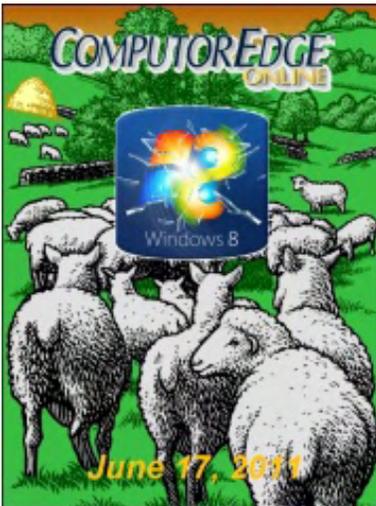


# ComputerEdge™ Online — 06/17/11



## This issue: A Closer Look at Windows 8

Windows 8 has been in the works for a while. Is it worth considering or merely another flavor of the same old Windows?

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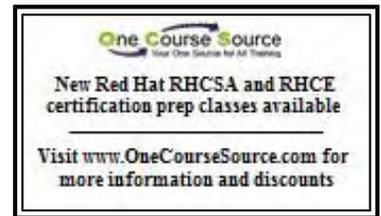
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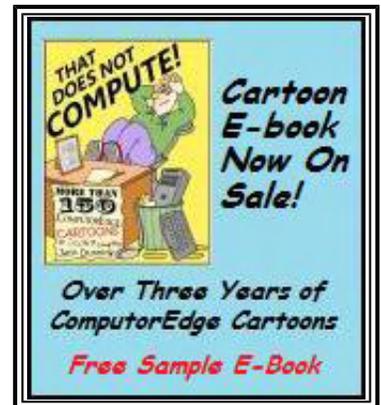
"Time for Training," "AM-Deadlink for Browser Favorites," "Missing Files," "Ringing the Linux Bell"



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## Digital Dave

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

Internet Explorer 9 Problem; Internet Phone Doesn't Work in Hotel; Windows Explorer Stopped Working.

Dear Digital Dave,

*I'm running Vista on a Compaq laptop. I've been using Internet Explorer for years, through its various iterations, most recently IE8. Recently, I downloaded IE9. Since it appeared on Windows Update, I figured it was ready for general use. But, it won't install with several attempts. It also said that it couldn't install because I had an earlier version already installed (Duh!). So I uninstalled IE8 and whatever parts of IE9 it had installed, then turned off my antivirus software and firewall as was suggested on the Microsoft Web site.*

*Same problem. It won't install and now I don't have IE8 to work with as a backup either. So I switched to Firefox and managed to get it configured pretty much as I want it (except I have no idea what all this stuff is about add-ons, extensions, plug-ins, etc.)*

*Surely I'm not the only one who can't use IE9, but I couldn't find any useful suggestions, advice, or fixes online. Thanks, and I have read your column every week for many years, since I used to live in San Diego and always picked it up on the sidewalk machines.*

*Great job.*

*Steve Johnson  
Orlando, FL*

Dear Steve,

I'm sure that you are not the only one with this problem with Internet Explorer, although most people are probably having no issues. With so many different computers and the wide variety of software on those millions of computers, changes occurs over time that can ultimately cause a situation such as yours—even if it only hits a few computers.

Internet Explorer has never been Microsoft's best product. That's why so many people have switched to Firefox (as you have), Google Chrome and other Web browsers. I always keep a number of browsers installed on my computer just in case—even Internet Explorer. As for all the add-ons, extensions and plug-ins which are available for Web browsers, I generally avoid most of them unless they give me a capability I really need. When it comes right down to it, I have no Web browser loyalty.

As for your Internet Explorer 9 problems, Microsoft has a couple of pages which address some of the issues. (You may have already seen these.) "Troubleshoot problems when you cannot install Internet Explorer 9 ([support.microsoft.com/kb/2409098](http://support.microsoft.com/kb/2409098))" and "Prerequisites for installing Internet Explorer 9 ([support.microsoft.com/kb/2399238](http://support.microsoft.com/kb/2399238))." If none of this is useful, then you can always go back to Internet Explorer 8—or 7(?) ([windows.microsoft.com/en-US/internet-explorer/downloads/ie](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/internet-explorer/downloads/ie)). (Please don't go back to IE7. Chrome or Safari are definitely the fastest. Chrome is less pretentious than Safari, so I pick Chrome.)

Digital Dave

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Dear Digital Dave,

*I have an Internet phone and I generally take it with me wherever I go. All I have to do is plug it into a router*

*and I have my phone number with the quality of a land line. I also have a cell phone, but cell calls rarely measure up to my Internet phone, especially for business calls.*

*I have noticed that the phone often won't work in hotels, especially in Las Vegas. What causes this problem?*

*Jim  
El Cajon, CA*

Dear Jim,

One problem hotels have had is getting people to use their telephone systems. They spend millions of dollars on these systems, yet people won't even pay the fee for a local call. People will generally bypass the system by using their cell phone. Who can blame them? The same has happened with built-in Internet systems.

While many hotels will offer free Internet to their guests, the Las Vegas hotels saw Web access as another opportunity to generate more cash. In the past they would charge a daily fee, but people either would forego the service or find a way around it (free Wi-Fi at a local coffee shop). The Vegas hotels finally decided to charge everyone for the telephone and Internet service whether they wanted it or not. They call it a "resort fee."

Most likely, the hotels are blocking the ports which are commonly used by the Internet phones. This prevents you from using the Internet connection (which you are paying for) to circumvent their phone systems. (They still haven't figured a way to stop you from using your cell phone.)

There are ways around this problem. One is to use a service such as Vonage which allows you to forward your Internet calls to your cell phone when your Internet phone is not available. The easiest may be to just use a Web service such as Skype to do your calls. It would be great to hear from others who have found ways to use Internet phones in these circumstances.

Digital Dave

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*Dear Digital Dave,*

*The message "Windows Explorer Stopped Working" pops up when I start up Windows on Vista. Immediately another pops up "Windows Explorer is restarting," and it keeps repeating these pop-ups making it impossible to use the computer. I've tried the Windows repair disk and going back to an earlier date, but nothing helps. Any ideas? Or do I bite the bullet and completely reinstall Vista?*

*Thank you,*

*Robert Jenkins  
San Diego, CA*

Dear Robert,

This is among the worse type of problem to have. You don't have normal usage of the computer while you are trying to troubleshoot. That usually means booting into Windows safe mode, which will load only the bare minimum of the operating system and none of the usual start-up items which may be contributing to the problem.

This symptom is generally caused by either a virus or a corrupted system file. Restoring to an earlier date, which is commonly used to deal with viruses, didn't work for you. I would suggest booting into the safe mode (F8 at Power On/Startup) and running your virus scan software. I would also try other virus scanners since they do not all catch the same problems.

If you don't solve the problem by finding and cleaning viruses, then you need to look for damaged files (which the repair program was supposed to do). Also in the safe mode, run the System File Checker "sfc /scannow" in the Command Prompt window. This program will look for corrupted system files. Have your Windows disks handy in case you need to copy over the bad files. You can find more information on this procedure at this Microsoft page ([support.microsoft.com/kb/928228/en-gb](http://support.microsoft.com/kb/928228/en-gb)).

While there is no guarantee, Microsoft has set up a series of online troubleshooting tools ([support.microsoft.com/fixit/](http://support.microsoft.com/fixit/)) for

Microsoft products. Since these are Web based features, if you want to run them in Windows safe mode be sure to pick "Safe mode with networking" to allow access to the Internet. Anyone who is having trouble with Microsoft products, including Windows, may be helped by these automatic tools.

If nothing has done the job, then you may need to reinstall the operating system. (Be sure that you have backed up all your important files.) Yet, if it's a particularly insidious virus, this may not work without reformatting the hard drive. I would definitely scour all the Windows forums before taking this step, although sometimes, it's just easier just to start over.

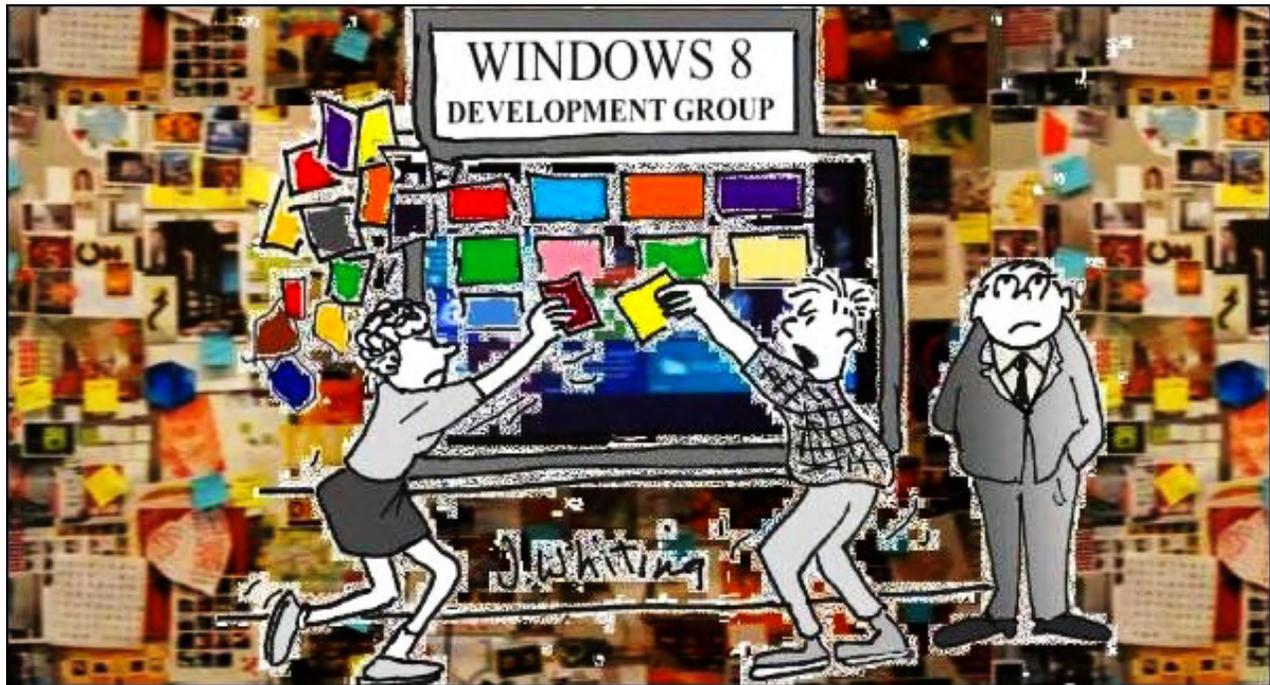
Digital Dave

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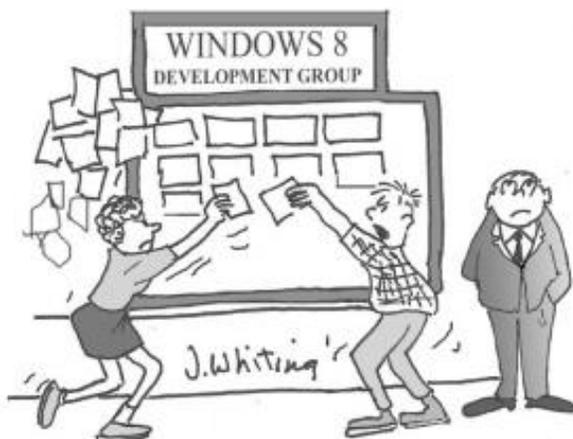


## Ready or Not, Here Comes Windows 8!

“Are we suffering from Windows fatigue?” by Jack Dunning

With so many people regarding Windows XP as a “good enough” operating system, and Windows 7 as the default for new PCs, why do we need Windows 8? Maybe we don’t.

Microsoft has unveiled its latest version of the Windows operating system using the “code name” Windows 8—probably because it was easy to remember. While the announcement has garnered plenty of attention, it has been received with either mild interest or stated confusion. People don’t get very excited about new versions of Windows anymore. This could make it possible for Microsoft to sneak this one into the market—which, considering past foul ups, may be the best way to introduce it.



**“That’s not fair! Sally tore off my Fantasy Football app to put her Web Shopping app on the Windows 8 Screen!”**

Microsoft tells us that Windows 8 will be two operating systems in one. Windows 8 part one, the new piece, is designed for touchscreens and will jump into the smart phone and tablet computer fray. The other part of the same operating system package is essentially Windows 7 (maybe with some improvements—don’t know yet). Rather than designing one operating system for tablets to compete with the now dominant iPad and another separate system defending their PC dominance in laptops and desktops, Microsoft has decided that an uber-operating system (all things to all people) suitable for all types of machines is the new strategic direction.

The response to Windows 8 from critics is everything from “Are you kidding me?” to “Crazy like a fox!” I’ll leave it to the experts to predict the eventual outcome of this Microsoft gamble. (The same ones that had forecast the failure of the iPad.) As for me, I don’t have a clue whether this will work for Microsoft or not. Stranger things have happened. Let’s take a closer look.

## Two Operating Systems in One

Windows 8 will not be the same as Windows 7—except it sort of will. If you want to stick with the traditional Windows interface, then the classic mode will give you everything you currently experience on your PC. Your trusty keyboard and mouse will be there for all your

usual activities. In fact, if your happy with Windows 7 (or even XP), there may not be much motivation to upgrade. For this reason, traditional computer users are not likely to be rushing out to upgrade. The actual release of Windows 8, predicted for some time in 2012, may be more of a mild realization than a major event. (Ever since Windows Vista, people have had a hard time getting excited about Microsoft products.) Window 8 may be regarded more as an option than a replacement for Windows 7. While I don't know how Microsoft will market this new release, I could see it being sold along side Windows 7 computers. (I'm probably wrong on this, but with the current skepticism people have about new products for Microsoft, it might be a good idea.)

On the other hand, if your into smart phones and/or tablet computers, you could be looking at Microsoft's ultimate solution. Windows 8 includes a touchscreen interface for one-handed computing, which would be expected on any tablet. It has been designed with the mobile user in mind. It works in a fashion similar to the iPad, but has significant differences. As work started on this version of Microsoft's mobile software before the release of iPad, it was not a complete "me too" shot at competing in the tablet market. (Although, I'm sure that the iPhone had a heavy influence.) What makes Windows 8 different is that, unlike Apple's iOS which runs on iPhone and iPad, Microsoft is attempting to combine both the touch sensitive tablet OS with the complete standard laptop/desktop OS. Does it make any sense to combine to completely different types of operating systems into one package? Maybe.

Microsoft has released a Windows 8 video ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=p92QfWOW88I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p92QfWOW88I)), which does a pretty good job of demonstrating the look and feel of the touchscreen side of the software. While the video does display how regular Windows program will run, it doesn't spend much time reviewing classic Windows. After all most people are familiar with how regular Windows works.

## The Tablet Software

The tablet side of Windows 8 was designed from the ground up to work with a touchscreen. Rather than using icons, Windows 8 uses larger tiles which contain more application specific information (see Figure 1). The down side is that less tiles will fit on a screen. (I'm guessing that there might be a way to minimize tiles into icons, getting more to fit onto one screen.) As can be seen in the demonstration video, the tiles are quickly dragged onto and off the screen with one finger. Depressing (or a slow tap) appears to activate the application.



Figure 1. Windows 8 Start Screen.

Microsoft has been working on fuzzy touch technology to deal with fat-finger syndrome. (This is an issue that I continually deal with on the iPad.) The problem is that a tiny mis-touch on the iPad will cause an errant result often cascading into more extreme situations. If Microsoft does it right, the fuzzy touchscreen will sense what you "mostly" want to do, then do that.

Another plus for the tablet side of Windows 8 is the split thumbs keyboard for two thumb typing (also shown in the video). With this type of split keyboard, it would be much easier to type on a tablet by holding it with two hands while operating the easy-to-reach keyboards with the thumbs. Then one could truly walk, type and chew gum all at the same time.

One of the advantages of Windows 8 on tablets would be the multitasking environment. Currently on the iPad, even though it will run multiple programs simultaneously, only one app window can be displayed at one time. That means jumping between screens when coordinating information. Windows 8 allows other apps to be "snapped" onto the screen to cohabit with the original program.

## HTML5 and Javascript

One move by Microsoft which may turn out to be brilliant is that HTML5 and Javascript will be the primary programming languages for Windows 8 apps. HTML and Javascript are the primary programming languages of the Web. That means there are many programmers who already know how to write apps for Windows 8. Many existing HTML programs could be quickly modified to run on a Windows 8 computer.

HTML5 includes tags for adding audio and video directly to Web sites, which will be in high demand in any new tablet computer. The new browsers such as Internet Explorer 10 will support those features and run the Windows 8 apps on virtually any computer with a compliant browser. HTML5 could be the death knell for Adobe Flash since the requirement for many of such plug-ins will go away in the new HTML5 compliant browsers.

Windows 8 will continue to support traditional Windows programming in the classic mode.

## Will I Need to Upgrade My Computer?

According to Microsoft, Windows 8 will be less demanding than Windows 7, suggesting that bloatware is a thing of the past for Microsoft. That means Windows 8 should run on all of the current Windows 7 hardware without a problem. This is a necessity since many of the planned new platforms are phones and tablets.

It's a little difficult to believe some of these claims unless Microsoft has made major changes in their approach to producing software. For one, just adding the touch side of the operating system to what is essentially Windows 7 demands some pretty clever programming if the normal expected growth in the system software is avoided. There is always the possibility that stripped down Windows 8 versions, which won't include the full Windows 7 environment, will be made available for the hand-held devices.

Having a two-in-one operating system will no doubt make Windows 8 more sensitive to errors and crashes. (Microsoft acknowledges this susceptibility and says they are feverishly working on it.) However, the OS needs to be light and fast to run on phones and tablets while powerful enough to keep desktop users happy. Can it be done? There are many skeptics.

## The Same Old Windows?

If a older Windows program is loaded in Windows 8, the system automatically switches to the classic Windows environment with the same familiar look and feel. Windows 8 has an accessible file systems which gives the user the same navigational control as found in other Windows systems. Whether there will be significant improvements in this portion of Windows is not clear. If indeed the Windows 8 software is as lean and fast as a Windows PC, then it could be a great success—even if the touchscreen capabilities are never implemented. Otherwise there will be little reason for the average PC user to upgrade to Windows 8.

Many people are pointing out that this approach to Windows 8 is a huge risk for Microsoft. They say it's impossible to build one ultimate operating system which will do it all. They might be right, but Microsoft has plenty of cash. They can either spend it taking risks or they can give it back to the stockholders. If Windows 8 fails, it will just be another ebb in Microsoft's decline. If it works, people will put Microsoft back in the same category as other innovative computer companies, such as...say, Apple.

## Microsoft Tablet?

There is a rumor that Microsoft will produce its own tablet computer. Some experts says this won't happen since it will incur the wrath of computer manufacturers. I don't buy this position because right now the manufacturers are not doing much of a job taking on Apple's iPad. At some point someone is going to step up and produce a tablet which will compete with Apple. Why not Microsoft? (Well, for one, with the exception of the XBox, Microsoft has not fared well with building hardware.)

Can Microsoft catch up with the rapid moving Apple? History suggest that Apple has a way of blowing early leads. When the early Macintosh with its user-friendly interface first hit the market, it was the most innovative computer on the market. Microsoft computers were running MS-DOS. Microsoft came out with a crummy version of Windows, gave it away, and over the following years kept working on it until it stuck. However, Apple may have learned from its own history.

Now Apple is dominant in the smart phone market and virtually owns the tablet market. If Microsoft is going to have any chance, they are going to have to do something really smart. That could be Windows 8. In a few years, we'll know whether or not they did.

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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](http://www.computoredge.com). He can be reached at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com)

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## Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Apple Competitors Falling Further Behind” by Wally Wang

Apple is destroying competitors with the iPhone, iPad and now iCloud; The iPhone 4 heads to the space station; the principles of the future; the death of MobileMe and iWeb; assign new keystroke combinations to common commands.

# Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Apple's recent announcements at their World Wide Developer's Conference (WWDC) continues wrecking the plans of so many different companies. Critics will focus on what Apple's products don't do (Flash support, etc.) and claim that Apple didn't innovate anything that wasn't already around in some other form. What critics will ignore is what Apple products can do well, and how Apple never invents something new but finds new ways to use existing technology to make computing tasks easier.

First, there's Mac OS X 10.7 Lion ([www.pcmag.com/slideshow/story/265435/os-x-lion-vs-windows-8-feature-by-feature](http://www.pcmag.com/slideshow/story/265435/os-x-lion-vs-windows-8-feature-by-feature)), which will challenge Microsoft's Windows 8 in the operating system market. Mac OS X 10.7 Lion will be out in July while Windows 8 won't be out for another year. Until Windows 8 arrives in 2012, consumers can only compare Lion to Windows 7, and Windows 7 will come up short.

Lion will only cost \$29.99 while if Windows 8 follows the pricing model of Windows 7, a retail copy of Windows 8 will likely cost \$119.99 or four times as much as Lion. Lion Server ([www.apple.com/macosex/server/](http://www.apple.com/macosex/server/)) costs an additional \$49.99 when upgrading from Snow Leopard Server (\$499). Windows Server 2008 ([www.microsoft.com/windowsserver2008/en/us/pricing.aspx](http://www.microsoft.com/windowsserver2008/en/us/pricing.aspx)) costs \$1,029 or twice as much than Lion Server and Snow Leopard Server. Just from a price comparison alone, Mac OS X 10.7 Lion handily beats Windows.

Lion focuses on making Macintosh computers easier to use by automatically saving files and displaying multiple versions so you can revert to an earlier draft at any time. If you've ever lost data due to a computer crash or power blackout, you'll appreciate Lion's ability to protect users from losing critical data.

In comparison, Windows 8 provides the tile interface of Windows Phone 7. While interesting, does this tile interface make you dramatically more productive? Everyone can see how Lion's automatic file saving feature could save them, but not as many people may feel that the Windows 8 tile interface will provide similar dramatic benefits for everyone.

## Auto Save

It's time to stop worrying about saving your work. Because now your Mac automatically saves what you're working on so you don't have to. It's not just an improvement for OS X, it's an improvement for anyone who's ever lost hours of hard work after forgetting to press Command-S.

[Learn more about Auto Save and Versions >](#)

## Versions

Versions is a new feature that charts the history of your documents, taking snapshots in time, and displaying them side by side with the latest versions in an easily browsable timeline. You can review the past iterations of your compositions, restore a previous version, or copy and paste from old versions to new ones.

[Learn more about Auto Save and Versions >](#)

Figure 1. Autosave and Versions can protect your data.

Lion can easily install itself on a Macintosh running Snow Leopard (Mac OS X 10.6) without forcing you to reinstall your programs or files. Will Windows 8 allow such a seamless upgrade path from Windows 7?

Cost has always been one reason why people claim the Macintosh is inferior, but with Lion costing less than Windows in both the consumer and the server version, this argument about price now works against Windows ([www.technightowl.com/2011/06/the-microsoft-scared-to-death-Report/](http://www.technightowl.com/2011/06/the-microsoft-scared-to-death-Report/)).

### Casualty No. 1: Windows 7 and 8.

Now consider the impact of iCloud ([www.washingtonpost.com/business/technology/it-just-works/2011/06/08/AGTxnZMH\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/technology/it-just-works/2011/06/08/AGTxnZMH_story.html)). Unlike the cloud services of other companies like DropBox or Microsoft Live SkyDrive that provide an online storage site for holding your files, iCloud acts more like a synchronization service that insures your current data automatically appears on all your devices without any extra work on your part. Make an appointment on your iPhone and that appointment will

automatically appear in your iPad and Macintosh. Take a picture on your iPhone and it automatically appears on your iPad and Macintosh.



Figure 2. iCloud automatically synchronizes data almost instantly.

From a technical point of view, existing cloud solutions (such as DropBox or SugarSync) can do everything iCloud can do, but you have to take time to make them work. With iCloud, you set it up once and it works in the background automatically so you don't have to think about "using" it ever again. The benefit of iCloud isn't what it can do, but how it can do something useful without forcing the user to learn something new and constantly work to maintain those benefits. If you have to manually synchronize your files, you'll eventually forget to do it and wind up not having a critical file on another device when you need it.

Would you want a car that requires you to crank its engine to get it started every time, or would you rather have a car that can start itself the moment you sit in the driver's seat? That's the difference between most cloud solutions and iCloud.

If you have an iPhone or iPad, you can take advantage of iCloud to synchronize your data with a PC or Mac. Since iCloud is free, there's little reason for iPhone or iPad users to use anything else. Once people start relying on iCloud, they'll want to continue using it, which means sticking with iOS devices (iPhone and iPad) instead of any rival products (Android phones or tablets).

Anyone using Blackberry OS, Nokia's Symbian OS, Windows Phone 7, Android, or WebOS smart phones will need to find a rival to iCloud so they can also effortlessly synchronize their data with their computers. The main problem will be coordinating different software to work together.

Automatically synchronizing files (documents, music and pictures) along with appointments and contact information with just Windows 7 and Windows Phone 7 may be challenging enough, but now consider adding support for Android and Blackberry as well. It's easy to synchronize pictures or music files among different operating systems, but how easy will it be to synchronize appointments, contact information and e-mail among a diverse range of operating systems, e-mail programs, calendar schedulers and address books?

Users might have an Android smart phone, a Windows PC running Microsoft Outlook, and a tablet running WebOS. Getting these three operating systems to share information seamlessly isn't necessarily difficult, but does require a lot of work and testing. Now multiply it by

all the different possible combinations users might have such as a Blackberry smart phone, a Windows PC running Gmail, and an Android tablet. How about a WebOS smart phone, a Windows PC running Thunderbird, and a Playbook tablet? What about a Symbian smart phone, a Windows PC running Windows Live Mail, and a Windows 8 tablet running on an ARM processor? Get all these wild combinations to work once and when they come out with a new version, you'll have to test all these combinations all over again.

Rather than try to support every different smart phone, tablet on the market and Windows contact manager program, companies could simply offer support for the most popular ones, such as Android smart phones and tablets, Blackberries and Microsoft Outlook. That cuts down on the troublesome testing of multiple software combinations, but it's still clumsy and time-consuming while offering benefits to rival products. Would Google really want to create an iCloud rival that supports Blackberry and Windows Phone 7 users and encourages people to buy non-Android smart phones? The simplest way an iCloud rival can work is by rallying around a single vendor's products.

To offer a free iCloud rival, competitors will need to make it work seamlessly and make it work for free. Apple can afford to give iCloud away for free because they make money selling iOS devices along with getting a percentage of iOS apps people buy, so iCloud is a way to sell more Apple products.

Google doesn't make money selling Android devices and doesn't get a percentage of Android app sales, so they'll have to fund an iCloud rival from their advertising revenue stream that Android gives them. Google already funds multiple free projects anyway (Chrome OS, Android, Google Apps, etc.), so making an iCloud rival is possible. Google just has to set it up and deal with their current lack of success in the tablet market.

Microsoft already runs Windows Live SkyDrive ([explore.live.com/windows-live-skydrive](http://explore.live.com/windows-live-skydrive)) for free, so Microsoft can easily turn this into a free iCloud rival. The problem Microsoft faces is selling more Windows Phone 7 phones and entering the tablet market with Windows 8 devices in 2012.

Research in Motion could offer an iCloud rival to support Blackberry phones and Playbook tablets, but Blackberries are already losing sales to Android and iPhone, while their Playbook tablet is also struggling to compete against the iPad.

Hewlett-Packard could offer a free iCloud rival to support WebOS, but WebOS smart phones are in the minority and the WebOS TouchPad still has to compete against the iPad.

Technically, creating a free iCloud rival is trivial, but the real benefit comes from supporting smart phones and tablets. If you get a smart phone and tablet with two different operating systems, such as a Windows Phone 7 smart phone and an Android tablet, you won't be able to synchronize your data between them as easily as an iPhone and iPad using iCloud.

If you just want either a smart phone or tablet, you can buy any product, but only Apple's iCloud will allow you to choose one of the most popular smart phones on the market and the most popular tablet on the market. Rivals can easily compete against iCloud, but they can't compete ([www.infoworld.com/d/the-industry-standard/pity-the-poor-pc-first-the-ipad-now-icloud-591](http://www.infoworld.com/d/the-industry-standard/pity-the-poor-pc-first-the-ipad-now-icloud-591)) against both the iPhone and the iPad at the same time.

### ***Casualty No. 2: Every smart phone and tablet maker not named Apple.***

One minor new feature that Apple introduced was iMessage, which encrypts messages while also alerting you when someone read your message and whether they're currently typing a response back to you. For years, Research in Motion touted their Blackberry Messenger (BBM) as a way to provide secure messaging. With iMessage, Apple has wiped out this minor advantage of Blackberries.

Considering that Research in Motion's Blackberries and Playbook tablet are losing ground to Apple's iPhone and iPad, it's easy to see that Research in Motion needs a new product in a hurry if they want to stop their steady decline into irrelevance.

### ***Casualty No. 3: Research in Motion's Blackberry smart phones and Playbook tablet.***

One unique feature of iCloud is the ability to synchronize your Pages, Numbers and Keynote files between your iPhone, iPad and Macintosh. Theoretically, you'll be able to create a Keynote presentation on your Macintosh, then without the hassle of transferring the file to your iPhone or iPad, you can show off that Keynote presentation on your iPhone or iPad.

To take advantage of synchronizing word processor, spreadsheet and presentation files, you'll need to use the iWork office suite. (Most likely, a new version of iWork for the Macintosh should arrive this fall at the same time as iCloud's official release.) With iWork being the only office suite available on the iPhone, iPad and the Macintosh, Microsoft Office may no longer be that important any more.

#### *Casualty No. 4: Microsoft Office.*

Apple claims that over 50 million users are playing games on iOS devices (iPhone, iPad and iPod touch). Yet the Xbox has been around for eight years and only has 30 million users. More importantly, developing games for game consoles such as the Xbox has gotten so expensive that only a few companies can afford to develop games, limiting your choices.

On the other hand, the iOS app store makes it easy for individual game designers to market their games. Since developing an iOS game isn't as expensive as developing an Xbox or PlayStation game, game designers can get more creative, providing more choices and more interesting games. This may explain why both Sony and Nintendo have seen sales of their portable game consoles plummet.

#### *Casualty No. 5: Sony and Nintendo.*

By releasing iCloud as a free service, iCloud has made the iPhone, iPad and Mac more useful at no extra cost. With big names like Google, Microsoft, Dell and Hewlett-Packard stumbling in their wake, Apple has continued raising the standard that everybody else keeps missing time and time again.

If the only advantage smart phone and tablet rivals can use against the iPhone and iPad is the ability to run Flash (and not very well at that), then their future seems more dire with each passing day.

The Economist recently wrote an article predicting why certain companies last longer than others ([www.economist.com/node/18805483?frsc=dg%7Ca](http://www.economist.com/node/18805483?frsc=dg%7Ca)). The theory is that companies like Apple and Amazon are based on an idea while companies like Dell, Cisco and Microsoft are based on technology. Technology changes, but IBM has managed to survive because their main idea is to focus on packaging technology for business customers whatever that technology might be. If you're too dependent on specific technology, your future looks much less brighter for the long-term future.

#### The iPhone 4 Heads to the Space Station.

For the last space shuttle launch, NASA will be sending up two iPhone 4's to conduct experiments in space for several months using the SpaceLab for iOS app from Odyssey Space Research ([www.odysseysr.com/](http://www.odysseysr.com/)). The app will help astronauts find their relative position in space by matching pictures of the Earth taken with the iPhone's camera to a database of coastline maps in the app.

To view the results of these experiments, buy a copy of SpaceLab for iOS ([itunes.apple.com/us/app/spacelab-for-ios/id441829040?mt=8](http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/spacelab-for-ios/id441829040?mt=8)). By studying actual experimental data from the space station, you can try analyzing the data yourself or just have fun monitoring outer space experiments from the convenience of your iPhone here on Earth.



Figure 3. Spacelab for iOS can help you track experiments on the International Space Station.

## The Principles of the Future

If anyone wants to avoid stagnating in any industry, especially in a fast-moving one like technology, they need to heed these words:

"Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose. And it's an unreliable guide to the future. What seems the perfect business plan or latest technology today may soon be as out-of-date as the eight-track tape player, the vacuum-tube television, or the mainframe computer...I think most of these mistakes can be understood by looking at a few critical factors. Among them are positive and negative spirals, the necessity of initiating rather than following trends, the importance of software as opposed to hardware, and the role of compatibility and the positive feedback it can generate."

Bill Gates wrote these words in his 1995 book *The Road Ahead* ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1405879327/ref=as\\_li\\_tf\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217153&creative=399701&creativeASIN=1405879327](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1405879327/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217153&creative=399701&creativeASIN=1405879327)). What's amazing is that he knew that a company can't follow trends to succeed, yet the people running Microsoft seem to have forgotten this. He also knew that software is more important than hardware, yet too many people obsess over technical specifications without considering the software to make it work. Microsoft made a fortune developing useful software, and then got lost creating software without defining any useful benefits for the customer (think Vista).

Bill Gates talks about positive spirals where a company produces a product that attracts attention and people, which further fuels more interest in working for that company or buying that company's products. This sounds like Microsoft in the old days, but does anyone associate Microsoft with a positive spiral today?

Apple Stores now earn \$34.1 million per retail store while Macy's earns \$29 million per store and J.C. Penney earns just \$16.1 million per store, according to Michael Exstein of Credit Suisse ([benton.org/node/76996?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+headlines%2Ffeed+\(Benton+Foundation++Headlines\)](http://benton.org/node/76996?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+headlines%2Ffeed+(Benton+Foundation++Headlines))). Apple keeps selling more Macintosh computers ([applenews.resumit.com/overseas-suppliers-indicate-apple-sales-up-87-in-may/](http://applenews.resumit.com/overseas-suppliers-indicate-apple-sales-up-87-in-may/)) every quarter and the media watches every announcement from the company. Clearly Apple is in a positive spiral.

On the other hand, Bill Gates talks about companies caught in negative spirals where they lose market share and everyone starts questioning everything that company does, even if they're doing something right. Does this sound more like Microsoft today? In a recent experiment by PC Magazine, people tried to buy a Windows Phone 7 phone and the sales people kept turning them to Android phones instead ([www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2386647,00.asp](http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2386647,00.asp)). Android has obviously captured the attention of many sales people while Windows Phone 7 has not.

As two examples of companies that suffered from negative spirals, Bill Gates discusses Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), which pioneered the mini-computer market but famously ignored the personal computer market because they thought PCs were simply toys that were unable to replace mini-computers. Sound like the familiar argument that the iPad is a toy that can never replace a laptop computer?

A second example Bill Gates uses is Wang Laboratories, which once dominated offices with their Wang word processing software and terminals. When PCs arrived that could run a variety of different programs including word processors, Wang Laboratories couldn't compete and disappeared.

DEC had their mini-computer market and didn't initiate a new trend to move to personal computers. Wang Laboratories had their word processing market and didn't initiate a new trend to move to personal computers. Both companies got wiped out, despite being billion dollar technology juggernauts at one time, simply because, as Bill Gates puts it, they missed a big bend in the road.

Look at Microsoft's position today where they once held 20 percent of the market in mobile phones (now down to 8 percent and shrinking), and completely missed the tablet market despite defining it back in 2001. The world is going mobile and Microsoft is more of an afterthought than a significant player in the mobile market.

Both DEC and Wang Laboratories tried offering a personal computer, but they were too late. Microsoft responded to the iPhone three years later and will respond to the iPad two years later. Does this sound like a company initiating a trend or following one?

If Microsoft had just read Bill Gates' book, they could have foreseen that the future doesn't belong to those who copy and follow trends, but those who initiate and create trends. For a company founded by a man who foresaw the future of personal computers, Microsoft's performance in the mobile market appears to be one of those missed bends in the road. Ironically, Microsoft could have adapted faster to the mobile market if they had just listened to Bill Gates.

## The Death of MobileMe and iWeb

With the announcement of iCloud replacing MobileMe, Apple will eliminate many of MobileMe's features such as the ability to host Web sites. If you're currently using MobileMe to host a Web site, you'll need to find a new site provider, such as Go Daddy or HostGator. If you were using Apple's iWeb program that comes with iLife to design your Web pages, you'll need to find a new Web designing program since iWeb is also going away.

If you're used to the way iWeb works by letting you create your content and then choose a theme to design your Web pages automatically, you probably won't be happy using an HTML editor like Dreamweaver. Instead, consider a \$79.99 program that works like iWeb called RapidWeaver ([www.realmacsoftware.com/rapidweaver/overview/](http://www.realmacsoftware.com/rapidweaver/overview/)).

With RapidWeaver, you focus on creating text and graphics without worrying about the appearance of your data. After you've created your content, you can pick from a variety of themes to design your site.

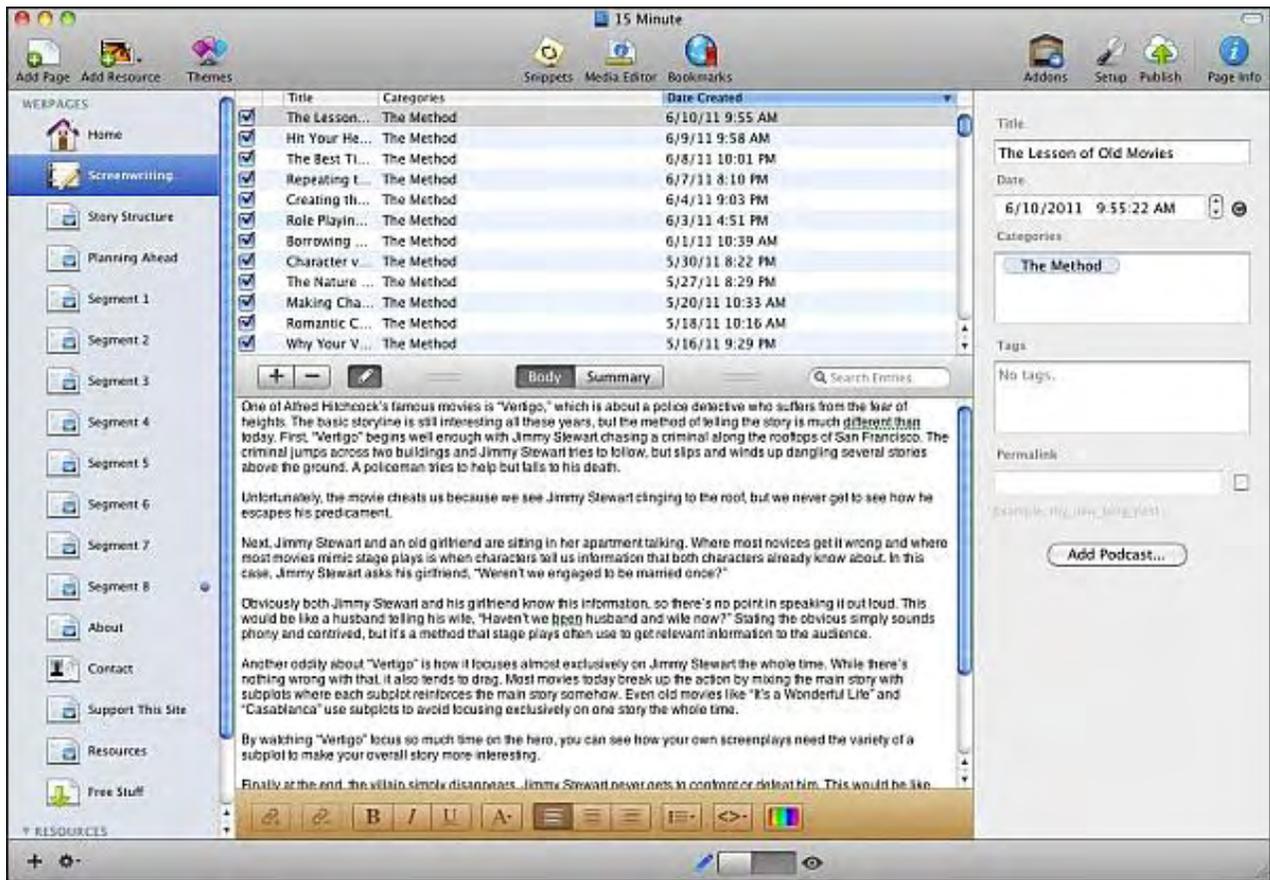


Figure 4. RapidWeaver lets you focus on your content.

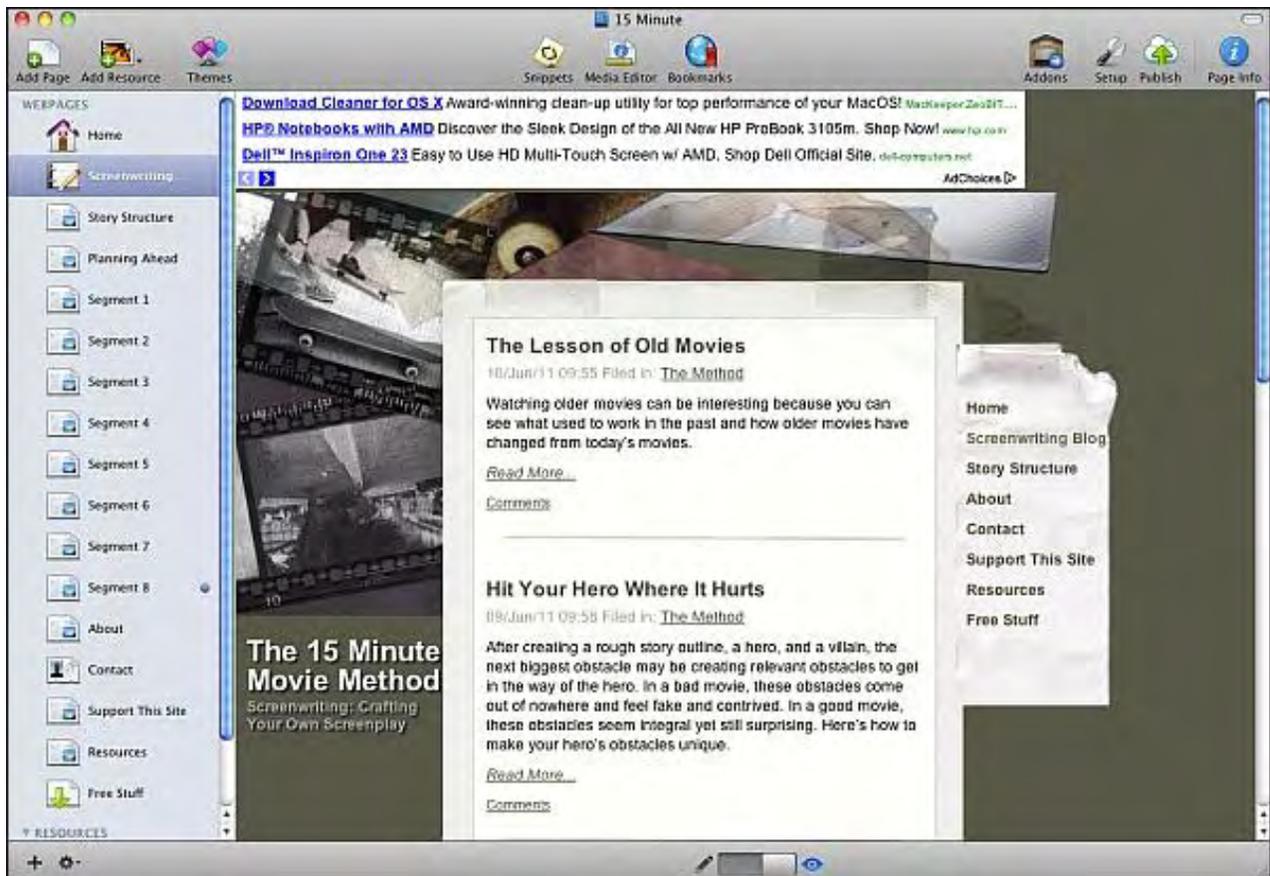


Figure 5. Applying a theme creates a pretty Web site without requiring any graphical design skills.

I started using iWeb initially and then switched to RapidWeaver a long time ago simply because RapidWeaver seemed more flexible and powerful than iWeb. If you're used to the easy graphical design of iWeb, then you'll find RapidWeaver just as easy to use.

One limitation of a program like RapidWeaver (or iWeb) is that it's not easy to customize the available themes. If you're the type who needs a custom solution, you may be better off hiring a Web designer or using a program like Dreamweaver. If you just want to create a Web site quickly, then RapidWeaver lives up to its name. To see what an actual RapidWeaver site looks like, visit my screenwriting site called The 15 Minute Movie Method ([www.15minutemoviemethod.com](http://www.15minutemoviemethod.com)).

\* \* \*

Most programs never use the function keys, so Mac OS X assigns default functions to these keys. For example, pressing F9 displays all open windows as thumbnail images on the screen. To see what different function keys will do, or to assign new keystroke combinations to different commands, click on the Apple menu and choose System Preferences to open the System Preferences dialog.

Now click the Keyboard icon under the hardware category and click the Keyboard Shortcuts tab. By selecting different features in the left pane, you can selectively turn on or off certain function key commands, or reassign new keystroke combinations to different commands.



Figure 6. You can assign new keystroke combinations to common commands.

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 particples with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

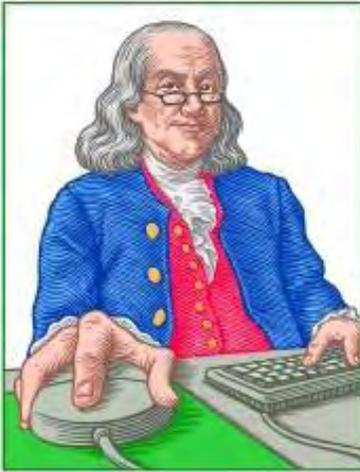
Wally is responsible for the following books:

My New Mac ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646](http://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](http://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](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593272758?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593272758)),  
Steal This Computer Book 4.0 ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)),  
Microsoft Office 2010 for Dummies ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-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?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-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?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)),  
Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)),  
Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon Fisher and Gerald Fisher ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)),  
How to Live With a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) ([www.smashwords.com/books/view/18896](http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/18896)).  
Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362))  
The 15-Minute Movie Method  
([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as\\_li\\_tf\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004TMD9K8](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004TMD9K8))  
In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method" ([www.15minutemoviemethod.com/](http://www.15minutemoviemethod.com/)) along with blogging about electronic publishing and how authors can take advantage of technology at his site "The Electronic Author." ([www.wallacewang.com](http://www.wallacewang.com)) Wally can be reached at [wally@computoredge.com](mailto:wally@computoredge.com).

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## LINUX LESSONS

**"AN INVESTMENT  
IN LINUX KNOWLEDGE  
PAYS THE BEST  
INTEREST."**

### Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users

**"Linux Fortunes, Part II"** by Tony J. Podrasky

Last time, Tony showed us how to generate our own Linux fortunes. This time he demonstrates how to attach a fortune to an e-mail.

Last time we covered the <fortune> and <strfile> utilities, how the <fortune> command works, and how to create your own fortunes. Now, we'll see how to set up your host so it will automatically generate a signature that will be appended to your outgoing e-mail.

Just to make sure that we're all on the same page, this will only work if you are doing your e-mail locally on your own computer. If you are logging into an ISP, like Gmail or AOL, and doing your e-mail there, it will not work. However, you can <cat> your .signature file, and then cut-and-paste it into the draft you're about to send on the ISP's host.

First, save the file below in the /usr/local/bin directory and call it "SIGF"

\_\_\_\_\_CUT HERE\_\_\_\_\_

```
#!/bin/csh -f
cd ~/
rm .signature
/usr/games/fortune sig_fortunes > .signature
```

\_\_\_\_\_CUT HERE\_\_\_\_\_

Explanation of how <SIGF> works:

#!/bin/csh -f	<i>Use the c-shell interpreter.</i>
cd ~/	<i>Change directory to your home directory.</i>
rm .signature	<i>Remove the current .signature file.</i>
/usr/games/fortune sig_fortunes > .signature	<i>Have the fortune program get a fortune from your sig_fortunes file and put it in .signature.</i>

(Don't forget the do a <chmod 755 SIGF> to make the SIGF file executable.)

If you are already using <cron>, the Linux tool for scheduling processes, edit your crontab file and put in the following entry:

\_\_\_\_\_CUT HERE\_\_\_\_\_

```
03,08,13,18,23,28,33,38,43,48,53,58 * * * * /usr/local/bin/SIGF
```

---

CUT HERE

---

If you are not using <cron>, do the following:

- <cd> into your home directory.
- Create the file ".crontab"
- Add the line above
- Do <crontab .crontab>. That will tell <crontab> to examine the .crontab file.
- Do <crontab -l>. You should see the entry in it.

The entry above is telling the cron mechanism to execute the command "/usr/local/bin/SIGF" every five minutes, starting at the three-minute mark, and do it forever. If you do <ls -la .signature> you should see the .signature file change at the 3,8,13...58 minute mark. By changing those numbers, you can adjust the system to update your signature at a different time. You can remove all the numbers (from 03 to 58) and replace them with a single asterisk if you'd like a new signature to be generated every minute.

(For a full description of how <crontab> works, do a <man 5 crontab>.)

Now, how to attach the .signature to your e-mail. The only browsers I use are Netscape and Mozilla. You might want to consult your browser's online manual to find out how to add a .signature file.

- Open your browser's e-mail configuration tab. (Again, I'm using Mozilla. If you are using a different browser you may find your signature parameters in a different—but similar—place.
- Look around for the radio button (a box that you can click on) that says something to the effect of "Attach this signature."
- Click it so that it becomes active, and in the box associated with the button, enter where your .signature is located. If you put it in your home directory, it will probably be something similar to: /home/myusername/.signature.
- Close your browser and then reopen it (to make sure that it is updated).
- Now, tell your browser to compose an e-mail and when it opens the compose box see if there is a signature attached to the bottom of it.

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NOTE: I give my shell files uppercase names so that *I know* they are my shell files and not the system's binaries. For example, when I save the data (the commands between the "CUT HERE" lines, which is the actual shell file) I might call it "VI", which is *not* to be confused with the system's "vi" file—but I call it "VI" because it calls (or uses) the system's "vi editor."

Tony has been in the computer field since 1976 when he started working for Data General Corp as a field engineer. Later going on to design hardware interfaces, write patches for operating systems, and build networks. It was in 1995 while working with the military on several projects that he ran into a "spook" who showed him a laptop that ran a then-unknown O/S called "Linux." "A laptop running a form of UNIX tony = a marriage made in heaven!" Tony can be reached for questions at Linux Questions for Tony ([hunybuny@netzero.net](mailto:hunybuny@netzero.net)).

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## Beyond Personal Computing

“Model Years and Contagious Memory: Computer Conundrums That Are Almost Logical” by Marilyn K. Martin

Support Techs and Help Desks often deal with new and unusual computer problems—yet, sometimes even they are left without words. Marilyn shares some humorous stories about computer user confusion.

Support Techs and Help Desks spend a lot of time explaining and troubleshooting. And granted, they take a lot of abuse, whether being screamed at by an irate user or laboriously walking a non-Techie through the basics at the speed of paint drying.

But sometimes, no matter how extensive their training or education, someone lobs one in from left field. It may almost make sense, or make perfect sense—but only to the user. These are the instances when Support Techs prove their mettle. Right after they stammer, "Excuse me?"

### Say What?

One Help Desk got a call where the user assured him that, in her computer, anything over 64K memory was "free." When he asked her to explain, she replied, "It's here in the manual. After booting, BASIC will print '64k free'."

Another Help Desk got a fax from a customer, about their accounting software package. "Sales orders are entered into our system, but no one is entering them. Could this be caused by static electricity from a broken monitor?"

A computer store was selling off some salvaged computers. They had a couple of 286 CPU cases stacked together with a monitor on top. Another monitor was sitting next to them on the floor. A woman came in, then pointed at the monitor on the cases. "How come this one comes with two risers, and the other none?"

### Which Way Did That Database Go?

A clerical worker called up Tech Support to report, "I deleted all the images in our database that were more than three days old. Now I can't get the pictures I scanned last week. Maybe the database has some problems?"

While another Tech got this call: "I've lost one of my databases. It's fallen off my desktop."

A customer called up to report, "I can't get into the database." The Tech checked the usual stuff, but everything seemed to be working OK. "Can you go and check if the server is working?" he asked the customer. "No," the customer replied. "They took it away to be upgraded."

### Memory Related to Other

A Help Desk got a call one day where the customer blurted out, "My computer told me it had a contagious memory. Does it have a virus?" The Tech tried to be helpful. "No, Sir, that is 'contiguous' memory, as in 'sequential.' Type 'mem' and hit Enter." The customer was duly impressed. "Oh!"

Then there was the user who reported to a Help Desk that "I have 384,000 free contentious memory." Or how about the retired dentist

who told his son that he'd upgraded his Mac to add "64 milligrams" of memory.

Then there was the Help Desk that got a call that a user's computer was acting funny. "But I shouldn't be having any problems, since my computer says it's OK." The Tech pondered a moment, then realized that the display was really reading "zero K", meaning that the disk was full.

One user reported to a Support Tech, "It says 'Disc 1 of 1'. That means there's another one around here somewhere." While another user reported, "This DOS program says I have insignificant memory." (Yes, that happens to all of us as we get older.)

## Cooling and Other Non-Essentials

One computer Tech operated the mainframe for a local college. His position was reclassified to fall into a new area outside of the I/S staff. One day his new, non-techie supervisor entered the Tech's office, and stared at the flashing light on the air conditioner unit behind the Tech. "So what job is that thing currently processing?" the supervisor asked. The Tech reports he killed his career by replying, "Actually, Sir, it's just cooling the room. The computer is over there."

Another college Tech said that the only place in an early 19th-century building to install a server in a tall, rack-mount cabinet, was the corner of the conference room. A distinguished professor used the conference room one day to grade some tests. Suddenly the server in the same room crashed. When the Tech arrived, the clueless professor explained, "It got so cold in here, I turned off the air conditioner."

One Tech set up all the software in a local bank. Since all the Internet software his company supported ran under MS Windows, he asked the manager, "Do you have Windows?" The manager stared blankly at him for a moment, then replied "No, we've got air conditioning."

## This Bleeping Beeping!

There was a Help Desk Tech who was attempting to help a customer on the phone one day, when a high pitched beeping noise went off in the background. The customer excused himself, and turned around to yell, "Hey, Manny! I'm on the phone! Cut it out!"

The Help Tech couldn't imagine what could be making such a loud and obnoxious sound. So he asked the customer, who replied that it was coming from "a device." "A device? Like a fax machine or something?" wondered the Tech. "I dunno," answered the exasperated customer. "Someone in here is under house arrest, and I guess he's trying to go out the door with that thing on his ankle ..."

A Help Desk got a call from a user complaining that there was a problem with her system randomly "beeping" her. It occurred at no specific time, whether she was at the computer or not. The Tech knew troubleshooting a random problem would be difficult. So he created a Problem Report, and asked her to call in the next time she heard this beeping. A month later she called to sheepishly report that somehow a pager had been dropped under the desk the computer sat on.

A Tech was servicing bank teller stations. He got a call one day that a workstation was "beeping." The Tech arrived at the workstation, and couldn't find anything wrong. He cleaned the keyboard, in case it was a stuck key. The next time he was called about that beeping workstation, he replaced the keyboard. The teller swore she wasn't doing anything to cause the beeping.

The Tech was in the bank on another matter one day, when he heard the beeping sound at exactly 3PM. He rushed over to track down the beeping sound. He finally found the culprit: There was a digital alarm clock in the very back of the desk drawer. (Maybe 3PM was the end of the Teller's shift?)

## Human Error—Does Not Compute

"OK, what does the screen say now?" asked one patient Support Tech. The user replied. "It says, 'Hit ENTER when ready'." The Tech waited and then prompted, "Well?" The user replied, "So ... how do I know when it's ready?"

Then there was the executive secretary who was new to PCs, so she named all her computer files by numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.). She kept a handwritten notebook listing each file number and description. She got up to 5,000 numbers-only files, when disaster struck. She lost her notebook.

Or consider the Support Tech who got a call one day from a confused user. "Whenever I change my font sizes, the letters change size. It is supposed to do that?"

An upset user called Tech Support to report, "I just shut down Windows 95, and it says 'It is NOT safe for me to turn off my computer! What do I do?'" The Tech asked him to read the sentence on the screen letter by letter. "OK. I...t...i...s...n...o...w-" The Tech interrupted. "There is it! It says 'now', not 'not'. Anything else I can help you with?"

## Comp-Auto Mechanics 101

Consider the Help Desk who picked up a call from a customer complaining, "My computer is making a noise like a lawn mower! It must be the fan belt or something."

Then there was another Help Desk who got a call complaining, "I was wondering if this computer has a fan belt. It's getting slower each time I start it, and I wondered if there was a fan belt or drive shaft that might be slipping."

Another Help Desk got a call that "Two windows aren't working properly, and one is just plain broken." The Tech asked helpfully, "What version of Windows are you using?" The user was confused. "Version?! I have a 1984 Honda Accord vehicle!"

Then there was the angry customer who called up his computer salesman, to complain that they had sold him a "dead computer," since it wouldn't start. Come to find out, he had been trying to start it with the keyboard Lock keys—like a car.

"I'm sorry, Sir," said one exasperated Tech to a customer on the phone. "There is no such thing as Windows 96. You must mean Windows 95." The customer insisted that "I bought this computer in 1996, so I know it has Windows 96 on it!" The Tech took a deep breath. "Sir, buying a computer is not like buying a car with different model years." The customer responded, "Oh. I didn't know that."

A Tech was doing some training for an initial release of new software. One of the students found a bug that caused the software to crash. The student was new to computers, so the Tech explained that the program had crashed. Suddenly the student was looking behind his laptop, below it, to both sides. Then he looked up at the Tech. "So what did it hit to crash?"

## Questions from the Void

"Where is the lower case?"

"So which is better? Hardware or software?"

"That old computer still works. It has got a color modem and everything."

"Hi. I'm supposed to zip my database and send it to you. What should I pack it in?"

"Thanks for inquiring. The spell chicker works just fine now."

"I have a cursing flasher." (Um, should we call the police?)

(These funny stories can be found in numerous locations on the Internet. But special thanks to *Rinkworks.com*.)

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Marilyn is a freelance writer and humorist with many interests. She has sold teen anti-drug articles, as well as had numerous esoteric articles published. She has almost seventy mini-articles on Helium.com ([www.helium.com/users/573405/show\\_articles](http://www.helium.com/users/573405/show_articles)), and is writing a humorous Young Adult Science Fiction series, *Chronicles of Mathias*. Volumes One and Two have received a "Gold Star for Excellence" from TeensReadToo.com ([www.teensreadtoo.com/ReptilianRebirth.html](http://www.teensreadtoo.com/ReptilianRebirth.html)), and are available from most on-line bookstores.

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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

"Time for Training," "AM-Deadlink for Browser Favorites," "Missing Files," "Ringing the Linux Bell"

### Time for Training

[Regarding Marilyn K. Martin's May 27 article, "Are Computers Stealing Our Jobs?":]

It is time to return some of our high schools into vocational skill training centers showing students how to apply in the real world what they have been learning in the classroom. Everyone does not have the skill set capability to be a university graduate. We need skilled craftspeople to install, operate and maintain equipment. We do not need more unskilled high school graduates who can only mouth the phrase "Gimme a job."

-Steve Chapman, San Juan Capistrano

### AM-Deadlink for Browser Favorites

[Regarding the May 27 Digital Dave column:]

Hi Dave,

Thanks for the heads up on AM-Deadlink, nifty utility. I have bookmarks going back to my very first computer in '06, many of which are no longer good. I added it to my ever growing tool kit. Thanks in part to *ComputerEdge*, I've been able to go from learning to turn a computer on all by myself without messing it up, to building this one last year. I need a new thumb drive to hold all my PC tools now, my old one is only 6GB, lol.

Kudos to *ComputerEdge*, Jack, Dave and all the other contributors! Thank you all.

-Paula Barefoot, Borrego Springs, Ca

There is a possible "gotcha" here. Sometimes links might be down for maintenance.

-Walter, San Diego, CA

### Missing Files

[Regarding the June 3 Digital Dave column:]

It sounds more likely, given his computer boots into Windows XP and his programs still exist, that his profile was corrupted. Looking at "C:\\*bckslsh\*Documents and Settings", Dean will very likely see several folders, Administrator, Dean, All Users, and if my hunch is right another folder similar to Dean, but something like dean.<machinename>.

If he compares the dates on those folders he will see the entry with his name and dot extension has a current date and the directory with his account name also has an aged date. All of his profile information should be in that folder folder and he can copy it over.

-Stephen, San Diego, CA

### Ringing the Linux Bell

[Regarding the May 27 Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users column:]

Recently a Linux Lessons article, issue date 5/27/11, presented the csh script BEEP which rings the terminal bell. The script as presented generates a line feed for each beep. By adding the "-n" option to the "echo" command the line feed will be suppressed. Listing 1, ring\_bell.sh, is a script which incorporates this change. The script also allows setting the beep rate, volume, pitch and duration on the command line.

```
>csh ring_bell.sh 2 100 5 500
```

Listing 2, Example\_of\_using\_ring\_bell.sh, is an example of how the script might be used. The script simply runs ring\_bell in the background. Once the foreground job completes a kill (-9) signal is sent to the ring\_bell process.

```
>sh Example_of_using_ring_bell.sh
```

#### Listing 1: ring\_bell.sh

```
#!/bin/csh -f
set volume=100      # percentage of its maximum
set pitch=1046     # in hertz
set duration=300   # in milliseconds
set repeat_rate=60 # delay in seconds before next bell ring
set scale = ( )
set scale = ($scale 10)      #C0
set scale = ($scale 32)     #C1    32.703
set scale = ($scale 65)     #C2    65.406
set scale = ($scale 130)    #C3    130.81
set scale = ($scale 261)   #C4    261.63
set scale = ($scale 523)   #C5    523.251 (middle C)
set scale = ($scale 1046)  #C6    1046.502
set scale = ($scale 2093)  #C7
set scale = ($scale 4186)  #C8
set scale = ($scale 8372)  #C9
set scale = ($scale 16744) #C10
set scale = ($scale 440)   #A4
set i = 0;
while ( $#argv )
  @ i = $i + 1;
  switch ($i)
    case [1]:
      if ($argv[1] !~ "") then
        set repeat_rate=$argv[1]
      endif
      breaksw
    case [2]:
      if ($argv[1] !~ "") then
        set volume=$argv[1]
      endif
      breaksw
    case [3]:
      if ($argv[1] !~ "") then
        set pitch=$scale[$argv[1]]
      endif
      breaksw
```



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