users can submit neat Web links and also vote on which submissions actually make it to the 'Neat' section.



New Grounds

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

Home of some really amazing Flash games. Play everything from classic arcade emulators and shooting games, to puzzles and physics engine-based play.

I've formed a new partnership with Sharon Parq Tips, a publishing group that offers training material on such topics as Microsoft Word and Excel. The company has been kind enough to share with us some free tips, which you can find on pages 9 and 18. If you find them useful, please visit their Web site <<http://wordribbon.tips.net>> and see if they offer anything else you might enjoy.

If you are reading this, you are one of a shrinking number of members. When I started working with Alamo PC, the club had more than 3,000 members. Today, we have far fewer.

If you are reading this, I want you to tell me what topics you'd like to read. Is it the technical articles about the inner workings of computers? Do you prefer how-to articles? Do you want the bare basics, the in-depth articles or something in between?

If you are reading this, please tell me what I can offer you so you will continue to read.

In the coming issues, I plan to change the format of the PC Alamode a bit. Many members over the years have asked for a printable newsletter. When we stopped printing a few years ago, we added color, huge graphics and lots of extras that really drain toner or ink in home printers.

Here's my plan: produce a streamlined newsletter with larger type, no color, using a two-column format and minimal graphics to make it easier (cheaper) for you to print the PC Alamode at home.

Want something different? I'm listening.

Joseph de Leon, Editor

<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

"March" - Reading, Daylight Saving, St. Patrick, Spring, Palm

This month has six days that should be of interest to a number of folks: 2nd - Read Across America Day (Dr. Seuss Birthday): Honoring Dr. Seuss, Read Across America Day is celebrated on Dr. Seuss' birthday. The National Education Association sponsors events to inspire reading in children throughout our schools and communities; 14th - Daylight Saving Time begins: The national change three years ago extends the period about four weeks - starts a few weeks earlier, and ends a little later than the previous decree. To remember which way to move the clock time indicators, keep in mind the phrase, "Spring forward, Fall back;" 17th - St. Patrick's Day: an annual feast day which celebrates Saint Patrick (circa 385-461 AD), one of the patron saints of Ireland. Don't forget to wear green; 20th - First day of Spring: There is either an equinox (autumn and spring) or a solstice (summer and winter) on approximately the 21st day of the last month of every quarter of the calendar year. On a day which has an equinox, the center of the Sun will spend a nearly equal amount of time above and below the horizon at every location on Earth and night and day will be of nearly the same length; 28th - Palm Sunday: The beginning of Holy Week which begins on the Sunday before Easter Sunday. It recalls Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem one week before his execution (for a listing of each day go to: religioustolerance.org/easter3.htm); 30th - Passover: Jewish Holiday of Pesach is the 8 day observance commemorating the freedom and exodus of the Israelites (Jewish slaves) from Egypt during the reign of the Pharaoh Ramses II. Begins on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Nissan. As the Jewish day begins at sundown the night before, the first night of Passover will be on the 29th.

Rent expense (although much reduced) has been paid through April, but declining membership (about 200 at last count), waning interest in the organization, very low attendance at monthly General Meetings (only 16 present in February), and shrinking finances (less than \$500 available to pay remaining expenses and anticipated expenses) continues. (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.) Fortunately, the member's access server has been moved to a new location and is to become functional, again soon. Also, the Alamo PC magazine (PC Alamode) will be published through April. We are continuing to try and find ways to keep a presence of the Alamo PC Organization alive, but it has not been easy. The Main "Home Page" server remains unaffected, and will continue to be available although it is being maintained in a "caretaker" mode at present.

These actions have allowed 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 February BOD meeting was held, with only four members (Me, David Steward, Steve Tech, Billy Samples, and Mike Bianchi). 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 continue to 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 continue to be held at either the current location or an alternate location that may be available..

At the February 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 again forthcoming about Alamo PC and the Organization's future. Answers were provided as information was available, and proposed thinking and actions were again discussed. Those present seemed to understand the difficulties leadership is faced with, given the expenses and declining membership. Some again indicated they were surprised the leadership had been able to keep the organization functioning for as long as this year.

It is the next to the last day of February and David Steward has indicated he will be the presenter for the March 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 which begins at 7PM.

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 ceased to exist 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 viable Organization. As previously mentioned, things may only be able to continue in an ad hoc status, and only with the same loyal few who have appeared month after month at the monthly General Meeting

Being a member of Alamo PC since the early 90’s, and having tried to serve the Organization in various capacities has been a great experience. When I was nominated as “President Elect” in 2003 and began serving in that capacity in October of that year I hoped all would go very well. 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.” So, it looks like interest began to subside about 6 years ago. That started the slow downhill journey.

Once again, 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. Again, 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.”

Again, my thanks for allowing me to try and serve each member, although I have some misgivings about the effectiveness of 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 (Steven Tech) or to me at either one of the following: president@alamopc.org, or privately at wkklutzjr@juno.com). We will try to provide information relating to the request.

March Program

Bill Klutz

It is the next to last day in February, and David Steward has scheduled himself to be the presenter for the March General Meeting. So, unless I hear otherwise, the meeting location will be at our current office location (4888 Whirlwind, SAT) on March 8th at 7 PM. Since things can change at the last minute, please check the Alamo PC web site (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.

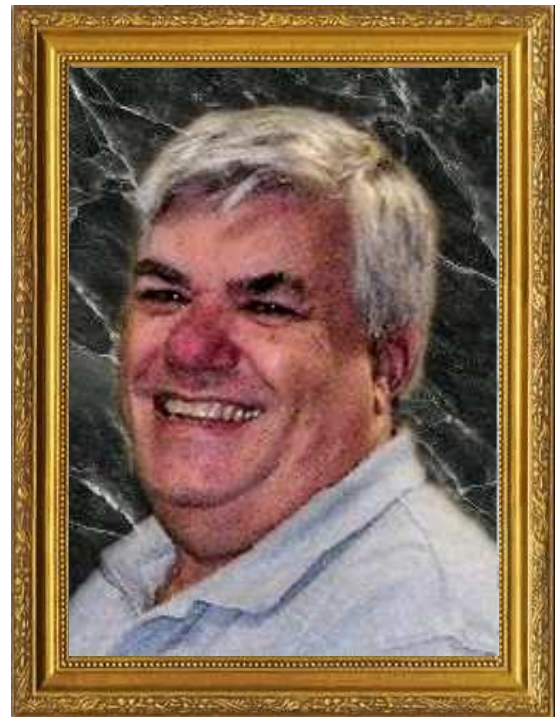
Volunteer of the Year

Bill Beverley



Volunteer of the Month

Neil Shaver



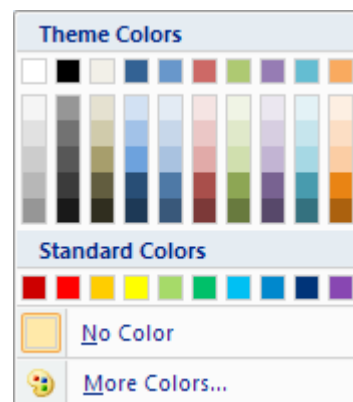
Sharon Parq Tips

Microsoft Word

Using Shading to Highlight Information

Word provides a way you can shade the information in your document. This shading can be added in conjunction with any border you may specify for the paragraph. Word allows you to precisely control the degree of shading, as well. To add shading to a paragraph or portion of text, follow these steps:

1. Position the insertion point in the paragraph that you want to shade, or select the text to which the shading should be applied.
2. Make sure that the Home tab is selected for the ribbon.
3. In the Paragraph group, click the down-arrow to the right of the Shading tool. (This tool looks like a tilted paint bucket, spilling paint to the right.) Word displays a shading palette.
4. Select one of the theme colors at the top of the palette. There are ten colors, and each option under the colors represents a different percentage of shading for that color.



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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:

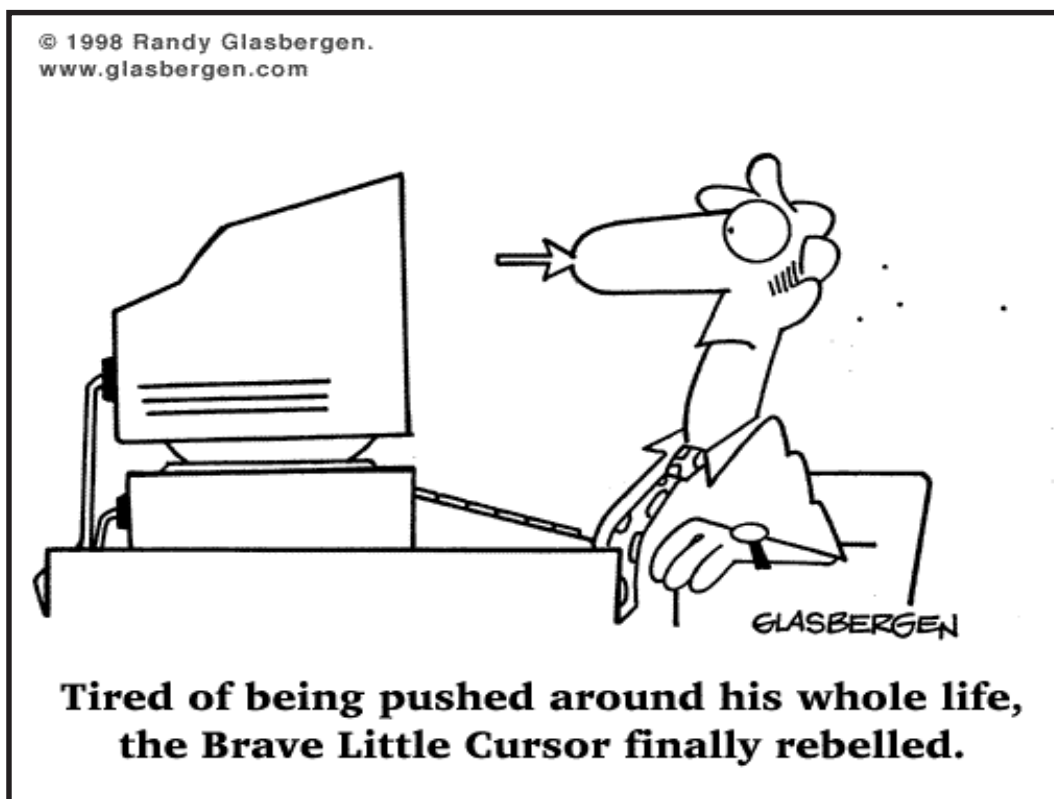
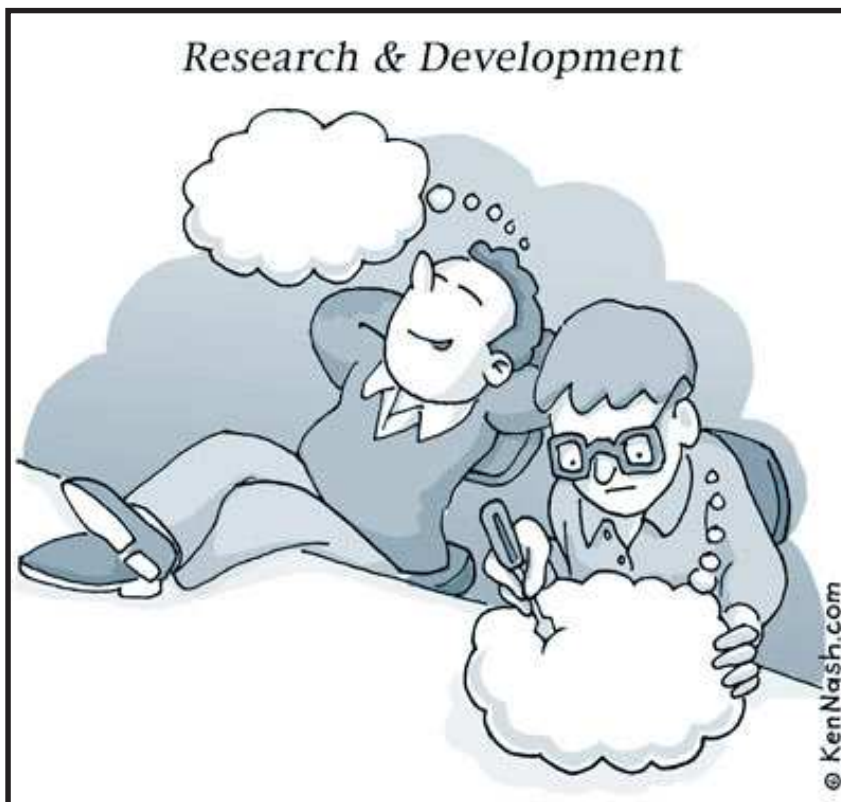
Dates to be announced

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.

The following tips may or may not apply to all of the most recent revisions Microsoft Office.

Excel is indispensable to anyone in business. It is a godsend when it comes time to look at financials or prepare charts. It is even good for personal budgets. For beginners, Excel is a little daunting. But it is fairly easy to learn for the more experienced computer users. The following site, <www.usd.edu/trio/tut/excel>, will help get you up and going in no time.

You may find it interesting to know something about the actual size of a worksheet. Do the arithmetic (256 x 65,536), and you'll see that a worksheet has 16,777,216 cells. This is in just one worksheet. A single workbook can hold more than one worksheet. If using the standard VGA video mode with the default row heights and column widths, you can see nine columns and 18 rows (or 162 cells) at a time. This works out to less than 0.0001 percent of the entire worksheet. In other words, nearly 104,000 VGA screens of information reside inside a single worksheet. If you entered a single digit into each cell at a relatively rapid clip of one cell per second, it would take about 194 days, nonstop, to fill up a worksheet. To print the results of your efforts would require more than 36,000 sheets of paper which amounts to a stack about six feet tall.

An Excel formula isn't a computer program. Formulas, however, are subject to the same types of problems that occur in a computer program. If you create a formula that does not work as it should, then you need to identify and correct the problem. Formula errors tend to fall into one of the following six general

categories: Syntax errors: You have a problem with the syntax of the formula. For example, a formula may have mismatched parentheses, or you may have spelled a function name incorrectly. Logical errors: A formula does not return an error, but it contains a logical flaw that causes it to return an incorrect result. Incorrect reference errors: The logic of the formula is correct, but the formula uses an incorrect cell reference. As a simple example, the range reference in a SUM formula may not include all the data that you want to sum. Circular references: A circular reference occurs when a formula refers to its own cell, either directly or indirectly. Circular references are useful in a few cases, but most of the time a circular reference indicates a problem. Array formula entry error: When entering (or editing) an array formula, you must use Ctrl+Shift+Enter to enter the formula. If you fail to do so, Excel does not recognize the formula as an array formula. Incomplete calculation errors: The formulas simply aren't calculated fully. Microsoft has acknowledged some problems with Excel's calculation engine in some versions of Excel. To ensure that your formulas are fully calculated, use Ctrl+Alt+F9.

Excel provides several chart types to use for displaying data. You can select a chart type when using the Chart Wizard to create a chart, or when the Chart Type dialog box is displayed while editing an existing chart. The standard chart types are summarized are: Bar, Column, Cone, Cylinder, and Pyramid. Use to compare items. The main difference between a Column and Bar chart is the orientation. A Column chart displays data points vertically and a Bar chart displays data points horizontally. Either way, the variance among data points is easy to see. Cylinder, Cone, and Pyramid chart types are just stylized Column and Bar charts. When using Cylinder, Cone, or Pyramid charts, you have the choice to orient them as columns or bars. In a Column chart, values are shown on the vertical (y) axis. In a Bar chart, values are shown on the horizontal (x) axis. Area, Line, Stock, Surface: Use to show change over time or category. These chart types display values in a series' data at different points of measurement. The points of measurement are most often time-based (for example, displaying the value of some entity at different points in time). The category axis comprises the points of measurement. Although the categories are most often time-based, they don't have to be. For example, you can measure the value of an entity at different locations. Doughnut, Pie: Use to analyze components of an entity. These chart types make it easy to see how big or small each component is. These charts can display only a single data series. Bubble, Radar, XY (Scatter): Use to display relationships, dependencies, and correlation among sets of data. These chart types are helpful to show how one set of data affects, or is related to, another. Different chart types are used to display different facts about data. There is an art to selecting the right type of chart. How many series are in the data? Does one series correlate to another? (For example, does a drop in temperature cause more fractured ankles?) Do you need to emphasize the dominant factor of a sum of items? An incorrect chart type can produce a great-looking chart and yet still not display the correct information.

AutoFit Calibrating Columns

For those times when Excel doesn't automatically adjust the width of your columns to your complete satisfaction, the program makes changing the column widths a breeze. The easiest way to adjust a column is to do a best-fit, using the AutoFit feature. With this method, Excel automatically determines how much to widen or narrow the column to fit the longest entry currently in the column. To use AutoFit to get the best-fit for a column, position the mouse pointer on the right border of the gray frame with the column letter at the top of the worksheet. The mouse pointer changes to a double-headed arrow pointing left and right. Double-

Continued on page 14

click the mouse button. Excel widens or narrows the column width to suit the longest entry. You can apply a best-fit to more than one column at a time. Simply select all the columns that need adjusting if the columns neighbor one another, drag through their column letters on the frame. If they don't, hold down the Ctrl key while you click the individual column letters. After you select the columns, double-click any of the right borders on the frame.

Background Graphics

You can personalize and make Excel spreadsheets more attractive by adding background graphics. Click the Format menu, Sheet, and Background. In the Sheet Background dialog box, browse your files for the image you want to set as the background. Now click to select it and then click the Insert button. The image repeats as many times as needed to tile and fill the screen. You may want to use a photo editor, such as Adobe Photoshop Elements, to lighten an image before setting it as the background so the graphic doesn't obscure the text in the spreadsheet.

Cell Cleanup

To get rid of just the contents of a cell selection rather than delete the cells along with their contents, select the range of cells to be cleared and press Delete or choose Edit, Clear, Contents on the menu bar. If you want to get rid of more than just the contents of a cell selection, choose Edit, Clear and then choose from among the submenu commands: Choose All to get rid of all formatting and notes as well as entries in the cell selection. Choose Formats to delete only the formatting from the current cell selection without touching anything else. Choose Comments if you only want to remove the notes in the cell selection but leave everything else behind.

Cell Pointer

Excel automatically advances the cell pointer to the next cell down in the column every time you press Enter to complete the cell entry. If you want to customize Excel so that pressing Enter doesn't move the cell pointer as the program enters your data, or to have it move the cell pointer to the next cell up, left, or right, choose Options on the Tools menu and select the Edit tab in the Options dialog box. To prevent the cell pointer from moving at all, choose the Move Selection after Enter option to remove the check mark from its check box. To have the cell pointer move in another direction, choose the Direction pop-up list box right below the Move Selection after Enter check box and then select the new direction you want to use (Right, Up, or Left). When you're finished changing this setting, click the OK button or press Enter.

Change an Excel Chart to a Graphic

Pasting an Excel chart as a graphic is a good option if you're sure the data will never change. You can add such a graphic into a PowerPoint presentation or Microsoft Word document. A chart pasted as a graphic can be moved and resized. When you double-click a chart graphic, the Microsoft Office picture-editing tools and settings become available. Your chart is now a graphic and any connection to Excel is gone. If you just need a graphic of an Excel chart, you can use a great shortcut. In Excel, click once on the chart to select it and then hold down the Shift key. Next choose Edit, Copy Picture to copy the chart as a picture. When you select Copy Picture from the menu, the Copy Picture dialog box appears. You can select how the chart should be copied. Finally paste into PowerPoint, Word, or any other program.

Chart Gridlines

Gridlines can help you determine what the chart series represents numerically. They simply extend the tick marks on the axes. To add or remove gridlines, activate the chart. Choose the Chart, Chart Options command and then click the Gridlines tab. Check or uncheck the check boxes that correspond to the desired gridlines. Each axis has two sets of gridlines: major and minor. Major units are the ones displaying labels. Minor units are those in between labels. If you're working with a 3-D chart, the dialog box has options for three sets of gridlines.

Chart Legend

A chart legend in Excel lists each pattern or symbol used as a data marker in a chart and follows the pattern or symbol with the chart data series name. Generally, it's a good idea to use a legend in a chart where you're not using category labels. You can customize the legend that you add to the chart in various ways. You can click the Legend button on the Chart toolbar to add or delete a legend for your chart. Click the Legend tool to display a legend if none is showing or to delete a legend if one is showing. When you select a legend in a chart, it appears with sizing handles around it that enable you to resize the legend markers and text. To move the legend, click the arrowhead pointer within its borders, and then drag its rectangle to the position you want. Be careful to drag the legend to a blank part of the chart area where it doesn't overlap and obscure other chart elements. As with chart text, you can change the border around the legend and the pattern within the area of the legend box. The easiest way to make the changes is to double-click the legend to open the Format Legend dialog box and then use the options on the Patterns tab to format its border and background as you want.



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.

My wife drives a 2003 GMC Sonoma pickup and while I could write a book about its shortcomings, she loves it. We bought an extended warranty on it, but for only five years or 50,000 miles because we didn't think we would own it more than five years. We noticed oil leaks on the garage floor and took it to the dealer for diagnosis. The five-year warranty recently ended, but the truck only has 60,000 easy miles on it. The service advisor told us it had three leaks and explained that one was an oil pan leak, another is oil leaking from the timing chain cover and the other was the rear transmission seal leaking.

I was surprised about so many leaks, but asked the price of repairs. He said that the oil pan could not be removed because of the front end cross member being too close so they must pull the engine for those repairs. The total bill for all the leaks would be a bit over \$1,700. I was astounded because I felt that 60,000 miles was premature for so many oil leaks.

I called GMC Customer Service, who has not been much help in the past with another ongoing problem, and explained the situation and disappointment with the reliability of the vehicle. The customer rep said he would take it up with the Zone Manager and get back with me. The dealership advisor said not to expect much these days. A few days later, the zone manager said they would be happy to help me and said they would pay for the gaskets and give me a 10% discount on the repair cost. I was stunned and told them where they could shove that help and that they had insulted my intelligence. After all, the gaskets would probably cost \$20 and most dealerships give senior citizens a 10% discount, so there was no help there and they said OK, sorry, goodbye. I would have been happy with 50% or something like that. No wonder GM is going bankrupt with that kind of product reliability and customer relations attitude.

My son used my GM discount to purchase a GMC Sierra pickup and has had his share of warranty problems with it. First was a problem with the brake rotors, which the dealer would not replace when they became warped at 2,500 miles. They resurfaced them and the problem came back. Later, when the vehicle was just out of warranty, the diesel engine's injector pump went out. Customer Service said they would repair it at no cost, but it took two weeks to get the parts and they would not pay for the rental vehicle (interestingly, a Toyota pickup) which had always been customary. There were other problems. The first GMC pickup before he purchased his present one had transmission problems that they couldn't seem to repair and he had an attorney force GM to refund his money under the Lemon Law. This will be his last GMC, just like us, or probably even a GM product, for that matter, and that's where my pension comes from.

*New Product From Diskeeper

Ms. Teal Thompson, Director of Public Relations, sent me the specifications and pricing (below) for Diskeeper 2009 (just released). Diskeeper has always been a superb product.

New Features List:

Improved Trialware: Trialware will now take an analysis of the volume(s) "before" and "after" initial installation. A comparison report is then generated, demonstrating improve conditions.

Improved InvisiTasking: The new, more assertive InvisiTasking can now operate in competitive environments, in conjunction with other always-on/idle-time tasks that run at lowest priority while still guaranteeing completely invisible, zero-overhead, operations.

IPv6 (Internet Protocol version 6): Diskeeper 2009 now fully supports communication, such as remote management on native IPv6 networks.

Improved Free Space Consolidation: About 90% of the available free space will now be grouped into less than a dozen free space segments. This will increase file write performance.

About InvisiTasking

"Instead of the operating system scheduler allocating the entire computer system to each process, one at a time, InvisiTasking empowers the system to allocate resources (CPU, memory, disk, and network) allowing overlapping usage of separate resources, not just reducing system overhead, but eliminating it altogether.

Continued on page 16

InvisiTasking is what makes Diskeeper defrag in real time with zero overhead. Systems simply run fast, operate at peak and are reliable, constantly. The drives are always optimally maintained.

Diskeeper 2009 includes the new InvisiTasking 2.0! New functionality in InvisiTasking will allow it to be more assertive, while still guaranteeing completely invisible, zero-overhead, operations.” (Check their Web site for further information.)

Diskeeper 2009 with HyperFast™ SSD optimization:

The new Diskeeper 2009 is now available as a bundle with the new HyperFast SSD optimization product.

HyperFast™: Solid State drives (SSDs) promise users a faster and better experience than conventional hard disk drives (HDD). However, Microsoft® Windows® is not optimized for NAND Flash as a principal storage device, such as with SSDs. The result is that, over time, customers of systems with SSDs will experience a very noticeable and dramatic deterioration (up to 80%), to the degree that their computers operate much slower than they would with a hard disk. The new HyperFast feature bundled with Diskeeper 2009 is specifically designed to eliminate performance degradation, and restore performance to like-new conditions.”

Special pricing only applies on multiple purchases.

Diskeeper 2009 Home:

ESD \$29.95

2-pack \$44.95

3-pack \$54.95

5-pack \$89.95

Diskeeper 2009 Professional:

ESD \$59.95

2-pack \$89.95

3-pack \$149.95

5-pack \$269.75

Order through their online store at <<http://www.diskeeper.com/purchase/purchase.aspx>>.

*Want A DVD Creator? DealsGuy Note: I have not actually tried this product.

ZC Software has released ZC DVD Creator Platinum V. 6.2.2, a new version of ZC DVD creator software that converts almost any video source to burn on a DVD directly without having to store it on a hard drive. ZC DVD Creator Platinum lets users customize their menu templates to match the user's style, giving the movie a polished look. The software will edit, author and burn all DVD formats ever known. With ZC DVD Creator Platinum, it is possible to easily create personal DVDs. “ZC DVD Creator Platinum supports all known video source formats, such as AVI, DIVX, XVID, RM, RMVB, MPEG, MPG, VCD, SVCD, WMV, ASF, ASX, SWF, MOV/DAT, FLV (Flash Video), 3GP (3gpp, 3gp, 3gp2), MP4 (mp4, mpeg4), Nullsoft Video (NSV), AVS, Decrypted DVD File (VOB), MKV, DV video, mts, and m2ts. Also, the user has new menu template themes that can easily customize the new Hollywood-style DVD menus. It's possible to trim and split-cut the videos, specify the DVD background Music and Images, edit the DVD Menu short description and playback preview the video file.” “The video encoder guarantees the best DVD picture quality within one hour. If Nero is installed, the software automatically selects Nero as the default burning engine. ZC DVD Creator Platinum supports wide screens (16:9) as well as the usual TV screens (4:3). It also supports both NTSC and PAL TV systems. The advanced Dolby Digital audio will strengthen the movie with theater quality sound. The software includes automatic matching of a broad range of DVD-R/RW and DVD+R/RW burners. The user can burn a DVD Movie image file placed on a hard disc to a DVD Disk directly without storing them on a hard disc.” “ZC DVD Creator Platinum has a friendly and easy to use interface that allows the user to create a DVD movie just by one click. The new version of ZC DVD Creator Platinum has an upgraded video clip edit feature.” “Pricing and Availability” “ZC DVD Creator Platinum is compatible with all versions of Windows. Ordering the software on a CD-ROM is \$15 USD extra for shipping.” “Special offers are:” “- ZC DVD Creator Platinum and ZC Video Converter at \$60 USD;” “- ZC DVD Creator Platinum and QR Photo DVD Slideshow at \$60 USD;” “- ZC DVD Ripper and ZC Video Converter at \$65 USD;” “By purchasing ZC DVD Creator Platinum the user gets lifetime FREE Technical Support and FREE upgrades. For firsthand appraisal, a free trial version is available. The user has a 30-day money back guarantee.” “Product page: <<http://www.videoxdvd.com/product.htm>>” “Download link: <<http://www.videoxdvd.com/download.htm>>” “Company web-site: <<http://www.videoxdvd.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.



Evaluating Your Anti-Spyware Program

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>

For many years the most acute danger to your computer was some kind of destructive virus. Today the danger has shifted from software that is programmed to destroy files, corrupt programs, and disable systems to something more insidious, and perhaps even more treacherous. This threat comes in two broad categories known as Spyware and Trojan Horses.

Spyware started out as a stealth program surreptitiously installed on your system to track your web surfing habits. The developers of spyware didn't want to damage your computer. They wanted only to sell you something. That may be annoying, but there is nothing criminal about it.

A Trojan Horse is a program that pretends to be something other than what it really is. For example, a screensaver could be designed to install a program that will take over your system to forward spam to other machines. Trojan Horses have been used to initiate denial of service attacks, where the target such as a bank, credit card service or other high profile web site becomes so saturated with external requests that it cannot respond to legitimate traffic.

When selecting an anti-spyware program, start out by selecting one with a comprehensive signatures database. The best anti-spyware programs have databases that can recognize more than 750,000 different kinds of spyware and Trojan Horse programs. Read the documentation or call the company. This is important.

The best signatures database won't do you any good if it isn't updated frequently. The bad guys never seem to rest. They release new poison daily. Don't buy any solutions that require manual updates. You have better things to do. Insist on automatic updates.

Another important capability is active monitoring of your system. Wouldn't you rather prevent a malicious program from installing rather than removing it after the damage has been done? Avoid any program that removes infections found only after conducting a manual scan. This probably means avoiding some otherwise adequate free programs. There's an old saying about getting what you pay for. The best anti-spyware programs prevent spyware and Trojan Horses from ever being installed on your system.

Go for a program that allows you to customize your scans. We don't all use our computers in the same way. Some people require more comprehensive scans than others. If you are constantly browsing the internet, you are likely to benefit from a daily scan that checks active memory, system folders, the registry, and all hard drives. If you rarely use the internet or find yourself visiting the same six sites over and over, a weekly scan may be all you need.

You should be able to schedule unattended updates and scans. Your machine should be yours to use as you wish. Any decent anti-spyware program should be able to run in the background unattended, and not require interrupting your activities. The program should work according to your preferences, not the other way around. Choose a program that permits unattended maintenance and administration. It's also important that an unattended scan can quarantine infections without requiring intervention from you. Why do some anti-spyware programs ask if you want to remove infections? Of course you do! Of all the features in anti-spyware programs, that is the dumbest.

There are innumerable derivations and iterations of spyware being created. This makes it difficult for even the best anti-spyware programs to catch and destroy them. If you open the Processes tab in Windows Task Manager, you will observe the Process Manager in action. You will see a list of objects running on your system. Some of them are applications like word processors. Others are mysterious entities that don't provide a clue as to what they do, but you can't run Windows effectively without them. Among them would be Windows Explorer, Internet Explorer, Media Center, Windows Mobile Control Center, and many others.

Beyond shutting down a process or resetting its priority, there isn't much a non-specialist can do with this feature. Clever programmers can create spyware that won't show up in the Process Manager. Any decent anti-spyware program has to have its own built-in process manager that will recognize, track down, and eliminate malevolent software that may not even be in the signatures database. Anti-spyware programs should be able to monitor programs that load when Windows starts up. There are many very sophisticated spyware programs that do not show up in the Process Monitor or in Control Panel's Add/Remove section. If your anti-spyware program lacks this capability, find another one.

Assuming your anti-spyware program has the capabilities mentioned above, it is an excellent choice for individuals. However, businesses or organizations with multiple computers will require even more. Whoever is in charge of PCs will not have time to manually monitor or administrate individual machines. It is simply impractical in a large organization for support staff to visit every workstation, apply updates, schedule scans, and ensure that infestations are removed. If this applies to you, look for a program with a centralized administration console. This capability has the unfortunate drawback of being quite expensive, but the time saved generally justifies the cost.

Using the IF Worksheet Function

Microsoft Excel provides a wide range of worksheet functions you can use. One of the most versatile worksheet functions is IF. This function allows you to test some condition, and then use a value if the condition is true or a different value if the condition is false. For instance, consider the following example:

=IF(A2<C2,"Too low","")

Notice that IF requires three arguments, each separated by commas. The first argument (in this example, A2<C2) is the conditional test. If the test proves true, then the second argument (in this case, the test string "Too low") is used. If the test proves false, then the third argument (in this case, an empty string) is used. In other words, if the value in cell A2 is lower than the value in cell C2, then this formula returns the string "Too low." Otherwise, it returns an empty string.

You are not limited, of course, to returning strings in an IF function. You can return any value you want, including the values stored in other cells. For example:

=IF(A2<C2,B6-B7,43)

In this case, if A2 is less than C2, then the value derived by subtracting B7 from B6 is returned. If A2 is not less than C2, then the value 43 is returned.

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Tech Issue

Microsoft Windows 7

Windows 7 Is Here

and it is good and here's how to get there

By **Charles W. Evans**, PC Member and the Magazine's Reviews Editor, HAL-PC, Texas, HAL PC News Magazine, www.hal-pc.org, reviews@hal-pc.org

Before beginning installing Windows 7, create a plan that details what's on your original system, where it is going to wind up on the new system, configurations, and how you are going to get from one to the other. And yes, it is OK to employ your original word processor to do this and it migrates easily to Windows 7... technically it's called a pencil and paper. ;-)

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Determine which edition of Windows 7 you need.

1. Is your hardware up to snuff?
2. Back up your data before you start the upgrade. Acronis TrueImage, Casper and Ghost are good back up programs and have been reviewed by the Magazine.
3. Update Windows XP or Vista data before you begin installing Windows 7.
4. As a rule of thumb, if it works under Vista it should work under Windows 7.
5. Before installing Windows 7, download the current Windows 7 drivers onto a flash drive or burn to a CD. This part of being prepared.
6. If you are using Windows 7 RC1, no upgrade is possible and you have until June 2010, when it dies. If it is on the hard drive you intend to use for Windows 7, format the hard drive. You will no longer have use of RC1.



Four important notes:

1. Clean up your existing computer – really! Get rid of old programs and files and defragment your hard drive.
2. Your best option is NOT to upgrade – start with a clean hard drive.
3. You will be told that you CANNOT upgrade from Win XP to Win 7. Not so, but it is a convoluted process. I do not recommend this, period. But all is not lost. There are two ways to “salvage” your XP programs. One is to get a new computer with “V” certification; i.e., virtualization gives you capability to run your XP programs on a virtual hard drive under Win 7! There is a different route and that is to “migrate” your XP files to Win 7. I’ve listed a web site that will help you do this. There are some programs that will not successfully migrate. I’ll explain later.
4. If you upgrade from Windows Vista, you must upgrade to a like edition. For example, Vista Home to Win7 Home or Ultimate to Ultimate.

Upgrading from one operating system to another is no longer as simple as inserting a diskette and pressing the Enter key. Questions arise about the right hardware, about

compatibility of existing applications and data files with the new operating system. This article helps you think through the process of upgrading to Win7.

Windows Easy Transfer migrates your application settings and data, other options allow complete migration of both applications and data as a single operation. Windows Easy Transfer, which is available for free from Microsoft’s website, allows you to migrate both application settings and data from your XP system to a Windows 7 system. It even allows you to create a disk repository with this information. This is an acceptable method, but by no means foolproof.

Windows Easy Transfer lets you identify the programs and related data that you want to transfer and accomplish most of this migration work in one set of actions. The easiest workaround in transferring application data from Windows XP to a Win7 environment is to use Windows Easy Transfer on the Windows 7 DVD to transfer XP documents and settings to a backup location; e.g., flash drive or another hard disk, and then restore from this backup.

This would be a very good time to re-think your data storage location(s). Generally, Word will store your DOC files and other data created by Office under the Documents and Settings folders. Other programs will have a default location for the data you create. You might think about creating a partition just for the files that you generate. If it would be helpful, subdivide the partition by using folders for each type of file. In this method, you simply backup the entire partition and you have your backup accomplished.

Following are some points you should keep in mind:

1. You can use Windows Easy Transfer to move both programs and all their associated data as a package, but before you get to that stage, make sure that the move will transfer everything you want moved.
2. If you're using the move as an opportunity to upgrade from one version of an application to another (for example, moving from one version of Microsoft Office to another version), you should do two things:
 - a. Verify that the new application is compatible with the new operating system (some applications that worked with Windows XP or Windows Vista may not work under Win7).
 - b. Verify that the new version of the application will be able to use the data files from the older version. A good way to prevent problems like this is to use the same shared folders to store data on the old system and the new system.

Migration versus Reinstallation

I recommend that you migrate a software package intact. At times that may not be an option since some software packages register a unique ID based on both the license key and the CPU. If you migrate from one physical system to another, or significantly change the hardware configuration, the ID may change, as will the unique ID used by that software package. In this instance, you are forced to reinstall the software. This is one reason you cannot simply move your existing hard drive from one system to another.

What's Included?

Windows 7 still includes the Internet Explorer 8 web browser, since web access is a key part of any modern operating system. However, if you want to use Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, or Opera instead, feel free. Any browser easily can be set as your default through the Default Programs control on the Start menu. Also included are Windows Media Player 11, a basic picture viewer, and a DVD maker. Again, these easily can be replaced with utilities of your choice. Home users get the Windows Media Center included with their Windows 7 Home Premium, as was the case with the comparable Windows Vista version. That's about it for the standards we might have been used to seeing in previous versions.

What's not Included?

This is a much longer list for Windows 7. Microsoft has been hit with several anti-monopoly lawsuits over the last few years, so this and keeping the operating system tighter is one reason some things are missing. The most obvious application missing is an email client. Windows XP had Outlook Express and Windows Vista had Windows Mail. Windows 7 users are left to choose their own email solution. More people are using web-based email manager applications, so that remains an option. Microsoft offers a free download of the Windows Live Mail computer-based client. It can gather your mail from a number of different email services other than just Live Mail, which is a positive, but I am not sure those used to Outlook Express or Windows Mail will care for the user interface. If you don't want to use web-based email and want a familiar-looking email client, try Mozilla's free Thunderbird client (go to www.mozilla.com and look for the Thunderbird link.)

You won't find the Vista Sidebar for Gadgets, either, although the Gadgets still are available for installation on the desktop as indicated in Part III. Also gone from Windows 7 are the multimedia tools Windows Photo Gallery and Windows Movie Maker. (Strangely, the DVD Maker is included, but not a movie maker.) Those of us who did not use Windows Messenger instant messaging utility will welcome its absence in Windows 7. No more unused icon or pop-ups in the Notification Area. All these optional applications are available through the free Windows Live downloadable package, along with something called Live Family Safety to provide parental controls for those requiring them.

What's Improved?

Some old Windows standbys have been given new faces and new lives in Windows 7. WordPad and Paint have been around since the infancy of Windows. In Windows 7 both have been given more functionality and the Scenic Ribbon interface introduced in Office 2007. In particular, the WordPad basic word processor has been working out at the gym. Now it can read and create the docx format documents of Word 2007 in addition to its default Rich Text Format documents. Even if you don't buy Word, you can read, edit and compose docx files. Another recipient of a major facelift is Calculator. (Did you even know there was one?) Now it has several useful modes and can do unit conversions. (Check the Hel section for an explanation of features.) All these improved utilities are tucked away in the Accessories group on the Start menu. They are worth checking out.

Users of Vista may not have realized their computers could take dictation, but speech recognition was included and seems much improved in Windows 7. All you need is a microphone. The speech tool must be turned on—it's hidden in the Start/Accessories/Ease of Access folder but after that you can launch programs, go to web sites, and dictate letters or email with just your voice. There are some good tutorials and practice sessions included. Unlike commercial products, such as Dragon Naturally Speaking, Windows Speech Recognition does not lock onto one user, so multiple users of the same computer can use it.

An in-your-face curse for Windows Vista users was User Access Control (UAC). Intended to help protect us from bad guys trying to install malware or modify the operating system, instead it became a click every pop-up just to get it out of the way” bother. Often you had to give permission even to delete a desktop icon. The control levels for UAC were all-on or all-off. In Windows 7 UAC has been much tamed and provided with more user control levels. Now it better does the job it was designed for and stays out of the way the rest of the time.

Other improvements are not so obvious until you start using Windows 7. It is noticeably zippier than Windows Vista particularly on somewhat older computers. Windows XP aficionados take heart; you are not giving up performance to take advantage of the new features. Another area much improved is the time it takes to move or copy large files between the hard drive and external media. Vista’s performance was take a coffee break time, now you hardly can blink and it is over. There are many more under-the-hood improvements such as file indexing in support of the Search feature, but I need to cover some other things.

What’s New?

This is an operating system that wants to stay out of your way unless you need it for something. Sure, it works differently in many aspects from Windows XP (and to a lesser extent Vista), but its intent is to make things easier for you. Sometimes change really is good. Some of the features tagged with the Aero handle may seem just gee-whiz at first, but after you use them for a while they really can be helpful. I have covered some of these things in Libraries in Part III, so I will cover some of the other new elements here.

While it isn’t really new to Windows 7 (it was in Vista, but who knew?) the Windows Snipping Tool is very handy when you need to capture something on the screen or part of a web page. You can send your screen capture to the Clipboard for pasting or save it as an image for use elsewhere or sharing. Again, the Snipping Tool is in the Accessories folder.

One thing Microsoft feels is that everyone needs some basic online security protection in this age of hackers gone wild. Too many inexperienced users just let the trial” security software that comes with many new computers expire and still felt they were protected. Not so. A new free download is Microsoft Security Essentials. This is a basic anti-malware (viruses and other bad stuff) tool that is simple to install and set up. Once running it is nearly invisible unless it detects something. It is updated automatically with Microsoft Updates and just does what it does in the background. Power users and tweakers still will want their full featured security suites, but for the majority of basic email and web users Security Essentials will keep them out of most bad situations. Security Essentials has gotten favorable performance reviews early on.

Final Thoughts

This has been by no means a comprehensive review of Windows 7. I have tried to highlight those areas I felt most beneficial to the average user. Windows 7 is an operating system both average users and power users can enjoy. You can just get on with things or you can tweak to your heart’s content. The choice is yours.

Windows XP has been around nine years now and still is doing yeoman service for many. Microsoft will continue to support XP until 2014. Many people skipped Vista, and that is fine. With the prices of new PCs these days, however, it really is time to seriously consider moving into the second decade of the 21st Century with a new system, or at least a new operating system for Vista users. If you like Windows XP, you will learn to like Windows 7. Essentially, Windows still is Windows and most basic functions work the same. The new features really do make the computer easier to use once you understand them. As stated in earlier installments, the best route to Windows 7 for XP users is a new computer. Vista users have it somewhat easier when moving to a like version of Windows 7. (Windows Vista Home Basic users are permitted to upgrade to Windows 7 Home Premium.).



What's in MS Windows 7

By **Randy Esdon**, a member of Big Blue & Cousin, Canada, www.bbc.org

Hopefully you've heard of the new version of MS Windows called Windows 7. So what is the home user getting should they wish to upgrade their computer? In this article I'll try to highlight some of the basic home user features. This is not a complete highlight of everything that has been added or improved upon, but explains those items the average user might notice.

First off, the core applications that got an update are Windows Media Player, Internet Explorer, Paint, Calculator, and Wordpad. The first two programs I listed usually do get updates and are already available for Vista and XP.

The other three are basic programs that haven't seen any updates in a while. Basically their User interface (UI) and some functionality have been improved. The UI of each program now has the ribbon style of interface, like that of Office 2007. MS Paint added some more brushes, and can now use 'shapes' within the drawings. The best improvements are in the calculator, where they have added selectable tools or modes such as a mortgage calculator, a gas mileage calculator, a statistics mode, and even a programmer mode.

The next item Microsoft worked on was the desktop management area. They added several user friendly features, such as 'Snap to Docking', 'Aero Shake', an updated 'Taskbar', 'Jump Lists', 'Aero Peek', and 'Gadgets' wherever you want them.

'Snap to Docking' has three functions:

- to maximize a window, drag it to the top of the screen,
- to restore the window, drag it from the top of the screen,
- to compare two windows side by side, drag them to the opposite sides of the screen.

'Aero shake' is simple, and provides a great way to focus on just one application. Grab the 'Title Bar' of the screen you have open, shake the mouse, and all the other applications that are open will disappear.

'Taskbar' has been updated to include the ability to switch the order of the screens that are open. For those who multi-task, this is good when you want to prioritize your work. You can also point to a Taskbar icon to see a thumbnail preview of open files or programs. Then move your mouse over a thumbnail to preview the window as a full screen.

'Jump Lists' are smart lists of links specific to each application, such as:

- a history of pages visited - Internet Explorer or Firefox.
- opened files - MS Word.
- Frequently played songs - Media Player. Whenever you open a program, an up arrow becomes available next to the program icon. Click the list, and save time navigating to where you want to start within that program.

'Aero Peek' gives you the power of X-ray vision so you can peer past all your open windows, straight to the Windows 7 desktop. Simply point to the right edge of the taskbar and watch opened windows instantly turn transparent, revealing all your hidden icons and gadgets.

'Gadgets' can now be placed anywhere on your desktop, as opposed to just in the docking bar, as is the case in Vista.

'Home Networking Features' has been updated to make it easier to securely share files between computers. When you save a network as a home network, Windows pops up a dialog box which lets you decide what you want to share at home. To connect a second Windows 7 computer to the same network, enter the key given to you by the first machine, and you have instant secure file sharing. Microsoft has also included the ability of the computer to use different printers depending on what location you're at. This will simplify things for those people who take their laptop from home to the office, and use a printer at both locations.

'Program Compatibility Troubleshooter' has been added to help with using older programs within Windows 7. Basically this feature will ask you a series of questions to help you get a piece of incompatible software working. This has been much more streamlined than in Vista. Simply select the software that is giving you issues, list the problems associated with the software,

select the operating system it does work with, and run the test. If the software works, save the settings and you should be set up to use that program in the future.

'Biometrics' features of Windows 7 have been enhanced. This allows users to use fingerprint biometric devices to log on to computers, grant elevation privileges through User Account Control (UAC), and perform basic management of the fingerprint devices.

Tablet PC' has many improvements for handwriting recognition. Support for handwriting recognition, personalization, and text prediction in new languages has been enhanced. Support for handwritten math expressions, and personalized custom dictionaries for handwriting recognition have been added.

'User Access Control' (UAC) functionality improvements are some of the biggest from a user's perspective. Basically Microsoft has changed the UAC to have a slider bar the administrator can access, from four levels of security. By doing this, the number of tasks the average user can perform, that do not prompt for administrator approval, have been increased. This has dramatically reduced those unwanted pop up messages that ask you if you really want to do this.

Other items that have been improved include:

- Common tasks are easier and faster. For example with the built-in Windows Search, finding documents is much quicker.
- Less power consumption through better sleep/hibernate support. This provides longer battery time for laptops.
- Improved built-in CD Burning and DVD creation. This includes the ability to burn ISO images.
- For those who are gamers, there is better 3D hardware accelerated graphics support through an updated DirectX.

A Windows backup program has been added that will do a complete image of a drive. This will allow for easy recovery should a computer have a complete hard drive failure.

The 'Problem Screen Recorder' is a new feature in Windows 7. This allows you to capture and record the steps you are taking to produce a problem. Then you can email this file to a tech to explain the problem. It can also be used to generate a file with step by step pictures that can be edited so you can make a tutorial on how to use a program.

Overall, the new Windows system runs significantly quicker than Vista. It is also better equipped, with improved features and security functions.

Windows 7 is less demanding in terms of hardware than its predecessor, and has better support for hardware drivers than Vista was when it was released.

Overall I see many benefits to upgrading to the new version of Windows.

Yes, there is nothing outstanding that requires a user of Vista or XP to jump on the band wagon and do the upgrade, but for those who are fed up with the problems Vista presents, and those who are worried that XP has been dropped from Microsoft's supported OS list, i.e. no more updates, Windows 7 seems to be a good choice.



Windows 7 Upgrade – My Experience

By Sandy Berger, CompuKiss, www.compukiss.com, sandy@compukiss.com

Those of you who follow me know that I am really like Windows 7 and have no qualms about recommending it. This is not a program that you have to wait to purchase until the problems have cleared. I have been successfully using it for months and have just installed it on my everyday computer.

So if you are ready to buy a new computer, go right ahead and buy one with Window 7. However, if you are going to upgrade an older computer, there are a few things you should know.

First, I don't recommend upgrading an older computer running Windows XP. Although Windows 7 may run on your old XP computer, XP is more capable for computers with limited memory and outdated graphics. Also, if you upgrade from XP to 7, you have to do a clean install. (More on that later.)

Even if you are upgrading to Window 7 from Vista, there are a few things that you should know. My recent upgrade experience may help. Last week I got an advance copy of Windows 7 and decided to upgrade my Vista computer.

There are two possible ways to upgrade: An in-place upgrade or a clean install. A clean install is preferable, but it means that all your data and your programs are wiped out. This is good because it puts your computer into a like-new status. However, a clean install requires a lot of work. It entails backing up everything, reinstalling all of the programs, transferring the data from a backup back to the computer after the upgrade, and readjusting any programs that you had previously customized. After listing the number of programs that I had installed on my computer, I decided that after a clean install it would probably take me at least 2 days to get my computer back to where it was. With time at a premium, I opted for an in-place upgrade. I had already installed all of the updates and service packs, so my computer was ready to be upgraded.

The first thing that I did, (and that everyone should do before upgrading), was to back up my data. I chose to use a program called True image by Acronis to make a complete backup of everything on my computer. I put the backup on a portable hard drive. It was 350GB, so I expected this upgrade to take a long time.

Then I surfed over to the Microsoft website to check out their compatibility upgrade advisor for Windows 7. I installed this Microsoft program on my computer and ran it. It told me that my Belkin wireless network needed a new driver for Windows 7 and that my Logitech webcam might not work properly with Window 7. I surfed over to both manufacturers' websites and found that they had no specific drivers listed for Windows 7. Since I already had the most current Vista drivers, I decided to just go ahead with the upgrade.

I put the Windows 7 disk in the computer and clicked on "Install". I made a few choices, like choosing between an in-place and a clean install. To my surprise, the install program told me that I had quite a few incompatibility problems. In addition to the two devices that I had been warned about, it listed a printer that I had previously uninstalled and several games that also had been previously removed. However, it also listed iTunes as incompatible. I use iTunes everyday to sync my iPhone, so this could have been a deal-killer. Yet, I knew that I had the latest version of iTunes, so I just crossed my fingers and clicked "Next" to go on.

After that, the installation was easy. The computer pretty much did all the work, including rebooting several times. While a clean install can be accomplished in about ½ hour, my in-place install over 350 GB of programs and data on a pretty speedy computer took 3 hours. Once the update was complete, I found myself at the Windows 7 desktop. There was a new desktop background and the taskbar had much larger icons (something that I like about windows 7), but other than that, all of my icons were there and my desktop looked pretty normal.

To my surprise, the Belkin wireless card that I had been warned about worked seamlessly. The Logitech Quick Cam, however, gave me an error. On a hunch, I reinstalled the webcam driver. Although this was the same driver that I had been using with Vista, Windows 7 now seemed to like it. It also functioned perfectly. Oh, and the iTunes program that I had been warned about, also worked perfectly except that I had to reauthorize the computer, which was a simple process.

I am not sure if Microsoft was a little too harsh in their assessments of incompatibilities or if I was just lucky. Since I did my upgrade before the actual launch of the Windows 7 product, Microsoft's Windows 7 Capability Center was not yet available. As you read this, however, it should be open. Just type "Windows 7 Compatibility Center" in the search box at the Microsoft website and you should be able to check the compatibility of most software and hardware.

Windows Experience Index

By Sandy Berger, CompuKiss, www.compukiss.com, sandy@compukiss.com

Have you ever wondered how fast your computer is compared to other computers? Or would you like to know which component you should upgrade in order to speed up your computer? In Windows XP and older versions of Windows, there were always ways to get performance information. However, this information was given in cryptic charts and numbers. The average person would have had to spend a lot of time to find and assess that information. Now, however, with Windows Vista and Windows 7, Microsoft has made finding and assessing this information much easier.

Inside of Vista and Windows 7 is a feature called the Windows Experience Index. This is a simple tool that gives you an easy-to-read assessment of your computer's performance. To access this feature, click on the Start button and choose Control Panel. In Windows Vista, choose the Classic View. In Windows 7 choose one of the icon views. Then click on Performance Information and Tools. You will be given a snapshot of your computers performance.

The report is divided into five categories: processor, memory, graphics, gaming graphics, and hard disk. Each one of these has a score that indicates your computer's performance in that area. A Base Score is given in bold letters. You need to be aware that the base score is not the average of the scores, but rather, it is the rating on the slowest component. So if your gaming graphics score is 2.2, your overall score will be 2.2 even if all of the other subscores are higher. The base score is given in this manner assuming that your computer can only be as fast as the slowest component.

Currently the scores for a computer running Vista range from 1 to 5.9. The scores for Window 7 computers range from 1 to 7.9. They do not go all the way up to 10 because Microsoft is allowing a little leeway for the added performance levels of future hardware components.

Don't be shocked if your computer has a low base score or low subscores. Microsoft says that a score of 2 is adequate for basic computer tasks like email and word processing. Graphics-intensive software like Photoshop and games should have a score of 3 or higher.

If you use your computer for heavy duty computing including media center for multimedia like recording HDTV programs, then subscores in the processor, memory, desktop graphics, gaming graphics, and hard disk categories are all important and should be at least a 3.

In most cases, inexpensive computers will have the lowest score in the graphics category. This will be more important in a laptop computer because you cannot easily upgrade the graphics card later. In a desktop computer, you can always add a better graphics later, if you choose to do so.

My computer retailed last year for about \$500 and would currently be selling for less. I do everything on this computer including running as many as 10 programs at once, working with Photoshop, playing movies, and recording TV. My point is that even though the scores can go as high as 7.9 on a Windows 7 computer, you don't need extremely high scores to have a very useful computer.

This index is a good way to pinpoint slower components that may be worth upgrading. For example, my computer's scores tell me without a doubt, that if I were to purchase a high-end graphics card for my computer, I could almost double its base score and speed its performance.

While this little tool is a great way to score your own PC, it also excels at letting you see how the computer you may be thinking of purchasing stacks up against the others. Most stores that sell computers have a demo running in the store. If that is the case, you can pull up the Windows Experience Index on any computer that you are thinking of purchasing. You can also use it to compare computers. This tool is not perfect, but it does give you a fairly accurate assessment. While you will still have to compare things like the amount of memory, hard drive size, and cost, you won't have to understand as much about the processors and other components. And best of all, you won't have to rely as much on the salesman in the store.

Although I still feel that computers could be made easier to use, the Windows Experience Index is one example of how the newer operating systems are at least making computers easier to understand.

Use Caution When Upgrading to Windows 7

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; APCUG Representative, Golden Triangle PC Club; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, Texas; Radio Show Host (Mondays, 6-7pm Central Time, klvi.com), iwilsker@sbcglobal.net

A few weeks ago I wrote a column about how to determine if your computer could be satisfactorily upgraded to Windows 7. I mentioned Microsoft's Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor, and Windows 7 Compatibility Center, which should be run prior to any installation in order to determine hardware and software compatibility with Windows 7. I ran both of those utilities on my three month old Vista Home Premium 64 machine, and found that my hardware was compatible with Windows 7, and that some of my software needed to be updated, which I did. Rerunning both Microsoft utilities after making the recommended changes indicated that my computer hardware and software should run on Windows 7, and that no listed incompatibilities remained. With peace of mind that I should have no problems upgrading to Windows 7, I eagerly awaited the free upgrade discs that I had ordered under Microsoft's and my manufacturer's "Free Upgrade to Windows 7" offer for eligible computers.

A few days after Microsoft's much promoted rollout of Windows 7, my upgrade discs arrived in the mail. The envelope actually contained two DVDs, one the manufacturer's "Upgrade Advisor", the other Microsoft's "Windows 7 Home Premium Upgrade" complete with hologram and product key. Also in the envelope was a poster sized, multi-lingual, instruction sheet with detailed upgrade instructions. Knowing from past experience on my older computers (XP to Vista), it may take several hours to complete the upgrade I waited until the weekend when I might have the time to dedicate to the upgrade.

One of my most frequently used computing expressions is "Backup! Backup!, and Backup!". Prior to installing Windows 7, I made a set of Vista recovery DVDs, and a redundant backup of all of my critical data files. I can not understate the critical importance of this backup process, and that it is absolutely imperative to have a good current backup. If you have the software and media to make an image backup, which is a digital image of your entire hard drive that can be restored in the event of catastrophic failure, do it. This could be very useful, as it can restore the operating system, data, and all programs if necessary. The fact that I do have good backups may be my savior. I was heartened by the fact that the computer magazines and blogs were heavy with stories of successful upgrades and the high level of preliminary satisfaction that users had with their new Windows 7 upgrades.

After ensuring that I had good backups, I then proceeded to follow the upgrade instructions provided with my discs, and first ran the manufacturer's "Upgrade Advisor". It also ran the Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor (no problems found), and installed some updated Windows 7 drivers for the factory hardware. When completed, I was instructed to insert the Windows 7 Upgrade DVD.

The Windows 7 Upgrade DVD ran for a while and detected some factory installed software, mostly games and a few obsolete Microsoft utilities, that I was instructed to uninstall. The computer then rebooted back to my Vista Home Premium 64, and the list of items to uninstall appeared in a file on my desktop. I used my Revo Uninstaller, and uninstalled those items being sure to do a complete uninstall including any fragments and leftover registry entries.

I then restarted the computer and re-ran the Windows 7 Upgrade setup, as directed.

The computer ran for several hours, as I occasionally monitored its progress. There were no difficulties or anomalies so far, and as things were now running smoothly, I felt assured that I would shortly have the new Windows 7 Home Premium 64 installed on my computer. After running for nearly six hours, and completing an indicated 72% of the upgrade process, a window popped up which said that the install could not continue as my hard drive was full. That struck me as very odd, and a sense of disbelief came over me, as I knew that I had well over 500 gigs of available hard drive space prior to the upgrade! I was instructed by the upgrade software to restart my computer, and that my Vista would then be restored. Other than the annoyance of wasting six hours of my life on a failed upgrade, along with a modicum of disgust, I removed the Windows 7 DVD from the drive, and rebooted the computer. This is when thing went terribly wrong.

During the reboot process, I was greeted with a black window with white print that offered two options; repair Windows 7, or restore my Vista. I selected the restore option, and the computer booted into Windows 7 (not Vista), and as it was loading a popup appeared that said, "The computer restarted unexpectedly or encountered an unexpected error", and instructed me to reboot. I rebooted, selected the restore function, and the same popup error appeared. I rebooted again, but this time selected the "Repair Windows 7" option, and the system loaded identically as before. I selected a variety of the Windows 7 repair options, ran them,

rebooted, and the same error appeared. I put the Windows 7 Upgrade DVD in the drive, and ran the setup again, only to be greeted with the same error at the same place in the process. I tried over a dozen permutations of rebooting and selecting options, including a variety of repair options off of the Windows 7 repair menu, but always had the same error when rebooting. This became an infinite loop. Despite Microsoft's claims that Vista would be restored if the upgrade failed, the system would not restore my Vista, and the Windows 7 failed to install. Now I was left with a useless computer that would not load anything. I did finally boot off of a Linux CD, and saw that my files all appeared to be intact. With some difficulty, I was able to then boot off of my Spinrite CD, and did a thorough hard drive check; my hard drive was intact and undamaged.

Next, with growing frustration approaching anger, I went online with my trusty old XP computer (the same one that I am using to type this). I went to the Microsoft Windows 7 support forums, and found that I was far from alone. The Windows 7 forum "Install, Upgrade, Activate" had over 6,000 threads, and almost 25,000 messages. One forum, "Windows 7 - Upgrade Unsuccessful - Reboot Loop" had a post from Michael, a Microsoft support engineer. It says, "Hello,

For those who have attempted to perform an upgrade to Windows 7 and encounter a reboot loop, Microsoft is aware of this issue and is currently being investigated." It then provided a link to another forum, but at least I had some assurance that Microsoft was aware of the problem with the "Microsoft is aware of this issue" statement. That forum then linked to another forum, with the same title "Windows 7 - Upgrade Unsuccessful -Reboot Loop". That forum, which Microsoft "locked" (closed to new posts) has dozens of posts similar to mine, where users are complaining about the infinite loop reboot problem, and the failure to restore Vista. It appears that there may be two distinct and different issues involving the loop problem. Several dozen of the posts all indicated that their computer locked up at 62% of the install process, and many of them had purchased the student upgrade to Windows 7, and downloaded the upgrade. For these unhappy users, Microsoft has offered an updated download file for them to use to reinstall Windows 7. Many other users, me included, had an authentic Microsoft Upgrade DVD which we used for the install, and all of us encountered the same problem. Microsoft posted a few suggestions on possible fixes, but from the user responses, these have not been successful. It was immaterial if the user was updating a desktop computer like mine, or a laptop, the failure was the same. Some of the users were so frustrated that they chose to do a full install, rather than an upgrade, which did indeed work, but it wiped out all of their programs and data files which would have been preserved had the upgrade install worked as promised. It is of little solace to me and thousands of other users with crippled computers that the vast majority of those performing upgrades completed them successfully. I guess that we were just the unlucky few.

It is not just the Vista Home Premium users that have encountered this problem, but users of other editions as well. In the Microsoft forums "Vista x64 Ultimate to Windows 7 Ultimate upgrade failing" an IT professional who was upgrading several computers encountered a similar problem with the Ultimate upgrade.

Several of the computer magazines and independent support forums have had readers complain with the identical issues, and inquiries to Microsoft have resulted in a "we are aware of the problem and we are working to find a solution". Some of the independent support boards also have members trying to find a solution, but so far none have been found that can either restore our computers to the way they were prior to the upgrade (Vista), or allow the Windows 7 upgrade to complete.

The one saving grace is that I do have a Vista backup so I can be up and running again on my newer computer, but according to the Microsoft forums, many users did not create a backup prior to installing the Windows 7 Upgrade. Unless Microsoft comes up with a fix, these users will likely lose all of their programs and files, and unsatisfactory outcome. Once again, this demonstrates that it is absolutely imperative to have and maintain a contemporary backup of all critical data files, and preferably an image backup which can restore the computer to an earlier state complete with all programs and files.

Most users who have installed the upgrade editions of Windows 7 to compatible computers had great success, but for the few, maybe thousands, of us who had a catastrophic failure during the upgrade process, we are not happy campers. Can I recommend the Windows 7 Upgrade to users with compatible computers? Generally yes, as the benefits of Windows 7 appear to outweigh the foibles of Vista, but I will only make that recommendation with one proviso; be absolutely certain to have a good backup before attempting the upgrade. I am thankful that I have a good backup. If someone wants to do a clean install, meaning that they are installing Windows 7 to an empty or reformatted hard drive that is fine, as there have been very few problems with a clean install reported in the forums.

I will continue to monitor the Microsoft support forums hoping for a satisfactory resolution of this problem. In the meantime, remember, "Backup! Backup!, Backup!"



Windows 7, Thanks, But No Thanks!

By Herb Goldstein, Editor, Sarasota PCUG, Florida,
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I am a devout XP user. It's not by any means perfect. It has its own set of quirks (like everything else), but it's better than anything that came before and it works quite well. It's like my house...I know where everything is. I can navigate it in the dark. I've got it furnished and decorated just the way I want it, and it took me, bit by bit, a long time to do. So why should I move across the street and start all over again? For whose benefit?

Some weeks ago, Microsoft provided their release candidate of Windows 7 free for all takers. I installed it on a spare hard drive and have been playing with it every now and then. It's a nice functional operating system, but from a practical standpoint it provides me with nothing that I really need or must have that's missing in XP. If you are starting as a new computer user with a new computer, it's just fine. In fact it will be on your new computer right from the get-go, want it or not.

For whatever the many reasons, there is no upgrade path to migrate from XP to Windows 7. You need to start from scratch reinstalling all your software programs, all their many updates and upgrades, and all the customized settings you have factored into them over the period of time. Now that's providing you even have your original installation disks or some record of those that you originally downloaded for which you have no installation disks at all. You will also need all their serial numbers that you were originally required to provide, if you still have them. Talk about monumental tasks!

As though that were not enough to completely turn off the bravest among you, Windows 7 has another curve ball to pitch at you. Whatever applications you want to install in Windows 7 must have perfectly valid drivers that it will recognize. Windows 7 is much more fussy about what it wants to approve. Many smaller software publishers whose applications you may now be using in XP may not have developed drivers that will work in Windows 7. You may well have to kiss some of your most fabulous freebies goodbye. The loudest argument I have heard by those urging the switch is that Microsoft will cease to recognize XP. If the automobile industry operated in similar fashion you would be forced to junk all cars more than a few years old.

So pardon me folks while I continue to avoid fixing what isn't broken. Unless and until Microsoft can offer a much better operating system that will easily migrate everything I am currently using in XP, thanks but no thanks!



Window Watching: Microsoft's marketing madness

By Hari Raj, Freelance Journalist, Melbourne PC User Group, Australia, www.melbpc.org.au,
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"Microsoft's attempt to purchase street cred, a currency more valuable than the flatlining US dollar, couldn't have gone more wrong. The plan was to have the show with all commercials replaced by Windows 7 spots."

HARI RAJ would like to point out that he doesn't hate Microsoft. He just likes laughing at them.

The line doesn't seem too long, until you turn the corner and realise it stretches around the block and out of sight. People close to the front have brought tents and blankets. One man has enough food for two days, and uses it to bribe the girl behind him while he takes toilet breaks. So what are they waiting for? It's not a queue for a Harry Potter book, or a Star Wars prequel. It's the line for Windows 7. Or so Bill Gates would have you believe.

Really, Microsoft? Really?

When the US software giant released the latest iteration of its operating system on in November, there was a marked difference in approach. There were no gigantic launches, no celebrity spruikers, no sky-writing or power point presentations. (Yes, Power Point is a Microsoft Office program. Yes, it hurts to insert it into this analogy. But there weren't.) What Microsoft tried to foster was a groundswell of popularity, a viral tidal wave of excitement that would not only see hordes of customers swarm into shops to purchase Windows 7, but then scurry home, quivering with excitement, and have a Tupperware party while they installed and enthused about it.

Yes, you read that right. A Tupperware party.

The clips need to be seen to be believed, but thankfully have been immortalised on YouTube (for a full list of all clips referenced in this article, have a look at the sidebar). The video is surreal – people standing around a kitchen talking about Windows 7 – and reports indicate some potential party hosts felt less than impressed by the manner in which they were depicted.

Lamponing has been absolutely rife, of course. It's hard to find the original clip on YouTube, a search that necessitates wading through edited clips, many of which are admittedly hilarious.

But in all seriousness, what did Microsoft expect? That people would have huge, sprawling house parties celebrating the launch of an operating system, eagerly-awaited not because it represented a groundbreaking innovation in computing, but because its predecessor, Windows Vista, was so unstable it made the Indonesian tectonic plates look unremarkable, and so bug-ridden it should have come packaged with a can of Aeroguard?

Suspend disbelief for a moment, and say this breathless apprehension proved correct. But then, after rushing home to install it, these users would put down their mice, step away from their keyboards, head into a kitchen, and chat about it? All this after waiting for its release at midnight?

In the interest of fairness, it must be said that some people did take part. There's a link below to a blog featuring pictures from a Windows 7 party, with themed cupcakes and everything. Insert your own clever comment here.

All the same, this is hardly the first time Microsoft has launched ill-advised marketing campaigns. A facet of the online era is that nothing ever goes away – buffoonery, in particular, becomes truly immortal – and as you would expect, the interwebs have been aflutter with mockery, with more than one site dredging up some of Microsoft's greatest misses.

One particular walk down memory lane featured Friends alumni Jennifer Aniston and Matthew Perry clicking heels while sauntering down the yellow brick road of Windows 95, chanting a mantra of "Taskbars and email and shortcuts, oh my!" You couldn't make it up. The clip also breathlessly exhorts "the world's first cyber sitcom" a buzzword thankfully consigned to the scrapheap – soon to be joined, hopefully, by the prefix "i".

“Next there was a series of ads featuring onetime Superman Dean Cain as a bumbling caricature of every smarmy talk show host you've ever met, hawking Microsoft's Internet Explorer 8. Fair enough. But one of the ads, showcasing the browser's built-in Private Browsing Mode (what some critics have called a porn mode, as it stops websites leaving cookies on your computer) has a couple settling down to breakfast. The woman borrows the man's laptop. She sees something objectionable on screen. And vomits. Multiple times. On the floor, and on her husband. The moral? Use Internet Explorer 8 to cover your tracks, and keep your partner's breakfast down. Incredibly, the ad was pulled.

If you need another demonstration of just how much Microsoft has its finger on the pulse, you'll get one. Snarky comments aside, the need for greater health awareness, increased exercise and a balanced diet has received more press than ever before. It's never been easier to know what you should and shouldn't eat, and the anti-fast food movement is gaining momentum. Even fast food chains themselves are getting on the bandwagon, adding healthier meals (well, relatively) to their menu.

So what does Microsoft do? Team up with Burger King, of course, to release a Windows 7-themed burger, bursting with seven patties, and an epic 2120 calories. As CNN's Kyung Lah points out, that's an entire day's caloric intake. Once again, do sink your teeth into the video.

It's probably bordering on harsh to mention the advertisements featuring Bill Gates and Jerry Seinfeld, especially as they're sort of charmingly inoffensive, but again one wonders at the rationalising going on at the Microsoft marketing department. If you see fit to write a script that involves your two leads calling each other by name in the first five seconds, just in case people watching might not know who they are, here's a thought – people watching might not know who they are. It's been almost a decade since Seinfeld went off air, and let's just say Gates isn't going to quit his day job and take up acting.

But the best, dear reader, has been saved for last. Even in an era of bizarre and brazen barrages of product placement, this takes the cake. Sponsoring a television program is one thing, but this was a step further – a decision to integrate not just advertising, but content, into a TV show.

You'd think Microsoft would then pick a show that was at least tenuously connected to the world in which it operates (say, The IT Crowd, or even The Big Bang Theory). But no. The decision went to Seth Macfarlane's Family Guy, a program critics such as The Seattle Times' Frazier Moore celebrated earlier this month as being “rude, crude, and deliciously wrong.” Anyone smell the heady scent of trouble brewing?

Microsoft's attempt to purchase street cred, a currency more valuable than the flatlining US dollar, couldn't have gone more wrong. The plan was to have the show with all commercials replaced by Windows 7 spots. The Family Guy episode in question had jokes about incest, and feminine hygiene. What price a seat in the boardroom when the episode was screened to a room full of suits? Of course, there may have been something even more objectionable about the content. There's a link below to one of the prospective clips below. It's not even remotely funny.

The show would have gone to air on November 8th, but Microsoft pulled the plug well before then, explaining its actions in fluent corporatese. Apparently “the content was not a fit with the Windows brand”. Indeed. It's a joke I cannot claim credit for, but it merits repeating – after an epic display of foresight, in the end, Family Guy just wasn't PC enough for Microsoft.

Links

Official Windows 7 House Party Site: <http://www.houseparty.com/windows7> (for some reason, the link to Australia's redirects to the UK's site – not enough partygoers perhaps?)

Windows 7 Launch Party Video(edited): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpKr0NmDMIg&feature=related>

Jennifer Aniston and Matthew Perry do Windows 95: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GWQgb015Lc>

An actual Windows 7 house party: <http://blogs.technet.com/johnbaker/archive/2009/10/23/windows-7-launch-house-party-albany-ga.aspx>

Internet Explorer 8 Puking Ad: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xB9fhjnJcB0&feature=player_embedded

CNN coverage of Windows 7 burger: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZubQTiZc2c>

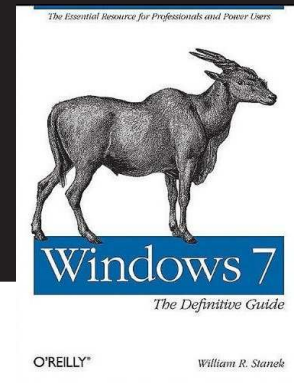
Family guy Windows 7: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6E-lfqibOi8>

Book Review

Windows 7: The Definitive Guide

Published by O'Reilly

Reviewed by Elsie Smith, Editor, PC Community, CA, PCC News, www.pcc.org,
lcms@pacbell.net



This is the kind of how-to book that anyone-regardless of skill level-can read from cover to cover and walk away with a wealth of knowledge about the subject at hand.

This book provides everything you need to manage and maintain Windows 7. You'll learn all of the features and enhancements in complete detail, along with specifics for

configuring the operating system to put you in full control. Bestselling author and Windows expert William Stanek doesn't just show you the steps you need to follow, he

also tells you how features work, why they work, and how you can customize

them to meet your needs. You'll also learn why you may want to use certain features of the operating system and when to use other features to resolve any problems you are having. Learn how to squeeze every bit of power out of Windows 7 to take full advantage of its features and programs.

When asked about the user level, Stanek replied: "This book doesn't focus on a specific user level. This isn't a lightweight beginner book or a book written exclusively for developers or administrators. Regardless of whether you are a beginning, power user, or seasoned professional, many of the concepts in this book will be valuable to you. And you'll be able to apply them to your computer regardless of which edition of Windows 7 you are using."

- * Set up, customize, and tune Windows 7-Optimize its appearance and performance, install software - what has changed and what you need to know, customize your hardware, and install printers, scanners, and faxes
- * Manage your files and data-Search your computer more efficiently, secure your data, share and collaborate, and get the most out of optional programs such as Windows Live Mail
- * Master your digital media-Create media libraries, manage digital pictures and videos, make DVDs, and create movies
- * Get connected and start networking-Set up a home or small-office network, conquer Internet Explorer, and master on-the-go networking
- * Protect your computer-Keep your family safe while on the Internet, navigate the computer security maze, and configure Windows 7's protection features
- * Manage and support Windows 7 systems-Configure user accounts, disks and drives, troubleshoot and handle routine maintenance, and resolve advanced support and recovery issues
- * Learn advanced tips & techniques-Manage the Windows boot environment, explore Group Policy, and much more

Product Information

Windows 7: The Definitive Guide: The Essential Resource for Professionals and Power Users

By William R. Stanek
 O'Reilly Media, Inc.
<http://www.oreilly.com>
 800-998-9938

List Price: O'Reilly Media: \$59.99

UG Price \$39.00 at: <http://www.oreilly.com/store/>

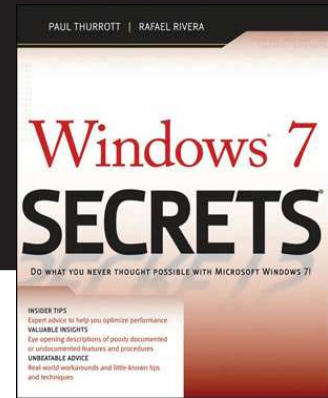
Free Online Edition: To try our Safari and the online edition of Windows 7: The Definitive Guide for 45 days, go to <http://www.oreilly.com/go/safarienabled> and enter the coupon code shown on the last page of your book. To see the complete Safari Library visit: <http://safari.oreilly.com>

Book Review

Windows 7 Secrets

Published by Wiley

Reviewed by Ken Blake, a member of the Tucson Computer Society, AZ, Journal of the Tucson Computer Society, www.aztcs.org, ken@kjblake.com



Before I begin to review this book, let me tell you a little about my experience with Windows 7. The Windows 7 Release Candidate 1 became available on April 23, 2009, and I ran it from then until August 6, when the Release to Manufacturing became available and I switched to it. (Note that although Windows 7 won't be available for sale until October 22, in August all testing ended and it was finalized and made available to a

limited group of people as well as to OEMs that will be distributing it with their computers starting on October 22).

I mention this just to make it clear that I already have six months of experience using this version of Windows and this book is not at all my first look at it. And before I begin to talk about the quality of its contents, let me address what the book is, and what it contains.

First its title, and in particular, the word "SECRETS" (in all upper-case):

Despite that word, the book is not about secrets. It's a book trying to tell the reader almost everything about Windows 7, and is both an introduction to Windows 7 for those who are completely new to it, and a reference book for those who already know something about it.

There's nothing at all secret about the great majority of what it contains. However, some of the things discussed in the book are marked with an icon containing the word "secret". Are these secrets? No, not at all; they are meant to be, as it says in the preface, "little-known facts." Something isn't a secret just because it's little-known; moreover, not all of the items marked "secret" are little-known and worse, not all of them are 100% accurate.

"My view is that the word "secrets" is just exaggerated advertising, and completely inappropriate.

Emblazoned on the paperback front cover of the book, in all caps, is the sentence "DO WHAT YOU NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE WITH Windows 7!"

Everybody may not agree with me, but that kind of advertising, especially overstated advertising, on the cover of the book is a major turnoff for me.

The book is enormous, containing 1009 pages of text in 26 chapters, and a large index that brings the total to 1054. Although I might have presented some of it in a slightly different order than what these authors did, the organization is generally well done. But some of these chapters have nothing to do with Windows 7, and as far as I'm concerned don't belong in this book at all.

For example, chapter 10 is about Windows Home Server. Windows Home Server is a completely different operating system that if you run at all will run on a different computer in your home network, and it's been around since well before Windows 7. It's an excellent product and I run it myself, but this book is not where a description of it and help in using it belongs.

And chapter 14 is about Zune, another Microsoft product that has nothing to do with Windows 7. Chapter 18 is about the Windows Mobile Smartphone, a hardware product. Chapter 21 is about Windows Live Mail, a software product that doesn't come with Windows 7. Chapter 13, "Digital Videos and DVD Movies," also is largely about software products that are not part of Windows 7. Much the same is true of chapter 23, "Your Life in Sync—Windows and Live Services."

Are these topics important and worth talking about and including in the book, even though they are not part of Windows 7? Arguably, yes and apparently the authors think so. On the other hand, I think someone who buys a book should get what the title promises he will get, and not other things as well.

Some people may be glad these non-Windows 7 topics are included, but others (me, for example) will feel that they just make the book more expensive as well as bigger, heavier, and containing more to read. My view is that this sort of stuff simply doesn't belong here—not unless the title of the book is dramatically changed, so purchasers get what they expect to get.

Oddly, in the font used for the text of the book the “7” of “Windows 7” is slashed, but in the fonts used for headings and other things, it’s not. It’s not a serious complaint, but slashing the “7” is unusual in the USA, and the inconsistency of its use is mildly annoying.

Throughout the book, whenever a particular feature is talked about, it’s described as wonderful, and an improvement over what it was in previous versions of Windows. I’m a big fan of Windows 7, and I think that it’s the best version of Windows ever, but I don’t think that everything about it is wonderful. If I had my ‘druthers, some things would be done differently.

Some of the things described may be good for some people, but not for others, depending on what other software they use, and upon their style of working. The tone of the authors in describing many things reads like unmitigated advertising, rather than honest description and evaluation.

Here’s an example of the kind of sentence I’m talking about: “Microsoft has dramatically enhanced the capabilities of the taskbar.” I know some people who like the Windows 7 changes to the task bar (Quick Launch icons are now on it together with the other icons, not on a separate toolbar) and others who hate it. Personally, I don’t have strong feelings about it either way, and I certainly wouldn’t describe it as “dramatically enhanced.”

So, putting behind me the negative views I stated above, and turning to the quality of the book’s contents, let me begin by stating that I generally like the book very much. It is thorough, reasonably complete, and by and large accurate (but not perfect—such books are never perfect). It explains things very well.

And in several instances, it told me things about Windows 7 that, despite my experience with it, I didn’t know. For example, it told me how, in Windows Explorer, to add folders to the Favorites list in the Navigation pane. This was to me a very useful tip and I was glad to have learned it. The touch support for the screen is described in the book. This was new to me, primarily because my hardware doesn’t support it, but it was interesting to read about it.

I was very glad to see that in the chapter on Windows security, the authors recommend against Norton and McAfee anti-virus (the two worst choices, in my view) and for ESET NOD32, the product that I think is best. However, I was very disappointed to see that they consider Windows Defender to be adequate anti-spyware protection, and do not recommend installing any third-party antispyware programs.

Unfortunately the book has its share of errors. Most of the errors are minor misstatements, rather than being terribly significant, but still they are errors. Here are few examples of things that are clearly wrong, and some things that are wrong in my opinion:

1. It says, “A full version of Windows 7...cannot be used to upgrade an existing version of Windows to Windows 7.” That is not correct.
2. It says “Peek at Desktop is enabled by mousing over a new glass rectangular area found in the lower rightmost corner of the screen.” The “new glass rectangular area” is at the end of the task bar, and will be at the lower rightmost corner of the screen only if the task bar is at the bottom of the screen.

Since the task bar will be on whichever of the four sides of the screen you choose to have it on (just as in previous versions of Windows), what the book says about where it is not correct.

3. It says “Like a certain demonic creature, the notification area goes by many other names. If you see references to such things as ‘the system tray’ ... these are referring to ... what’s now simply called the notification area.” The word “now” is a misstatement.

It was actually always called the “notification area,” even way back in Windows 95 “System Tray” wasn’t its former name, just an informal name for it, both in the past and today.

4. Talking about Windows Explorer, the book says “So My Documents is replaced by the Documents library in Windows 7.” Yes, it’s true that what used to be called “My Documents” is now more simply (and better, in my view) called “Documents,” but that didn’t begin in Windows 7; it was also true in Windows Vista.

5. The book says “The Office 2007 ribbon has proven wildly popular with users...” I can’t prove that that statement is wrong, but my experience with Office 2007 users is that the great majority don’t like the ribbon interface at all.

6. It states “Throughout the years, all Windows versions have shared a common problem: they degrade in performance over time and boot more slowly the longer the computer is used.” These authors are far from alone in having this opinion, but it’s one with which I strongly disagree.

I’ve run almost every Windows version since 2 0 and never experienced this. My view is that those who experience it do so because they used their computer poorly, not because of Windows slowing down on its own.

Most people start their computers once a day or even less frequently. In the overall scheme of things, even a few minutes to start up aren’t very important. Personally I power on my computer when I get up in the morning, then go get my coffee. When I come back, it’s done booting. I don’t know how long it took to boot and I don’t care.

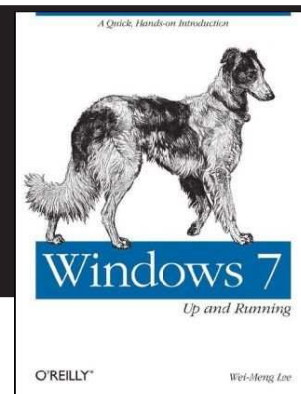
So, having complained about a number of things, what’s my overall view of this book and do I recommend it? Yes, I recommend it! Despite my list of its errors and points on which I disagree with the authors above, those points represent only a small portion of the book.

Book Review

Windows 7: Up and Running, A Quick, Hands-on Introduction

Published by O'Reilly

Reviewed by Elsie Smith, Editor, PC Community, CA, PCC News, www.pcc.org,
lcms@pacbell.net



Looking for the quickest path to get started with Microsoft's Windows 7 operating system? With *Windows 7: Up and Running* (O'Reilly), by Microsoft MVP Wei-Meng Lee,

you get the essential information you need to upgrade or install the system and configure it to fit your activities, along with a tour of Windows 7's features and built-in applications.

And for those of you who have been around the block a few times with Windows, Lee says, "Even if you are already familiar with Windows, this book will still offer you some info that you may not already know."

Microsoft has learned from the mistakes of Windows Vista, and Windows 7 shows it—this new OS is much faster and more stable. Lee says, "When I tried Windows 7, it

became clear to me that this was no Vista—Windows 7 is actually more stable and it runs beautifully even on older hardware."

With *Windows 7: Up and Running*, you'll learn what's new and what's changed from XP and Vista, and get advice on ways to use this system for work, entertainment, instant communication, and more. Windows 7 is poised to be a big hit, and with this handy guide, you can be up and running—and productive—with it right away.

This book will show you how to:

- * Master the user interface, including the taskbar, jump lists, desktop gadgets, Aero Shake, and notification area
- * Discover the joys of networking with HomeGroup file sharing and improved Wi-Fi
- * Tour the system's improved security, including the Action Center, User Account Control, and Credential Manager
- * Learn how to use Windows Live Essentials for messaging, photo sharing, moviemaking, emailing, and blogging
- * Get to know built-in applications such as Internet Explorer 8, Windows Media Player 12, Microsoft Paint, and WordPad
- * Learn about optional Microsoft software to enhance your Windows 7 experience

Table of Contents:

Ch. 1: Installing Windows 7
 Ch. 2: Getting Around Windows 7
 Ch. 3: File Sharing
 Ch. 4: Security
 Ch. 5: Essential Applications
 Ch. 6: Internet Explorer 8
 Ch. 7: Using Windows XP Mode
 Ch. 8: Windows 7 Tips and Tricks

Product Information

Windows 7: Up and Running, A Quick, Hands-on Introduction

By Wei-Meng Lee

O'Reilly Media, Inc.

<http://www.oreilly.com>

800-998-9938

List Price: O'Reilly Media: \$24.99

UG Price \$16.24 at: <http://www.oreilly.com/store/>



Consumer Electronics Show 2010

From Rubber Boots to 38% of the Worldwide Cell Phone Market!

By Lou Torraca, President of the TUG
(Computer User Group of the Hawaii MOAA
Chapter), www.the-tug.org, af06hi@gmail.com

From Rubber boots to 38% of the worldwide cellphone market!

Yup, that's a true fact and the name you will immediately know is Nokia which began in the last part of the 19th century as a rubber goods manufacturer. If you're really curious to know more, register and write a comment at the end of this column and I'll tell you where to get "the rest of the story."

As you can see, this is all about the Consumer Electronics show. Early numbers coming in on the event, which ran from Jan. 7 to 10 in Las Vegas, show that attendance was up year-over-year. CES attendance was calculated at more than 120,000, which was up from 98,495 for the first two days at the 2009 event.

The event also attracted 330 new exhibitors. My feet are still recuperating from all the walking...the press gaggle begins on Tuesday, 2 days before the opening, with meetings and a couple press conferences and then the official CES press event, CES unveiled where a thousand or so press and bloggers are invited to meet a hundred or so exhibitors showing off their "goodies" in the Venetian Ballroom. Then an all-day marathon of press conferences followed by the evening Digital Experience in the Mirage Ballroom where another hundred or so do a similar thing. On Thursday the rush is on as the Show



opens and it's a challenge to not run out of steam before the evening Showstoppers at the Wynn, specially if you were invited to Lunch at Pieros an excellently planned and executed smaller, more exclusive version of the others. So, what follows is mostly a listing of just a few of the many things I was able to see and checkout. Many had not been priced yet and won't be on the market for a month or two, but keep tuned, as I will continue next time with more as well as updates I may receive on these. You can also Google many of them for more info.



3D glasses would make for a great Super Bowl

Samsung, Panasonic, LG, Sony and others all debuted 3-D-capable TVs this year, but at prices of \$200 or more above other flat-screen sets, it's not certain whether customers will be buying. Besides, just think about all those glasses you'll need for your Super Bowl bash!

Microsoft Chief Executive Officer Steve Ballmer kicked off this year's keynote sessions with an upbeat take on how his company plans to not only extend its reach in the home entertainment market, but transform the sector as well.

"From the largest screen on the wall to the smallest screens in people's pockets, we are delivering the entertainment people want," Ballmer said.

The space allotted to games at this year's CE event nearly doubled from the previous year, to 13,000 square feet. This year's game-based innovations included a motion-control system from Microsoft dubbed Project Natal and a functioning guitar that can be used in "Rock Band" and "Guitar Hero".

In my opinion, The IdeaPad U1 Hybrid from Lenovo is arguably the coolest gadget at the Consumer Electronics Show.

The IdeaPad U1 gives users both a laptop and a tablet in one. Here's how: When the screen and keyboard base are attached the computers works as a 3.8 pound Windows 7 laptop running on a CULV Intel Core 2 Duo processor. But when you detach the 11.6 inch HD screen, that portion becomes a 1.6 pound tablet running on Lenovo's Skylight linux operating system and a 1Ghz Snapdragon processor. It also has 3G embedded and 16GB of solid state memory. The two pieces can work independently because they both have battery power enough for five hours. The base can actually work without the screen as long as you connect it to another display. The two piece can also work in coordination.

The base can share power with the tablet. Users can also begin a browsing session on the full laptop and continue it on the tablet. Users will have to get used to Skylight, which is more akin to the iPhone's app based operating system. And I'm still curious how sturdy the device will be when you keep attaching and detaching the parts. But this is one cool device that makes a lot of sense and lets you enjoy the perks of a tablet while still having the full keyboard and power of a laptop. The Lenovo IdeaPad U1 hybrid notebook will be available June 1 with an estimated retail price of \$999.





On the other hand, for sheer classy looks and price, the NX90Jq notebook sports not one, but two touchpads, one on each side, which should be music to any armchair DJ's ears. This is a home entertainment center-piece both in looks and specifications.

The NX90 has an Intel Core i7 CPU (either 7200QM or 8200QM), an 18-inch 1080p display, an Nvidia GeForce GT 335M graphics card, dual hard drives, and a Blu-ray drive. That config will run you \$2,499. The Asus NX90 will start at \$1,999, and be available sometime in the second quarter of 2010.

My favorite software just keeps getting better all the time! The End of Fragmentation: New Diskeeper 2010 is the only product available today that actually prevents fragmentation before it happens. Utilizing a new revolutionary technology called IntelliWrite™.

2010 benefits:

- Prevents up to 85% of all fragmentation before it can happen
- Operates invisibly without active resource conflicts.
- Boosts read/write speeds above previous limits
- Eliminates slow boot-up/patches/downloads
- Significantly reduces power consumption
- Increases productive life of servers, workstations and laptops
- Eliminates the need for defrag schedules or "wake up" times
- Cuts back "reactive administration" and Help Desk traffic
- Lowers cost of ownership and has fast return on investment.

The race to be number one in the emerging e-reader device market space is a crowded field as evidenced by product demos and displays during CES. Both tenured vendors, such as Sony, and startups, such as Copia, are developing devices with new features, improved user interfaces and a slew of accessories to meet what they hope will be a robust consumer market.

The PlasticLogic QUE was one of the most anticipated product launches of CES 2010. A lot of information had been revealed or leaked beforehand, but most of us tended to think of the QUE as an ereader oriented toward newspapers and magazines and aimed at business professionals. The reality exceeded those expectations as the QUE proReader turned out to be what PlasticLogic CEO Richard Archuleta called a "wireless briefcase." Not only does the QUE have deals in place with all of the top business periodicals, but it also syncs with Microsoft Exchange, provides "print-to-device" functionality, reads Microsoft Office documents and PDFs, and allows BlackBerry users to transfer data from their smartphones. Unfortunately, there was

another way in which the QUE exceeded expectations: the price. The two models cost \$650 and \$800. At that price, it will have to compete with tablet and slate computers.

Amazing what a small projector can do. Compact, lightweight and super mobile, the MPro110 pocket-sized microprojector opens up a whole new world of opportunity for people wanting to present or share digital content on-the-move.

The MPro110 MicroProjector is an LED-driven device that offers full VGA resolution connectivity to a range of multimedia devices. Being a 'pass-through' device, the projector requires an image source device to be connected.

Lenovo's dual screen laptop computer, W700ds is a large, \$5,000 laptop that looks as if it swallowed a netbook. It has a 17-inch main screen, from which a second, 10-inch, netbook-sized screen slides out. Almost like magic :-)

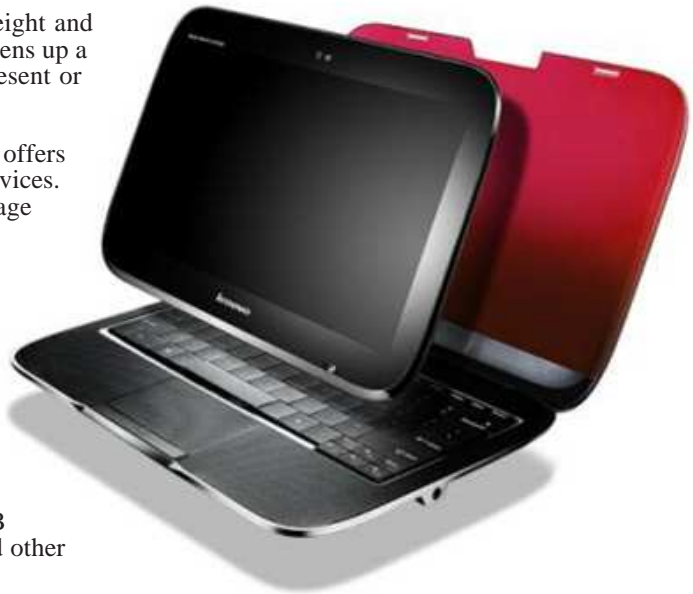
Why not recharge electronic gizmos while you carry them? BTW, this is NOT just for the ladies! The Concord Keystone 4U2ReUSE Solar Sling tote bag lets you. Made from 100-percent recycled plastic bottles, the Solar Sling features a flexible solar panel and a battery pack with USB connectors. It charges phones, cameras, music players, and other portable gadgets.

The solar cell achieves a full charge after soaking up five hours of full sunlight. The company hasn't announced pricing and availability yet.

D-Link is the first vendor to come out with a dedicated piece of hardware for the Boxee home media management software. The box is oddly shaped, but it won't take up much space when it sits next to a TV. It streams Internet video and connects wirelessly to your computer, so it as well as a long list of supported file formats; you can play virtually any kind of video on it. The Boxee Box will be available for \$199 in the second quarter of this year.

Big-Screen Skype: LG and Panasonic both announced Skype support for their connected HDTVs (equipped with Webcam accessories).

We can look forward to video chat with our loved ones in big-screen 1080p, which could mean the end of calling in underwear and PJs :-).



Now, here is a relatively small, inexpensive item that really makes sense. Flexicord™ always the right length the award-winning Flexicord™ Single-cord solution for cables up to ten feet in length.

- Shipped as a compact coiled cable
- Can be extended up to 10 feet
- Holds its shape without recoiling
- Full-size Flexicord™ cables include simple re-coiling tool
- 2009 CES Innovations Award Honoree*
- Available in HDMI, USB, S-Video, Network, Composite
- Introducing the Flexicord mini™!

And on that note, I will leave you to ponder this new electronic stuff. Have fun and be careful as usual on the 'net.

MARCH 2010						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Board of Directors Crossroads Mall @ the Food Court 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. (Members are welcome to attend)	2 Alamo Coders (DotNET - Web Development Technology) 7 - 9 P.M.	3	4 High Growth Stock Investing (adv) 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.	5 Small Business Server 8 - 10 A.M. *PRR*	6 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*
7	8 General Meeting @ 7 - 9 P.M. Presenter:	9	10	11	12	13 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*
21	22	23	24	25	26	27 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*
28	29	30	31			
ALAMOPC ORGANIZATION						
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. 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)

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. 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.



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PHONE H: _____ W: _____ FAX: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: ____/____/____ OCCUPATION: _____

EMPLOYER: _____ TITLE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

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

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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

PCA JAN05

Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

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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.

