

ComputerEdge™ Online — 11/26/10



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By using your computer, or just an ordinary piece of paper, you can learn to manage your time better without wasting time learning a time management program. Also, lawyers are shifting to the Macintosh; Microsoft may be fudging Windows revenue figures; Virginia's \$2.4 billion headache; MockupScreens is an invaluable tool for programmers; an unlikely voice of reason speaks out for Apple; and a tip on using Camino, a streamlined, Mac-only browser.

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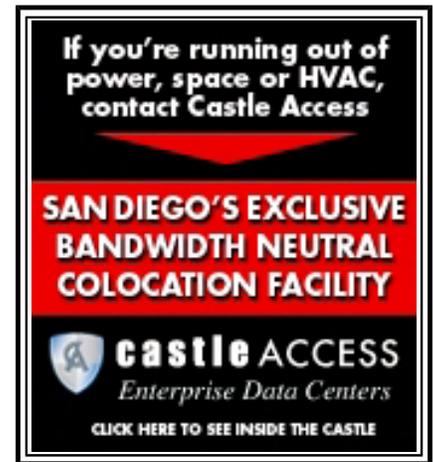
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Digital Dave

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

A reader needs to reset a long-forgotten Windows password; a reader is having a problem accessing one out of three network-attached storage devices; a Web site link is being hijacked somewhere during an e-mail's transit.

Dear Digital Dave,

My daughter's friend stepped on the screen of my daughter's Acer Aspire 5100 when it was a week old. That was four years ago. Now my other daughter's Acer was trashed, so I traded out the screen. Now that I fixed my daughter's computer, I can't remember the password. Do you or your readers know how I can get around this? I know a little about PCs and am always willing to learn more.

*Vincent Higinbotham
San Diego, California*

Dear Vincent,

I knew I had answered this question before. When I saw your query, I typed "password" into the little box at the top of the *ComputerEdge* Web page and clicked the "Search" button just below it. That took me to one of my columns where again I had remembered that I had once before answered the password question. I followed the link presented in the answer. In the next column I found a link to a site that offered a way to reset a Windows password; however, it now has a new URL (pogostick.net/~pnh/ntpasswd/). I also did a quick search of the Web and found tons of commercial programs that will probably work.

I don't need these programs myself because, not only do I create password-reset discs for my computers (also mentioned in the answer), I never forget passwords.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have three NAS devices. Right now I can access two of them via an FTP site using port 21 on one and the other on port 22. The third drive I can't access with either port. I was wondering if you can access two NAS devices using the same port 21, but just changing the user name and passwords on each device. I have been struggling with this for a while now. Any help would be appreciated.

P.S. Great info in your articles.

*Todd
Escondido, CA*

Dear Todd,

NAS (network-attached storage) devices are hard drives that can act as independent servers when attached to a network. They each have their own operating system, although not usually Windows, but often a form of Linux. This allows them to operate independently while working as a server for many different types of computers. In many ways having a NAS device on your network is similar to having another computer on your network. (In fact, you could make an old computer into NAS.)

It is likely that your access problem relates to IP addresses and device names rather than the use of FTP or the related port. If two devices on a network have the same (conflicting) IP addresses and/or name, then one (if not both) will not respond. It is important to set up each device individually with its own unique configuration (identification). You should be able to do this through the software (and hopefully documentation) that came with the NAS device.

FTP (File Transport Protocol) is merely one way to communicate with the storage device. It normally operates over port 21. SFTP (Secure File Transport Protocol) and SSH normally operate over port 22. There is nothing in particular that would prevent you from accessing all three devices via FTP over port 21, as long as each has at least a unique IP address. (If you know the IP address, then you can use that directly rather than the name—as long it is a fixed, non-changing IP.) However, FTP is not considered a secure form of communication and, if the drive is being accessed over the Internet, it could be susceptible to mischief.

If you're using Windows to access the NAS devices, then look to see if Samba (an SMB daemon) is supported—they should support Samba, as well as other protocols used on other systems, such as Apple Macintosh. If this is the case, then you should be able to directly map from your Windows computer to the drive using the unique IP address or name of the device. Then the remote file servers each will appear just like another hard drive on your Windows computer.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

My cousin says that when I e-mail him and direct him to click on a Web site, the Web site redirects him to a pharmaceutical company. He has to delete the last portion of the revised site in order to go to my referenced site. He told me if anyone, you would be the person to ask for advice.

*Wayne Ford
Huntington Beach, CA*

Dear Wayne,

Somebody has a malware problem—either you or him. It is difficult to know who has the problem until you isolate when the extra bit is being added to the URL that you are sending to your cousin. There are a number of different places where the Web address could be getting its deceptive redirect added.

The first is within your Web browser. When you copy an address, make sure that it is the same by pasting it first into a program such as Notepad. If not, then something is intercepting your copy and rewriting it.

The next is in your e-mail program. Check the e-mails in your Sent Items mailbox. Are the links clean, as you originally put them in? If not, then there is something happening when you send the e-mail.

If you don't find a problem on your end, then something is happening either during the transit to your cousin, or on his computer—either his e-mail program or browser. Each of these can be checked individually.

After you isolated where the problem is being introduced, then run anti-malware and anti-spyware programs to eliminate the problem. Since your cousin is being redirected to an ad, a program such as AdAware (www.adaware.com) would be a good idea. Comments from others who have solved this problem before are welcome.

Digital Dave

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Harvest for Time Tracking and Invoicing

“The world's best time tracking application.” by Michael J. Ross

If you want to bring together all of your project tasks and organize your invoicing in a central location, then consider hooking up with Harvest, and then go forth to cultivate paying clients!

There are innumerable types of tasks and projects for which you might want to track your time expended, just as there are innumerable reasons for doing so. For instance, you might decide to participate in National Novel Writing Month (www.nanowrimo.org) or Script Frenzy (www.scriptfrenzy.org), and in addition to the one-month calendar limitation, you want to find out how much clock time was required to crank out your first novel or screenplay. Yet the people most commonly in need of time tracking are the freelancers, attorneys and other office professionals who invoice their clients by the amount of time spent on each task (aside from any materials costs).

In light of the ongoing transition of desktop computer applications to the Web, it should come as no surprise that various software developers and vendors have created online time-tracking and invoicing tools, to replace the venerable desktop equivalents that have served their users for so long. One such Web-based tool is Harvest (www.getharvest.com), which is a product from the software company Iridesco (www.iridesco.com).

HARVEST TIME IS MONEY. TRACK IT WISELY.

Home Features Pricing Our Community Platform About Us Blog Sign Up

Sleek, intuitive, fast.

Track time, log expenses, invoice clients, keep track of account receivables and revenue. Harvest lets you

6 of 59

Sleek, intuitive, fast.

Track time, log expenses, invoice clients, keep track of account receivables and revenue. Harvest lets you do it all, so you can run your business with style and ease.

TRY IT FOR FREE

Sign up in 60 seconds

Already have an account? [Log in](#)



Freelancers & Individuals

Simple time tracking and invoicing solution for productive individuals.

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Small Business & Teams

Manage timesheets, estimates, and invoices from one integrated solution.

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Professional Services

Track time and estimates for large teams on a proven, flexible platform.

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The world's best time tracking application.

Harvest lets you and your staff track time, log expenses, and create invoices in one simple, integrated workflow. Set yourself or your team up on Harvest in just a few minutes, and instantly start tracking time and expenses. Use the Harvest graphical reports to see the distribution of your company's resources in a visual, intuitive way. Quickly create an invoice, and with just a single click, bill your client. You'll see your revenue come in faster with Harvest. Give Harvest a try and improve your business today.

Nothing to install and nothing to worry about.

Harvest is an online software which means you can use it as long as you have an Internet connection and a modern web browser. There is nothing to install for you and your employees.

Using Harvest is like having your own IT support team built in. The Harvest team monitors the application 24/7 to ensure it is in tip-top shape. Harvest is hosted on secured and reliable servers, and data is backed-up daily.

Who uses Harvest?

Freelancers, small businesses, and professional teams from a variety of industries including designers, architects, lawyers, accountants, non-profits, and universities. Harvest is the perfect tool for individuals and teams who need to track, analyze, and bill for their time.

[Learn more about Harvest](#)

[Sign up for free trial now](#)

Features at a glance

- Time tracking
- Expense tracking
- Budget tracking
- Billing and invoicing
- Powerful reporting
- Timesheet approval
- Desktop widgets
- QuickBooks export

[Learn more about Harvest](#)

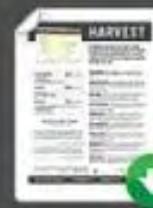
What people are saying about Harvest

"We love the simplicity, the well-crafted interface and the overall concept, execution and support that we get from such a great tool produced by an even better company."

Mike Buzzard, Cuban Council

"After a long search for a simple but robust time tracking tool that provides a usable interface, ease of implementation and meaningful output of info, we're very pleased to have Harvest be a component of our business tool strategy."

Dave Rosen, Big Spaceship



Harvest To-Go: A One Page Summary

Everything you need to know about Harvest in one handy PDF.

[Download PDF](#)

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cuban council

BIG SPACESHIP

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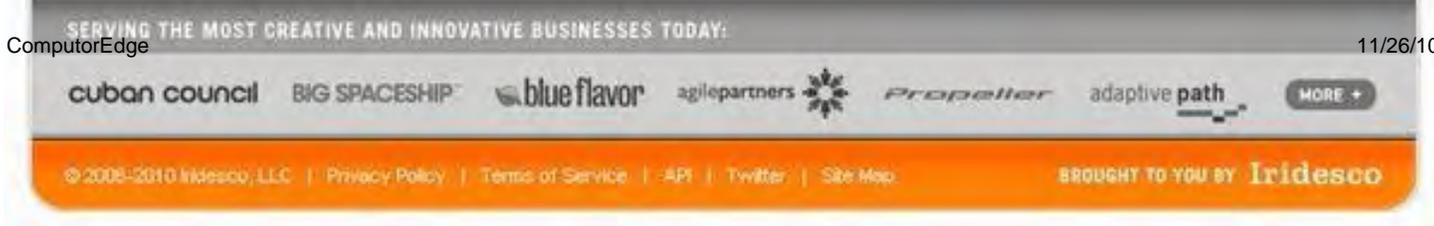


Figure 1. Harvest homepage.

Harvest is billed as "The world's best time tracking application." To find out if that claim is true, or, more relevantly, to find out if Harvest might be the ideal tool for your own time-tracking and invoicing needs, you can take it for a test spin, at no financial cost, using the company's 30-day trial offer. Start by visiting the Web site, and click on the green button to try it for free.

This takes you to a straightforward sign-up page, where at a minimum you must provide a company name, a personal name, your e-mail address, a password, your type of business (freelancer, or a business with fewer than 10 employees, or one with 10 or more employees), and what they call a "private website address," which is simply a sub-domain name (more on that in a moment). You optionally can specify your time zone and preferred currency. Oddly, the default time zone is that of Hawaii, even though my IP address is (unfortunately) not located in the beautiful islands of Hawaii, and the offices of Iridesco are located in the concrete jungle of New York City.

If and when you provide all of the required information, and you are able to choose a sub-domain that has not already been taken, then you will be shown a welcome page, which informs you that a confirmation message has been sent to the e-mail account that you had listed earlier. Unlike just about every other online service that requires registration with a valid e-mail address, Harvest does not verify that you have access to the address provided.

The message will reiterate your business's unique URL for logging into the system. Harvest tries to set a sub-domain name based upon your business name. For instance, if you do business by the name Acme Sprockets, then you will log into your Harvest account at the address <http://acmesprockets.harvestapp.com/>, assuming no one else has taken that address yet. When you log into your account, the default page is the Overview subsection within the Reports section.

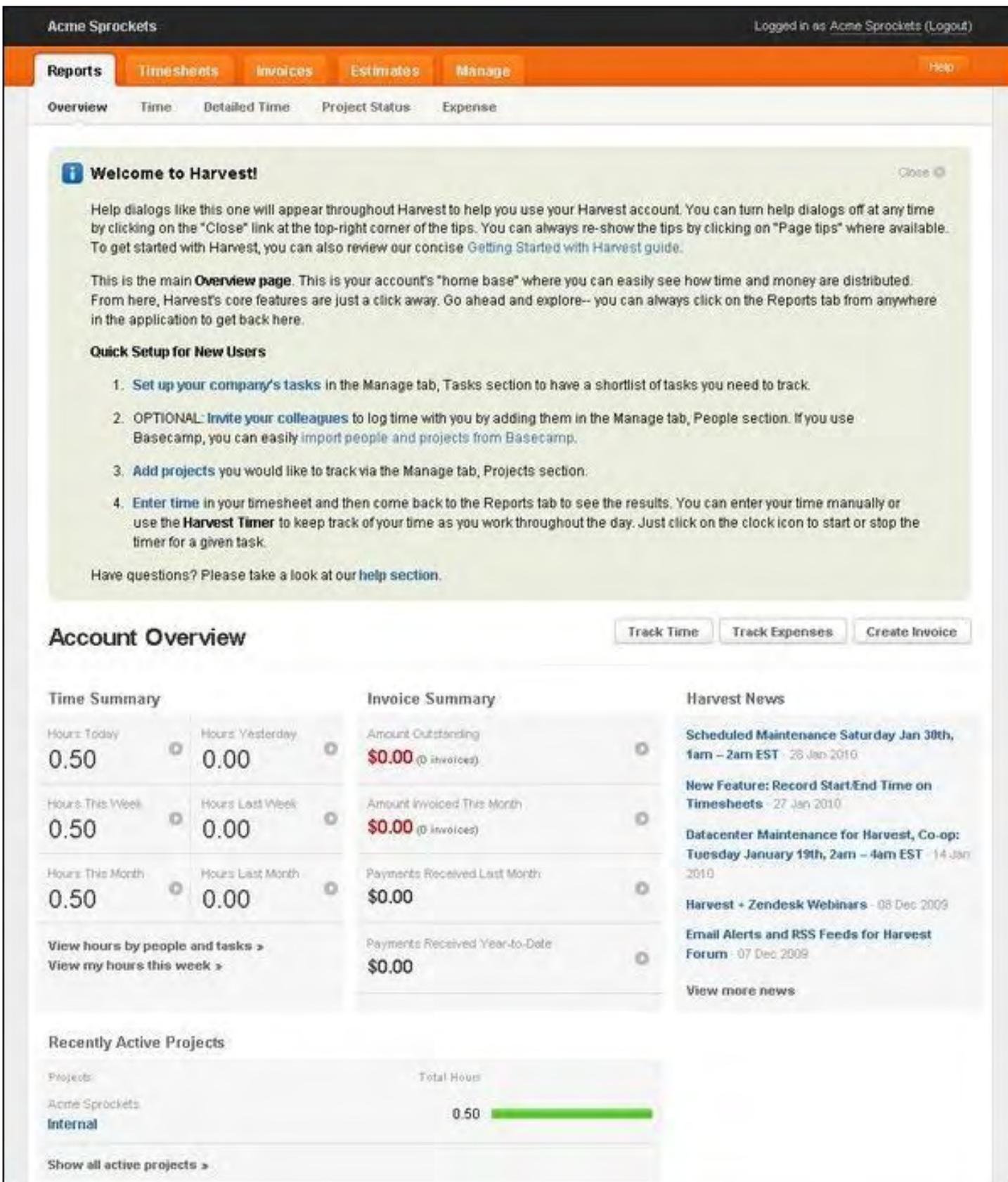


Figure 2. Account Overview page initially.

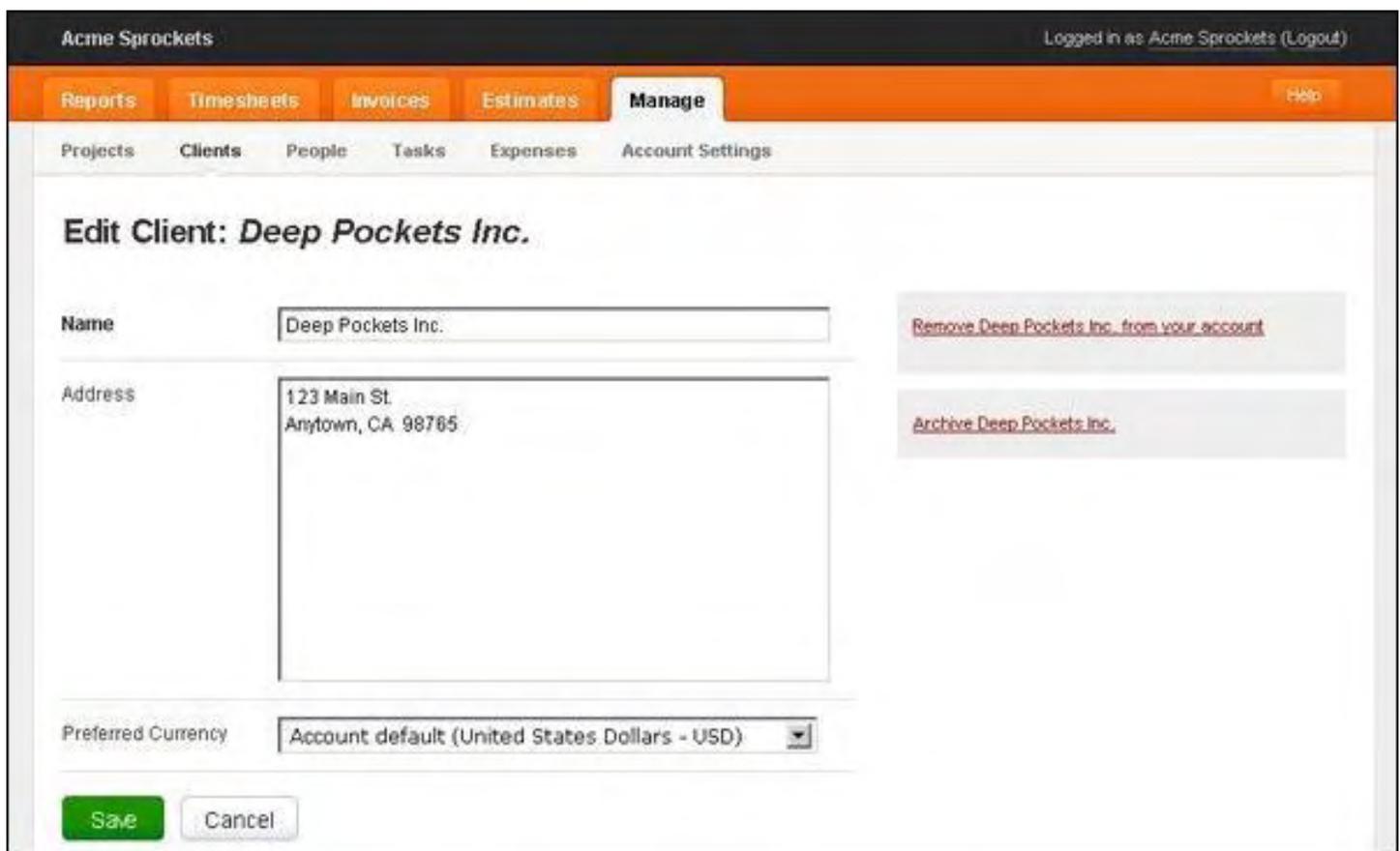
You can close and later re-open the page tip (the section with the gray background, which contains help information) for this and all subsequent pages. Confusingly, even though you have not created any projects, worked on any tasks, or logged any time, the Time Summary already reports half an hour, and the Recently Active Projects section shows a

project named "Internal," with 0.50 hours. Perhaps the Iridesco developers decided that it would be helpful to start off with a dummy project with some time already included, just so newcomers could see at least some entries displayed in the user interface. This is arguably more condescending than useful for such a simple application as this one, and runs the risk of confusing someone who is not sure whether the "Internal" project can be safely discarded or whether doing so could damage their account—similar to the system tables that exist in many newly created databases.

Seeding Your Data

Let's start with a clean slate. Go to the Timesheet section, which by default displays the Time subsection. Delete the Admin entry by hovering on its row and clicking the X button that appears to the right of the Edit button. Then go to Manage/Project, and delete the dummy "Internal" project.

Although the page tip for the Overview page recommends some initial steps for getting started—such as creating your projects—it fails to mention a critical one that you should do immediately: Define your clients, which need to exist in the system before you start assigning them to projects. Go to Manage/Clients, where initially only your own company is listed as a client. Some people new to business may be confused by this, but it's a useful technique to be able to account for internal work by designating your own company as the client. Create a new client for billable work.



The screenshot shows the 'Edit Client' page for 'Deep Pockets Inc.' in the Acme Sprockets system. The page has a dark header with 'Acme Sprockets' on the left and 'Logged in as Acme Sprockets (Logout)' on the right. Below the header is a navigation bar with tabs for 'Reports', 'Timesheets', 'Invoices', 'Estimates', and 'Manage'. Under 'Manage', there are sub-tabs for 'Projects', 'Clients', 'People', 'Tasks', 'Expenses', and 'Account Settings'. The main content area is titled 'Edit Client: Deep Pockets Inc.' and contains the following fields and buttons:

- Name:** A text input field containing 'Deep Pockets Inc.'
- Address:** A text area containing '123 Main St. Anytown, CA 98765'.
- Preferred Currency:** A dropdown menu set to 'Account default (United States Dollars - USD)'.
- Buttons:** A green 'Save' button and a grey 'Cancel' button at the bottom left.
- Actions:** Two buttons on the right side: 'Remove Deep Pockets Inc. from your account' and 'Archive Deep Pockets Inc.'.

Figure 3. Edit Client page.

Now you can create a new project and associate it with your new client. Go to Manage/Project, and create a new project, with a client name, project code, and some project notes. In addition, you can make the project billable, set an hourly rate for the Project Management task if desired, and add new tasks and rates for non-project management work.

Acme Sprockets
Logged in as [Acme Sprockets](#) ([Logout](#))

Reports
Timesheets
Invoices
Estimates
Manage
Help

Projects
Clients
People
Tasks
Expenses
Account Settings

Edit Project

Client: Deep Pockets Inc.

Project Name: Project 51

Project Code: PROJ51 (Optional)

Invoice Method:
 This project is not billable
 This project is billable, and we invoice by task hourly rate

Budget (?): No budget

Project Notes:

Here are some project notes.

Notes are displayed on the complete project report, only administrator can see them.

Tasks	Task Name	Billable? <small>Unselect all</small>	Hourly rate <small>(USD \$)</small>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Admin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Business Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Project Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input style="width: 50px; text-align: right; value: 120.00;" type="text"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sprocket Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input style="width: 50px; text-align: right; value: 80.00;" type="text"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vacation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>
<input type="button" value="+ Add Task"/>			

People

Name	Project manager
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Acme Sprockets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="button" value="+ Add Person"/>	

Figure 4. Edit Project page.

When you save your changes to this particular project, you are returned to the Manage Projects page.

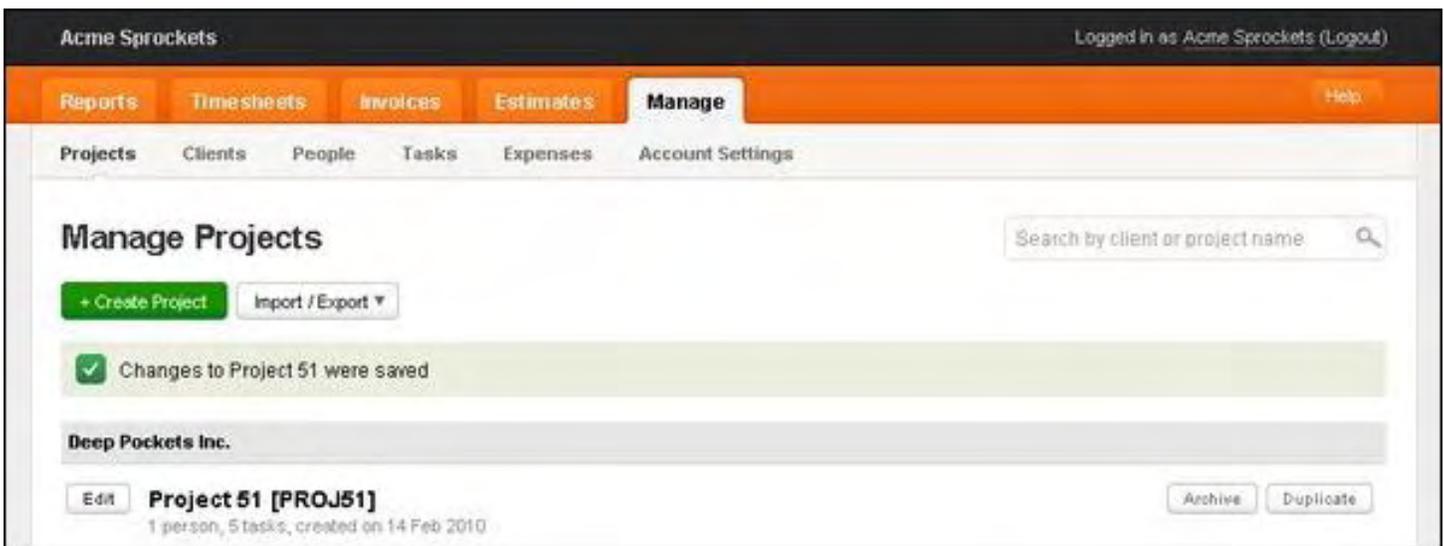


Figure 5. Manage Projects page.

Within this Manage section, you can add people (manually or by importing the data from an Excel spreadsheet) and manage existing ones. You can optionally include coworkers and other collaborators by giving them the login information, so they can access the account as well. You can add new tasks (Manage/Tasks), of four different types: common tasks (automatically added to new projects) versus others, and within these two categories, tasks billable by default or otherwise. Expense categories can be created if the existing six ones are not adequate. Lastly, you can change your Harvest account settings, including a default hourly rate (handy for freelancers); you can disable the expense tracking, invoices and estimates modules; you can integrate your Harvest account with Basecamp (basecamp.com) (an online project management tool), Highrise (highrise.com) (an online CRM tool) and QuickBooks.

In the Timesheet section, you can add expenses using the categories mentioned earlier, and assign them to different projects. But the subsection that you would probably use more than the other is Time, where you can manually assign hours and notes to the tasks of any project. You can also select a project/task combination, and then click the Start Timer button, go off and (supposedly) work on that particular task. When you return to the page, you would click the Stop button, and the correct time would automatically be added to that task. Any such timed tasks can always be modified (i.e., fudged) later.

Harvesting Your Efforts

Now that you have done all that work for your client, and diligently kept track of your time on tasks, you should reap the rewards by putting together an accurate invoice to send to the client. In the Invoices section, the Dashboards subsection has a button for creating a new invoice. Within the invoice detail page, you can specify the projects to invoice (in case you are working on multiple projects for this client), specify the hours and invoice type, and include any expenses. On the subsequent page, you can optionally enter a purchase order number, change settings such as due date, enter a subject line, and optionally add a tax, discount and some notes. If no hours appear on the invoice, then probably what happened is, on the previous screen, you left the "Billable hours" option at the default, which is to include uninvoiced billable hours from the previous month. Change this to either the current month, or click the radio button for "All uninvoiced billable hours." That default seems to be a poor choice by Iridesco. When you are satisfied that everything is set correctly, save the invoice.

Acme Sprockets
Logged in as Acme Sprockets (Logout)

Reports
Timesheets
Invoices
Estimates
Manage
Help

Dashboard
Report
Recurring
Configure

Invoice for Deep Pockets Inc. (ID: 1)

This is your first invoice
Created less than a minute ago (02/14/2010)

Invoice Balance

\$351.12

Receive Payment

Invoice created. You can send the invoice via Harvest, or mark the invoice as sent.

Send Invoice
Edit Invoice
More Actions ▾

INVOICE

Invoice ID: **1**

Issue Date: **02/14/2010**

PO Number: **123**

Due Date: **02/14/2010** (Upon receipt)

Subject: **This is your first invoice**

Acme Sprockets

Invoice For: **Deep Pockets Inc. (Edit info)**

123 Main St.
Anytown, CA 98765

DRAFT

Type	Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Amount
Service	[PROJ51] Project 51: Project Management (02/01/2010 - 02/28/2010)	1.00	\$120.00	\$120.00
Service	[PROJ51] Project 51: Sprocket Development (02/01/2010 - 02/28/2010)	3.12	\$80.00	\$249.60
Subtotal				\$369.60
Discount (5.00%)				\$18.48
Amount Due				\$351.12

Notes

Thanks in advance for speedy payment of this invoice!

Figure 6. Saved invoice.

When you return to the Overview page, you should see that the time entered earlier, as well as the new unpaid invoice, are included in the summary.

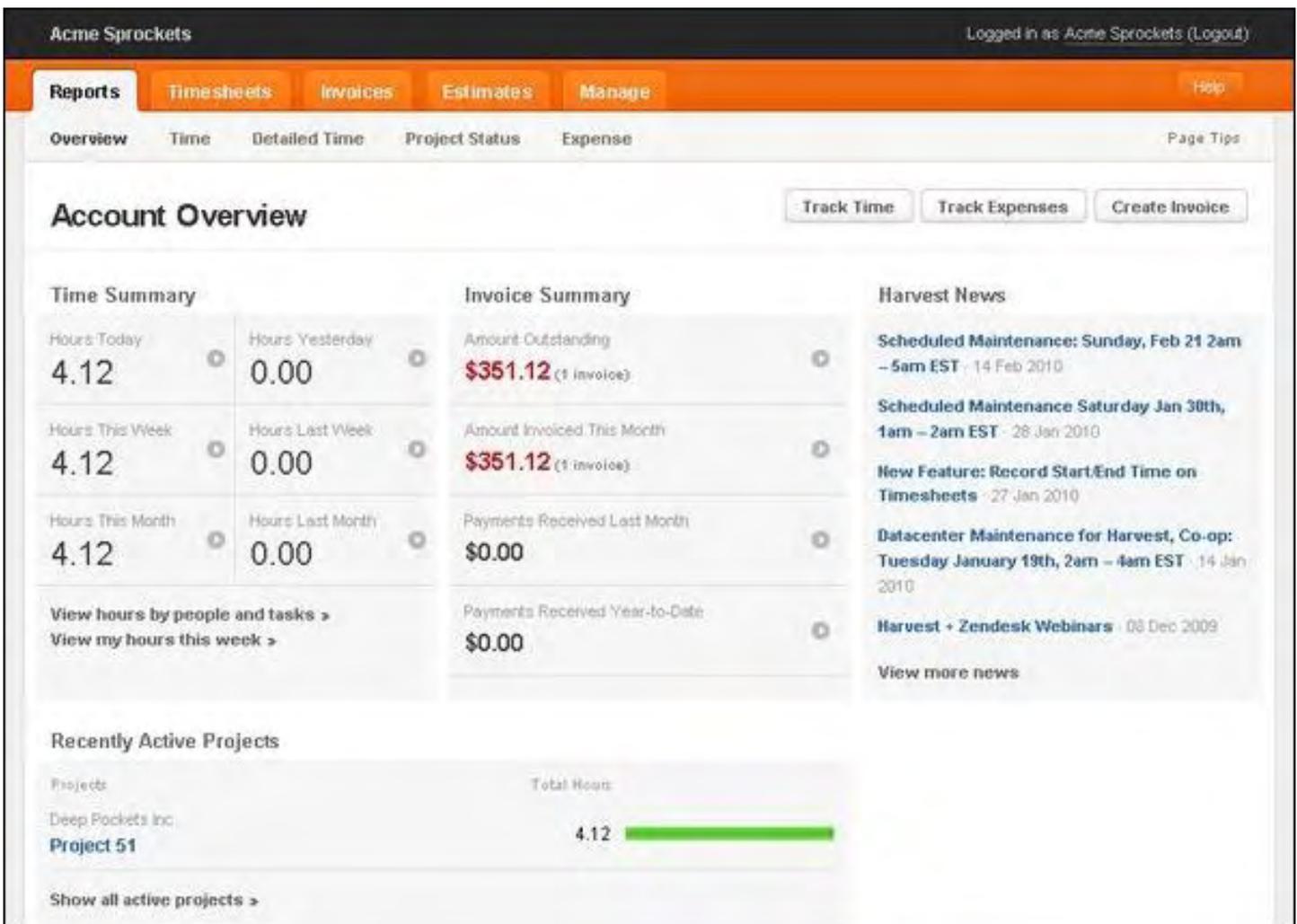


Figure 7. Account Overview page.

This is just a brief introduction, but should give you a good idea as to the capabilities available. Harvest appears to have all of the major features required for time tracking. No doubt the programmers at Iridesco have had ample time to iron out the bugs, given that the application was launched in March of 2006.

In terms of pricing, Harvest is quite reasonable. It is free to use if you are a single person tracking up to two projects and up to four clients. If, as an individual, you want to have unlimited numbers of projects and clients, then try the Solo plan, at \$12 per month. If you would like to add four other users, then the Basic plan should work well, at \$40 per month. Bumping that up to \$90 per month gets you the Business plan, with 10 active users allowed. If for some reason you decide that Harvest is not the best tool for your needs, then at the end of the 30-day trial period you can let your account expire, or cancel any time prior to that. You can upgrade or cancel your account at any time, without incurring any penalties. (Have the world's cell phone providers ever considered delighting their customers with such an option?)

If you want to bring together all of your project tasks and organize your invoicing in a central location, then consider hooking up with Harvest, and then go forth to cultivate paying clients!

Michael J. Ross is a Web developer (www.ross.ws), writer, and freelance editor. He creates Web sites that help entrepreneurs turn their ideas into profitable online businesses.

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MapleXp: A Free Time Tracker

“Get a handle on how you are using your time.” by Michael J. Ross

MapleXp is a viable choice for desktop-based time management. If it helps you get a handle on keeping track of how you are using your hours and days, then it should be more difficult for them to disappear unaccounted.

“Where did the day go?” In this hectic era, people oftentimes ask themselves this question as they try to juggle family commitments, put in long hours at work (or attempt to find a job), worry about the unending crises worldwide, fret over declining portfolios and retirement prospects, and try to stay healthy and sane in a nonstop modern life buffeted by accelerating change. Time is one of our most valuable resources, and so it makes sense to manage it wisely. For people who are serious about doing so, identifying how they spend their time each day on a personal level can be a valuable tool in planning and scheduling, as well as for discovering inefficiencies.

In the professional world, salaried workers are expected by their supervisors to conscientiously allocate the day so as to maximize the amount of work accomplished for the company. This may involve recording the time spent on each project, especially at companies that charge the government for time spent on various programs. Freelancers and other independent professionals invariably need to keep track of the time they spend on each project for each client, down to the minute—so when it comes time to ask the client for compensation for services rendered, the worker knows that she is being fair to both herself, by logging every moment worked, and fair to the client, by not mistakenly overcharging.

There are a variety of ways that an individual could track the time devoted to a given project. There is the tried-and-true method of using pen and paper, which might be adequate for a simple or short-lived project, but lacks the many benefits of automatic calculations, report generation, reprinting, etc. Programmers have developed time-tracking applications for all the major handheld devices—including Android phones and Apple iPhones—but these may not integrate well with one's needs for invoicing, quick storage and backup on a hard drive, etc. Spreadsheets have proven their worth for a few decades, and can be practically turned into powerful desktop applications through the use of macros, but this does require some programming expertise, plus time and effort.

For these reasons, and others, most people looking to manage their projects using their computer will seek out desktop software dedicated to the task. There exists a wide variety of such applications, ranging from the very complex, capable and pricey, to those that are more straightforward and free of charge.

MapleXp Basics

Of all the free time-tracking programs designed to run on Windows-based computers, MapleXp (www.maplexp.com/) has gained more respect and widespread usage than the majority of those listed on shareware Web sites. This is due not only to the lack of a licensing fee, but the program's capabilities for managing multiple projects and tasks (the details of which will be examined below). The program was developed by Quasima Software Studio (www.quasima.com/), a single-developer operation.

QUASIMA SOFTWARE STUDIO

You are here :: MapleXp

MAPLEXP

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A GLIMPSE AT MAPLEXP

WHAT IS MAPLEXP FOR?

MapleXp application gives you the ability to track multiple projects and categorize how much time went into each of the tasks involved. Each project can be divided into a hierarchical structure of tasks, which allows for very precise tracking of working time.

LICENSE

MapleXp is a freeware application. It means that you can use it without bearing any license fees. If you would like, however, support this project, you can do so - [learn how](#).

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

MapleXp can run on any computer equipped with Microsoft Windows XP (or newer) along with the Microsoft .NET Framework platform version 3.5 installed on it. You can learn more about requirements [here](#).

HIGHLIGHTS FROM BETA VERSION 1.5

- Container tasks.
- Licenses.
- Task sorting.

MAPLEXP NEWS

01/16/2010	MapleXp version 1.5.3.1 Beta released.
01/06/2010	MapleXp version 1.5.3 Beta released.
12/21/2009	MapleXp version 1.5.2 Beta released.
11/27/2009	MapleXp version 1.5.1 Beta released.
10/25/2009	MapleXp version 1.5 Beta released.
06/13/2009	MapleXp version 1.4.10.2 released.
06/03/2009	MapleXp version 1.4.10.1 released.
05/28/2009	MapleXp version 1.4.10 released.
03/05/2009	MapleXp version 1.4.9 released.
01/23/2009	MapleXp version 1.4.8.1 released.
01/18/2009	MapleXp version 1.4.8 released.
01/03/2009	MapleXp blog has moved here: http://blog.maplexp.com/
10/26/2008	MapleXp version 1.4.7.1 released.
10/01/2008	MapleXp version 1.4.7 released.
08/15/2008	MapleXp version 1.4.6 released.
07/21/2008	MapleXp version 1.4.5 released.
06/21/2008	MapleXp version 1.4.4 released.
03/24/2008	MapleXp version 1.4.3.1 released.
03/17/2008	MapleXp version 1.4.3 released.
02/28/2008	MapleXp version 1.4.2.1 released.
02/24/2008	MapleXp version 1.4.2 released.
01/07/2008	MapleXp version 1.4.1 released.

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Figure 1. MapleXp home page.

As always with any such application, the best way to explore its capabilities—in general, and specifically as to whether they would be sufficient for your own needs—is by trying it out. Before downloading the installation file, however, you will first want to confirm that your computer matches the minimum system requirements (www.maplexp.com/requirements/), namely, Microsoft Windows XP or newer, as well as the free Microsoft .NET Framework (msdn.

microsoft.com/netframework/) version 3.5 or newer. If your PC is not yet running .NET Framework, first download and install it. During this process, the system may complain that your PC does not yet have Windows Installer 3.1 (www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?familyid=889482FC-5F56-4A38-B838-DE776FD4138C). If that is the case, then first download and install Windows Installer before trying to install .NET Framework. (Unfortunately, as with most Microsoft products nowadays, the downloading can take a long time, because the packages are so large. Also, the entire process will likely require at least one reboot of your computer.)

Once the required programs have been installed, you can download and install MapleXp itself. In this article, version 1.4.10.2 will be used to illustrate the application. As of this writing, version 1.5 is only available in beta, and it is usually safer to start off with a non-beta version, which is typically more stable. The installation process is relatively straightforward. MapleXp utilizes Microsoft SQL Server Compact 3.5 as a database system, so you will need to agree to its user license, after which the installation wizard will begin downloading it from a Microsoft server. When that download is finished, the MapleXp installation wizard continues, so you should simply work your way through the dialog screens. In this case, a "Complete" installation was chosen, so no customization choices were needed.

Assuming that you also opted for the standard installation, then you can start MapleXp either by double-clicking the icon on your Windows desktop or by choosing "MapleXp Express" from your Windows Programs menu.



Figure 2. MapleXp interface initially.

The initial user interface is rather sparse. Before getting involved in creating databases, projects and tasks, you may want to set the program's options to best match your particular situation. The menu item Edit/Options will display a dialog containing seven tabs.

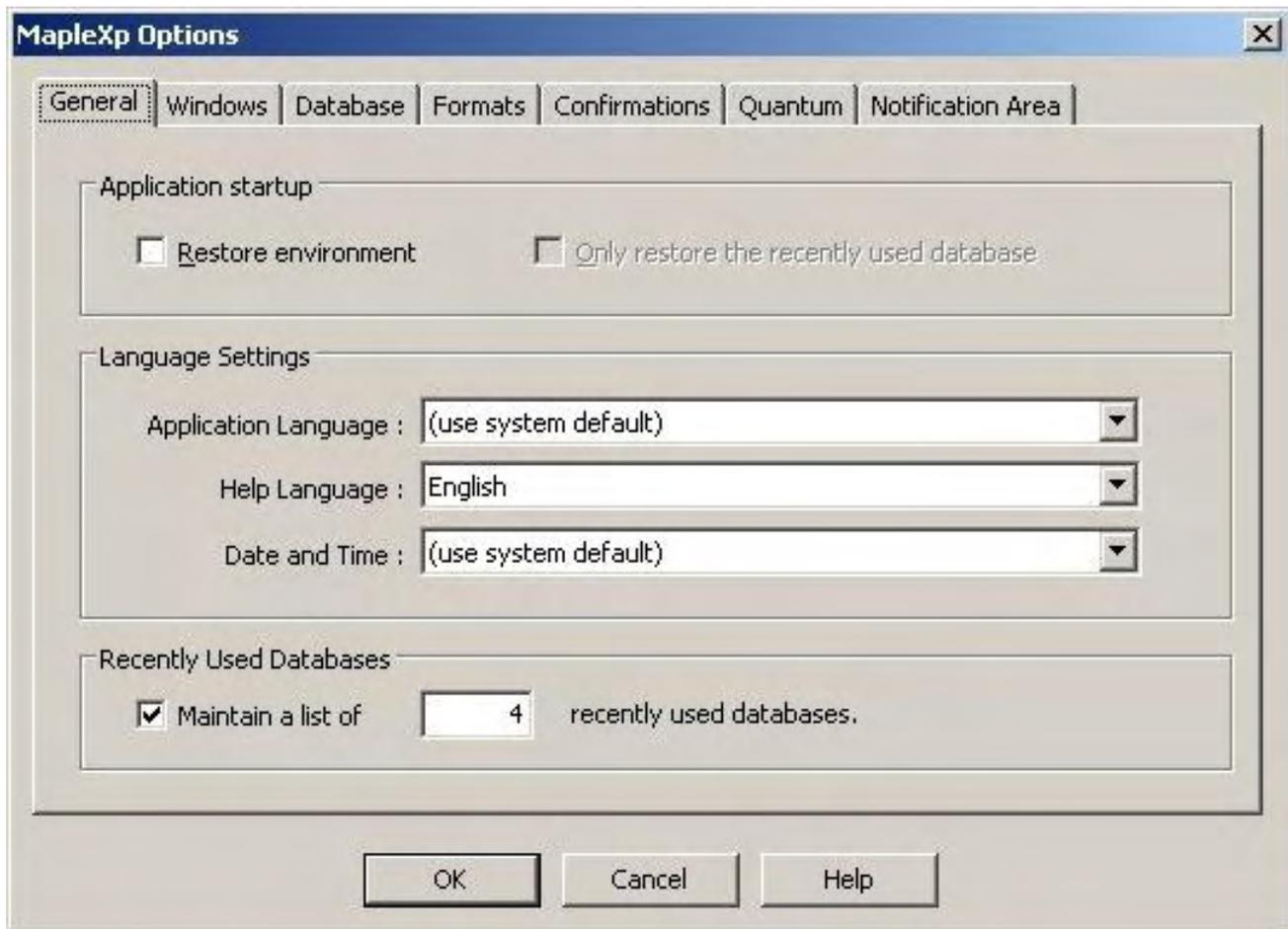


Figure 3. Options dialog.

Most of the default settings should work fine for your purposes, but you may want to go to the Formats section and change the values of the three radio button groups so as to remove the seconds from all time displays. One category of software that is somewhat related to time tracking consists of programs that remind you to periodically take a break from your work (for health reasons). Within the MapleXp options, in the Notification Area section, you can enable MapleXp to pop up a reminder every five minutes or so if there is a running task, or if you have been working on a task longer than 120 minutes or so, or if you have reached a certain time in the day after which you should not be working on any tasks.

All of the data you will be adding to MapleXp needs to be stored in a database, so first create a new one using the menu item File/New Database. Choose a location and database name, and MapleXp will create a file with an extension .sdf. Each database is intended for a single user, so if someone else is planning on using MapleXp on a shared PC, then you should create a separate database for them—possibly located in their own My Documents folder.

Turning Over a New Leaf

Now that you have an open database, you should define within it a hierarchy of tasks, in other words, major tasks (which could be thought of as projects), and subtasks within those, nested as deeply as you want. This can be visualized as the way that Windows allows one to create folders inside of other folders, in a hierarchical fashion.

Let's create a few dummy tasks. Open the Tasks window using the MapleXp/Tasks menu item. By default, the All Tasks task is already selected, so any new ones created at this point will be nested inside of this highest-level task. To create a new task, choose the menu item Tasks/New Task. To add a subtask to an existing one, simply click on the

intended parent task to select it, and then create the new task. As the hierarchy of tasks is built, it is displayed in the Tasks window.

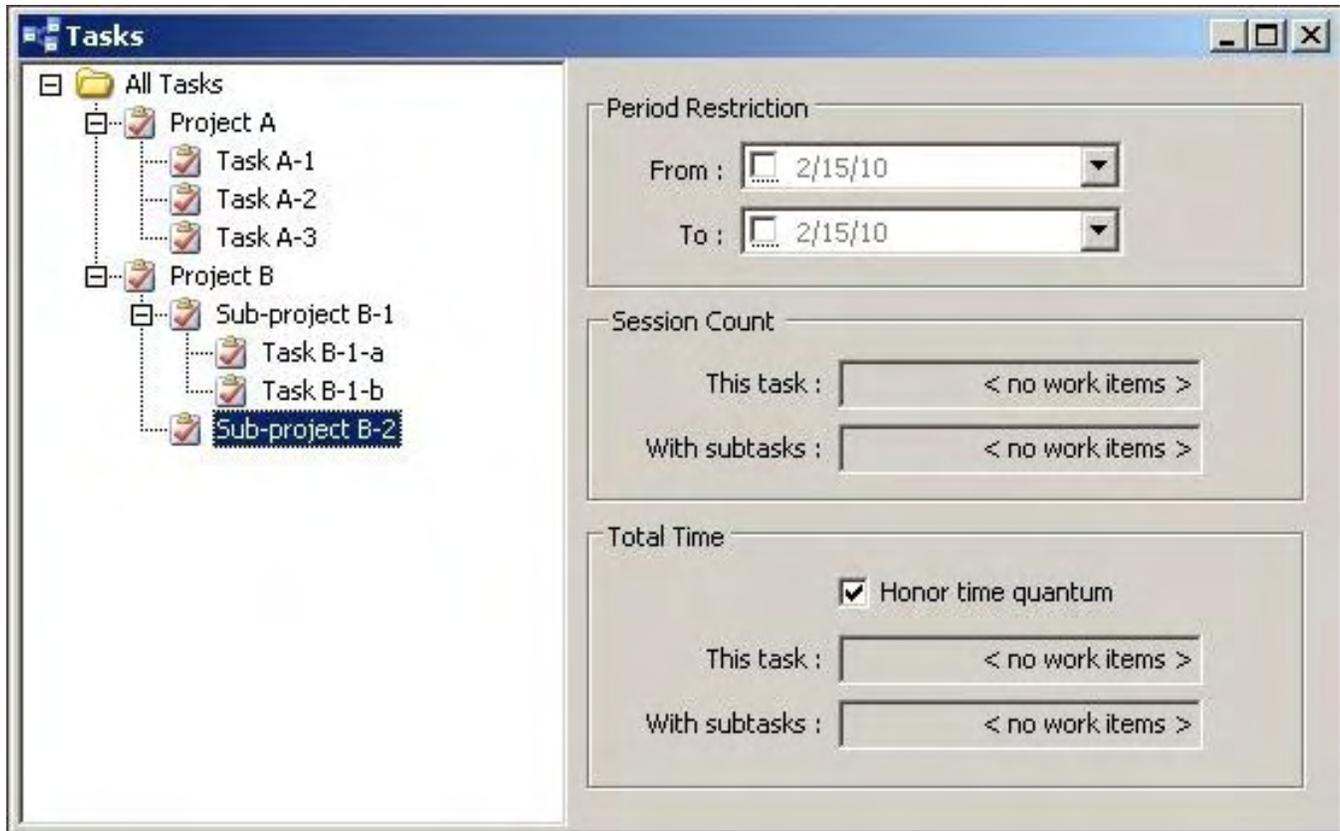


Figure 4. Tasks window.

You can use whatever naming scheme you think best. To modify any of the existing tasks, you should right-click on it and, within the context menu that pops up, choose *Modify Task*, or you can choose that action from the *Tasks* menu. To delete an existing task, the two ways to do so are almost identical to those for modifying a task, except a task cannot be deleted if it has any subtasks, nor if it is currently running. Deletions cannot be undone, so be careful before deleting anything.

Provided that you have defined some tasks, you are now able to track the time devoted to each one and monitor the results. To start adding time to a task, simply select it in the *Tasks* window, and then select the menu item *Start Task* from the *Tasks* menu or from the item's context menu. In the clipboard icon for that task, in addition to the red checkmark, there is now a small green box in the lower right-hand corner, indicating that this particular task is running. Note that you can only have one task running at a time.

For the task that is running, if any, you can simply stop the task, or stop it and review it. In the *Work Item Review* dialog, you can modify any of the settings, and add a description.

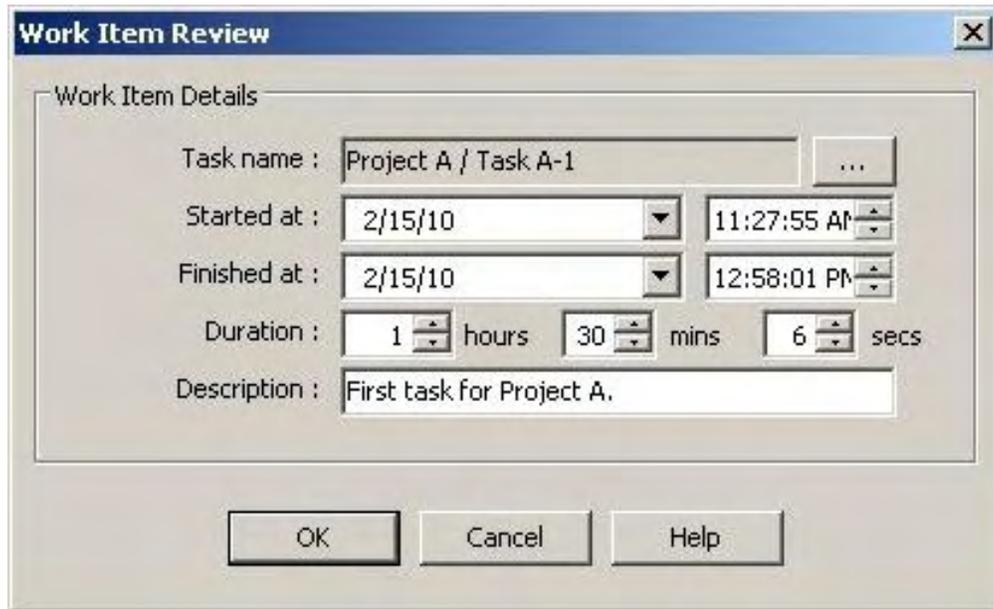


Figure 5. Task review dialog.

Once you have recorded all of the time you spent on the various tasks, you can now export that data as a comma-delimited text file (often known as a CSV file), which can then be read into other applications, such as Microsoft Excel. This capability could be handy if you want to generate an invoice for the tasks that you've worked on—a feature regrettably not built into MapleXp. The Export Wizard allows you to limit the data exported to start and end dates, or using predefined periods: one day, week, month, or year, and either the current one or the previous one. You can specify which tasks to export, the time format, the delimiter character and a few other choices.

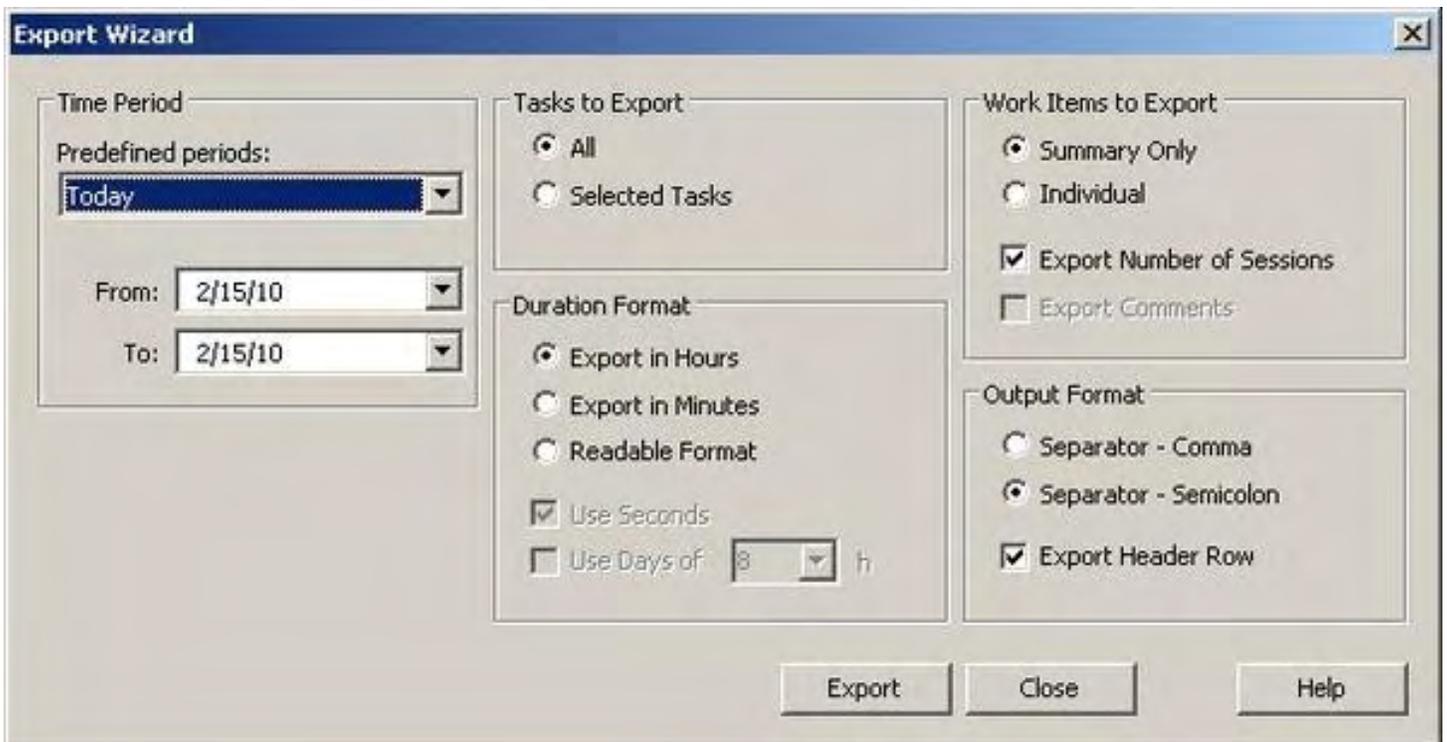


Figure 6. Export dialog.

The way that the MapleXp application is designed, the idea is that when doing your day-to-day work, you will start with the Task Controller, which displays the up-to-date information about your current task. It presents information about

your current task, such as whether you are currently working on it, the start time, the duration and an optional description. To switch to a different task, simply choose one from the "Pinned tasks" list box.

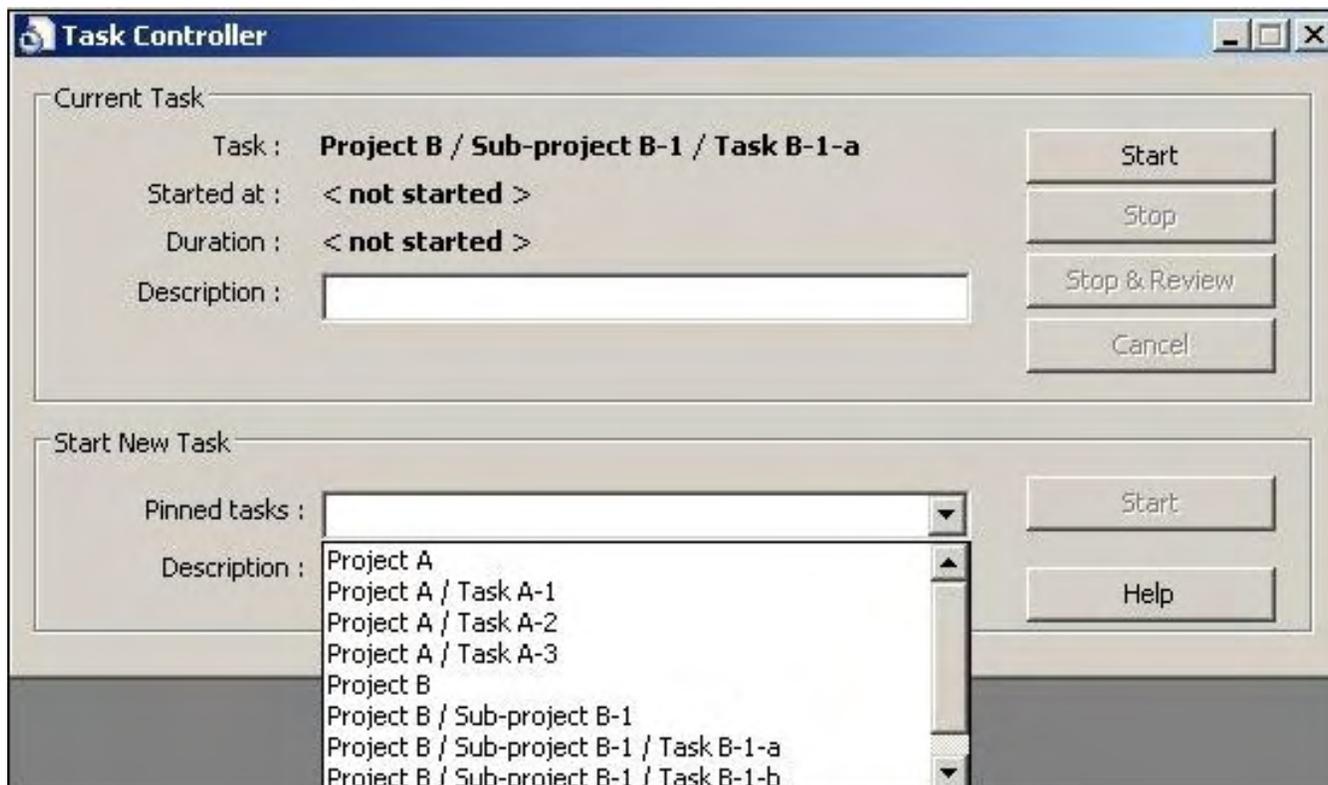


Figure 7. Task Controller.

Unfortunately, MapleXp's aggregation and reporting is limited to the Session Count and Total Time sections in the Tasks window. Perhaps future versions of the program will have more extensive functionality in these areas.

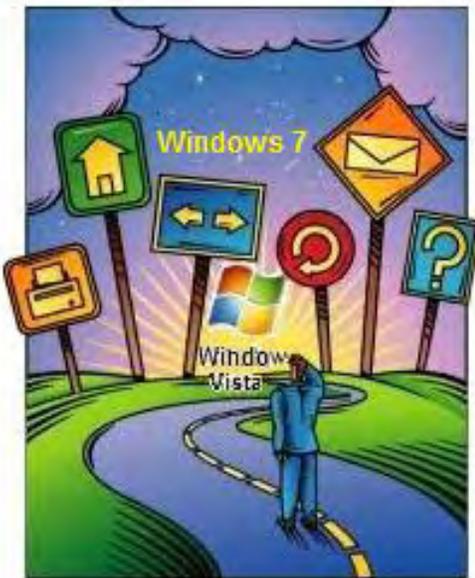
This should be enough information to get started using MapleXp. If you turn to the online help to learn more details about the program, beware that the menu item names and dialog labels do not always match the actual values in the program itself. All of the help information would benefit from complete editing and updating.

Even though MapleXp is free to use, if you do decide to make it a part of your personal or professional time-management procedures, please consider making a donation to support further development and maintenance of the product. The home page has links to make a payment, in any amount that you see fit, using PayPal or Dotpay. When you run MapleXp for the first time, it will pop up a nag screen asking for support.

Even though MapleXp is lacking in some features that would be quite valuable—such as invoice generation—it is still a viable choice for desktop-based time management. If it helps you get a handle on keeping track of how you are using your hours and days, then it should be more difficult for them to disappear unaccounted.

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Windows Tips and Tricks

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“Changing the Taskbar Clock” by Jack Dunning

If you want a system that is a little more clear in distinguishing between morning and afternoon, then you may want to modify how your taskbar clock displays the information.

There are always a few silly things that you can do to personalize your Windows computer. Many, such as the tip in this column, are simple, although probably not needed. However, there may be times when it could be very useful—such as for people who have trouble distinguishing between AM and PM on their computer taskbar clock. If you want a system that is a little more clear in distinguishing between morning and afternoon, then you may want to modify how your taskbar clock displays the information (see Figure 1). If you happen to get up before noon, then you may be gratified to see the welcoming message.



Figure 1. The Windows taskbar displays "Good Morning" rather than "AM."

This is a relatively easy change to make to your system, but I need to warn you that it will also affect many other programs, such as e-mail listings in your mail program.

These settings are found in the Regional and Language Options window, which can be found by opening the Control Panel from the Start Menu and double-clicking the icon by the same name (see Figure 2). (In Windows 7 and Vista the window may also be found by typing "regional" or "language" in the search field of the Start Menu and selecting it from the list under Programs.)

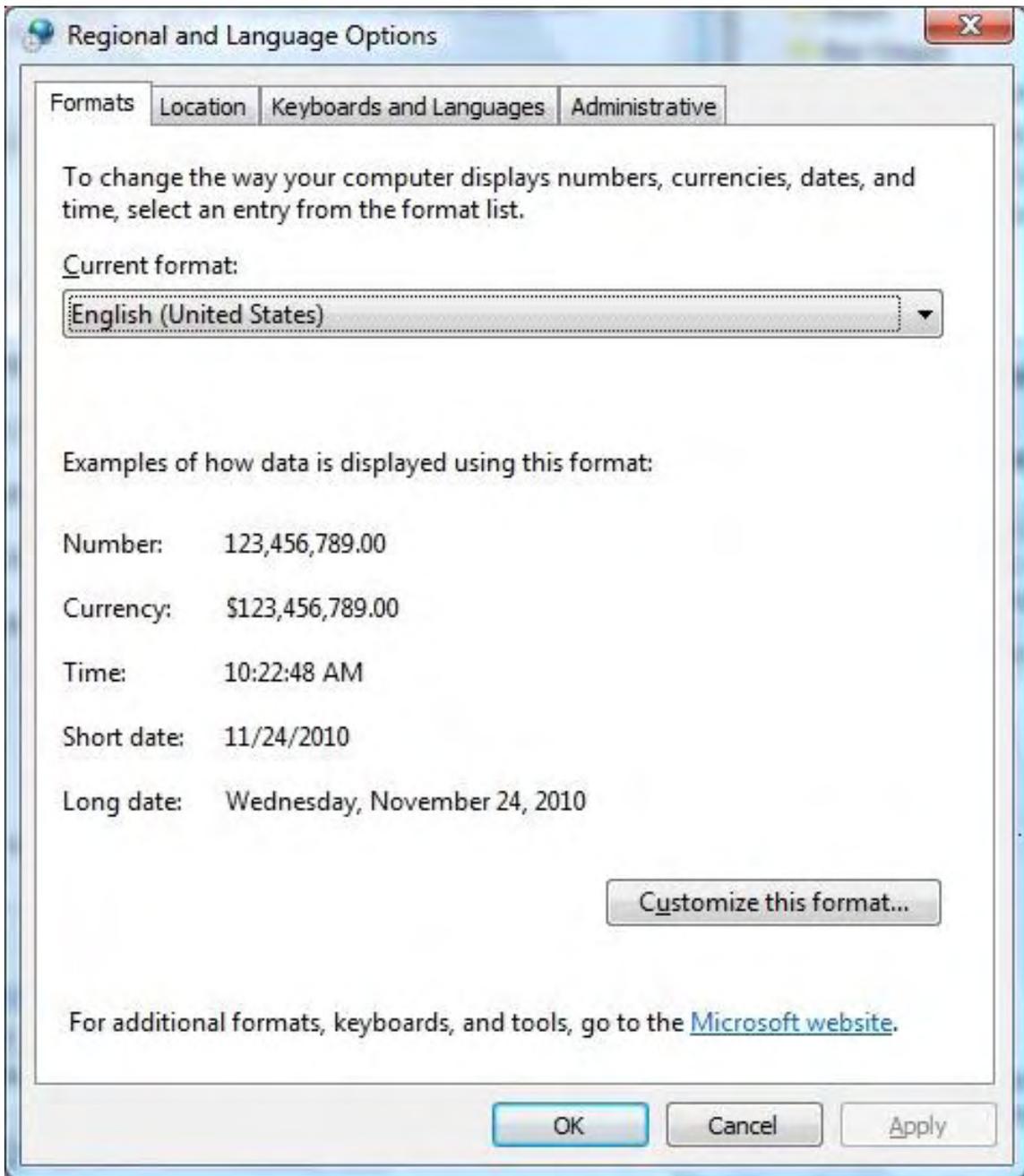


Figure 2. The Windows Vista Regional and Language Options window.

Depending upon your version of Windows, select either the Regional Options tab (Windows XP) or the Formats tab (Windows 7 and Vista). This will show your currently selected format and language defaults. If you want to change to the defaults of another country or language, you can change the selection here, and then click Apply. To further modify the defaults already selected, click Customize (Windows XP), "Customize this format..." (Windows Vista), or "Additional settings..." (Windows 7) button. (The Windows 7 Region and Language windows have additional options in the Formats tab to change basic date and time formats in drop-down menus that do not appear in the other versions of Windows.) The Customize window will open. Select the Time tab (see Figure 3).

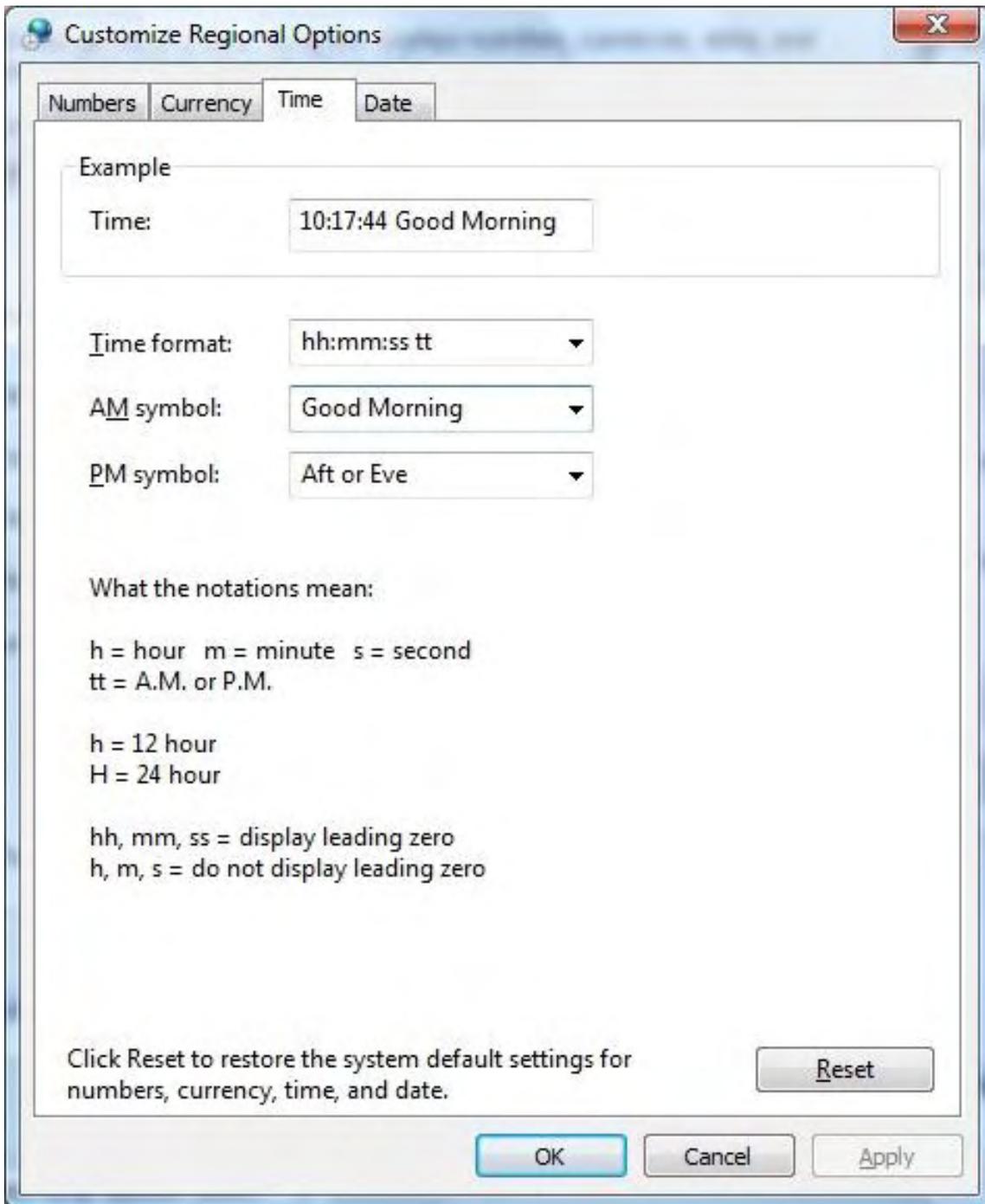


Figure 3. The Windows Vista Customize windows with the Time tab selected.

There are a few options in this window, but to change the AM or PM symbol merely type whatever you desire (up to 12 characters) into the appropriate field. After you Apply, the words will start to appear in the taskbar. (Windows XP also has the option to change the Time separator, but this can be done in the other versions by changing it in the Time format line.) In some versions of Windows, you will need to Apply again in the first Regional and Language window (Figure 2) before the change will display. The ultimate outcome will affect a number of Windows programs that may, or may not, be desirable. See Figure 4 for a Windows Mail example.

	11/18/2010 9:20 Good Morning
	11/18/2010 9:17 Good Morning
Christmas Gift: Tel...	11/17/2010 6:53 Aft or Eve
	11/17/2010 4:39 Aft or Eve
Christmas Gift: Tel...	11/17/2010 3:34 Aft or Eve
	11/16/2010 12:06 Aft or Eve
	11/16/2010 11:23 Good Morning
h his AOL email ad...	11/16/2010 10:49 Good Morning
	11/15/2010 5:27 Aft or Eve
	11/14/2010 6:56 Aft or Eve

Figure 4. A Windows Mail list of e-mail dates after changes have been made in AM and PM formats.

If you explore the other tabs, Numbers, Currency and Date, you will find a few other format defaults that you can change—if only upon a whim. For example, in the Numbers tab, the decimal symbol can be changed to something non-traditional. It will then appear as the new selection in the built-in calculator.

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

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“Time Management” by Wally Wang

By using your computer, or just an ordinary piece of paper, you can learn to manage your time better without wasting time learning a time management program. Also, lawyers are shifting to the Macintosh; Microsoft may be fudging Windows revenue figures; Virginia's \$2.4 billion headache; MockupScreens is an invaluable tool for programmers; an unlikely voice of reason speaks out for Apple; and a tip on using Camino, a streamlined, Mac-only browser.

There's a tendency to rely on ever-increasingly specialized software to perform unique tasks. While these programs can be useful, they're never as easy to use as you might hope. If you buy special time management software, you'll need to take time learning to use the time management software, plus you still need to learn how to manage your time. Here's another approach.

Rather than rely on specialized software to solve your problems, just focus on solving your problems using your currently available resources instead. Sometimes a piece of paper can be more versatile and useful than the latest computer and software.

A business consultant once approached Charles Schwab with an idea to get things done. This consultant told Charles Schwab that if his idea proved useful, then pay him \$25,000. Otherwise, don't pay him at all. After trying this consultant's idea, Charles Schwab gladly paid him \$25,000 for this idea:

Each day, write down the 10 most important things you need to do the next day. Then start with the most important task and do it.

Simple, right? But it's deceptively too simple, which causes people to look for complexity to justify their inability to accomplish anything.

For another example of a simple idea for managing your time, try the Pomodoro Technique (www.pomodorotechnique.com), which advocates breaking your tasks into discrete chunks of 25-minute segments. By committing yourself to a fixed set of time, you can focus your energy within that time period and get more done during that time than you might do all day procrastinating and staying unfocused like most people operate throughout the day.

To learn more about the Pomodoro Technique, grab a copy of *The Pomodoro Technique Illustrated* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1934356506?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1934356506). By using your computer, or just an ordinary piece of paper, you can learn to manage your time better without wasting time learning a time management program.

What Lawyers Use

According to a recent survey by Clio, a majority of law firms are relying on the Macintosh (www.goclio.com/blog/2010/11/2010-apple-in-law-firms-survey-results). Considering that at one time Windows dominated the business world, the fact that a slight majority of lawyers prefer using Macintosh computers shows how quickly businesses can shift away from reliance on Windows PCs.

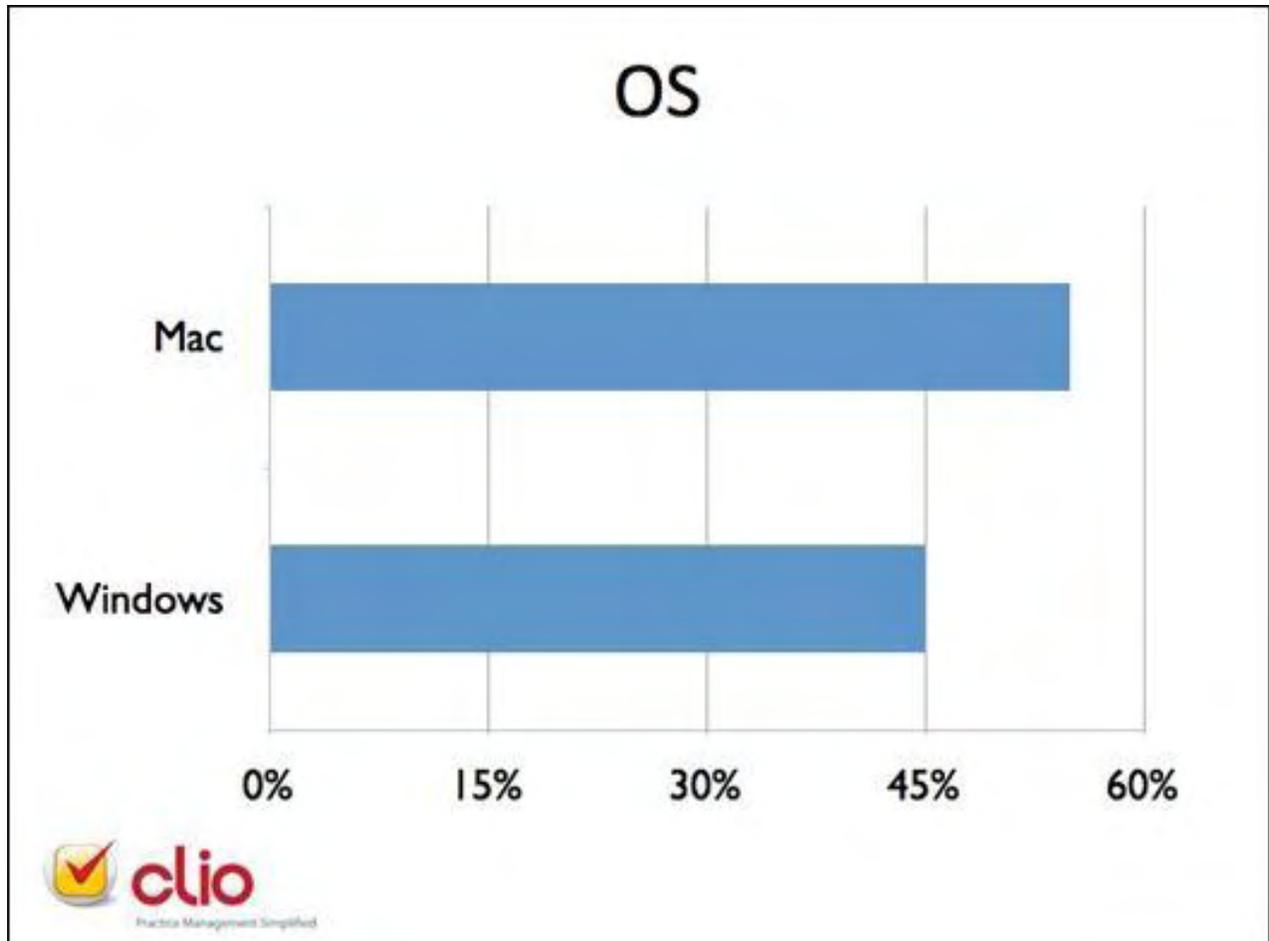


Figure 1. A slight majority of law firms uses the Macintosh over Windows.

Not surprisingly, the majority of law firms stated that they switched to the Macintosh for greater reliability and security. While Windows requires constant maintenance for defragmenting hard disks, cleaning the Windows Registry and scanning for viruses and spyware on a regular basis, Macintosh users can completely avoid these problems and spend their time more productively doing actual work.

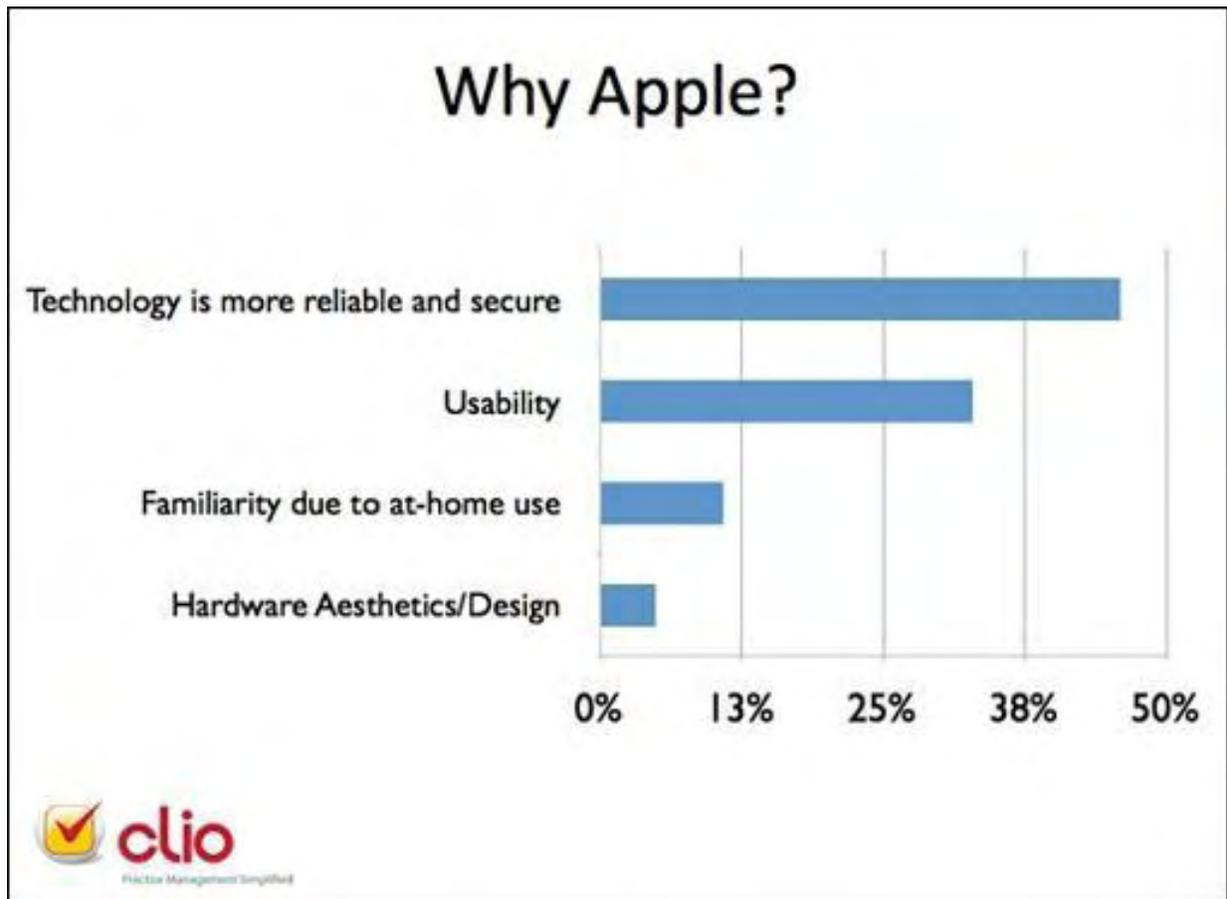


Figure 2. Reliability is the Macintosh's main attraction.

If lawyers are willing to shift to the Macintosh, that's a clear sign that the Macintosh is no longer considered a niche product just for graphic artists. Law firms are typically conservative and unwilling to purchase new technology just for the sake of getting the latest, shiniest new gadget. Instead, law firms, like most businesses, can justify new technology only if they see a clear benefit, and that's just one more indication that more businesses can see the advantage of relying on a Macintosh for their work.

Microsoft Manipulating Windows Sales Revenue

A while back, Microsoft announced that it sold a record number of Windows 7 licenses, making Windows 7 the fastest growing operating system in history. That sounds impressive until you also learn how Microsoft may have manipulated Windows sales results (www.informationweek.com/news/storage/reviews/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=228200850) by \$259 million, according to InformationWeek.

If Windows 7 was selling so well, why would Microsoft need to fudge revenue results to make it appear that Windows earned more than it actually did? Perhaps the real answer is that Windows may not be selling as well as Microsoft had hoped, and that's the reason for creative accounting to artificially inflate figures in favor of Windows.

Of course, fudging revenue figures can fool the average person, but it still does nothing to address the source of the problem. If Windows isn't earning as much as Microsoft would like, what is Microsoft doing to improve Windows sales beyond bookkeeping sleight of hand?

One way that Microsoft hopes to compete is by copying Apple. Microsoft recently opened its seventh retail store to crowds of people (www.businessinsider.com/watch-steve-ballmers-awesome-enthusiastic-opening-

of-a-microsoft-store-2010-11) who were there for the free Miley Cyrus tickets that went out to the first people in line. When Apple opens a new store, people pack the place to buy products. When Microsoft opens a retail store, it has to give away free concert tickets (tech.fortune.cnn.com/2010/11/19/how-to-pack-a-microsoft-store-opening/?section=magazines_fortune) to convince people to show up.

Which business model do you think is sustainable in the long run? Selling products to people or giving concert tickets away to attract a crowd? If Microsoft has to rely on concert ticket giveaways to attract people, shouldn't someone at Microsoft be asking themselves why people aren't interested in showing up at a Microsoft Store to buy something instead?

Perhaps people might rush to the nearest Microsoft Store to pick up the latest Windows Phone 7 device. Then again, Microsoft was quick to announce (www.techieinsider.com/news/3934) how many Kinect units it sold for the Xbox (one million units in the first 10 days), but it remains strangely silent on the number of Windows Phone 7 devices it has sold since its launch. While Windows Phone 7 isn't necessarily a bad operating system (nowhere near the problems of Vista), it would still be nice to know how well sales are going so far. Microsoft's silence just may be the answer we're looking for.

Virginia's \$2.4 Billion Headache

If Microsoft wants to promote the superiority of its products, it probably won't want people to learn about the state of Virginia's \$2.4 billion mistake (tech.fortune.cnn.com/2010/11/18/apples-new-board-member-virginias-computer-nightmare/) in creating a new computer infrastructure from scratch.

Virginia state departments lost Internet access for up to eight days when a data storage unit failed. In addition, Virginia state agencies also suffered from the following:

- 45,000 people couldn't renew their driver's licenses.
- The tax department was unable to issue refunds and liens.
- The department of juvenile justice couldn't release its inmates.
- The department of veterans services, which manages two long-term care centers and two cemeteries, couldn't pay its bills.
- Social service employees had to work overtime to get food stamps and welfare checks to 380,000 residents.

The system, according to Marcella Williamson, a spokesperson for the Virginia Information Technologies Agency, is standardized on Hewlett-Packard hardware and Microsoft software. "We use the entire Microsoft stack," she told Fortune. "Exchange, SharePoint, Microsoft Office, SQL servers and .Net for development."

"They aren't Apple computers," she says. "I can tell you that."

Whether the problem lies with Microsoft's software, Hewlett-Packard's hardware, or with the so-called experts implementing the system, this is certainly not a project that Microsoft could use to showcase the ease of use and productivity of its products.

Fortunately, the state of Virginia didn't rely on Dell, which apparently knowingly sold computers with defective motherboards (arstechnica.com/gadgets/news/2010/11/dell-knew-about-computer-failures-but-hid-info-from-customers.ars) between 2003 and 2005. If cost is the only compelling advantage you can offer customers, there's a good chance that pursuing ever-lower costs will eventually affect a company's ability to meet the basic needs of its customers. Just ask Dell or the state of Virginia if cost should be the primary goal when considering a computer that you need to rely on.

Designing Software

The biggest mistake programmers make all the time (usually when being paid under government contracts) is to start writing code before they even know what they're supposed to do. The FBI did this in trying to create a program dubbed Virtual Case File (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual_Case_File).

After wasting five years and \$100 million, they eventually abandoned the effort. Later a government investigation (which probably cost taxpayers a lot more money) revealed that one cause for the program's failure was a "lack of a strong blueprint from the outset led to poor architectural decisions." In other words, the programmers didn't know what they were designing before they went ahead and started creating what they didn't know they were supposed to do.

To avoid such disasters, it's usually best to create a prototype of your program, which displays screens that show what a program looks like without actually working. The simplest way to create a prototype is to draw your program's potential screens on a piece of paper. Now if you want to change something, it's easy to erase pictures and draw new ones without messing around with writing any actual code.

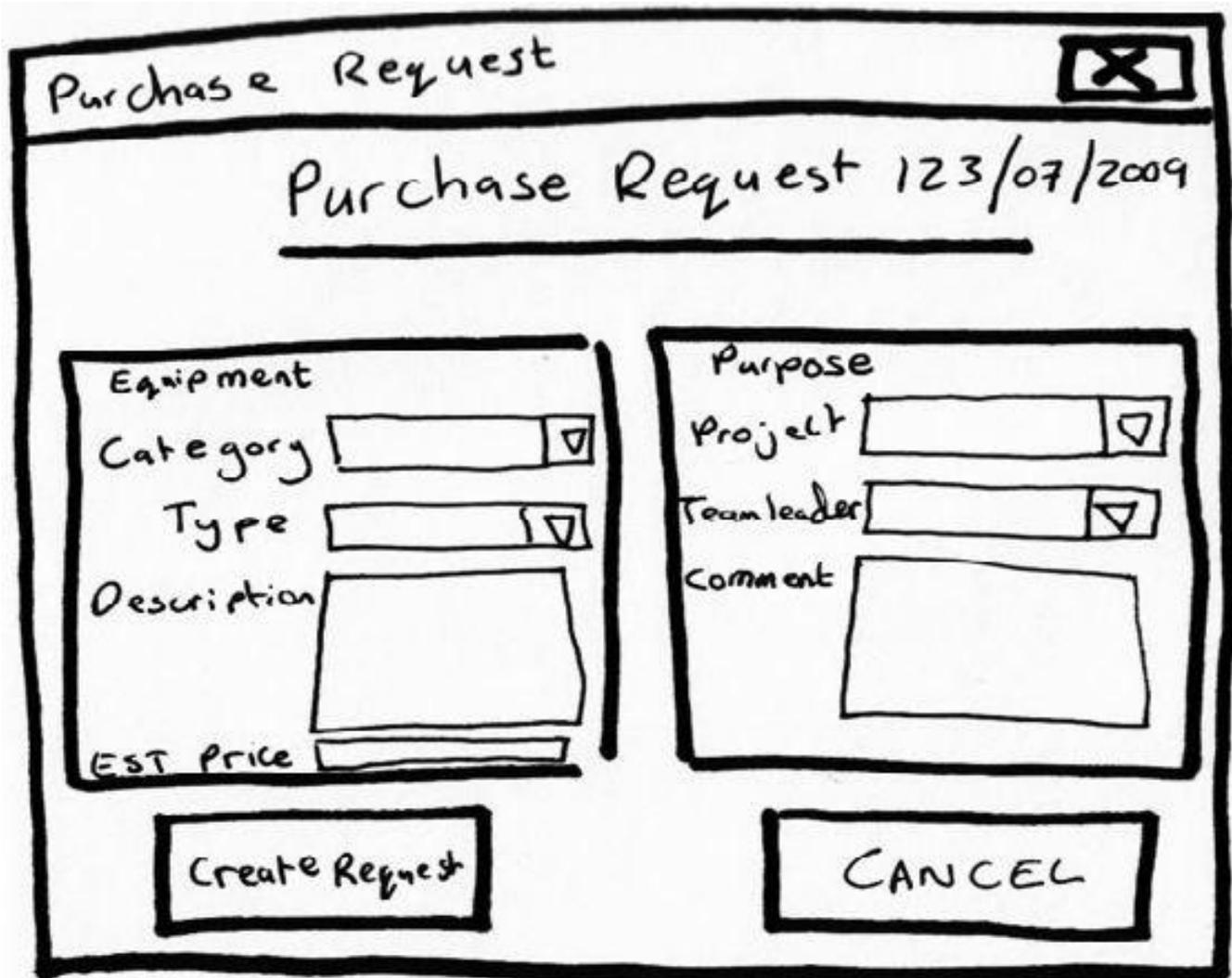


Figure 3. Prototyping a program can be as easy as scribbling on paper.

Scribbling on paper is a fast way to design your program, but paper scribbles aren't easy to share, show, or modify. To avoid these problems, try a unique prototyping tool called MockupScreens (mockupscreens.com), which runs on

both Windows and Mac OS X.

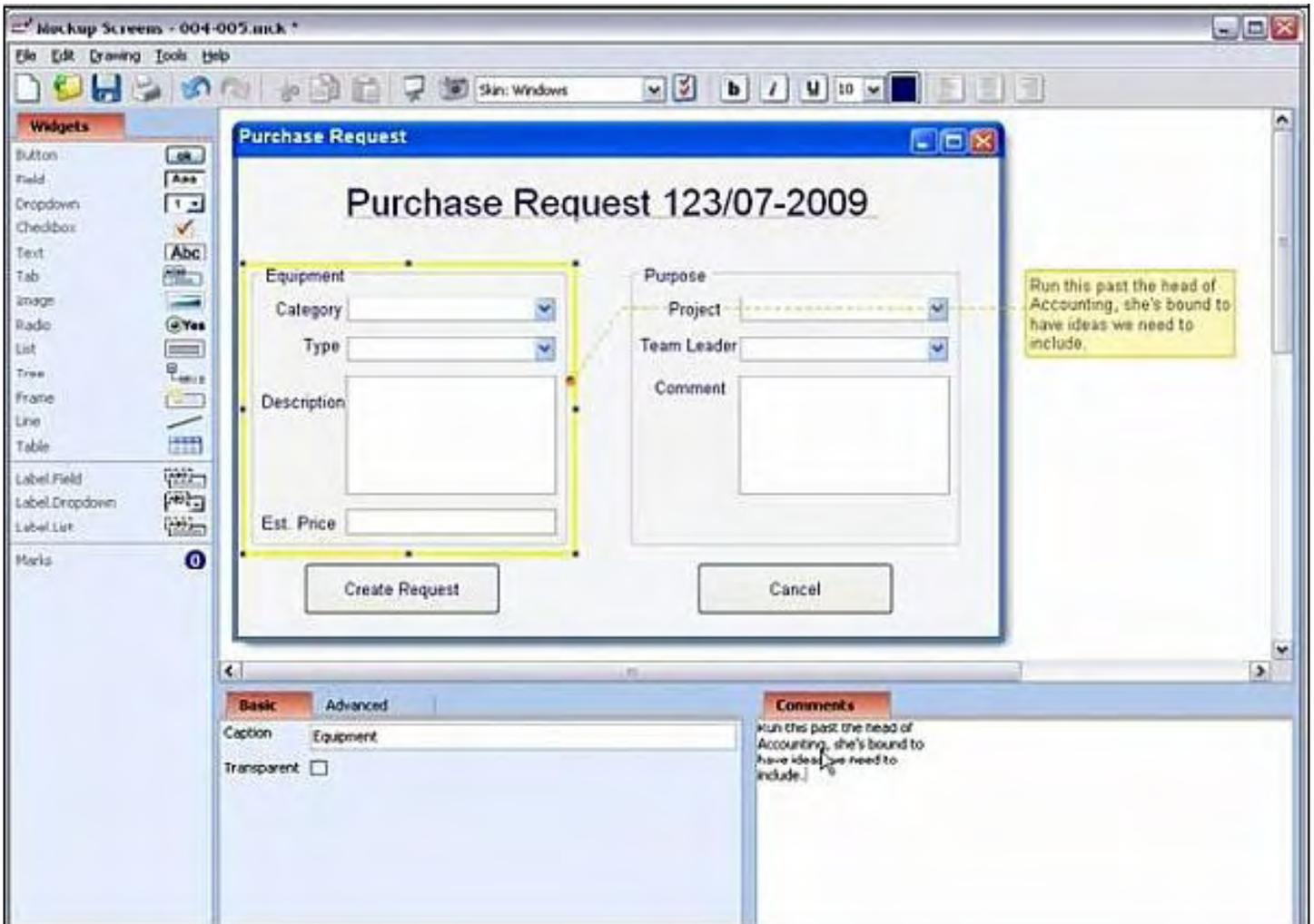


Figure 4. MockupScreens can turn your rough ideas into the appearance of an actual program.

MockupScreens lets you visually design the user interface of a program so you can get feedback right away on the best way to present and request information from the user. To help you focus on the design of your program, MockupScreens can display your user interface in a neutral black-and-white appearance.

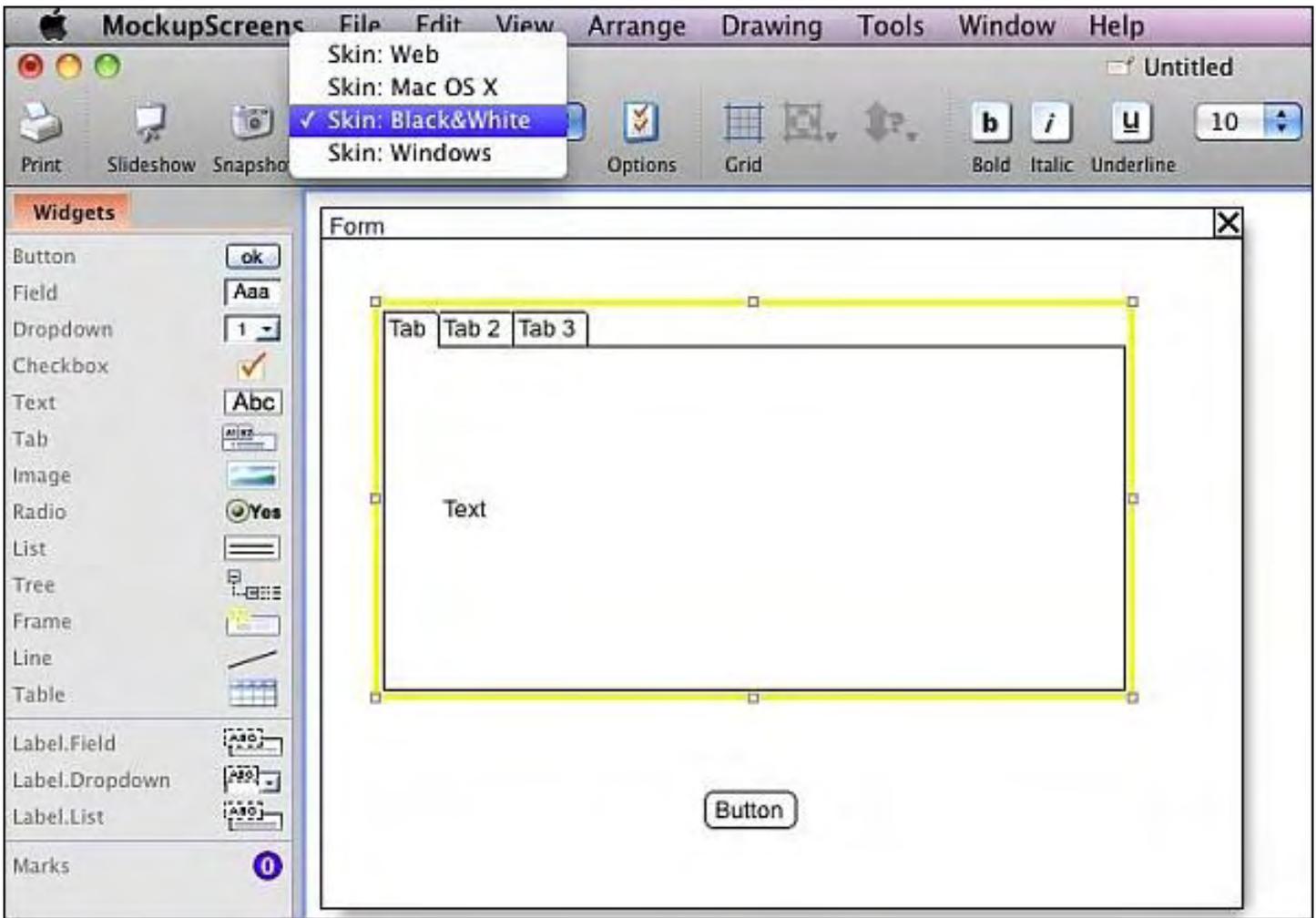


Figure 5. MockupScreens can display the bare bones of a program's user interface.

Once you're happy with the basic design of your user interface, you can apply a Windows or Mac OS X skin to see how your program might look under different operating systems.

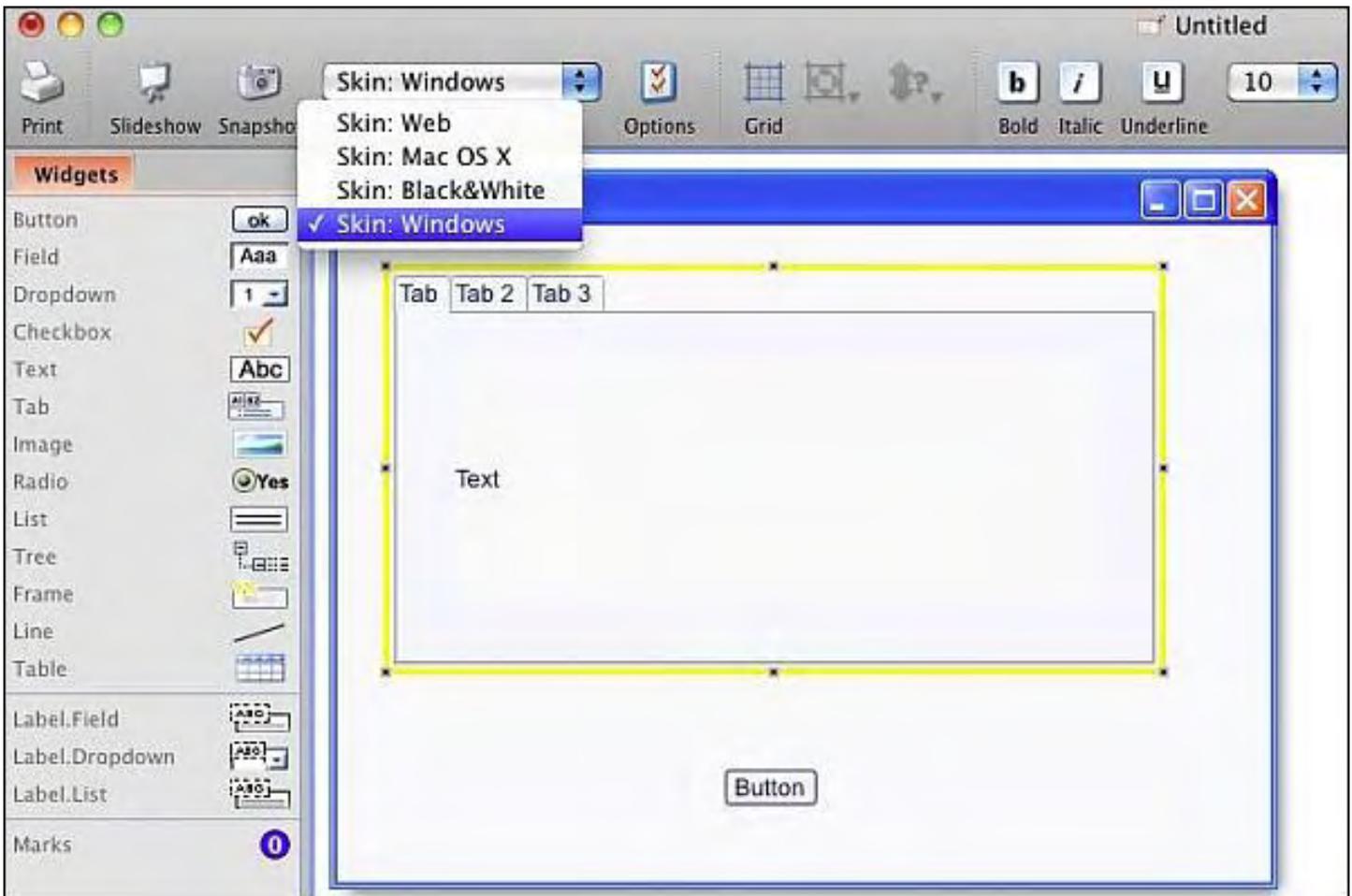


Figure 6. A Windows skin shows your program's appearance as a Windows XP program.

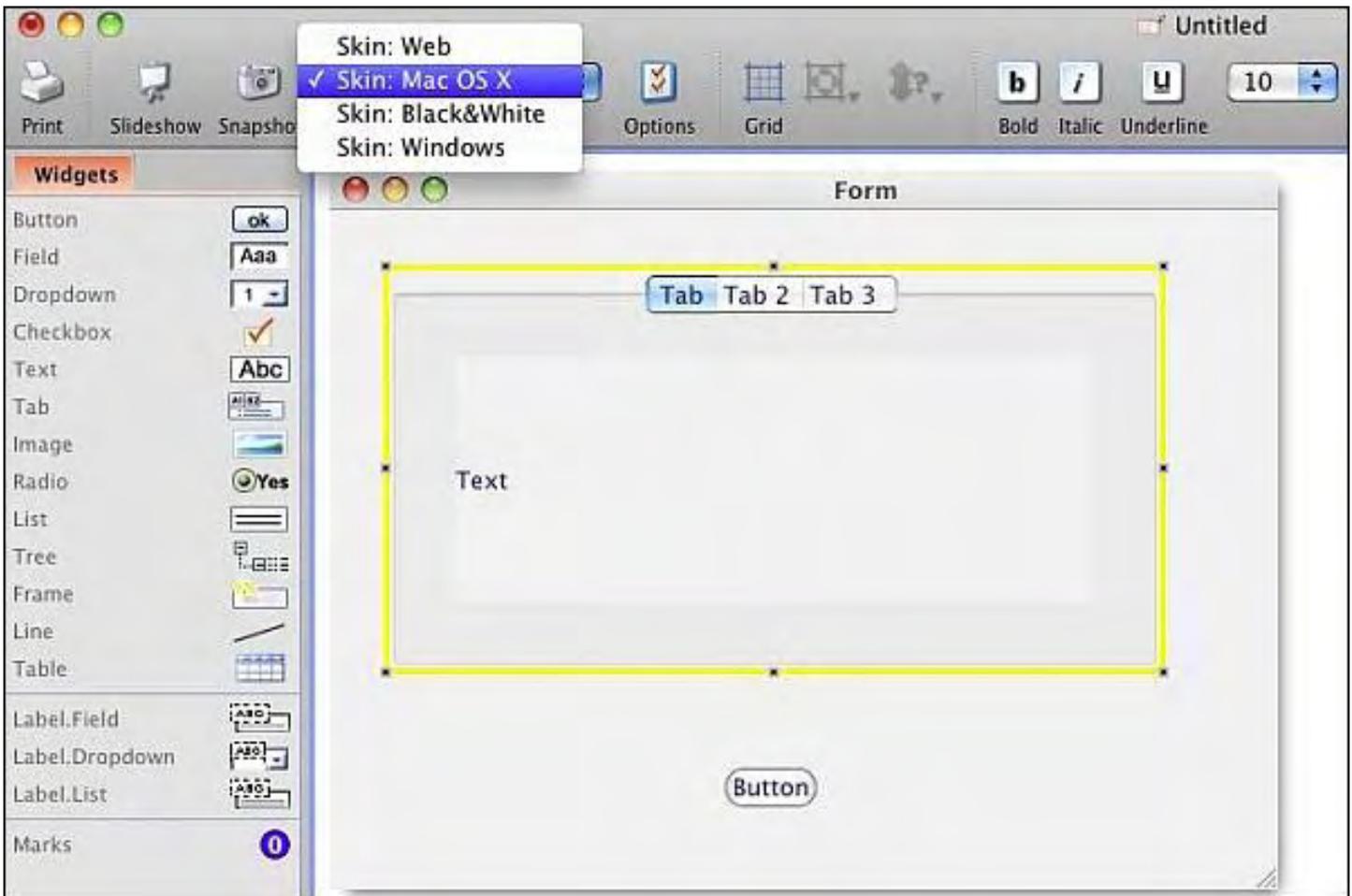


Figure 7. A Mac OS X skin shows your program's appearance as a Mac OS X program.

After completing a preliminary design of your program, MockupScreens lets you share your idea as a slide show (similar to a PowerPoint presentation), PDF file, as individual graphic files, or as an HTML file so you can post your design on a Web site for others to review.

If you're a programmer, MockupScreens can prove an invaluable tool for showing clients different program designs quickly and easily. MockupScreens only costs \$99.95, can run on Windows or Mac OS X, and can mimic the appearance of both Windows and Mac OS X, although its Windows skin doesn't display your prototype under the latest Windows 7 user interface.

MockupScreens may not be a program the average person needs, but if you do any kind of programming either as a hobby or professionally, MockupScreens is practically a necessity to avoid wasting time designing a program that doesn't look or work as it should. If you want to spare yourself the headaches and frustration of writing programs that don't work, grab a copy of MockupScreens and start designing your programs before you write any code. You may be surprised at how much more efficient you can be.

An Unusual Source of Sanity

Unless you're actively involved in the world of music, podcasting and social media, you may never have heard of a magazine called Beatweek. A cursory glance at Beatweek's magazine covers shows that they focus less on technology and more on pop culture.

Given this background, it's interesting to read a Beatweek article (www.beatweek.com/uncategorized/7577-

as-ios-4.2-goes-into-overtime-so-does-last-minute-ipad-bashing) questioning the techno-geek's obsession with bashing Apple products. "It's willful misrepresentation on the part of geek pundits everywhere who consciously or subconsciously would rather throw their own credibility away in trying to stop it, than allow a geek-averse product like the iPad [to] succeed. We've seen it all year, it's nothing new..."

As the Beatweek article mentions, anti-Apple critics commonly resort to lies and misinformation to convince others to avoid Apple products. The general theme behind anti-Apple critics revolves around the idea that, "We know what's best for you, so rather than understand your choices, just listen to us, ignore anything made by Apple, and don't bother evaluating the facts for yourself."

The Beatweek article concludes with this insight: "The real question is this: with the geeks' best efforts having had absolutely no negative effect on the iPad yet, why do they think that these increasingly foolish efforts will suddenly now get them anywhere? The iPad has its strengths and weaknesses, for sure. But in order to find out what they actually are, you'll have to ask a non-geek for a fair assessment—or just find out first hand for yourself."

Is it too much to ask people to honestly compare different products and then choose the best one for them? Unfortunately, asking anti-Apple critics to learn facts, tell the truth, and encourage others to make up their own minds actually is asking too much for them to do.

* * *

Apple recently released version 5.03 of Safari, which you can download by clicking on the Apple menu and choosing Software Updates. While this latest version fixes 27 vulnerabilities, no browser (or computer program) can ever be completely free of bugs and vulnerabilities. To reduce the risk of attack, you can either constantly update Safari, or use a less popular browser, since hackers will likely target only those browsers most people use (such as Safari on Mac OS X and Internet Explorer on Windows).

For a streamlined Macintosh-only browser, consider Camino (caminobrowser.org). Unlike cross-platform browsers that may not be completely optimized for Mac OS X (such as Firefox or Google's Chrome), Camino only runs on Mac OS X and it's obscure enough to be less of a target for hackers than Safari.

Apple also released iOS 4.2 for the iPhone/iPad, which gives the iPad the ability to store multiple icons into folders, multitask and print to wireless printers. When updating iOS on your iPad, start looking for updates to all your other apps, too, such as updates to Pages, Numbers and Keynote.

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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987)

[ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987](http://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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)

[ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702](http://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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=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: Technology Solutions

“Open Office Databases” by Rob Spahitz

This week we continue our investigation of the Base tool from OpenOffice, a free competitor to Microsoft's Office suite. Base is the competition for Access.

This week we continue our investigation of the Base tool from OpenOffice, a free competitor to Microsoft's Office suite. Base is the competition for Access. As a reminder, you can download the free OpenOffice applications from www.OpenOffice.org.

Last week we reviewed queries and quickly reviewed forms. This week we'll spend a bit more time on forms. If you'd like to follow along, create a Contacts table with the fields shown in Figure 1.

	Field Name	Field Type
	ID	Integer [INTEGER]
	FirstName	Text [VARCHAR]
	LastName	Text [VARCHAR]
	Address	Text [VARCHAR]
	City	Text [VARCHAR]
	StateOrProvince	Text [VARCHAR]
	PostalCode	Text [VARCHAR]
	Birthdate	Date [DATE]
	PhoneNumber	Text [VARCHAR]
	EmailAddress	Text [VARCHAR]

Figure 1. Contacts table definition.

As a reminder, the little key icon next to the ID field shows that it is the primary key of that table. In addition, ID has the AutoValue property set to Yes, so you won't have to give this field a value. For other fields, just use values that make sense, like 50 characters for names and 200 for addresses.

Forms

As seen last week, when you go to the Forms icon in the left panel of the Base application, you can create a form using the wizard. Let's work through the steps to see what options are presented to us. Remember that for this to work effectively, you will need a table like the one described above.

Start by clicking on the "Use Wizard to Create Form" link in the Tasks panel. After a mock-up of a form appears in a window, the wizard window appears on step 1 as seen in Figure 2.

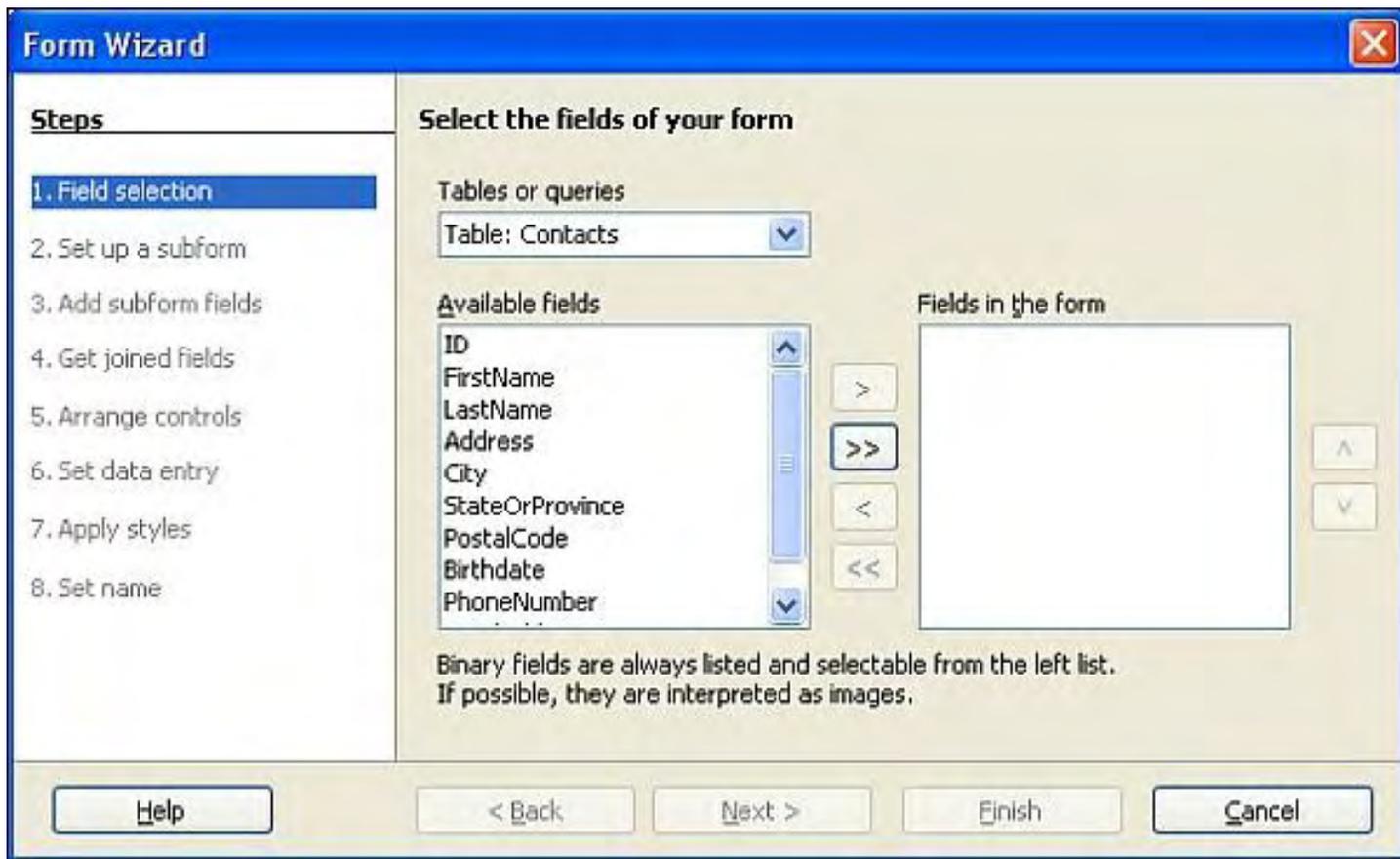


Figure 2. Form wizard field selection.

Since we're going to work with the contacts table, choose that in the "Tables or queries" drop-down list near the top middle (if it's not already selected). That will show a list of all of that table's fields. Depending on the purpose of the form, you may want all fields from a table, just a subset of fields, or a combination of fields from several tables. In our case, we'll create a "maintenance" form. These forms typically have all fields from a single table.

To quickly select all fields, click on the button with the two arrows on it pointing right (>>). Alternately, if you want fields in a specific order, select the desired fields and click on the button with the single arrow pointing right (>). To remove a field, use the left arrow button (or remove all with the double-left-arrow button). Select all fields and click on the Next button.

On the next wizard page, you can set up a subform. What is a subform? As the name implies, it's a smaller, embedded or dependent form. In this case, if we had a table with telephone numbers, you might want to make that a subform for contacts with an embedded window for adding a set of phone numbers related to that person. Since we don't have any other tables or related forms, just click on the Next button.

Since we didn't have any subforms, steps 3 and 4 ("Add subform fields" and "Get joined fields") are skipped. Step 5, Arrange Controls, allows you to define a style for how the form will appear, as seen in Figure 3.

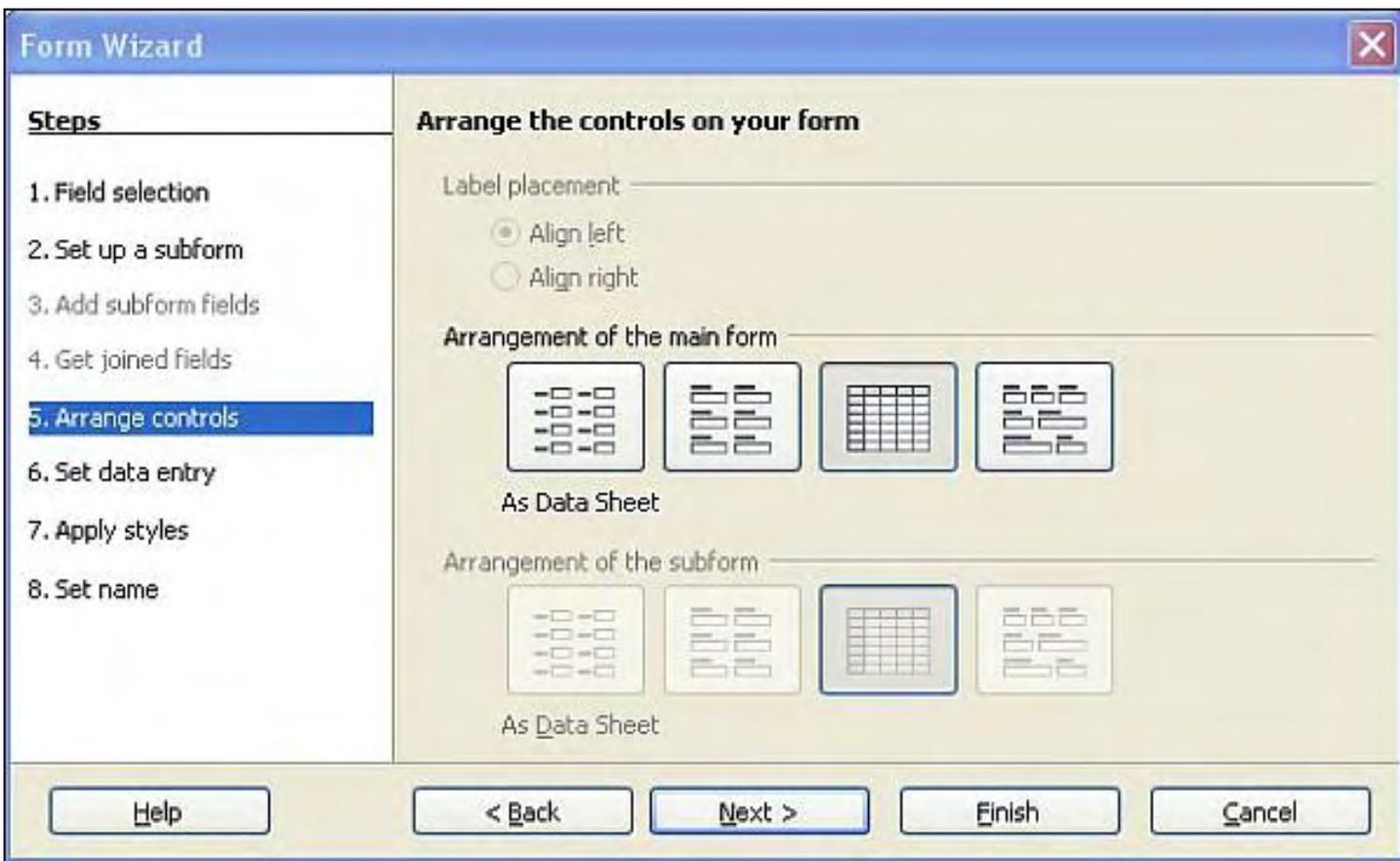


Figure 3. Form field arrangement.

The default setting, shown under "Arrangement of the main form," has the grid selected. As we saw last week, our form got created like a spreadsheet, with headings showing the field names and a grid of boxes where you can enter multiple rows (records) of information. Although there are benefit to this option (being able to enter multiple rows of entries quickly, and being able to see multiple entries in nice columns), there are also drawbacks. Grids often have limited space to show information, so either some fields (columns) will be obscured or data within a single column might get cut off from view to make room for all the fields. The way around that is to use individual fields to maximize the amount of room used on the form.

When creating a form with individual fields, Base offers three styles. You can make columns and rows of fields with labels to their left (the first button), columns and rows of fields with labels above (the second button), or labels above fields organized tightly in rows (not necessarily lining up as columns, the fourth button). Let's simply use the first button here. This enabled the section at the top to align the label text left-justified or right-justified (next to the input boxes). You may have also seen the disabled section at the bottom, used if you have subforms. Click the Next button.

In step 6, you can make this a data entry form or a "report" form. A report form is useful for looking up existing entries, after which you may want to modify or delete the entry. However, you are also given the option to disallow modifications, deletions and/or new entries. Let's keep the default to let us add, change or delete. Click on the Next button.

In step 7 you can pick a predefined color style for the form. As a reminder, I'm new to most of this tool's features, but I see strong similarities to Microsoft Access. As you click through the color options, you can see the background of the underlying form change to show a sample. I'll keep the default Beige color (although it looks orange on my monitor) and Click the Next button.

Finally, in step 8 you can give this form a name. Following the standards that I outlined in a previous article, I'll call it frmContacts, since it's a form used to access the Contacts table. I'll also keep the option to "Work with the form," then click on the Finish button.

After a few seconds of working through the settings, the finished form appears, as seen in Figure 4.

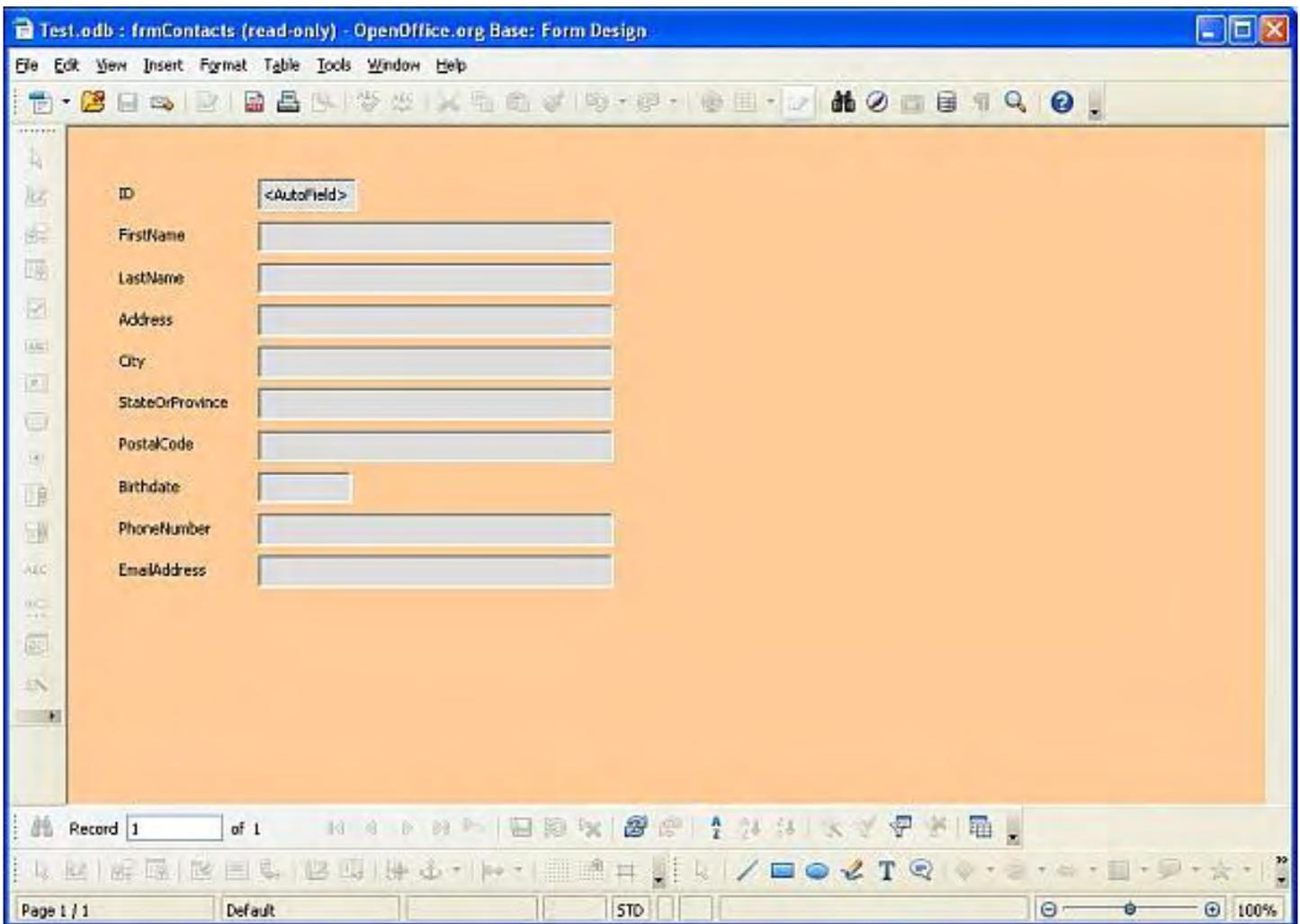


Figure 4. Completed form.

You can now enter information for any particular person. As you do this, some of the images at the bottom become enabled so that you can, for example, add a new record or navigate around the various records you've created.

If you want to change the layout or other settings, you'll need to switch to Design mode. To do that, I expected to be able to switch views as I do in Access, but I couldn't find that function on the form. However, that option is on the main window. Close this form (and save), and then right-click on the form you just created and select Edit. This takes you to a similar view, but now you can select any particular field to modify it.

Along the left edge is a toolbar with icons that allow you to work with the parts of the form, as shown in Figure 5.

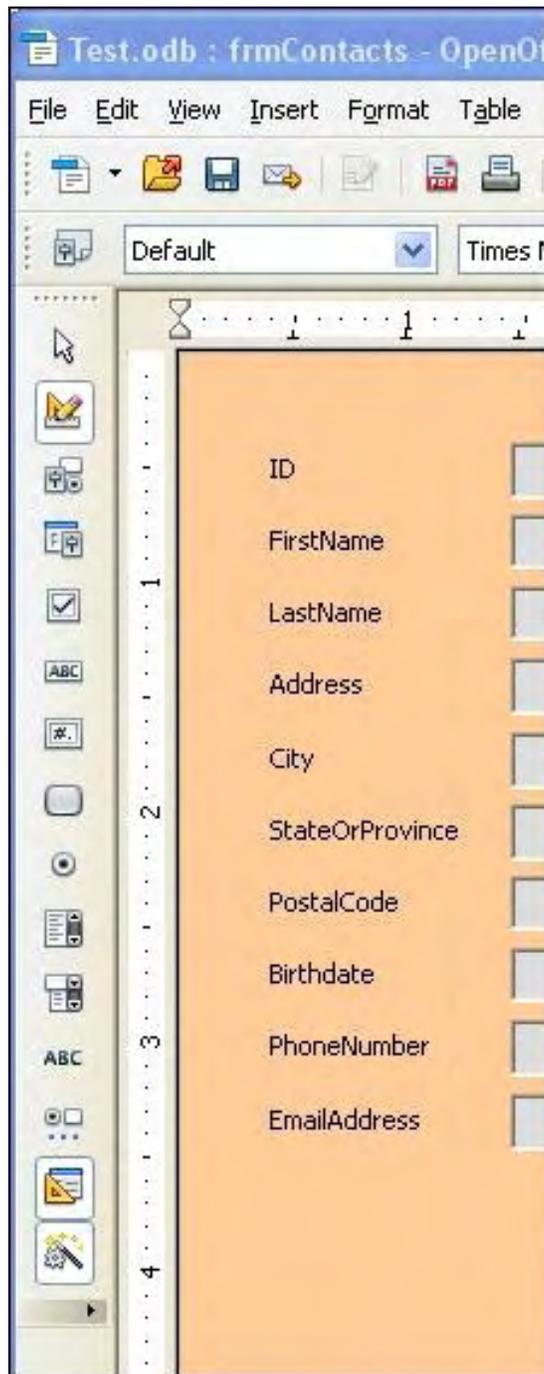


Figure 5. Form tools.

The arrow lets you go into selection mode to, for example, select the PostalCode field. Below that is a button for Design Mode On/Off (to work with the fields or preview the changes). Next down is a button to change settings for a particular field, as seen in Figure 6.

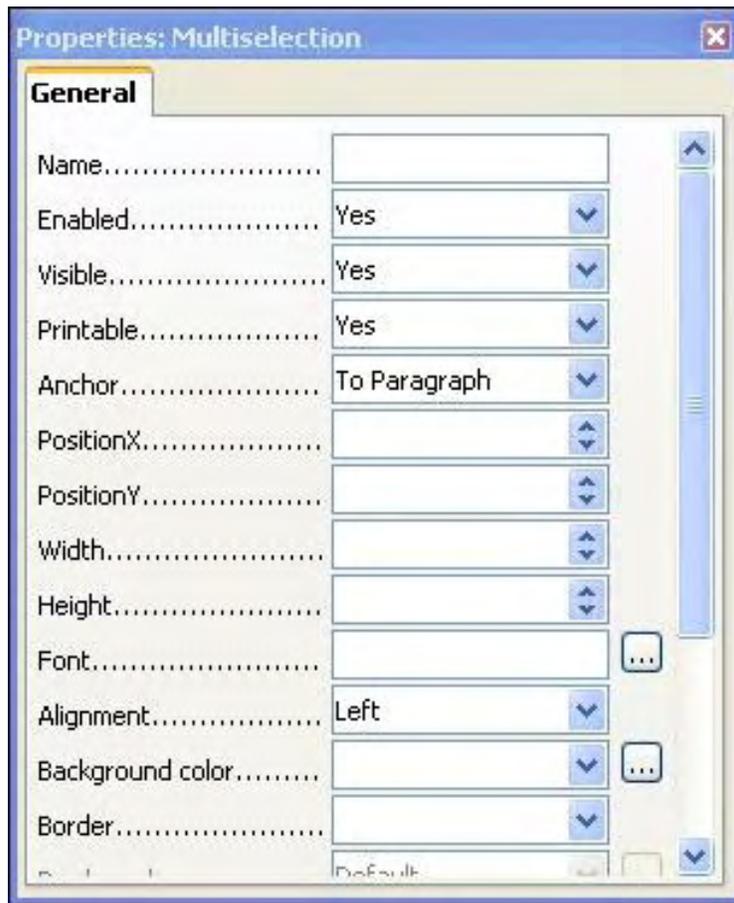


Figure 6. Form field properties.

These settings (known as properties) allow you to customize various parts of any particular field, such as the size, location, color and other things seen in the left portion of the above image.

Below that is a button to change form properties, and below that are a collection of components that you can use to improve the data entry (check boxes, text boxes, formatted input boxes, etc.). I leave these to the reader to explore further.

Since it appears that this is similar enough to Access and other design tools that I've previously explored, check *ComputerEdge.com* archives (webserver.computoredge.com/sitemap.mvc?feature=Columns&columnedcode=cmtutor&column=Rob,%20The%20ComputerTutor:%20Technology%20Solutions) for more information on how to use these pieces.

Reports

Let's take a look at reports. In the left panel of the Base tool you can select Reports. As with forms, you can use the wizard to create a report. This has similar steps to what we had with forms, as seen in Figure 7.



Figure 7. Report wizard.

We select the fields (such as the FirstName, LastName and PhoneNumber from the Contacts table). Next you can give improved labels to the fields. Then you can group how you want blocks of data combined (such as grouping all of those with the same last name). Sorting lets you alphabetize (or put in numerical or date order). Layouts give you various designs.

If you go through these settings and create the report, it will look something like Figure 8.

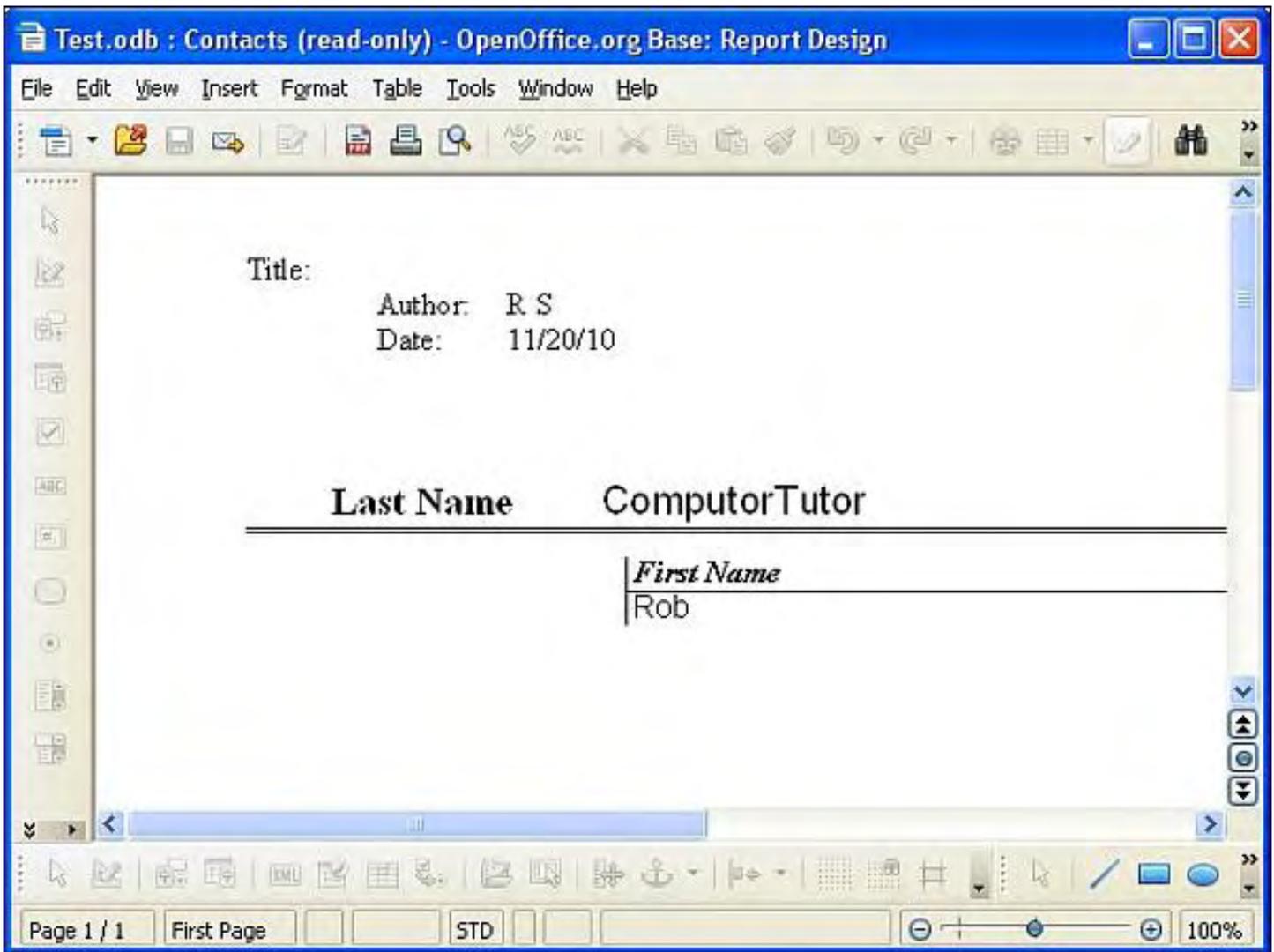


Figure 8. Completed report.

As with forms, you can go into Design mode and change these if they don't appear the way you want.

At this point, Base appears to be close enough to Access that if you come from the Microsoft world you'll probably be able to work your way through this free tool.

Next week, we'll start looking at the next tool in this package: Presentation (comparable to PowerPoint).

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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Worldwide News & Product Reviews

“The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.” by Charles Carr



Danger in the Internet Café?—Typhoid adware is being called the newest computer security threat for wireless networks; The 12 Small Business Marketing Phone Tips of Christmas—How do you reconcile the high-pressure needs of your small business with your family's desire to roast chestnuts on the open fire?; Mafia II for PC—Mafia II has a "bloody good" story to tell. HTC EVO 4G, Sprint's BIG Hit—A mobile-technology winner.

Danger in the Internet Café?

Leanne Yohemas, Senior Communications Manager, University of Calgary, Faculty of Science:

Something dubbed "typhoid adware" is being called the newest computer security threat for wireless networks. According to researchers at the University of Calgary:

There's a potential threat lurking in your Internet café. It's called typhoid adware and works in similar fashion to Typhoid Mary, the first identified healthy carrier of typhoid fever who spread the disease to dozens of people in the New York area in the early 1900s.

"Our research describes a potential computer security threat and offers some solutions," says associate professor John Aycok, who co-authored a paper with assistant professor Mea Wang and students Daniel Medeiros Nunes de Castro and Eric Lin. "We're looking at a different variant of adware—typhoid adware—which we haven't seen out there yet, but we believe could be a threat soon."

Adware is software that sneaks onto computers often when users download things, for example fancy tool bars or free screen savers, and it typically pops up lots and lots of ads. Typhoid adware needs a wireless Internet café or other area where users share a non-encrypted wireless connection.

"Typhoid adware is designed for public places where people bring their laptops," says Aycok. "It's far more covert, displaying advertisements on computers that don't have the adware installed, not the ones that do."

The paper demonstrates how Typhoid adware works as well as presents solutions on how to defend against such attacks. De Castro recently presented it at the EICAR conference in Paris, a conference devoted to IT security.

Typically, adware authors install their software on as many machines as possible. But typhoid adware comes from another person's computer and convinces other laptops to communicate with it and not the legitimate access point. Then the typhoid adware automatically inserts advertisements in videos and Web pages on the other computers. Meanwhile, the carrier sips her latté in peace—she sees no advertisements and doesn't know she is infected—just like symptomless Typhoid Mary.

U of C researchers have come up with a number of defenses against typhoid adware. One is protecting the content of videos to ensure that what users see comes from the original source. Another is a way to "tell" laptops they are at an

Internet café to make them more suspicious of contact from other computers.

"When you go to an Internet café, you tell your computer you are there and it can put up these defenses. Anti-virus companies can do the same thing through software that stops your computer from being misled and re-directed to someone else," says Aycock.

Why worry about ads? Aycock explains it this way: "Not only are ads annoying, but they can also advertise rogue antivirus software that's harmful to your computer, so ads are in some sense the tip of the iceberg."

The paper, Typhoid Adware, can be found here (pages.cpsc.ucalgary.ca/~aycock/papers/eicar10.pdf).

The 12 Small Business Marketing Phone Tips of Christmas

Kevin Baker, Product Marketing Manager for my1voice (www.my1voice.com) virtual phone service for small business writes in this week:

Ah, the holidays. That wonderful time of year when families gather 'round the fireplace to drink a little eggnog, trim the tree, and experience the joy of being together.

For most of us, the holidays are also a very hectic time of year. Especially the 12 days leading up to Christmas. And that's true even if you don't happen to celebrate Christmas, because it still sets a very short deadline to get the word out about your business' holiday promotions via a marketing campaign, and for getting business done in general since most of the business world seems to come to a stop from December 25 until around January 3.

How do you reconcile the high-pressure needs of your small business with your family's desire to roast chestnuts on the open fire? Having a virtual phone service can help. Toward that end, we offer up these 12 small business phone tips 'til Christmas. Hope they help make your season a little brighter.

Tip 1: Use smart call forwarding to carve out a little time for yourself. A small business owner's time is not his/her own anytime during the year. But during the holidays it's especially precious. With smart call forwarding you can sneak out to do a little extended shopping, trim the tree with the family, or a holiday lunch without losing touch. Simply forward your calls to your mobile, home or other number and you can answer just as though you're in the office.

Tip 2: Record informational messages that answer repetitive questions. Rather than taking time to answer the same questions about what days you'll be working over the holidays or what time the business is open, pre-record a message and make it an option on your virtual receptionist. This tip is extra helpful for businesses whose hours will be varying greatly during the holidays. Retailers can also use these messages to post updates on the status of hot holiday items.

Tip 3: Spur holiday sales by offering door busters. Add a burst to your ads and/or direct mail/e-mail promotions encouraging customers to call a particular extension you set up to promote the door buster of the day. You can even use different extensions for each advertising vehicle so you can track which ones get the most calls—thus telling you which are the most effective at driving customers to action.

Tip 4: Enable the virtual receptionist to greet callers during peak times. Many businesses still prefer to have calls answered by a live person. But during the holidays, the high volume of calls can make it tough to answer every call promptly. Rather than forcing callers to leave a message or call back when you're not available, use the virtual receptionist as a backup to provide a friendly, professional greeting and help callers connect with the person or department they want quickly.

Tip 5: Use voicemail transcription to scan through messages. Voicemail messages always seem to multiply during the holidays. Choose a virtual phone service that has the ability to turn voicemails into text, so you can have those messages sent to you via e-mail or as a text to your phone. That way you can quickly skim through them rather than listen to them one at a time. It's a great way to stay on top of the priorities, especially when you're out shopping yourself.

Tip 6: Give Santa his own extension. Businesses can get in on the holiday spirit by letting kids call to speak with Santa directly at the North Pole. This works particularly well if you have a toll-free phone number.

Tip 7: Put a "Call Me" button on your Web site. These days customers often gather information on the Web then use other means to make the purchase. Make it easy for them to call by adding a Call Me button to your Web site.

Customers click the button, input the phone number they want to use to receive the call, and are connected quickly, while they're still looking at the product or service on the screen. It's doubly important if you're a retailer without a Web-purchasing capability.

Tip 8: Make business calls while you're out shopping with the family. But when you do, be sure the caller ID appears as if you're calling from the office.

Tip 9: Use Caller ID tagging to identify business vs. personal calls. By assigning a unique number to appear in front of the caller ID of incoming calls, you can tell at a glance what phone number the caller dialed.

Knowing beforehand if a call is business or personal gives you the ability to choose which calls to answer so you can make more effective use of your time.

Tip 10: Don't stay behind waiting to receive a fax in your home office while your family heads out to the in-laws for a pre-holiday feast. Treat fax delivery the same as you do with your voicemail messages: by having faxes sent directly to the e-mail inbox on your laptop or smartphone. Never be stuck somewhere waiting for a fax again!

Tip 11: Use smart call forwarding to offer 24x7 customer support. When customers need help during the holidays, they usually want it right now—even if it's 2:00 in the morning. With a small staff you can't be in the office 24x7. But you can use smart call forwarding to forward calls to any phone you choose. Have each person on staff take a night to provide that support during the holidays, then advertise that it's available.

Tip 12: Make your holiday bright. Not really a phone tip but still good advice. Take the time to relax, enjoy and refresh yourself for 2011.

Happy holidays!

Mafia II for PC

2K Games' Mafia II (www.mafia2game.com) (about \$35) is a third-person shooter that aims to give players a taste of life in the world of organized crime. While the game bills itself as a so-called sandbox game—one in which players get a lot of freedom to go where they want, take on side quests, etc.—it really isn't. Mafia II has a story to tell, and if you're interested in going along for the ride, it's a bloody good one.



The original game, developed by Gathering of Developers was a big hit and sold a couple of million copies. Mafia II, written by the same team, offers up a brand new story, set in a fictional 100-square-mile city called Empire Bay, centered around the character Vito, "born the son of a poor immigrant beaten down Italian American who is trying to secure his piece of the American Dream. Looking to escape the life of poverty that consumed his childhood, Vito is soon swayed by the lure of power and wealth that a life of organized crime can bring. A petty criminal his whole life, Vito, along with his childhood friend, Joe, will descend into the world of organized crime. Together, they will work to prove themselves to the Mob as they try to make their names on the streets of a cold and unforgiving city." (2K Games)

Mafia II's save system might be frustrating for some players. Like (too many) games these days, it saves automatically when you have achieved certain progress within a mission. Thankfully, you usually won't be sent back to the very beginning of the mission, but it can be frustrating nonetheless. For me, it was about right. I could usually finish each mission in two or three run-throughs. When success in a couple of the timed missions eluded me, I simply asked my teen-aged son to do those for me. Extremely useful gaming accessory, the lad.

The game's gorgeous look is largely due to 2K Czech's next-generation engine, which was built specifically for Mafia II. Gamers move between lushly designed interiors to ultra-realistic outdoor environments. I'll long remember driving around snow-covered Empire Bay at Christmastime usually on the way to shoot people I didn't like. The game also has an excellent soundtrack featuring some of the best music (usually played on your car's radio) of the post-WWII era.

Personally, I liked Mafia II's story. It's very well-written with lots of surprises (usually bloody ones, the game is rated M). The trick to enjoying Mafia II is to take it for what it is: a movie in which you are invited to participate—when it says you can.



HTC EVO 4G—Sprint's BIG Hit

HTC's EVO 4G (Sprint, \$199 after rebates with two-year contract, \$79.99 per month with Everything Data-450 Anytime Minutes package (shop.sprint.com/NASApp/onlinestore/en/Action/DisplayPackages?INTNAV=ATG):

HE:Pkgs) is an extraordinary piece of mobile technology. Thanks to its humongous 4.3-inch screen, easily customizable Android (2.2) operating system, and crazy-fast 1GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon processor, the EVO 4G is a winner.



Why 4G over 3G? Sprint says the EVO 4G delivers download speeds as much as 10x faster than 3G (although the phone is also compatible with 3G networks). According to the company, the EVO runs on Sprint's 4G network as well as the 800/1900 CDMA/EV-DO Rev. A frequencies.

The EVO 4G's huge display is so large that, ironically, it might be a turn-off for some users who are actually looking for a device that's easier to tuck away. For my average male-sized-hands, it's perfect. Videos look fantastic on it—big enough to really get a sense of immersion whether you're watching downloaded TV and films or the HD movies you

capture yourself on the phone's built-in auto-focus camera. The forward-facing 1.3 megapixel camera allows you to place video calls using the Qik voice and video service from (upgrade charge applies).



Integrated Google technology gives you one-touch access to some of today's most popular services, including Google Search by Voice, Picasa, YouTube, music downloads, and more. The time-tested Android OS allows access to thousands of useful apps and games, many of which are free. The phone has a built-in microSD memory card slot. An 8GB card is included, but you can kick it up to as much as 32GB yourself.

The EVO 4G supports Adobe Flash and has an HDMI audio/video output so you can hook it right up to most HD TVs. Built-in mobile hotspot functionality allows you to connect up to eight Wi-Fi-enabled devices. The Wi-Fi worked flawlessly. At home, set it up once and you're done. Away from home, finding and connecting to hotspots is quick and intuitive.

Some personal notes: That Snapdragon processor really is fast. Apps launch so fast they feel like they come up slightly *before* you click on their icon. With this phone, worrying about slowdowns as the result of running too many apps at once is a thing of the past—although you still might want to close a few to reduce battery drain.

Speaking of which, battery life is not the greatest (about six hours). That's what you get with a screen that large and all the added goodies. You can do better if you turn off Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, reduce screen brightness, and other power-hungry features. I got about six hours of talk time if I was careful. There's a company named Seido (www.seidionline.com/product-p/bacy35hev4-bk.htm) that offers a battery for \$69.95 that doubles capacity. If you can afford it, get it. No more resource triaging.

Finally, the HTC EVO 4G has a very solid, almost organic feel to it—almost like a polished stone. The quality of calls was excellent. Loud and clear.

The HTC EVO 4G is one amazing phone—if, for you, larger is a plus, not a minus.



In addition to being an editor and columnist for *ComputerEdge* and *ComputerScene* Magazines, where he has written hundreds of feature articles and cover stories over the past decade, Charles Carr has also penned well over 1,000 non-tech newspaper and magazine articles and columns for various publications, including two widely-read columns each week for San Diego's *North County Times* newspaper.

Carr has covered such diverse topics as pesticide use in area schools, invasive background checks for county volunteers, asthma awareness, the debate over standards-based grading, potential vulnerabilities in electronic voting machines, and Southern California's devastating 2003 and 2007 wildfires. He has also written many humorous pieces.

Carr has also edited dozens of stories and articles written by others which have appeared in major publications and web sites across the country.

He has been a contributor and technical advisor to *L.A. and San Diego Parent* magazines and receives dozens of requests a year to appear on Southern California television and radio stations to talk about important events in the tech world.

Carr has judged many writing competitions including San Diego Press Club and Time-Warner Communications contests and was sole judge for the national NAPPA Tech Toys awards for five years (which his kids really appreciated). He was recently a judge for the national "Poetry Out Loud" competition.

He has won many writing accolades, including Press Club awards for Best Column Writing, Consumer Writing and Best Arts and Entertainment, and has repeatedly taken top honors in San Diego Songwriter's Guild competitions for his original musical compositions.

Carr will soon publish his first book, *What a World*, a collection of his best writings.

Learn more at www.charlescarr.com.

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Computer Hazards: Strain, Pain, Disease and ER Visits

“A Look at the Human Side
of Computing” by Marilyn K. Martin

Yes indeed, your computer harbors medical dangers from the micro to the macro. Doubt me? Then read on—if you dare.

Hard to imagine that hunk of plastic and electronics sitting on your desk or table can actually endanger your life. Or else seriously impair your health. Yes indeed, your computer harbors medical dangers from the micro to the macro. Doubt me? Then read on—if you dare.

The most commonly reported physical problems related to using a computer are classified as "repetitive stress injuries," "overuse injuries" or "repetitive strain injuries." These cover the spectrum of stress and strain in backs, necks, wrists, hands and eyes, all from working too long or in the wrong position in front of a computer. This, above all else, has opened up a Pandora's Box of computer injuries, and unleashed those mega-spectrum products called *ergonomic*.



Designed specifically for his new iPad, Henry enjoys his iHammock ergonomic furniture.

That's a strange word. So I looked it up. "Ergo" is Latin for "therefore." And "nomic" was a game created in 1982 by Peter Suber. The players make up the rules through democratic voting, which soon breaks down. It supposedly shows that any rule-changing system can easily end up with laws that are contradictory, insufficient and illegal.

Somehow, I think "therefore insufficient" is a perfect definition for all the ergonomic products out there. Most are quite expensive, and they may or may not be all that helpful, especially if you only use one ergonomic product, which might exacerbate problems with your ratty older computer parts, which could cancel out or contradict the desired effects. (And, if you learn how to make an ATM shoot out \$20 bills with your reprogrammed ergonomic-mouse, quite

Designed specifically for his new iPad, Henry enjoys his iHammock ergonomic furniture.

"therefore illegal.")

When and if your physical troubles escalate, rest assured that there are even more scary-sounding medical terms to framework your computer "injury." All of which are great for bragging rights. ("I was in wrist surgery for 10 hours. I woke up being asked 'Can you type without one thumb?") As well as being able to initiate interesting conversations. ("Ah! I see you've got a hand brace too. Wanna try a Pain Threshold Test?")

And with a precise strain/overuse/repetitive/stress "injury" diagnosis, you can make your insurance company feel compelled to cover all treatment. Or at the very least, get your boss to pony up for an expensive "ergonomic ensemble." This usually consists of an expensive keyboard, mouse, chair and an ergonomic Mouthpiece, usually leather, stick or a bullet, to bite down on if the pain gets too intense. (Hey, all those 1950s TV Westerns were historical *and* educational!)

Carpel tunnel that goes up your forearm is now called "radial tunnel syndrome," while a "triggerfinger" describes swollen finger tendons. And if you cradle a phone handset between your ear and shoulder, you are a ripe candidate for "carotid-artery dissection." But—cue the doom-and-gloom music—"prolonged keyboarding and mousing" can lead to ... even scarier medical problems!

CTD describes "Cumulative Trauma Disorder," where you can throw all your mild to serious computer-causing aches and pains into one category. (And everyone knows that anytime a physical ailment moves from "injury" to "disorder," you need to start getting your Last Will and Testament and life insurance policies up to date.)

You may even be experiencing ingrained-in-your-brain syndromes, like "Tunneling Dissection Vision." Which is when you are unable to tell your monitor icons from all the sparkling cursors your 12-year-old keeps changing around.

Or "Prolonged Keyboard Stabbing," where your fingers tap hard on everything you do, and you find yourself punching holes in every newspaper and paper document you read when you get excited. And you've been wondering why no one invites you to picnics anymore? Possibly because your PKS makes you end up wearing your meal, after you shred your paper plate stabbing your keyboard food with a plastic fork.

Or maybe you'll experience the related "Keyboard Ghost Sensation," where your fingers type out your invisible words' reaction to everything. While shopping, your restless right hand types out "you hip?" on a new stereo. Or your left hand types out "tread far" while you wait restlessly for help in a shoe department.

But if you haven't been treating all those physical "triggering" and "trauma" problems up to this point, you may now be experiencing everything from muscle weakness to cramping and chronic pain, up to and including loss of feeling and limited mobility.

Yes indeed! You too could end up in one of those little motorized chairs, exchanging injury stories in your doctor's waiting room: "And then the pain went up both arms, exploded behind my neck, and cascaded down my ribs to my legs. It's called Radial Nerve Tunneling Dissection, and suddenly I was too weak to even walk anymore!"

But wait! That computer you work at could cause you more than just strain, pain and bizarre new habits. The American Journal of Preventive Medicine has done its homework, and has sagely reported that more and more computer injuries are showing up in emergency rooms, mainly due to tripping over computer cords and dropping monitors, or people banging their heads or snagging limbs on various computer parts.

ER visits from computer injuries increased seven-fold from 1994 to 2006, the Journal reports. Computer injuries are

now even outpacing new computers brought into the home (which is a rather strange comparison statistic). How exactly does bringing home a new computer correlate to ER computer injuries? Unless too many homeowners are butterfingers, dropping computer pieces as fast as they are de-boxed for installation?

But the Journal's stats don't stop there. The most ER-bound computer injuries (21 percent) come from computer equipment falling on people. But there was some good news. Head injuries from falling monitors increased until 2003, then started to decline. The speculation being that newer and thinner monitors aren't as heavy or destructive when they fall on someone.

Hey, kiddies—electronic history factoid! Have you ever seen some of those original monitors? Everything was desktop in those days, and early PC monitors had the size and heft of a small refrigerator. (Which seriously delayed the idea of a "laptop" computer, believe me.) When one of those puppies fell on you, it was bone-breaking time. Or a six-month medical leave for a concussion that left your head slanted to the right forevermore. Or "reconstructive surgery due to cartilage rupture." Meaning that mega-monitor sliced off your outer ear on the way to the floor.

Although, why so many people were in physical positions to have monitors fall on their head in the first place is a bit of a mystery. I vaguely remember hearing some pre-injury discussion in offices I worked in, when someone was fussing over something behind or below their monitor.

The dialogue ranged from, "So leave it back there, George! We've got plenty of other pens in the supply room." Or, "You keep tripping over all those cords, Luther. Haven't you heard of zip-strips?" And "Why don't you wait for tech support to get up here, Heather? Let them figure out why your peripherals are all hooked up wrong."

All of which were usually followed by a distinctive thud!, and people suddenly rushing over to ask someone now supine on the floor, "Are you all right?" The injured party would usually dazedly murmur, "I think so..." from beneath a fallen fridge-monitor. Or else the injured didn't respond at all. At which point someone would scream out "CALL LEGAL, TECH SUPPORT, AND THE PARAMEDICS!" (And who says there isn't any excitement working in an office?)

But, hypochondriacs take heart: It gets worse! Bad laptop batteries in 2006 had an alarming tendency to burst into flames. Talk about a having a bad day! How exactly would you explain that your shared family laptop is now crispy black and misshapen? ("Yes, it did! I swear! The laptop burst into flames just as I was sending an e-mail to the IRS! You know my cousin, Backwoods Ralph? The one who believes Congress has all been replaced by robots? He thinks the IRS can really fry your laptop by remote, if you owe too much in back taxes.")

And recently, "toasted lap syndrome" has been reported in some laptop users who, surprisingly, actually kept their laptops *on* their laps for extended periods of time. Even tho' the bottom of laptops can reach 125 degrees. ER physicians were sanguine, saying that they had seen similar injuries from "overuse" of heating pads and hot water bottles. Lasting results, however, can include mottled or darkened skin, as well as decreased sperm production, known as "toasted infertility."

Explosions, flying-off components and acid leaks have been reported in other well-used electronics, but so far not in computers. But, since I believe in a Layered Complexity of Disaster Preparedness, consider yourself warned about what might, maybe, possibly could happen to your computer someday. And, as a living peripheral, to you as well.

Even on the microscopic scale, great danger lurks for computer users. According to a July 2010 article in the Journal of Applied Microbiology, multiuser electronics are literally a primordial soup of dangerous viruses and bacteria waiting to be passed from one person to another. One fact quoted was that mobile phones alone can harbor 18 times more bacteria than a flush handle in a typical men's restroom.

This is another strange comparison/factoid I have problems with. Why not compare the bacteria found on a flush handle in a women's restroom? Do women have cleaner hands? Or do too many men race to the office restroom after sneezing on their keyboard, picking their nose, or retrieving half-smoked cigarette butts from the trash? (I guess it's another one of those Mars-Venus things. In other words, no-definitive-answer.)

Disease through germs, we're told, can go from multiuser touchscreens and keyboards/keypads, to finger-tips and then to the eyes, nose and mouth. Which, we are solemnly informed, "are the most likely routes of infection." And entrepreneurs have been quick to notice this lurking and menacing danger, with a growing market for sanitary wipes. One company even intones solemnly that "it's not entirely surprising that the filthiest things we encounter on a regular basis are computer keyboards and mobile phones."

Filthiest? Infection? Multiuser electronic surfaces quivering with diseased sludge, as in "It's ... ALIVE!" Frankly, I think there's a good science-fiction novel in all this, using the disease-that-wipes-out-mankind model. How about "Day After Virtual Tomorrow: Death From E-coli Electronics." Or maybe "Microbes Kill—and Artificial Intelligence Can't Save Us." Or possibly "Sneezing On the Mouse: The Typhoid Mary of the Mars Colony."

On the mega-danger scale, disaster risk management is a key part of big business today, much of it focused on every sizeable company's computer network. Whether natural or man-made disasters, every company wants a good disaster recovery plan in place to protect their all-important computer files, network and profit margin, from mid-disaster "mitigating effects" plans, up through "business continuity" to "full recovery." No company wants their products and services seriously interrupted or lost due to crust-splitting earthquakes, impacting asteroids or detonated nuclear weapons.

Now whether or not there will be any people left to buy those products or services after such dystopian disasters, is another matter. But it does kinda leave a glow in your heart region, to think of the dazed remnants of humanity shuffling past partial skyscrapers with hanging banners offering "Program Your Prosthetics!" or "Connect To The Only Surviving Internet in Iceland!" or "All Canned Goods Taken In Barter! Special Discounts for Unopened Beer!"

Marilyn K. Martin is a freelance writer of nonfiction and fiction living in East Texas. She is the author of several published mini-articles and is currently writing a Young Adult Science Fiction series, *Chronicles of Mathias*, (www.amazon.com/Chronicles-Mathias-One-Reptilian-Rebirth/dp/1598249002) Volume One and Two are available on Amazon.

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EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher

“Change Is Inevitable, Thanks to Technology” by Jack Dunning



There is no turning back the clock. Savvy business people realize this and adapt. The photography business is one such example.

Computers are continuing to change the way businesses operate despite the best efforts of professionals who are accustomed to the old way of doing things. People who have made a healthy living with more traditional approaches are finding that computers and digital equipment have brought many more people into competition with them, and it's very unsettling. This time I'm looking at professional photography.

I need to preface this with the fact that there are people who have a particular talent for photography—whether they are professionals or enthusiastic amateurs. They have an eye for setting up the shot, then know (or have learned) how to select and touch up the best of the lot. The digital world has made it much easier for talented (and not so talented) people to enter the photography field. Cameras continually improve and the costs keep dropping. There is no longer the problem of processing film—cutting out an expensive part of the profession. This has put increasing pressure on the old way of running a photography business, whether for portraits or special occasions.

For example, if a photographer was hired for a wedding, traditionally not only did the photographer get paid for their time on the day of the event, but each print had to be purchased from the photographer for a substantial additional fee. This was understandable, since the touching up of the original photos was a time-consuming process—this is still true with digital photography. (Even amateurs uploading their personal pics to Costco must sort through the masses, remove red-eye, and crop each individual shot. This can easily take an hour or two. People who know how to improve the originals take even more time.) Charging for prints is still the case for many wedding photographers, but the times are changing.

The problem is that people today know that the actual cost of taking the digital pictures is not substantially beyond the cost of the photographer's time and a little overhead. There is certainly a good deal of work that goes into processing each acceptable photo, which needs to be compensated, but why should each print be charged? This made sense when the only way you could view the photos was by printing them, but today it costs next to nothing to reproduce digital photos—which may or may not get printed at some time in the future. More and more people are going to photographers who deliver a CD-ROM or DVD of photos after they've completed their work. That way the bride and groom can get their own prints at their leisure. Eventually, this will become the accepted way of doing business—although there can be tremendous value added when albums are put together by the photographer.

It is not uncommon to find photographers who will charge a flat rate for a shoot that includes touching up a certain number of photos. Then a DVD is delivered to the buyer, who may print as many as desired without limitation. The quality is professional and the customer is happy.



There is no turning back the clock. Savvy business people realize this and adapt. Many businesses hang on to their traditional approaches bemoaning the newcomers who undercut them by "giving away too much." They point to their quality and professionalism as the reason that they won't adapt to the circumstances—yet there are many more capable people who don't know the old way of business and are willing to give what the customer wants.

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

"Data Backup on the Web," "Office Clipboard Replacement," "Visual Studio Alternative," "Storage Vs. Backup?," "Window 7 Power Button"

Data Backup on the Web

[Regarding Michael J. Ross's November 12 article, "Data Backup on the Web":]

But why no mention of industry leader Carbonite?

-Pete Maurer, Rosarito Beach

Most of us have sloooooow upload speeds to the "cloud." Also, you can't back up and restore MS operating systems.

-Walter, San Diego, CA

My business and home are at different locations. I use a PogoPlug and a 1.5TB USB hard drive to store my business data at home over the Net. The cost of this setup was around \$200. The setup took about 10 minutes. No third party has access to my data. Only data is backed up, since operating systems and programs can easily be reproduced. The PogoPlug has four USB ports.

-Dennis, San Diego, CA

Office Clipboard Replacement

[Regarding the November 5 Digital Dave column:]

You could try a replacement for the Office Clipboard. Here is a page with some alternatives (www.ilovefreesoftware.com/02/articles/4-free-windows-clipboard-replacement-software.html).

-James Tepe, Lakewood, CO

I use ClipMate from Thornsoft. A little utility I have used for years, and I would be lost without it. Pasting from ClipMate into Excel works just fine.

-Steve, Escondido

The article says the Clipboard is flushed when Excel is started. I noticed it also happens with Word. No problem doing a Copy if Word is already open.

-John Markham, Chula Vista, CA

Visual Studio Alternative

[Regarding the November 12 Digital Dave column:]

Another alternative for "non-digital Don" might be Microsoft's Visual Studio 2010—Express Edition. You can check it out at msdn.microsoft.com. The Express Edition is free and includes a Web Developer, Basic, C# and C++ compilers. Microsoft includes a lot of instructional videos as well as an open forum where experienced people can answer questions, etc. And there are plenty of books available to learn from.

-Mike Z, Dacono, CO

Storage Vs. Backup?

[Regarding Pete Choppin's November 12 article, "Online Storage Services":]

This article seems to be trying to make a distinction between online storage and online backup. Seems to me that no such distinction exists. What am I missing?

-Pete Maurer, Rosarito, Baja California

Window 7 Power Button

Good article! It would have been cool if you could state what the other options really do, like sleep means the computer is asleep but not offline, not on the Internet, and if you click here, the computer comes to life and is now awake. Could it really be that simple?

What about hibernate? How does it differ from sleep? I like to sleep to hibernate; on the other hand, usually I don't hibernate when I sleep. What does sleep mean on the Windows 7 Power button?

-Hector G., San Diego

[If you check out this article, you will get a few answers. Sleep is the same as standby for purposes of the article. Windows computers often don't wake up properly. —Jack Dunning]

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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