

ComputerEdge™ Online — 07/23/10



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An advertisement for computer hardware. At the top, it says "chips and memory" in red. Below that is the Intel logo and a photograph of a black computer tower. The price "\$209" is prominently displayed in large black font. Below the price, the specifications are listed: "INTEL® Dual Core E3200", "2.4Ghz Per Core", "1GB DDR-2 MEMORY", "20X DVDR/RW and", and "320GB SATA Hard Drive".

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integration of the computer with home entertainment. But delivering digital content directly to the TV may be the future.

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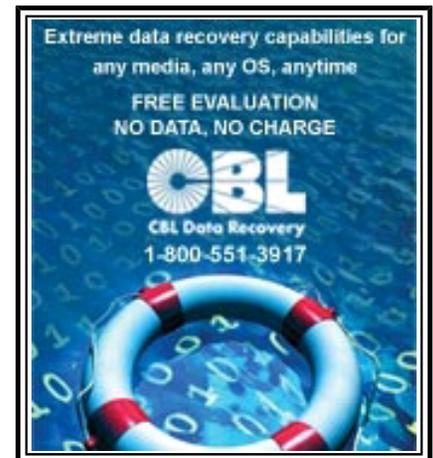
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Digital Dave

“Digital Dave answers your tech questions.” by *Digital Dave*

A reader wonders about the legitimacy of the 3,500-channel satellite TV deals; are there any actual uses for old CRT monitors, or is recycling the only option?; a reader needs help removing the evaluation version of Windows 7 on his PC.

Dear Digital Dave,

Can you tell me if the satellite TV program that you can use to get 3,500 channels from all over the world on your computer for \$49.95 is legitimate?

*David Koon
Brooksville, FL 34601*

Dear David,

In my opinion, you can probably get what is being offered with these 3,500-channel deals without paying anything beyond the price of your Internet connection—which is still required. Even then, you may be overpaying. The advertising for these services, while not totally wrong, is misleading.

First, many of them advertise HD channels—presumably meaning high definition. If you actually use the service, the quality is usually barely 320x240 quality. If you want to get a sense for how content is delivered, check out the free site WWITV (www.witv.com/).

Second, while 3,500 channels are theoretically possible—from all over the world in many languages—most do not load properly or are streaming video rather than live content. What you will not get is the same encoded content that now comes from cable systems. In other words, don't expect quality programming.

There are much better alternatives. If you want to watch programming on your computer, you can go either directly to the network Web sites (ABC (abc.go.com/watch) , CBS (www.cbs.com) , NBC (www.nbc.com/), etc) for recently aired shows or to a free aggregate site such as Hulu (www.hulu.com/). (Hulu is starting to offer Hulu Plus, which will stream current programming from networks for \$9.99 per month.) All of these have some form of advertising on them.

Another alternative—if you live on a hill or have a rooftop antenna—is to get a digital television receiver (card or USB) for your computer. These products come with software that will tune the stations and record the programming on your hard drive. There is a good deal of free digital programming offered over the airwaves.

Eventually, there will be real options to get cable-like television programming over the Internet. It will be cheaper than your current billing, although nowhere near the low one-time \$49.95 fee for the mediocre service you mention. This is inevitable—as is being demonstrated by Netflix and its Internet streaming of DVD releases for only \$8.99 per month. Over time, the major entertainment providers will opt for other delivery methods, and the Internet is the ideal medium.

Unless there is something you need that is offered by the service you mentioned, don't waste your time or money on it. It's too easy to find other free entertainment on the Web.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have several old computer monitors that still worked before I upgraded to an LCD monitor. The old CRTs have what looks like BNCs for blue-green-red, and two additional BNCs (total of five). With thoughts of recycling/reuse, can these old monitors be used for other purposes?

Research on this is confusing since I do not think they could be used for HDMI, as some Internet links seem to suggest.

*Dale
San Diego, CA*

Dear Dale,

It sounds like you have some of the connections on your monitor confused, which indicates that it would probably be best for you not to fool around with finding another use for your CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) monitors. Unless you are well educated about the inner workings and hidden mechanisms of these boxes, it is likely that you will experience mostly frustration in looking for an alternative use. These types of monitors have no market value—you can't give them away—mostly because there are not a lot of other applications for them.

I have one CRT monitor that I keep around for testing purposes in case I run into a problem with another monitor. When it finally dies, I'll recycle it. I'm sure that you can find uses on the Web (turn it into an aquarium), but most of these are not worth the time and require a reasonable level of know-how. These tasks are best left to hobbyists who revel in doing the almost impossible—if even for the most trivial reason.

It is important to recycle old CRT monitors. They contain toxic materials, such as the lead coating on the inside of the tube. If you dump them in the trash (illegal everywhere that I know), you will be adding pollutants to the local dump. Call your local recycling center to find out how to properly dispose of a monitor or old tube television. Since so many people will improperly dispose of monitors if they must pay to recycle, many locations will take them free of charge.

For some of us it is difficult to part with anything that once had value, but, believe me, it is the right thing to do. There is no point in turning your garage into a museum of past endeavors.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have been reading you for years and finally need your help. I bought a used computer that came with an evaluation copy of Windows 7 installed. Said evaluation copy has expired, and now the machine shuts down every two hours and is acting increasingly buggy.

How do I remove the Windows 7 OS and install my legal copy of XP? Windows 7 is great, but I do not want to upgrade at the moment.

*Seth Schulberg
Carlsbad, CA*

Dear Seth,

There is no specific program for removing the evaluation versions of Windows 7. Assuming that you have either backed up your files or there is nothing that you want to save, the easiest way to remove Windows 7 is to do a clean install of Windows XP. You should boot from your original XP installation discs. In the process, you will reformat the hard drive, which will eliminate Windows 7 as an option.

If you have the folder window.old on the hard drive, there is a complex procedure for restoring to the old operating system without reformatting, but it is probably not worth the effort.

Digital Dave

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Building an iPhone App

“Increase your options for making money in the mobile market.” by Wally Wang

If you've fantasized about writing your own iPhone/iPad app, be prepared for a long learning curve, but with dedication and persistence, even non-programmers can learn to create an iPhone/iPad app.

The mobile phone app market is growing like mad, with the iPhone in the lead and Android following closely behind. Further behind the pack are BlackBerry, Nokia and Palm. If you want to maximize your chances of making money with mobile phone apps, it only makes sense to start with the leader, which is the iPhone.

Besides reaching the largest mobile phone app market in the world, the iPhone has another advantage over other mobile phone platforms. Once you know how to create an iPhone app, you can easily modify your source code to create an equivalent iPad app as well, which allows you to tap into the leading mobile phone and tablet markets at the same time. (Once you master iPhone/iPad programming, you'll also know how to create Mac OS X programs too.)

To create iPhone/iPad apps, you need an Intel-based Macintosh along with a free copy of Apple's Xcode programming tools (developer.apple.com/technologies/tools/xcode.html), which you can download from Apple's Web site. Xcode actually consists of several programming tools that work together, but the three you'll use to create iPhone/iPad apps are Xcode, Interface Builder and the iPhone Simulator.

Xcode is the editor where you write your Objective-C source code to make your program do something. Interface Builder is where you design your actual user interface. The iPhone Simulator is the program that lets you test your iPhone/iPad app without having an actual iPhone or iPad connected to your computer.

This is the way you'll typically create an iPhone/iPad app. First, you'll start in Xcode and write

Objective-C code. Then you'll switch to Interface Builder to create your user interface. After designing your user interface, you have to go back to Xcode again to write more code to "connect" your user interface to your actual Objective-C source code. Only after you finish this "connection" process will your user interface work. Then you can test your app in the iPhone Simulator.

It's this Xcode/InterfaceBuilder/Xcode back-and-forth process that makes creating apps more troublesome than necessary. (Apple's latest Xcode 4 will integrate Xcode and Interface Builder into a single program to avoid switching between two different programming tools, but until that arrives sometime next year, you'll be stuck constantly switching between Xcode and Interface Builder.)

Writing Code in Xcode

When you start Xcode, you'll have two choices. First, you can choose which type of app to make—an iPhone, iPad, or Universal app. A Universal app simply lets you create two separate user interfaces for the iPhone and the iPad. That way when you compile your code, you'll create both an iPhone and iPad app at the same time.

When you're just starting out, it's best to begin with either an iPhone or iPad app so you can focus on a single user interface. The main differences between the two is that iPhone apps have much less screen space to display data and that iPad apps need the ability to rotate around, since users can hold the iPad in one of four ways.

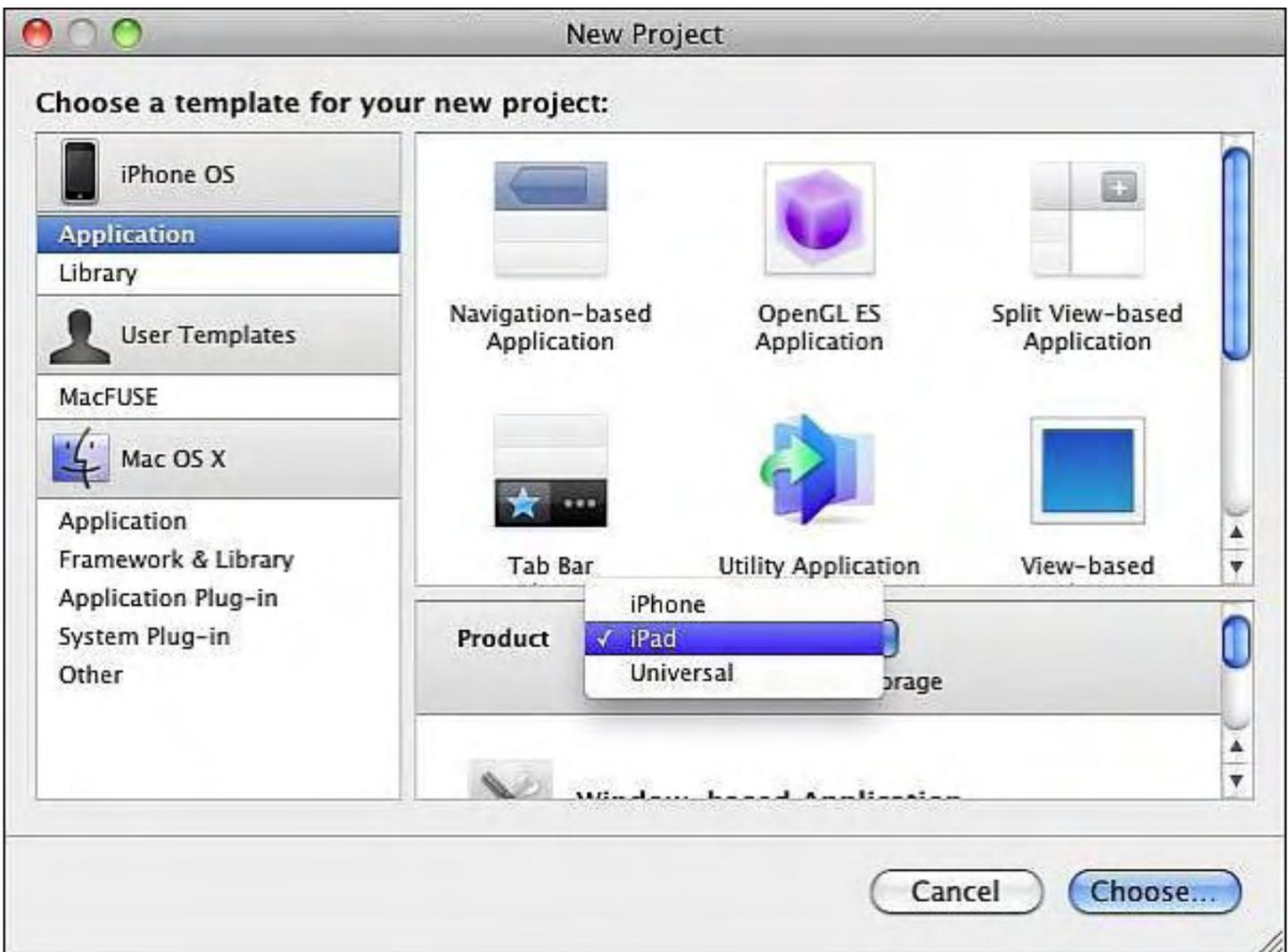


Figure 1. Xcode lets you choose a template and the type of app to create.

After you decide whether to create an iPhone, iPad or Universal app, the next step is to choose a template. These templates provide the basic framework for different types of apps, such as games or utilities. By choosing the right template, you can have Xcode create much of the necessary source code for you automatically. (Choose the wrong template and you'll wind up deleting and writing much of the source code yourself.)

In the early days of programming, a program consisted of a single file. Nowadays, programs consist of multiple files. To help organize your files, Xcode creates separate folders for your app with names such as Classes, Resources and Frameworks. These folders exist solely for your convenience in organizing your files, so you could create folders with names of your favorite pet or favorite four-letter words..

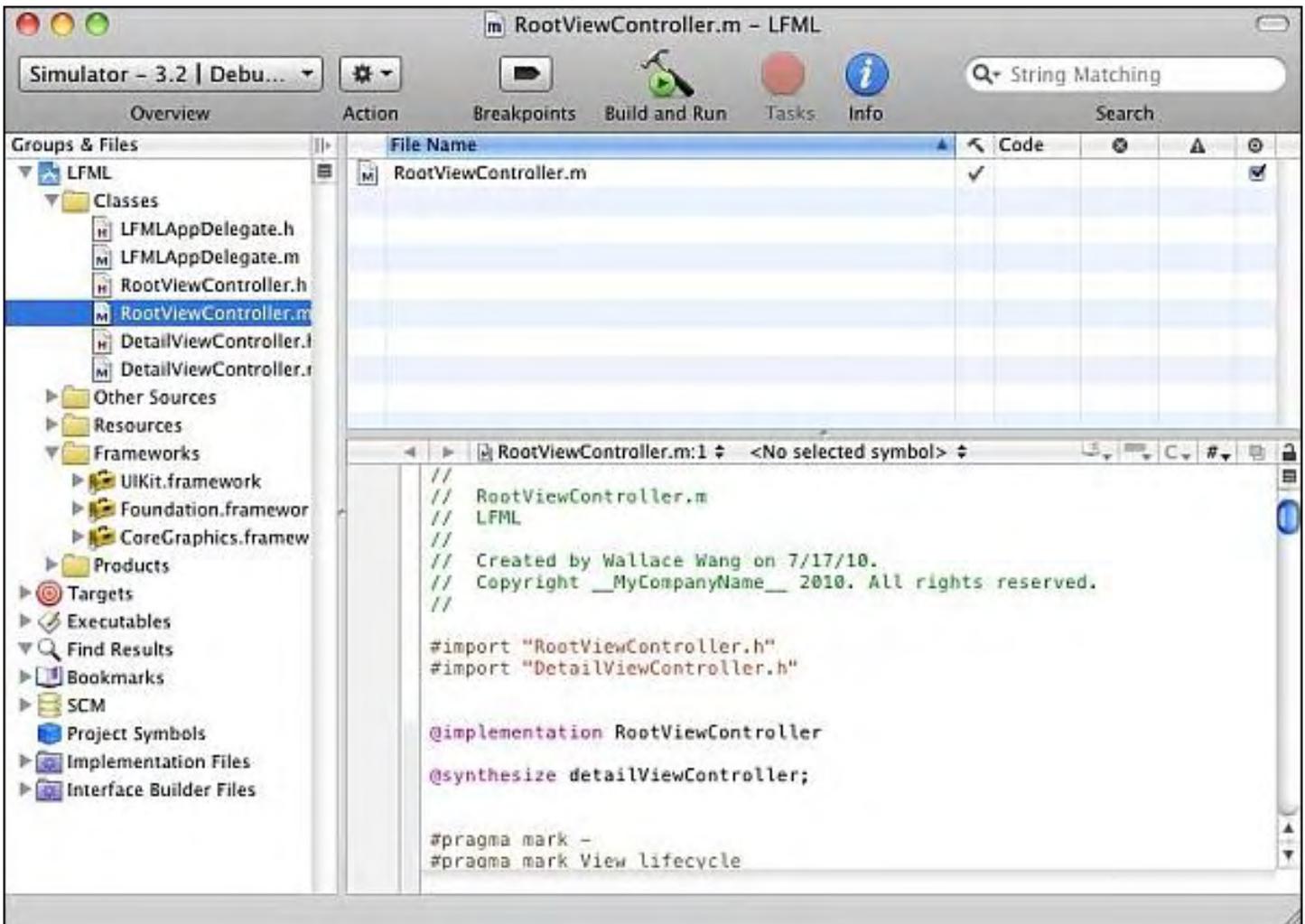


Figure 2. Xcode divides a program into multiple folders.

Clicking on a file in a folder displays the contents of that file so you can edit it. To help you spot spelling errors or custom code, Xcode color codes common program elements such as comments (in green) and Objective-C keywords (in pink).

To write code, you need to understand basic programming principles, such as declaring variables or calling object methods using the Objective-C language. If you're familiar with any version of C, such as C++ or C#, you'll find Objective-C familiar.

One pitfall of iPhone/iPad programming is that at first glance, there's no clear starting point for your program. With other programs, the first line you type is the first line that runs, but with Xcode, you divide your program into separate subprograms (methods) that run only at certain times, such as when the user taps a button on the screen or when the user rotates the iPhone or iPad on its side.

As a result, the first line of your program that runs could actually be near the bottom of your file, and the last line of code that runs could be at the top or middle of the file. It's up to you to organize your subprograms in a logical order if you want.

Rather than force you to write your entire app from scratch, Apple provides various libraries of code, called frameworks, that you can add to your program. Each framework adds different

functions to your app, such as graphics and animation (for creating games) or ads for displaying advertisements through Apple's new iAds program.

Just writing code in Xcode may create a fully functional program, but you won't be able to interact with your app without a user interface. If you want to display information on your user interface, you must create variables (called properties).

Here's where Xcode gets even more needlessly complicated. In Objective-C, like in most C-based languages, you can divide a large program into separate chunks where each program chunk consists of two files called a header (.h) file and an implementation (.m) file.

The header file simply identifies which variables that particular program chunk (called an object) can share with the rest of the program. The implementation file hides the details for how that particular program chunk (object) works.

Now, to create a variable that can display data on the user interface, you need to declare your variable in your header file, such as:

```
UILabel *detailLabel;
```

Then you need to define that variable as a property using the IBOutlet keyword such as:

```
@property (nonatomic, retain) IBOutlet UILabel *detailLabel;
```

After doing these two steps, there's still a third step left. Now you must open the implementation file and define that variable for storing data using the @synthesize keyword, such as:

```
@synthesize detailLabel;
```

If none of this makes sense, the point is that doing something as simple as declaring a variable to display information on the user interface requires three separate steps. They're not hard to follow, but they are tedious to do each time. Forget just one step, and your program won't work.

Of course, just declaring a variable to store and display data on your user interface means nothing until you actually create your user interface. At this point you have to load up Interface Builder and set Xcode aside for now.

Creating User Interfaces with Interface Builder

Interface Builder displays a blank screen and a window that displays various objects you can drag and drop on your user interface, such as buttons, sliders or labels. What makes Interface Builder confusing is its multiple windows floating around the screen with different functions and names, such as Library or Window. The trick is knowing which window provides the functions you need at any given time, but since the position of each window can be anywhere on the screen, finding the window you want can feel like a treasure hunt until you learn which features

are buried in which window.

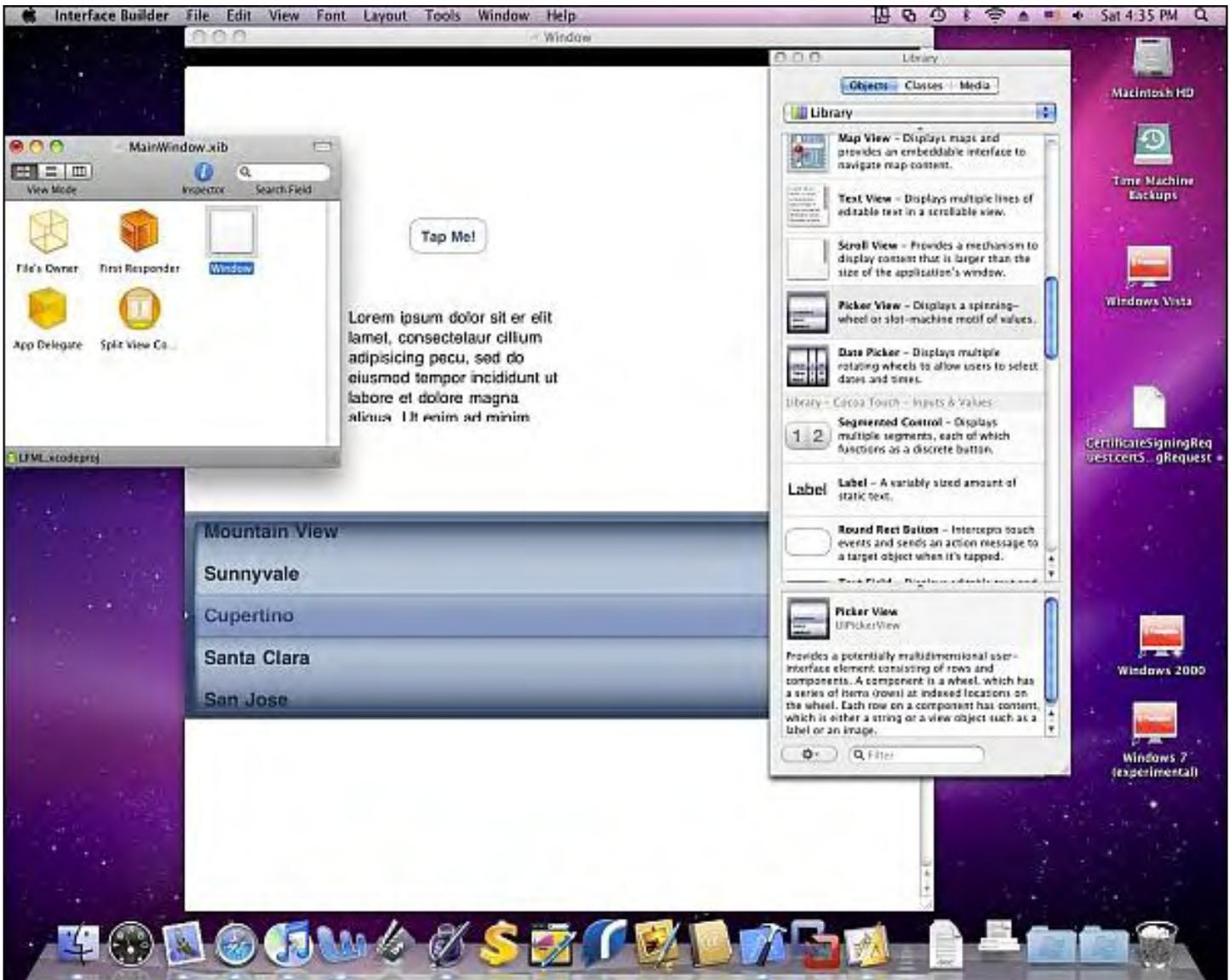


Figure 3. Interface Builder lets you design your user interface.

Dragging and dropping objects on your user interface is fairly straightforward, but your user interface won't do anything until you "connect" it to your code. To connect a user interface item to a variable that you've declared, you need to open up the window that contains an odd icon called File's Owner. Hold down the Ctrl key and drag the mouse from the File Owner's icon over the user interface item that you want to display the data in your variable.

A menu appears over your user interface item so you can choose the variable you want to use. Remember, this variable was defined using the IBOutlet keyword, so if you omit that crucial keyword, you won't be able to connect your user interface to your code.



Figure 4. Ctrl-dragging lets you assign a user interface object to display information stored in a variable.

How intuitive is it to Ctrl-drag from the File Owner's icon to a user interface object? After a while you get used to it, but initially, this may seem like the weirdest way to program in the world. Of course, you have to make sure that you declared a variable to be of the same type as the user interface object that you want to display the data.

In the previous example, the variable name is "detailLabel" and it's declared as a UILabel so that it can appear inside the Label object on a user interface:

```
UILabel *detailLabel;
```

If you wanted this variable to display data in a different user interface object, you'd have to replace the UILabel with something else, such as UITextView. Is your head starting to swim yet? Wait, it's not over.

Let's say you want to create a button for the user to tap and do something. It's easy enough to draw a button on the user interface and name it. Now you have to connect this button to your actual code.

This is the time you have to switch out of Interface Builder and get back to the Xcode window. In your header file, you have to define a subprogram using the IBAction keyword, such as:

```
-(IBAction)tapMe;
```

Then in the implementation file, you have to write the actual code inside that subprogram such as:

```
-(IBAction)tapMe
{
    NSLog(@"Hello there!");
}
```

Don't congratulate yourself just yet, because now you have to leave Xcode and go back to Interface Builder to "connect" your subprogram to your user interface object. Remember how you Ctrl-dragged to connect a variable to a user interface object? Well, when you want to connect a subprogram to a user interface object, you right-click on the user interface object to display a list of different types of events you want to respond to.

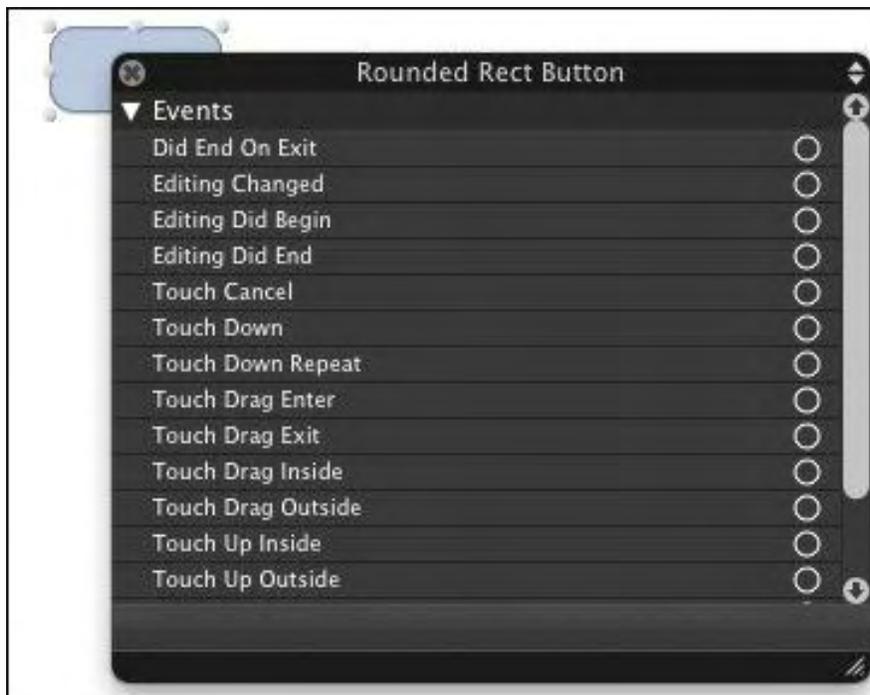


Figure 5. Right-clicking on a user interface object displays a list of events to respond to.

The most common event to respond to is called Touch Up Inside, which says that if the user taps inside the object, do something. (You can also choose other types of events, such as if the user touches inside the object, then drags a finger away from the object.)

Assuming you want to respond to a simple tap, you would click inside the radio button next to the Touch Up Inside event. Now you drag (not Ctrl-drag) to the File Owner's icon to "connect" this user interface object to your subprogram that you defined using the IBAction keyword.

Sound confusing? It is at first, but like everything involving Xcode, you get used to these odd quirks after a while. If you added a subprogram to your code, but forgot to save it, guess what? Interface Builder won't know that this subprogram even exists, so when you try to connect your user interface object to your code, you won't see the subprogram's name to connect it to.

If you're really confused at how convoluted Xcode programming can be, it's not just you. There are so many minor pitfalls that can trip you up in writing an iPhone/iPad app that if you can overcome these numerous obstacles that seem designed just to frustrate you, you'll find that writing an actual app is actually fairly easy. The hard part is simply figuring out how to do the simplest tasks in Xcode and Interface Builder.

Running an App in the iPhone Simulator

After you're done writing code in Xcode and designing and connecting your user interface to your code in Interface Builder, the final step is to test your app in the iPhone Simulator program. Just click the Build and Run option in Xcode, and if you spelled anything wrong or if your code doesn't make sense, Xcode will highlight the errors with its usual cryptic message that actually tells you how to fix the problem if you can decipher it.

Assuming your code is correct, you'll see your app running inside the iPhone Simulator program, which can simulate almost every feature of the iPhone/iPad except for tilting it.



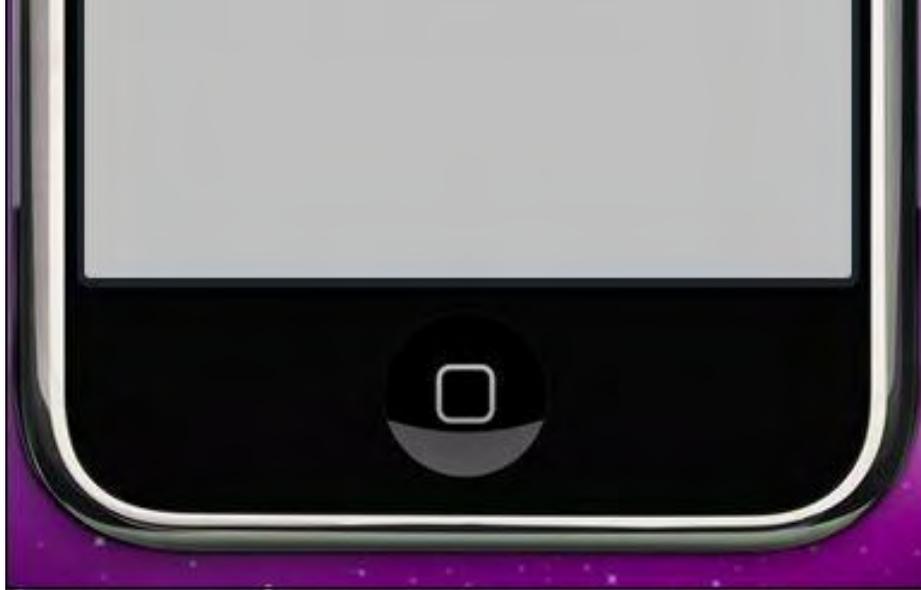


Figure 6. Running an app inside the iPhone Simulator.

When you're satisfied that your app runs correctly, you can connect a real iPhone or iPad to your Macintosh, transfer the app to your device, and test it on an actual iPhone or iPad.

After you've tested your app on a real device, then you can pay Apple's \$99 developer's fee for the privilege of submitting your app to Apple's App Store. You'll need to pay this \$99 fee annually too, so if you're hoping to get rich selling apps, you'll need to take this \$99 annual cost into account.

If you have Xcode installed on your Macintosh, you can download and run a sample iPhone app (called CESample.zip) so you can examine the source code and see how everything works. This sample app simply displays a button for the user to tap and displays a "Hello there" message on the screen.

The bottom line is that writing iPhone/iPad apps isn't necessarily difficult, but it can be incredibly frustrating with all the minor steps needed to accomplish the seemingly simplest tasks. The constant need to switch between Xcode and Interface Builder is one more big headache along with the need to write code multiple times just to define a single variable (which is more a problem with object-oriented programming languages than anything inherent in Xcode).

Despite all these barriers, don't be afraid to tackle iPhone/iPad programming. After all, other mobile phones have their own quirks in programming too, so if you're going to take the time to learn mobile phone programming, you might as well start with the iPhone/iPad market.

Of course, mobile phone programming isn't a sure-fire way to get rich. The programmer who created the original iFart app reportedly made as much as \$10,000 a day at one point, but that's the exception.

While it's possible to create a popular app that thousands of people will download every day, it's more likely that you won't get rich overnight selling apps. Besides trying to create a popular app that can earn you thousands of dollars a day, a second approach is to hire out your iPhone/iPad programming skills to others for creating custom apps.

A third option is to write apps for yourself and give them away, but include Apple's iAds in your app to display advertising. Now the more people who download your app, the more people will

likely tap on the iAd to watch it, earning you money each time someone views that ad.

If you've fantasized about writing your own iPhone/iPad app, be prepared for a long learning curve, but with dedication and persistence, even non-programmers can learn to create an iPhone/iPad app. With the growing iPhone/iPad market, your options for making money writing apps will only keep increasing over time.

In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around The Byte Buyer dangling participles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for the following books:

Microsoft Office 2010 for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987),
 Beginning Programming for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702),
 Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541),
 Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468),
 Steal This Computer Book 4.0 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050),
 My New Mac (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646),
 My New iPhone (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956),
 My New iPad (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593272758?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593272758),
 Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon Fisher and Gerald Fisher (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894),
 How to Live With a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) (www.smashwords.com/books/view/18896).

When not performing stand-up comedy or writing computer books, he likes to paper trade stocks with the video game Stock Reflex (www.plimus.com/jsp/download_trial.jsp?contractId=1722712&referrer=wwang), using the techniques he learned from a professional Wall Street day trader.

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method." (www.15minutemoviemethod.com/) Wally can be reached at wally@computoredge.com.

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iPhone Application Development--A Reality Check

“Success will take money, patience and a lot of work.” by Pete Choppin

Developers are creating iPhone apps by the thousands. But before you jump into the fray, consider some sobering realities about the App Store and the app business.



It's the same story I've heard dozens of times before, and it's called "get rich quick." This is really no different than the gold rush of 1849 or the dot-com boom of the 1990s. A simple Google search with the words "develop iPhone apps" will yield almost nine million results, most of which talk about how simple and lucrative it is to develop your own app, put it on the App Store, and in seconds you will be raking in thousands of dollars.

The reality, however, is a little more discouraging. Here are a few numbers taken from New Mac Online (www.newmaconline.com/2010-01-28-apple-iphone-theres-an-app-for-that/) that ought to scare you, or

at the very least cause you to raise an eyebrow:

- The number of active apps available at the App Store: 134,000.
- Every 2.5 minutes another iPhone app is submitted.
- If you spent five minutes on each app, it would take you a full year without stopping to try each one.
- 34.4 million iPhones are sold throughout the world (personally, I consider this a conservative estimate).
- More than three billion apps have been downloaded from the App Store by iPhone and iPod touch users worldwide.

But even with these statistics, developers are still developing apps—by the thousands. Maybe it is because there are apps they think you would need and could benefit other people, or maybe it's just the millions of dollars that are made from iPhone app sales.



A quick Google search will provide you with thousands of listings about iPhone app development, but there are very few that actually outline the positives. Apparently, the Web has become the biggest whining collaboration in history. Let's address some of the main complaints and what the real truth is so that you can see beyond the complaining.

The First Approval

The first issue is that people are having trouble getting their apps past the first approval process. OK, this is fairly easy. Obviously, there is

something wrong with the application to cause the rejection. Apple has specific policies that are meant to be followed, such as no foul language and no using the iPhone icon (or anything that resembles an iPhone icon—including a rectangle). It may seem stupid to some people, but the reality is that obviously there are other developers that are getting their iPhone apps approved because there is an unreal amount of apps to choose from in the App Store. Additionally, many people are ignoring the e-mail messages that they are getting from the reviewers. These messages are sent when an app doesn't get through the first stage in the review process, and are designed to help developers see the mistakes, correct them, and resubmit the app.

The Second Approval

The next major issue is with the time that it takes to get an iPhone app approved. Well, quite frankly, you have no choice. If you think about the bigger picture, you will understand that Apple has an understaffed review department. The people they do have can handle only so much at once. Sending 50 thousand "What's going on?" e-mails does not make things any better. It is understandable that you are impatient, but only to a certain degree. Let's say, for example, that you submitted an app and a week goes by. You haven't heard anything, and you start e-mailing. It's only been a week. The review process for an app is rather lengthy; reviewers need to check out everything, down to the smallest details, such as loading times. Have a little patience. If two-and-a-half to three weeks has gone by without a word, then you can start politely sending requests for progress updates.

Cost

The cheapest way to make an iPhone app is "Do it Yourself," and the second cheapest way is to "Do it with Friends." Otherwise you're going to have to use the services of a registered iPhone developer. Qualified registered developers are in short supply and programming costs are not cheap; some developers have long backlogs.

The real answer is that the cost for creating a new iPhone app depends on the features you need incorporated in the app and how you want the app to be used. Here are three levels of iPhone app development that illustrates this:

1. Barebones basic iPhone apps are simple applications that have minimal features. This type of iPhone app may be "similarly different" to another app already on the market. You can find thousands of apps in this category in the iTunes App Store—such as various clocks, bobbleheads, joke apps and many more!

Cost—\$1,000 to \$10,000 or more depending on the needed specifications.

2. Mid-range custom iPhone apps incorporate more features and therefore incur more programming costs. An example of a mid-range custom iPhone application would be a useful tool like Track My Shipments. These mid-level apps will have expanded features with multiple screens, interactive play, Web connectivity and maybe some simple social networking aspects.

Cost—\$15,000 to \$50,000 or more depending on the features.

3. Upper level, more complex custom iPhone apps are more sophisticated types of iPhone applications such as a multiplayer game with many levels. It could be a corporate

promotional app such as Coke's Spin the Bottle Game, which leads players back to a dedicated Web site for a marketing campaign with user metrics. It could be a useful business tool such as the FedEx Mobile app that allows users to automatically find the closest FedEx location with the iPhone's built-in GPS function, as well as full tools for shipping and tracking for air and ground.

Cost—\$50,000 to \$75,000 to \$100,000 or more depending on the complexity and related tie-ins required.

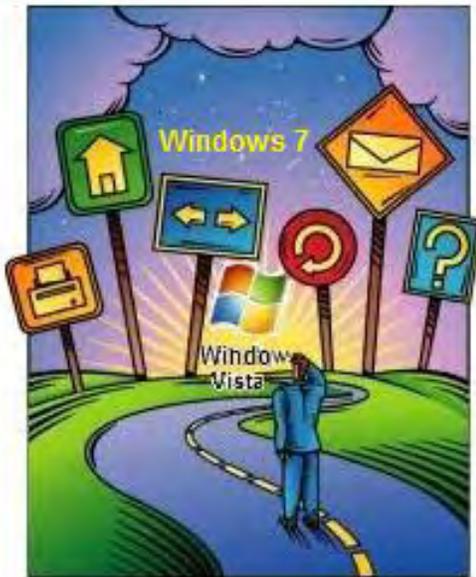
There are many ways to keep the costs down on your iPhone app project. First is to have a well-thought-out plan with requirements for your application. Second is to work with a developer that has experience and has learned to save money through repetition. Third is to work closely with the developer to keep the timeline on a tight schedule.

If you're thinking about getting into iPhone app development, I would say proceed with caution. There are many things to consider when building iPhone apps and the harsh reality is that it will take money, patience and a lot of work. But definitely proceed. The gold rush should be going on for a while longer!

Pete Choppin has been an IT Professional for over 15 years. He currently works as a network and systems administrator for a company called Albion based in Clearfield, Utah. He has experience in all types of hardware, software, and networking technologies. He is proficient in many operating systems including Linux, Windows and Macintosh. His interests include cooking, sci-fi, computers and technology, and Web design—a semi-professional endeavor, having designed Web sites in the dental field, e-commerce businesses, and for the Boy Scouts of America.

Pete has been a devout reader of *ComputerEdge* since 1990 and contributes regularly to featured articles as well as the Linux Lessons section of *ComputerEdge*. He can be contacted at pchoppin@comcast.net but prefers to have comments on *ComputerEdge* articles submitted to the editor and posted for the benefit of all readers.

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Windows Tips and Tricks

Windows Tips and Tricks

“Windows Media Center: An Adequate Solution?” by Jack Dunning

Windows Media Center offers a glimpse into the future of the integration of the computer with home entertainment. But delivering digital content directly to the TV may be the future.

The idea of using your computer to drive your television viewing is in its early stages. Trying to decipher which way the market will move is mostly mass confusion. Microsoft has not done much to help. If all you want to do is watch local television on your Windows 7 computer, then Windows Media Center along with a digital television receiver and a decent antenna will provide you with local broadcast stations. However, the assumption must be that *all* you want to do is watch television programming on your computer. For many people, that will not be the case.

The big money does not go into the computer monitor. That is saved for the entertainment television set—often HDTV—which is the center of family viewing. A computer monitor will not suffice for that multi-person function, which means that any software that doesn't *easily* deliver the programming to the television will be left in the dust. This is the most likely case for Windows Media Center.

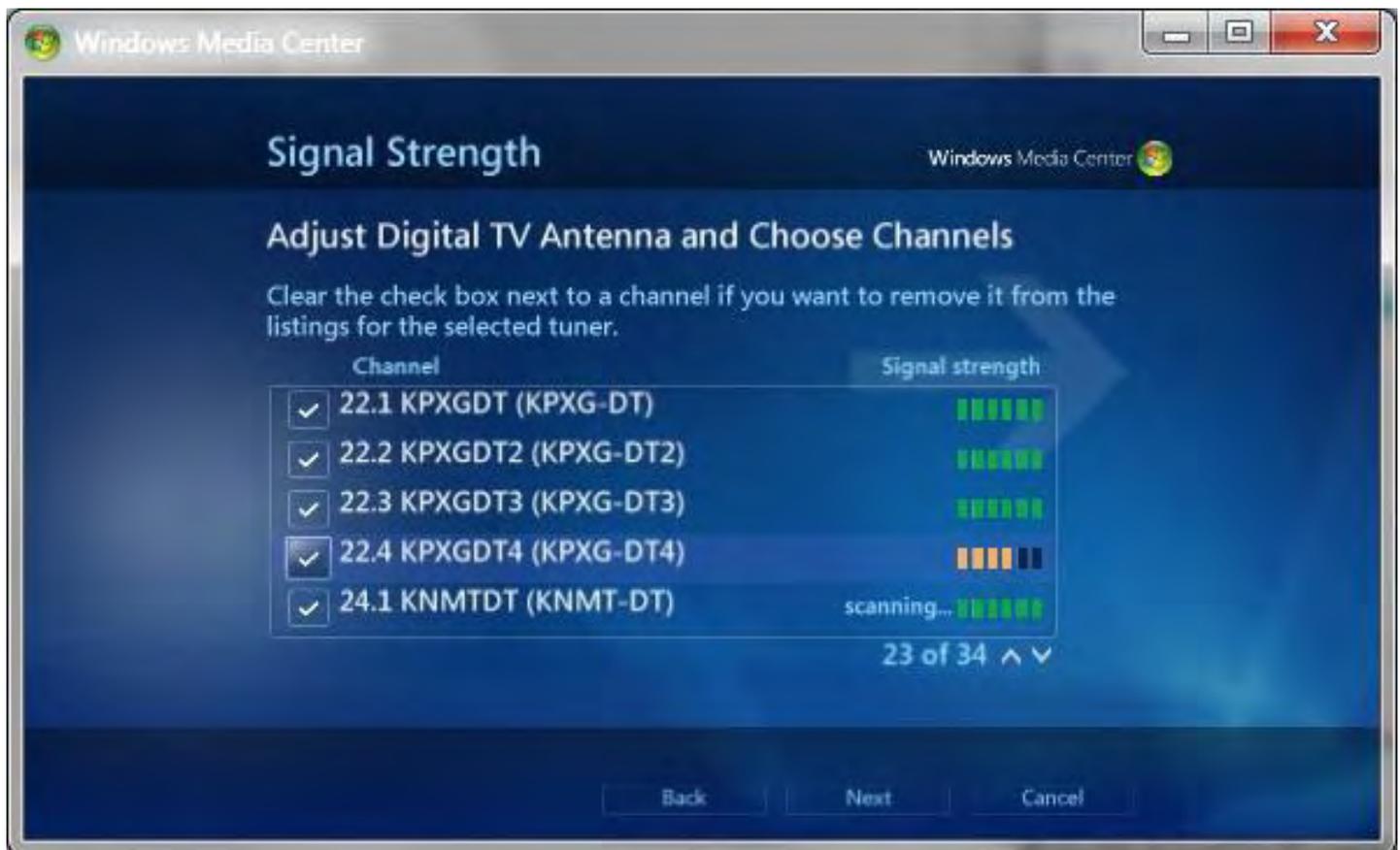
Windows Media Center does have a function for delivering to other media devices called Media Center Extender. The problem is that, other than the Xbox, there are not very many devices that support Extender—making the feature in most cases useless. You will need to either directly connect your television to your computer or record programs, then find a way to play them back on the television. The latter solution is complicated by the fact that playable formats are not easily converted from Window Media Center. Microsoft has some work to do. As for placing your computer next to the television for a connection, who wants to do that? Next week, I'll address alternative devices for getting computer media on the television.

If you are planning to use your computer for watching local television, Windows Media Center can do a pretty good job. You can download a guide to the programming in the local area, which helps in the scanning and tuning local stations. If you want to tailor the settings—which you probably will since not all stations are likely to come in—there are settings that can be accessed via Tasks/Settings (see Figure 1).



Adjustments for live television settings in Window Media Center in Windows 7.

When you select TV from the list, you are given the options Recorder, Guide, TV Signal, Configure Your TV or Monitor, Language, Audio and Closed Captioning. The Guide option allows you to add, edit and remove channels from the listing—including the Internet TV channels provided by Microsoft. If you select TV Signal, then you will have the opportunity to scan for more channels, check channel signal strength, or set up the TV signal. When checking for signal strength, you can add and remove the channels from the guide with a click of a check box (see Figure 2).



Channels can be added and removed from the guide with the check of a box in Window Media Center in Windows 7.

When you do get a good signal and have programming running, Windows Media Center acts as a DVR (Digital Video Recorder). It immediately starts recording the program just in case you want to skip back to review something. With the click of the Record button, you can record the program for later viewing. If you click a future show in the guide, you will be given the option of recording the program or the series. You can record only one program at a time with one receiver.

While I'm not enamored with Windows Media Center, it does offer a glimpse into the future of the integration of the computer with home entertainment. I'm sure that there are more products on the market that do a better job of adding your home television to the system. Next week, I'll talk about the type of device that may beat out the computer as the center of home entertainment.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is www.computoredge.com. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoredge.com

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“The Growth of Apple” by Wally Wang

The Macintosh's market share will likely continue rising at the expense of market share for Windows. Also, the problem with the iPhone 4's antenna; the MicroCell may be the answer to better indoor iPhone reception; some Apple critics are simply in denial; an iPad app lets priests celebrate Mass; and a tip on pressing Command Tab to display a list of open program icons in the middle of the screen.

A long time ago, Apple had about 2 percent market share. Then it jumped up to 4 percent. Slowly it climbed to 6 percent and now, according to Gartner (www.drivershq.com/News/Device-Manufacturers/Mac-sales-hit-new-company-heights-in-market-share/105/727.aspx), the Macintosh's market share has reached 9.8 percent.

Sales of Macintosh computers continue to grow (tech.fortune.cnn.com/2010/03/15/u-s-mac-sales-up-39-in-jan-and-feb/), which means that within the next year, the Macintosh should capture at least 10 percent of the operating system market. Since sales of the Macintosh show no signs of reversing any time soon, the Macintosh's market share will likely continue rising at the expense of market share for Windows.

Of course, Windows XP still maintains a commanding 74 percent lead as the primary operating system in corporations (www.hexus.net/content/item.php?item=25558). Most businesses likely skipped Vista and may move on to Windows 7, but the overall trend in the corporate world is to stick with Windows XP. Microsoft will even let users downgrade from Windows 7 (news.cnet.com/8301-13860_3-20010285-56.html) to Windows XP until the year 2014, which ensures that Windows XP will still maintain a large share of corporate computers.

The problem with corporations sticking with Windows XP for so long is that they have even less incentive to switch to either the Macintosh or Windows 7. After all, if something works, why bother changing it?

Eventually corporations will have to abandon their Windows XP machines, and that's the time when they'll need to consider upgrading to Windows 7 (or Windows 8 if they wait long enough) or the Macintosh. By that time, switching from Windows XP to another operating system will be such a drastic change that Windows 7 will lose part of its advantage of being a familiar and compatible upgrade path.

While Windows 7 may provide a seemingly comfortable upgrade path from Windows XP, more corporations are now using iPhones and iPads (www.electronista.com/articles/10/07/16/ipad.mac).

getting.deep.footprint.at.work), which will lead many of these corporations to consider switching to the Macintosh as well. Toss in the growing number of college graduates using the Macintosh, iPhone, or iPad, and there's a good chance that at least some corporations will switch from Windows XP to the Macintosh.

Now add in the ability to turn every Windows XP PC into a virtual machine and run it within a Macintosh using Parallels or Fusion, and the barriers to the Macintosh don't seem so imposing after all.

The increasing market share of the Macintosh shows no signs of stopping or reversing, and the iPad's growth even threatens sales of Windows laptops and netbooks (news.cnet.com/8301-13924_3-20010046-64.html). As more people use Macintosh computers, iPhones and iPads, there will be new opportunities for consultants, programmers and trainers while similar consultants, programmers and trainers in the Windows world will have to battle for customers in a steadily shrinking Windows market. If you make money from computers, where would you rather be? In the growing market of Apple products (Macintosh, iPhone and iPad) or the stagnating world of Windows? For right now, you should actually be in both.

Just as knowing only English limits your job opportunities compared to someone who's bilingual, knowing about Apple products in addition to Windows can open more opportunities as well. Even if you're an exclusive Macintosh user, take some time to learn about Windows. After all, your next job may involve helping a company switch from Windows to the Macintosh, and given the trends, those types of jobs may become more numerous in the future.

The Problem with the iPhone 4's Antenna

The iPhone is notorious for dropping phone calls. When I got the iPhone 3, it dropped calls regularly. When I upgraded to the iPhone 3GS, the number of dropped calls plummeted to the point where I can't recall dropping a single call. With the iPhone 4, I still haven't dropped a single call, although dropped calls still affect many iPhone users.

The problem is that if you hold the iPhone 4 in such a way that your hand covers up the bottom left side of the iPhone, it can weaken the signal and risk dropping a call. Try as I might, I still can't get my iPhone 4 to drop a call while holding it in this so-called "Death Grip" position to kill a phone call. However, enough people complained of this problem that Apple initially claimed that the problem had to do with the signal strength displayed on the screen.

According to Apple, the signal strength indicator gave out false readings, so covering up the bottom portion of its antenna with your hand would falsely indicate that signal strength had dropped. Of course, some people really did experience dropped calls, so that explanation didn't fully dismiss the problem.

Finally as this problem continued to grow, Microsoft's Kevin Turner claimed that the iPhone 4 was "like Apple's Vista" (www.toptechnews.com/story.xhtml?story_id=1000046MBXL8&full_skip=1). Essentially this is like Microsoft saying, "The iPhone 4 problem is so bad that it's something Microsoft would have done."

Consumer Reports discovered that if you placed a piece of duct tape over this antenna weak spot, it would eliminate this problem. Despite this trivial fix, Consumer Reports rated the iPhone 4

highly, but still refused to recommend it. Finally Apple held a press conference to announce that the iPhone did lose signal strength when held a certain way, but that all mobile phones experienced this same problem (although no other mobile phone seems to have gotten much scrutiny over this issue before the iPhone 4).

Apple also said that this problem of dropped calls is limited to a small percentage of users and that if they're not happy, they can return the iPhone 4 for a complete refund (although they'll still be stuck with their AT&T two-year contract).

To appease current iPhone 4 users, Apple will also offer free bumper cases that will cover up the area that causes signal strength to drop. With a case covering this weak spot, iPhone 4 users should experience no loss of signal strength no matter how they hold their phone.

By offering full refunds and free bumper cases, Apple hopes to minimize the public relations damage caused by this antenna problem. If you're one of the unlucky few who have problems with dropped calls, try a different iPhone 4, get the free bumper case, or just return the whole thing for your money back.

Despite this antenna problem, millions of people continue buying the iPhone 4 without returning them en masse, so apparently a large majority of users are happy with the phone. On July 30, Apple plans to start selling the iPhone internationally, so we'll see if Apple has redesigned the iPhone 4 or if international users experience the same problems with dropped calls that can't be attributed directly to AT&T.

Getting Better iPhone Reception

The biggest complaint against the iPhone is AT&T's spotty coverage. Unfortunately, this problem isn't easy for Apple to fix since it depends entirely on the carrier. In San Francisco, AT&T can't build new cell towers without a three-year approval process (compared to a three-week approval process in Texas).

One way AT&T is trying to plug the gaps in its coverage is through a device called the MicroCell (www.wireless.att.com/learn/why/3gmicrocell). Essentially this MicroCell plugs into your high-speed Internet connection (such as a cable or DSL line) and acts like a miniature cell tower for your exclusive use in your home or office.



Figure 1. The MicroCell acts like a private cell tower.

Using the MicroCell still burns off minutes from your iPhone's calling plan, but otherwise there's no extra charge to use it. If you make a call inside your house, your iPhone connects to the MicroCell. If you step out of the house and out of range of the MicroCell, your iPhone will reconnect to AT&T's network automatically.

Unfortunately, if you make a call outside and then walk into your home or office, your iPhone won't switch to the MicroCell. Instead, you'll have to hang up and re-dial to connect through the MicroCell.

For a limited time, AT&T is even giving away MicroCells for free by invitation only. Before the MicroCell, I could never use my iPhone inside the house. Now with the MicroCell, I can finally make and receive calls on my iPhone anywhere in the house.

If AT&T didn't send you an invitation for a free MicroCell, you can still buy one for \$149.99. For anyone who needs perfect cell phone coverage inside a building, then the MicroCell may be the answer to better coverage (at least until you walk out of its range).

Denying Reality

When Windows enthusiasts compare PCs with Intel or AMD processors, they can objectively evaluate each one with little antagonism toward either company's products. However, when you ask many Windows enthusiasts to compare an Apple product to a similar Microsoft competitor, suddenly all objectivity goes out the window.

For some people, switching to an Apple product (Macintosh, iPhone, or iPad) makes the most sense. For others, sticking to a Microsoft product (Windows 7) might make more sense, but you'll never know unless you honestly evaluate the capabilities of each.

Denying and avoiding the facts is a favorite tactic of anti-Apple critics, and one of the more vocal anti-Apple critics is Rob Enderle (online.wsj.com/article/SB121738346889295815.html) of TechNewsWorld, who pretends to be an objective technology journalist, but who was once hired by Dell as a consultant for Dell's MP3 player.

Obviously someone who has been paid by Dell will likely say good things about Dell's products while disparaging competing products such as those from Apple. Now Rob Enderle has written a curious article that suggests that the failure of other companies to compete against Apple may be due to sabotage (www.technewsworld.com/story/Apple-Didnt-Beat-Microsoft-Robbie-Bach-Did-Apples-Secret-5th-Column-70092.html?wlc=1279323483).

Rob does admit that his accusations of sabotage are more likely to be fiction than fact, but he still offers it as one unlikely possibility to explain why Apple is succeeding where others consistently fail. According to Rob's theory, Dell's MP3 player and Palm's Pre failed not because they were poorly designed products that nobody wanted, but because Apple has saboteurs within these companies who made sure the products failed.

Apple's so-called saboteurs even get the blame for Microsoft's failed Zune MP3 player and the Microsoft Kin phone, which Microsoft yanked just 48 days after launching with a million-dollar advertising campaign. Rob's theory is that no company could fail so consistently and spectacularly against Apple unless they had active resistance from within, denying the more likely fact that other companies simply aren't making products that people want, as Apple does.

This saboteur theory may appeal to anti-Apple critics who prefer the comfort of fantasy rather than the cold shock of reality that simply evaluating and trying an Apple product might do to their belief system.

Of course, Windows enthusiasts have nothing to lose (except their belief system against Apple) by trying and objectively evaluating an Apple product. Unfortunately, as religious-inspired terrorists have proved, belief systems can be far stronger than reality no matter how twisted and convoluted your thinking must be to deny facts that contradict your ideas about how the world should really work.

As Apple products continue grabbing market share, expect to hear more bizarre theories for why Apple keeps succeeding. The more outlandish the theories, the more desperate you'll know people are getting to avoid thinking for themselves.

In the future, we can all look back and laugh at those reality-deniers, such as this 2006 story about Palm Computing's CEO, Ed Colligan (www.palminfocenter.com/news/9110/colligan-laugh-off-iphone-competition).

"Responding to questions from New York Times correspondent John Markoff at a Churchill Club breakfast gathering Thursday morning, Colligan laughed off the idea that any company—including the wildly popular Apple Computer—could easily win customers in the finicky smartphone sector.

'We've learned and struggled for a few years here figuring out how to make a decent phone,' he said. 'PC guys are not going to just figure this out. They're not going to just walk in.'"

The iPad App for Mass

One obvious use for the iPad is to read books. However, there's more to replacing paper with an e-book. The Rev. Paolo Padrini, a priest in Italy, has created an iPad app that lets priests celebrate Mass with an iPad on the altar instead of the regular Roman missal (www.marketwatch.com/video/asset/ipriest-the-future-of-catholicism/C8967B5B-E86A-49F1-A834-1FFC2E71C827).

"Paper books will never disappear," Padrini claims, but he also added that "we shouldn't be scandalized that on altars there are these instruments in support of prayer."

The iPad app contains the complete missal—everything said and sung during Mass throughout the liturgical year. Upgrades will include audio as well as commentaries and suggestions for homilies in addition to musical accompaniment

If a priest can develop a unique app for the iPad, certainly it's possible for people in other fields to develop their own unique apps customized for their line of work. Think of simple apps that only someone in your field might need. Giving away such an app can be free publicity for you or your company, or selling it can capture a unique niche market with few competitors.

The iPad offers a unique opportunity for anyone, not just dedicated programmers, to create specialized apps that can benefit others. Just as Paolo Padrini discovered, if you create an app to solve your own needs, you'll likely find that it can help others as well.

* * *

The most common way to switch between open programs on the Macintosh is to click that program's icon on the Dock. Another way is to press Command+Tab to display a list of open programs. Then just click on the icon you want.



Figure 2. Pressing Command+Tab displays a list of open program icons in the middle of the screen.

Unlike the Dock, which shows both open and closed programs, the Command+Tab method only displays icons of open programs, so the list is much shorter and easier to navigate.

In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around The Byte Buyer dangling participles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for the following books:

Microsoft Office 2010 for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987),
Beginning Programming for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702),
Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541),
Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468),
Steal This Computer Book 4.0 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050),
My New Mac (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646),
My New iPhone (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956),
My New iPad (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593272758?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593272758),
Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon Fisher and Gerald Fisher (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894),
How to Live With a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) (www.smashwords.com/books/view/18896).

When not performing stand-up comedy or writing computer books, he likes to paper trade stocks with the video game Stock Reflex (www.plimus.com/jsp/download_trial.jsp?contractId=1722712&referrer=wwang), using the techniques he learned from a professional Wall Street day trader.

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method." (www.15minutemoviemethod.com/) Wally can be reached at wally@computoredge.com.

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Rob, The Computer Tutor

Rob, The Computer Tutor:
Tech Solutions with
Microsoft Word
“More Word Labels” by Rob Spahitz

Last week, we started looking at how to print addresses on labels. We explored label-makers and printing directly onto envelopes. This week we explore sheets of labels.

Last week, we started looking at how to print addresses on labels. We explored label-makers and printing directly onto envelopes. This week we explore sheets of labels.

When printing labels on sheets, you'll typically be printing on sheets that have labels attached to a separate sheet, usually on a standard letter-size page. The big name in label sheets is Avery, and it offers hundreds of different types depending on your needs. Some examples include one giant label that takes up almost the entire sheet. Another is return address labels with about 50 per page. And, of course, there are regular mailing labels, which will be our focus today.

Using Word 2010, let's create a new document. Proceed to the File menu tab and select New and then the Label folder, as seen in Figure 1.

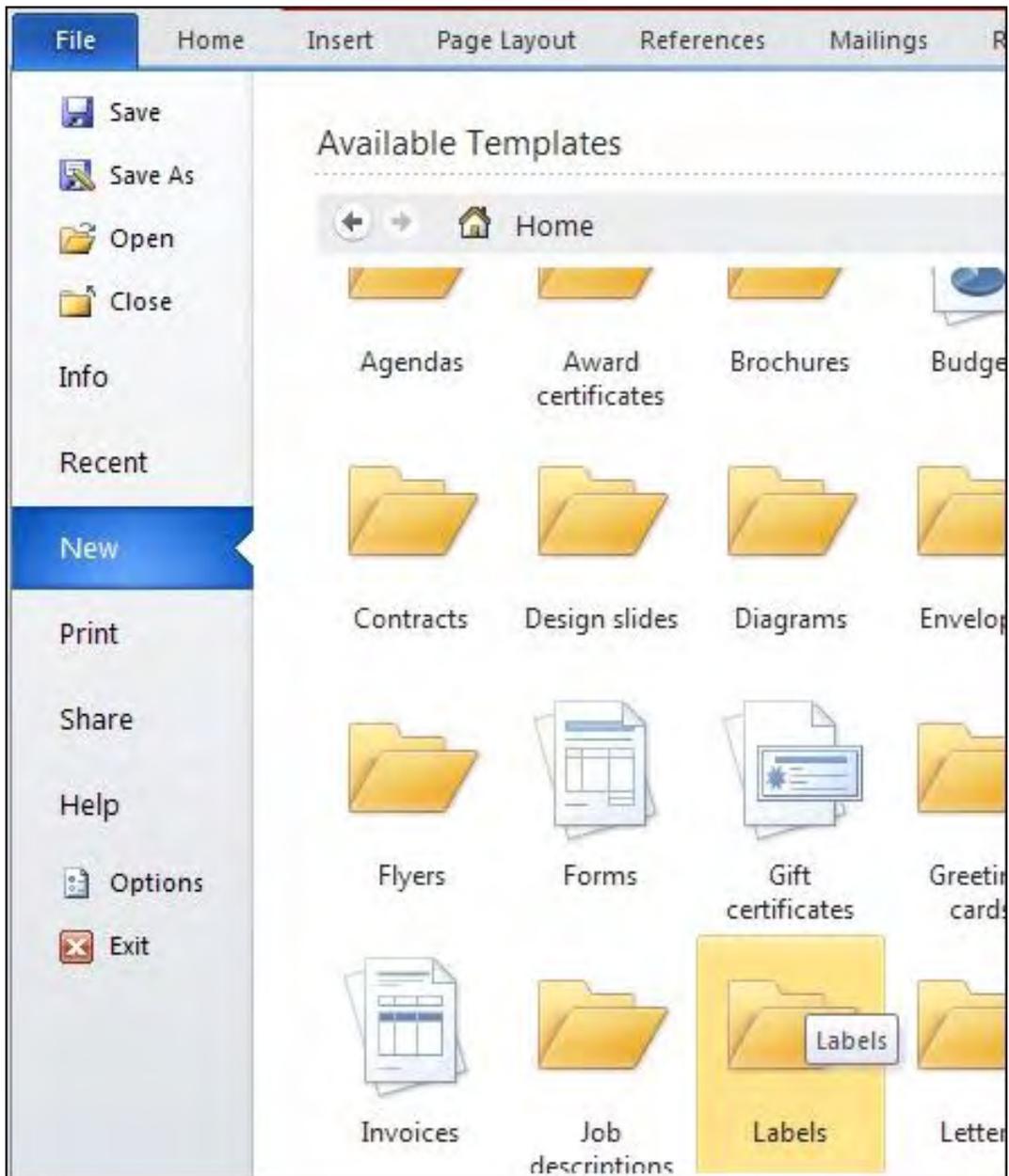


Figure 1. New Labels Document.

When you select that, Word will connect across the Internet to load a selection of choices from the Microsoft Web site. You will get additional choices, as seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Label Templates.

Choose the Mailing and Shipping label. You will get three additional folder choices: Business, Holiday and Home. See, there are just so many choices for labels (many are just fancy versions of the same thing, but feel free to explore). Let's choose Business since we will be mailing resumes and business cards (rather than Home, which includes things like wedding and graduation-themed labels). Locate the standard "Mailing labels (30 per sheet, works with Avery 5160, 8160)" as seen in Figure 3.

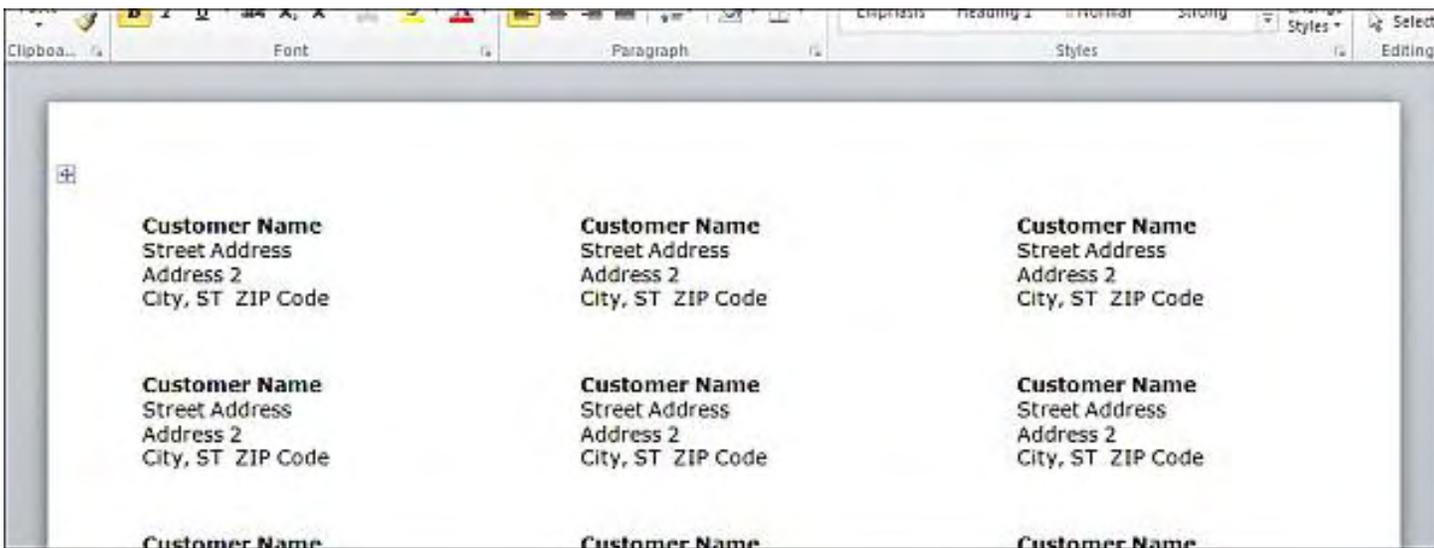


Figure 3. Standard Mailing Labels Choice.

When you click on that, you will see a sample in the right panel. Below that, click on the Download button to grab a copy and load it into Word, as seen in Figure 4.

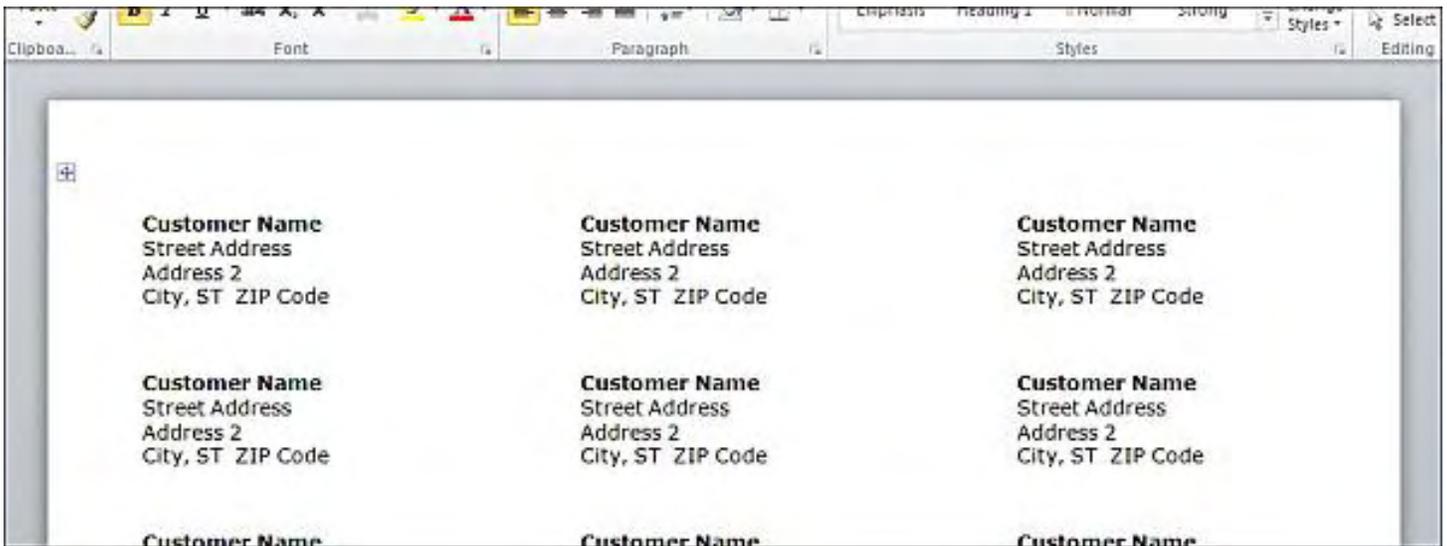


Figure 4. Label Selection.

When we worked with business cards, we loaded a template similar to this. The main difference is that we had to manually copy and paste to replicate the cards. We reworked these using Word Fields so we only had to change the first one and all the rest updated with a simple command. If these were return address labels, that would be a good thing to follow. However, for mailing labels, you probably want every one to be different, so we're just about ready to go.

Go ahead and update the first label with information that is appropriate for mailing. Note, however, that unless you are sending out 30 letters, you will end up wasting a lot of labels. Let's look at a few solutions to this.

Setting Up Label Pages

First, notice that when you select any label, you are really inside a table. Near the top right of the tab menu you have the new Table Tools menu, which includes Design and Layout tabs, as we previously discussed when we explored Tables. Since this template has the labels inside a table, each label is really just a grid cell.

So one option is to simply select the whole table (click on the little plus in the top-left corner of the table when selected, as seen in Figure 4 above), and press the Delete key to delete the contents of each cell. The problem with this is that you'll lose all of the formatting and won't be able to easily tell where the labels are located without clicking around to find the cells. Let's look for some better options.

Another option is to clear the contents and add borders. This lets you see where to enter your information. However, you still lose the formatting.

Another option is to change the color of the contents. This keeps the formatting intact, but still wastes the labels, as they print colored text. Where this becomes more useful is when you change the color of the text to white. When you print white text, most printers will simply print nothing. That means that you can change any particular label by changing the color back to black and adjusting the text. Again, you may have trouble locating the labels, so you may want to add borders.

Related to this, I like to change the color of my labels to a very light gray. Specifically, I use foreground color "White, Background 1, Darker 5%" as shown in Figure 5.

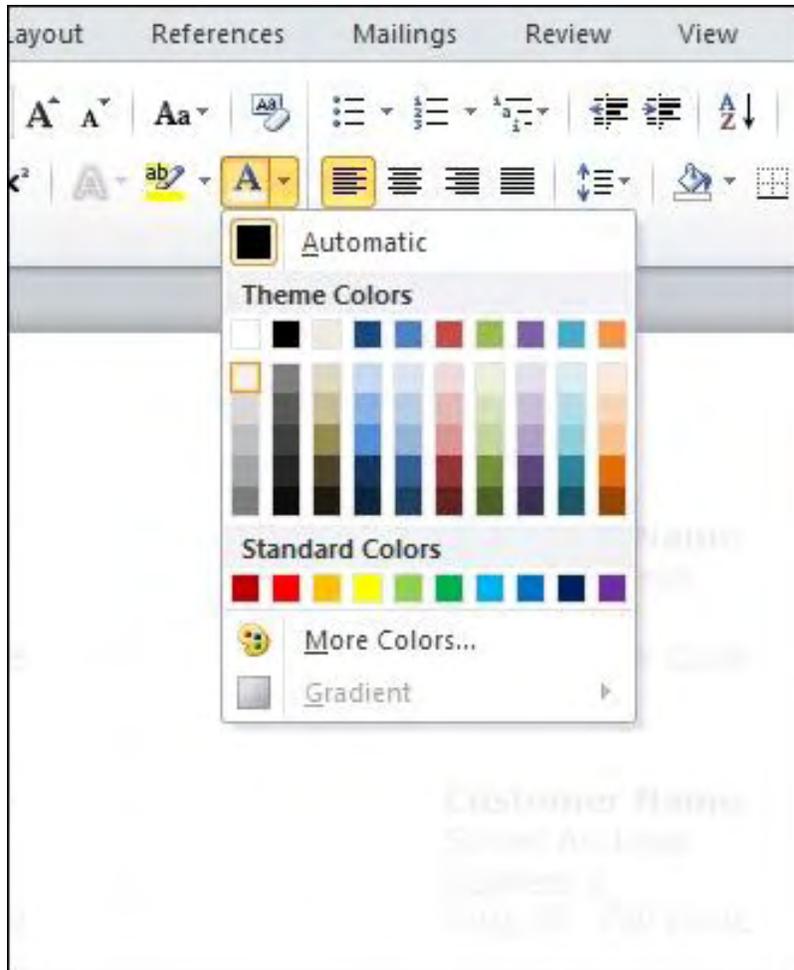


Figure 5. Selecting Light Gray Text.

Depending on your monitor or printout, you may not be able to see that the text is there in Figure 5. Likewise, you may want to go slightly darker, but the point is that it should be very difficult to see. How does this help? Well, if you keep all of the labels very light, you can still find them, but they will print very lightly on the label sheet. When you are ready to print a label, simply change the color to black, enter the information and print.

The very first time you print on this label sheet, it will print the whole page. However, assuming that you set up four labels in black, those will print very nicely and the rest will be very light. Peel off the four labels, attach them to the envelopes and mail them off. Next time you need labels, let's say one more, you can use the same template and label sheet. However, you should clear the black labels, or color them red since when they print, it will print in an area that the labels were already removed, so it doesn't matter what prints there (other than the ink that gets wasted). When you print the black labels, they will print on top of the labels that previously had a very light gray print. The chance of anyone noticing the light gray beneath the black will be very slim, although you can judge for yourself.

When we preview this page, using menu tab File then Print, you will see the labels that are ready to print because they will be black, as seen in Figure 6.

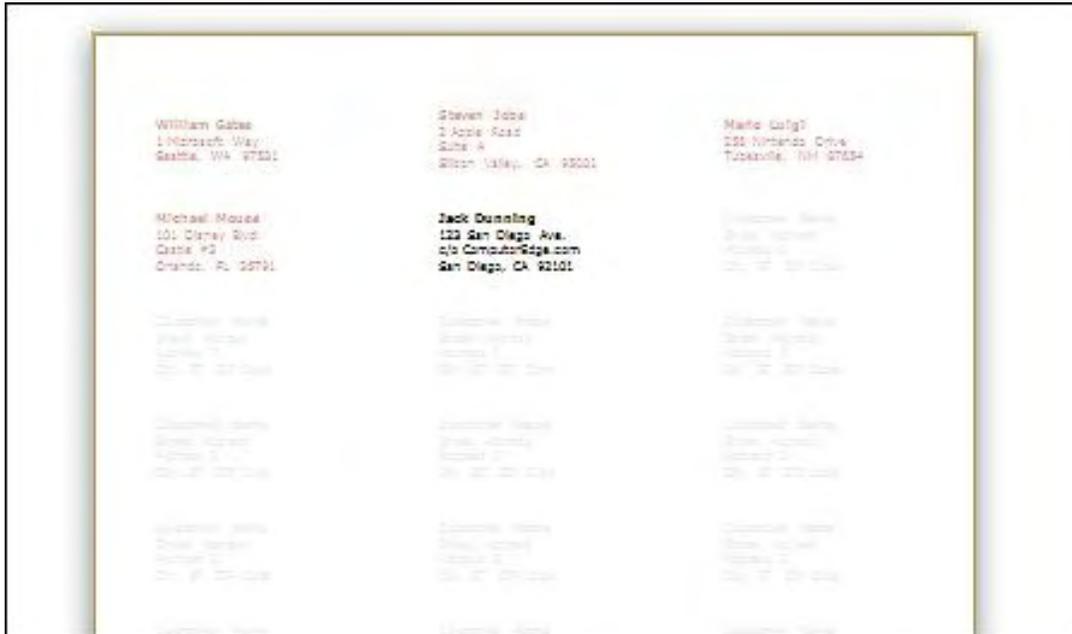


Figure 6. Labels are ready to print.

Obviously, if you want to make the best impression, you should choose an option that prints nothing (like white text) so that future labels are as pristine as possible. You could also try a combination of these, like make everything red, add the label information you want in black, then change the rest to white and print.

Next week, we'll start exploring Mail Merge, which is a way to generate a collection of form letters with custom information.

Rob has been in the computer industry for over 25 years and is currently a part-time teacher, offering classes in Excel, Access, Visual Basic, and a variety of other technical tools. He has loved *ComputerEdge* since 1990 and can be contacted at RSpahitz@Dogopoly.com.

Looking for a great boardgame? Grab a copy from DOGOPOLY.com (dogopoly.com) and have a dog-gone great time.



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EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher “Which App Platform To Choose?” by Jack Dunning

edge **WORD**

Do you learn to program the iPad or iPhone and go with a product that is already showing stupendous success, or do you spend your money (and time) on a product that will be supported by the rest of the industry?

Writing apps for computer devices is something that I would love to do—and maybe I will someday. I've always been fond of writing code and seeing the results. For me it is a creative process involving solving puzzles—often in multiple ways. My primary problem is finding the blocks of time required to lose myself in the process. There is also the issue of deciding what type of app to write, although I've always found that a little experimentation will open my eyes to a path. There is also the dilemma of which platform (iPad, Android, etc.) I should pursue. It would be unrealistic to try to do them all. That approach will generally lead to mediocre results in a number of areas.



Since she downloaded the hot selling image enhancing iMirror app for her iPad, Esmeralda knows she is the "Fairest in the Land."

Wally would suggest Apple as the target platform because he seems to think that Apple will eventually dominate the world. He could be right. After all Apple has always been the impetus for new industries—desktop publishing, iPod, iPhone and now iPad. In the case of the iPhone and iPad, Apple was not the first to build a smartphone or a tablet computer, but it was the first to do it in such a way that it generated huge levels of excitement. There was an immediate adoption of both products, propelling Apple into the lead in what can only be called a new market. These products have launched their categories even though there were many previous

attempts by other companies with products that failed to capture the imagination. This happens because, rather than rush a product to market, Apple's Jobs is willing to wait until the product excites him—which isn't easy to do. The only problem with going with Apple is that there is a massive number of companies in the industry working to catch up.

Apple is a loner company. It is very successful, but it's not satisfied with a piece of the pie. Apple wants it all—from building the hardware to selling the software. After all these decades, this approach has the Macintosh now approaching 10 percent of the computer market. That is not

exactly dominance, yet it is impressive from a financial point of view. With the iPhone and iPad, Apple certainly holds a commanding lead, but can the company hold on to it? Its exclusive deal with AT&T may not have served it well because Google Android phones have now made significant inroads with all the other cellular providers. These companies, although individually behind in the market, intend to compete. It is reported that Android smartphones in aggregate outsold the iPhone last quarter (www.marketwatch.com/story/android-shakes-up-us-smartphone-market-2010-05-10?reflink=MW_news_stmp). People scoffed when Google introduced its free Android operating system.

The Apple iPad has created a tremendous stir and the initial incredible sales have built a good size market for writing new apps. The unusually reasonable price surprised everyone, making buying an iPad an easy decision for someone who just wanted to try it out. However, none of the computer companies plan to sit on the sidelines, including those not known for computer hardware. Google and Verizon are in a joint venture to produce a tablet computer (online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704250104575238680540806288.html?mod=WSJ_hpp_LEFTWhatsNewsCollection). Even Cisco, the networking giant that is not known for end-user products, is entering the fray with the Cisco Cius business tablet (www.cisco.com/en/US/products/ps11156/). Although aimed at the business market, it runs Android—making it open to all those apps—and has a detachable and serviceable eight-hour battery. It may not be long (a couple of years) before Android tablets overtake the iPad as is happening with the iPhone. There is much more investment capital in the entire industry than exists in loner Apple, who must compete with everyone else. Maybe Android is the operating system to bet on for writing apps.

I don't pretend to predict the future—I'm notoriously bad at that—but at some point a decision must be made by the programmer. Do you learn to program the iPad and go with a product that is already showing stupendous success, or do you put your money (and time) on a product that will be supported by the rest of the industry (except Microsoft who is in its own world)? Maybe you should hedge your bets and do both.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is www.computoredge.com. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoredge.com

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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

“Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.” by ComputerEdge Staff

"Dave Solves Another Crisis," "E-Mail Account Error," "Changes at ComputerEdge," "Not Using Article Links," "Linux on a Thumb Drive," "Flash Support on Mobile Phones"

Dave Solves Another Crisis

[Regarding the July 9 Digital Dave column:]

Dear Dave,

This is Mike Barletta with the Compaq computer and memory problem. After writing you about my problem, I went ahead and pulled the two 256MB memory boards and just left the 1GB in. It works much better now. Thanks for the info on the memory configuration.

-Mike Barletta, Spring Valley, CA

E-Mail Account Error

[Regarding the July 2 Digital Dave column:]

Indeed AT&T does use SSL, and when I had that turned off after a bit I got an e-mail from them asking me to turn it on. The port did change, but with Thunderbird the default after turning on SSL [it] was what they wanted.

-Ted Medin, Poway, CA

Changes at **ComputerEdge**

[Regarding the July 2 EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher column:]

Sorry to hear that possible bad changes are coming. I appreciate *ComputerEdge* a lot and hope it manages to continue!

-Rich, Lakewood, CO

Yes, *ComputerEdge* needs sponsors, but not necessarily the local computer shops. Back in 1996 when I was shopping for my first PC, I wanted the latest available, especially since I had previously used mainframes, which were quite powerful and accurate with the ability to invoke "double precision" in Fortran, and use advanced Unix editing for documents. I saw a full page ad in the Wall Street Journal for a Toshiba laptop and went to a few local stores to see it. No one carried it; too expensive. So I bought it over the phone sight unseen by mail order. Today most of

the technical purchases are done online, since the problem of local availability has been getting worse all along regardless of the economy. It seems to me you should just solicit ads from the manufacturers and the big online sellers. Your readership level should be a great selling point. Hopefully, you will still be able to personally contribute since I find your articles about using Windows most instructive.

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego, CA

Sir: Hoping (fervently) that "*Digital Dave*" & his offered solutions will never leave us. Thanks!

Tech Challenged in SD

-Francis, San Diego

Not Using Article Links

[Regarding the July 2 EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher column:]

There's a very good reason not to use links to other articles and instead copy the text (hopefully with the proper citations). It's only a matter of time before *all* links become dead. Whether from going out of business or just a site redesign, sooner or later that link will die.

-Jeff, Colorado Springs

Linux on a Thumb Drive

[Regarding Michael J. Ross' July 2 article, "Linux on a Thumb Drive":]

Very informative and easy to understand, I commonly use Slax because it includes all the software I need and it does not take much space. By the way there are 256GB flash drives already available through Amazon (www.amazon.com/Kingston-DataTraveler-310-flash-Hi-Speed/dp/B0039PBFNE) or Newegg (www.newegg.com/product/product.aspx?Item=N82E16820139147).

I like your column and read it every week. Keep up the good work.

-Silverio Reyes, Tijuana, Baja California

Flash Support on Mobile Phones

[Regarding the July 9 Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column:]

Before Ron Cerrato or anyone else gets excited about Flash support on mobile phones, at least verify exactly what "Flash support" means. As I pointed out in my June 4 and June 25 columns, mobile phone companies are eager to claim "Flash support," but will it run as seamless on a mobile phone as on a desktop computer without draining the battery life out of the phone, only displaying Flash (but not letting you interact with Flash-based menus), and running Flash videos without long waiting times and choppy performance due to slow Internet connectivity over a cellular network?

There are many technical limitations running Flash on a mobile phone, as I've outlined in previous columns. If Adobe has found a way to overcome those technical limitations, I would be delighted to have Flash on my phone. If mobile phone Flash support is not as seamless on a mobile phone as a computer, then can we really get excited over a half-baked, misleading claim of Flash support? Anyone out there with a mobile phone running Flash 10.1?

Let's get some comments and facts from actual users before jumping to conclusions that full Flash support for mobile phones is now available. Neither of the two articles listed by Ron Cerrato regarding Flash on mobile phones clearly addresses these potential limitations of Flash on a mobile phone. Instead, these articles simply mention that Flash support is available, but whether that level of Flash support is equal to desktop computer Flash support or not is not clearly specified. Once again, let's get all the facts first before jumping wildly to any conclusion just to justify an agenda against Apple.

-Wally Wang, San Diego, CA

ComputerEdge always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the article/column. Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section.

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