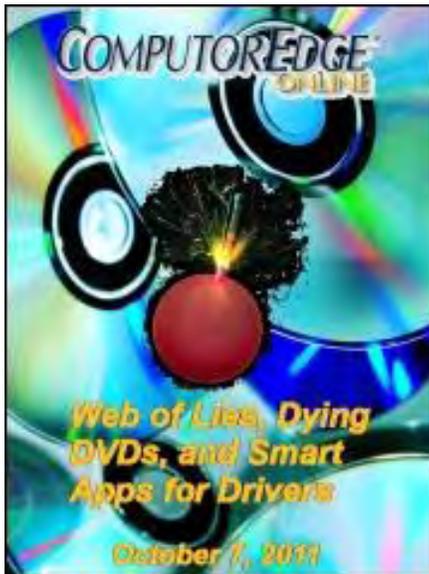


ComputerEdge™ Online — 10/07/11



This issue: Web of Lies, Dying DVDs, and Smart Apps for Drivers

More little known computer stories,
plus Digital Dave and friends.

Table of Contents:

[Digital Dave](#) by *Digital Dave*

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.
Home Networking with Two Routers; Microsoft Windows Hard Drive Warning
Message; Trying to Move Up the Career Ladder.

[Social Media Feuds and More Little Known Computer Stories](#) by Marilyn K. Martin

Police Body-cams, Vibration-Charging Batteries and
Much More
New Smartphone Apps for Drivers; Historical Topographic Maps; Hollywood Movie
Makers Retrench over the Decline of DVD Sales; Biometrics Update: Time Clocks
and Lie Detectors; Better Security for Less Privacy?; Digital Devices for Law
Enforcement; Self-charging Batteries from Vibrations; Public Schools Using More
Digital Technology; Extreme Wi-Fi; Hi-tech Ghost Town; Web of Lies—Local Social
Media on Trial; iPads and New Apps in Combat; Online Counseling Therapy.

[Wally Wang's Apple Farm](#) by Wally Wang

The New iPhone 4S
The New iPhone 4S; iPads in the Classroom; Lego's Life of George; The Old World
Continues Collapsing; Chasing the Leaders; VMWare's Fusion 4; With Mac OS X
10.7 Lion and a trackpad, browsing in Safari is even easier.

[Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users](#) by Tony J. Podrasky

RAID Configuration Issues
Tony answers a question on how to know if a drive goes down when two hard drives



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(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)

are in a RAID configuration.

[Beyond Personal Computing](#) by Marilyn K. Martin

If Computer Brands or Operating Systems Made Other Products

Marilyn shares some amusing anecdotes that describe how various computer brands or operating systems would make other, non-computing products.

DEPARTMENTS:

[EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher](#) by Jack Dunning

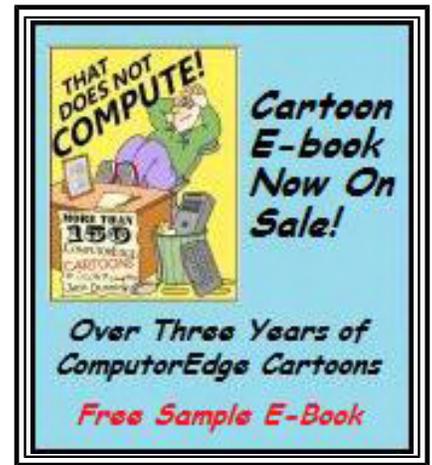
Steve Jobs will be sorely missed.
It wouldn't be right to ignore the passing of a true legend.

[Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers](#) by

ComputerEdge Staff

Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.

"Mac Considerations," "Add Comments to Directory Listings," "Mac Fax," "df, Human Readable"



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[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Digital Dave

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

Home Networking with Two Routers; Microsoft Windows Hard Drive Warning Message; Trying to Move Up the Career Ladder.

Dear Digital Dave,

First, let me thank you for all of your good words over the decades. Second, I have a problem. For years I have had a stable home network involving a Linksys WRT54GS Router serving three hardwired desktops, a laptop (wireless) and a wireless print server. With the recent addition of a PS3, I needed another hardwired connection. So I daisy-chained a Netgear WGR614NA router into the living room, giving me more ports and a much better wireless signal in that end of the house. All units have Internet access, but nothing downstream from the second router can see the original network. Obviously, I need to reconfigure something. All computers use Windows XP Pro SP3. What do you think?

*Rick Hazlet
Palomar Mountain*

Dear Rick,

The problem is that you have two different networks—one set up by each router. The devices on the second network cannot see the devices on the first. Whenever you add a router to your network it will set up an internal network. Coincidentally the Linksys and Netgear default IPs (addresses 192.168.1.1 and 192.168.0.1 respectively) do not conflict. They are actually from two separate networks with the “1” and “0” in the third number set differentiating the two. If both routers had been assigned with the same IP—as would be the case if they had been the same brand—then you would have been forced to change one of the router’s address to a unique IP, such as 192.168.1.2 for Linksys routers—although they would have been on the same network. In that situation you would not have your current problem, although other issues might arise if both routers are assigning IPs to other devices.

To resolve your problem you need to get both routers on the same network by assigning a new IP to the new Netgear router in the form 192.168.1.xxx. You may need to temporarily directly connect your laptop to the router while you configure it. I will generally assign an IP to a second router with a significantly different address such as 192.168.1.100. This is to lessen the likelihood that there will be a conflict between the router and an IP assigned to a device by the first router. If the second router is set to assign IPs, I would limit the possible IP assignments to those higher than the router. (I would also limit the assigning ability of the first router to the lower range of IPs.) This would preclude any possibility of conflicts arising between different devices. Once you have both routers on the same network (192.168.1.xxx), you should be able to see all the devices regardless of their location.

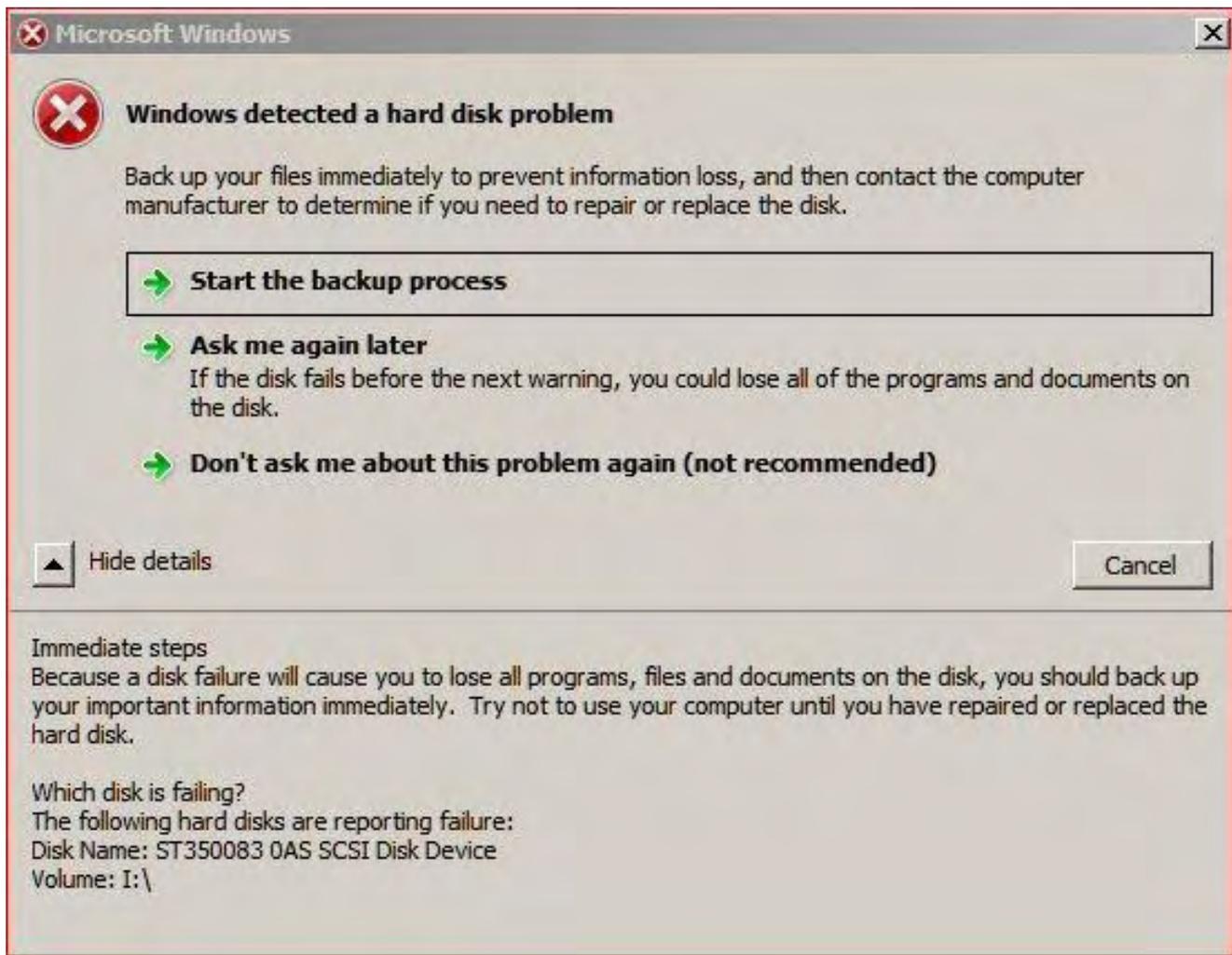
Another easier way to add more hardwired connections is to add a hub (or switch) to your original router which will

add more ports—although this would not increase the range of your Wi-Fi. A newer "N" type Wi-Fi router would probably resolve the range problem at the end of the house without resorting to two routers. Also, PS3s can connect to wireless networks out of the box. If you were so inclined, a more powerful wireless router alone would probably be the best solution. However, your current arrangement is fine as long as you get both routers on the same network without conflicts.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I updated several drivers on my desktop machine yesterday. This morning I am presented with the message below.



The message essentially says Windows detected a hard disk problem and offers to start the back up process now, later, or don't ask again. There is also a bit of detail that says my SCSI Disk Device is failing.

I have simply selected the "Ask Me Again Later" option each time so far. For some reason the persistence of the message and the offer to start a back up seems different from most windows messages. This one seems far to helpful. My experience with most windows messages drive me to look up a cryptic code or text and then decide what to do— hardly ever do I see something

from Windows that warns me of the problem and offers to help protect my data. It is down right suspicious if you ask me!

My question is how can I tell if this is a legitimate windows message or if I have been hit with some kind of virus? I use a fully licensed version of Grisoft AVG Internet Security 2011. I don't receive any warnings or messages from AVG.

Thanks

*Joe
Pinole, CA*

Dear Joe,

A person is right to be suspicious of any helpful pop-up windows encountered. Even if they look like a legitimate window—as this one does— because it could be replicated by someone with malevolent intent. In those situations it is best to be safe and circumvent the window by going directly to the required tools for checking out the problem.

The Windows alert you have encountered is most likely real. Windows will give warnings for hard drives when it detects read/write errors and bad sectors. While this does not necessarily predict that you will need to replace your hard drive, it often does mean exactly that.

You can go directly to the tools by opening Window Explorer (Microsoft logo key+E), selecting the hard drive and right-clicking. Select Properties from the right-click menu and pick the Tools tab. Run the error check program by clicking the "Check Now..." button. Be sure to check the "Automatically fix system file errors" box in the next window. Click "Start" to begin. (If you haven't already done so, you may want to back up critical files first. The back up process may bring up the error detection window again.)

This program will scan the entire drive for errors. If it finds unreadable/unwriteable sectors it will mark them as bad sectors and no longer attempt to use the marked sectors. This should stop the error windows from popping up—at least temporarily. In my experience when these types of disk errors start occurring, general hard drive failure is not far behind. I would start thinking about a replacement and certainly make sure my back up is up to date.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

Back in April I wrote you about wanting to make a career change into IT. After almost a month I made the jump and was hired as a Desktop Technician for a defense contractor.

I have really enjoyed the change and have learned a lot about the Windows OS from the user perspective, but I am thirsting for more. My next goal is to be a Windows System Administrator on the server side and to this point have added to my resume CompTIA certifications in both Network+ and Security+. To achieve that position what certification(s) do you think are best for preparing me for the position?

I am very big on hands on and any books that you could recommend to not only prepare me for the exam, but are also excellent resources as a desk guide would be fantastic.

Also, I would like to pass along my thanks to the readers who commented on my previous

question. Specifically, I did take up one of the reader's advice and now volunteer at a local senior citizen's center twice a month as a computer technician. Everything from creating an e-mail to teaching seniors on how to use the Web (safely I might add!). Although I did it originally as a resume builder it has become a lot more of giving back to those that have helped me, as well as, a very self-fulfilling experience. So please let everyone know that I greatly appreciated their feedback.

Thank you again and as always you are doing great work!

*Mike
Snoqualmie, WA*

Dear Mike,

While I'm not an expert on all the certifications that you can get or which are the most recognized, it certainly sounds like you are on the right track. Your CompTIA certifications are recognized as an excellent first step and are incorporated in many of the other programs including Microsoft, Cisco, Novell and HP.

It looks like your next step would be Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) (www.microsoft.com/learning/en/us/certification/mcse.aspx). Based on the description, it sounds like you are in a good place to start this. Other readers may be in a better position than me to recommend specific courses, materials and books for working on your certifications. What you choose depends very much on how you learn best. Some people benefit more with active courses, while others can get everything they need from books or online tutorials. You need to pick what will work best for you, hopefully with the guidance of others.

I would welcome input from those who either work in the area or are in the position to hire Windows Systems Administrators.

Digital Dave

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Social Media Feuds and More Little Known Computer Stories

“Police Body-cams, Vibration-Charging Batteries and Much More” by Marilyn K. Martin

New Smartphone Apps for Drivers; Historical Topographic Maps; Hollywood Movie Makers Retrench over the Decline of DVD Sales; Biometrics Update: Time Clocks and Lie Detectors; Better Security for Less Privacy?; Digital Devices for Law Enforcement; Self-charging Batteries from Vibrations; Public Schools Using More Digital Technology; Extreme Wi-Fi; Hi-tech Ghost Town; Web of Lies—Local Social Media on Trial; iPads and New Apps in Combat; Online Counseling Therapy.

New Smartphone Apps for Drivers

Since 23% of all U.S. motor vehicle accidents (1.3 million crashes annually) are caused by cell phone talking and texting, there is a new free smartphone app (www.newser.com/story/127683/free-app-prevents-texting-while-driving.html) to stop a driver from talking/texting while driving. Called "iZup Lite (www.getizup.com/)", it blocks all texting, tweeting and e-mailing while driving. And it works automatically, using a GPS satellite to gauge the vehicle's speed. An added advantage? "It keeps you from doing something that is illegal in 35 states."

Allstate Insurance (community.allstate.com/community/allstate_blog/blog/2011/09/07/do-smartphones-and-motorcycles-go-together-they-do-with-allstate-s-goodridesm-app) now offers a free iPhone app for motorcycle riders called GoodRide (itunes.apple.com/us/app/allstate-mobile/id439396162?mt=8) and most features of the app are available to riders who don't insure through Allstate. Features include creating a log and even sharing it, getting 3-day weather forecasts, and keeping track of motorcycle maintenance with alert options. Other helpful features are Roadside Assistance, to dispatch a "motorcycle friendly service truck," and the "Find Gas" feature listing nearby gas stations with their cost per gallon of gas.

Historical Topographic Maps

Historical USGS (United States Geological Survey) maps, some dating as far back as 1884, are now available online (www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=2919&from=rss_home). These include U.S. maps of all scales and editions, and are offered as a geo-referenced digital download, for no cost. Or as a scanned paper print for \$20 from the USGS Store. "In partnership with the Library of Congress and other map depositories, the USGS will build a

complete master catalog, and will duplicate maps that may be missing from any of those other sources."

Hollywood Movie Makers Retrench over the Decline of DVD Sales

A quiet revolution is about to radically change how Hollywood presents their movies to the public after theatrical release. Studio executives have been pondering what to do about the 40% decline (www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-cover-dvd-future-20110925-1,0,6516807.story) in home entertainment, or DVD revenues. Most studio execs have concluded that the only solution is to "rapidly accelerate the delivery of movies over the Internet."

Thus, in the next few years, Internet connected televisions, computers and smartphones will be offering a vast array of downloadable movie options. Digital movies could even be shared on Facebook like a photo. "It's now critical that we experiment as much as possible," says David Bishop, President of Sony Pictures' Home Entertainment unit. "(We need to) determine how to build a vibrant market for collecting digital movies."

Biometrics Update: Time Clocks and Lie Detectors



Punching in and out of a job with a time clock is a necessary ritual with most companies, large and small. Even then, someone with a different person's time card or password can sign someone in or out who isn't present. Today, with the evolution of biometrics, facial recognition time clocks can verify registered users (www.miamiherald.com/2011/09/08/2397078/new-technology-lets-you-punch.html) at three feet away, and clock them in or out within seconds.

FacelN (lathem.com/products/automated-systems/fr700-face-recognition-system.aspx) from Lathem Corp in Atlanta, brags that it is the largest seller of facial recognition time clock technology in the U.S. (Companies selling similar time clocks are ZK and PSP Security.) Besides being touchless

and hygienic, "FacelN" is embedded in the terminal, so no additional components or infrastructure is needed. Even as an employee ages, or gains/loses weight, "FacelN" will still recognize them with at least 80% digital characteristics, since each day's punch in/out updates the employee's template. The system is even built to "not accept a photograph, and even twins can't fool it."

In September 2011, the BBC revealed "a sophisticated new camera system (that) can detect lies (www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-14900800) just by watching our faces as we talk." Using a simple video camera, a high-resolution thermal imaging sensor and algorithms, the system can discriminate between the truth and lies in about two-thirds of the cases. Developed by a team from the UK universities of Bradford and Aberystwyth, along with the UK Border Agency, the system reflects years of research on how we unconsciously, involuntarily reveal our emotions in subtle changes of expression, and the flow of blood to our skin.

Better Security for Less Privacy?



"I was going to take him back after he

“I was going to take him back after he sent me that romantic text message from his iPhone. But then I discovered that he was using his new iLie app.”

According to a September 2011 Associated Press Poll, Americans are now willing to give up some privacy and freedom in exchange for better security (www.newser.com/story/127800/americans-willing-to-give-up-some-freedoms-for-security.html). 71% of the

people polled agreed with the necessity of security cameras in public places.

And around half those polled were OK with full body scans and pat downs at airports, and even a national ID card. But less than half approved of racial/ethnic profiling at airports, monitoring of e-mails, or domestic phone eavesdropping without a warrant.

Digital Devices for Law Enforcement



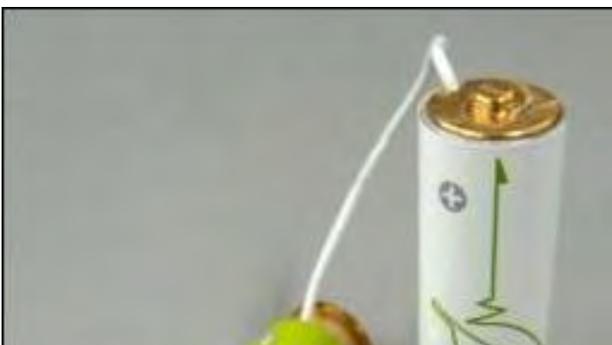
Amid a rising number of citizen complaints last year in Oakland, California, over encounters with police, the rank-and-file Oakland officers asked their commanders to let them wear body cameras (seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2016139595_bodycams08m.html) to record their encounters with the public. A pilot program was started last summer (2010) with 20 Oakland police officers wearing the cameras, which has now expanded to 350 officers, with 150 more body cameras scheduled for delivery by the end of the year.

With an increasing number of citizen complaints about interactions with police, these body cameras can hang around an officer's neck or mount on a vehicle dashboard.

Made by VIEVU (www.viewvu.com/), a Seattle-based company founded by a former SWAT officer, the cameras record both audio and video. These "evidence cameras" can hopefully end the emotionally charged he-said/she-said type of charges, where the citizen and the police officer have vastly different memories of an encounter.

Self-charging Batteries from Vibrations

According to an August 2011 article (www.technewsdaily.com/new-battery-charges-itself-from-vibrations-3176/) in TechNewsDaily, there is now in development a postage-stamp sized battery that can recharge from any type of vibrations. MicroGen (www.microgen.com/uk-en/) is a British company developing a battery that "incorporates four chips with small cantilevers ... that respond to even the smallest vibrations." The amount of electricity generated would be small, but they could be grouped together to be charged by natural vibrations from Nature, as well as normal human activity. They could also potentially cost about \$1 each, and last a lifetime. "MicroGen" anticipates mass production to start next year.



In addition, Nokia (www.nokia.com) filed a patent for self-charging kinetic energy cell phone batteries (www.knowyourcell.com/news/435725/nokia_files_patent_for_selfcharging_cell_phone_battery.html) in 2010. Also in 2010, Brother Industries (www.brother-usa.com/) developed an AA and AAA battery sized generator



(www.physorg.com/news198686681.html) powered by vibration, which can be used to charge another AA or AAA battery.

Public Schools Using More Digital Technology

First day of school in the Chippewa Valley School District (Michigan), was a day to surprise the students with a new array of "21st Century technology (www.freep.com/article/20110906/NEWS04/110906033/Chippewa-Valley-schools-switch-new-high-tech-tools-first-day?odyssey=mod|newswell|)

text|FRONTPAGE(s)." These included interactive *smart* whiteboards, a high-definition data projector, a document camera, and an audio system in every classroom which includes a microphone and a Blu-Ray DVD player.

The new technology devices were mainly funded through a February 2010 bond proposal. In addition, a new security system provides the Principal's office with computer views from 26 cameras placed around the school. So far the students love the new technology that enables them to all hear their teacher now, and to interact with the boards at the front of the classrooms.

Extreme Wi-Fi

According to a September 2011 article (www.technewsdaily.com/new-yorkers-mixed-on-cell-phone-service-in-subways-atat-t-mobile—3312/) in Tech News Daily some subway stations in New York City are now offering cell phone and Internet service at certain underground stations. The first phase has been completed, with five stations under Manhattan now offering AT&T and T-Mobile customers with cell phone and Internet access.

Subway riders in Manhattan have mixed feelings. Some predict more annoyance and distraction in the stations. While others like having access to the Internet and the ability to use their cell phones underground. Uninterrupted access to 911 at the connected subway stations is also a plus. Plans are to have the remaining 271 underground NYC subway stations "connected" within four years.

Satellite phone company Iridium Communications, Inc. (www.iridium.com/), announced in September 2011 that it was launching a cigarette pack sized box that produces a Wi-Fi hotspot (seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/business/technology/20110907_1109070361_apustectechbitsatellitehotspot.html) that connects to an Iridium phone.

The phone can relay a smartphone or computer connection to 66 overhead satellites covering the entire planet, which then shunts the signal to a ground station to connect to the Internet. The data speeds are slower than dial-up, but you will be able to read your e-mail in the middle of the ocean or near the Poles. AT&T sells a similar alternative through their TerreStar Genus (www.terrestar.com/technology-solutions/products/) satellite phone, but its satellite coverage is only for North America.

Hi-tech Ghost Town

In September 2011, Pegasus Global Holdings (www.pegasus-global.com/), a Washington D.C. technology company, announced plans to build a small ghost city (www.newsmax.com/SciTech/TechCompanytoBuildScienceGhostTowninNM/2011/09/07/id/410009) in New Mexico. The idea is to be able to "test everything from renewable energy innovations to intelligent traffic systems, next-generation wireless networks and smart-grid cyber security systems." New Mexico's premier national scientific, nuclear and military

institutions, as well as universities, are planning to take part in the venture.

Although no one will actually live in The Center, the 20 square mile planned city will be modeled on a typical American city of 35,000 people, "complete with highways, houses and commercial buildings, old and new." Bob Brumley, CEO of "Pegasus Global Holdings", says the \$200 million project will be a first for U.S. scientists to "test their innovations for upgrading cities to 21st century green technology and infrastructure."

Brumley is also hoping The Center will draw investors and new businesses for a "technology corridor" like Silicon Valley in California. "Our own company (faced) challenges trying to test new and emerging technologies beyond the confines of a sterile lab environment," Brumley states. "The Center will allow (researchers) to test ... with a real world infrastructure, allowing them to better understand the cost and potential limitations of new technologies prior to introduction."

Web of Lies—Local Social Media on Trial

Mountain Grove, Missouri, a small town in the Ozarks, is a cauldron of hurt feelings and betrayals these days, over vicious and anonymous posts on their Mountain Grove Forum (www.nytimes.com/2011/09/20/us/small-town-gossip-moves-to-the-web-anonymous-and-vicious.html?_r=1&nl=todaysheadlines&emc=tha23) through the social media site, Topix. This little town of 5,000 is seething with rage over the negative postings on their Forum, which has resulted in fights and even divorces. Driven by pettiness and jealousy, the anonymous posts are clearly disrupting lives. One targeted young mother of two cried constantly and considered suicide, until her husband declared that they were moving.

Localized Web sites like this were created "for candid talk about local news and politics," but turned instead into hotbeds of vicious and anonymous attacks that are mostly unsubstantiated. Topix (www.topix.com/) is a site barely trafficked in cities, but has a dedicated and growing following from Appalachia and the Ozarks, across much of the rural South. Topix's chief executive, Chris Tolles, is unapologetic, noting all the traffic his sites get in "feud states," and defends the content on free-speech grounds.

One of the most heavily trafficked forums is Pikeville, Kentucky, Tolles brags, which was once the staging ground for the legendary Hatfields and McCoys blood feud. These gossip forums have resulted in lawsuits, censure by local governments, and even suicides, in addition to the fights and divorces already noted. Interspersed with genuine discussion about local news and politics, one surveyed small town forum was also filled with unsubstantiated rumors about alleged drug dealers, home wreckers with herpes, and even a 13-year-old girl "preggo by her mommy's man." Many of these wild allegations are followed with the accused weighing in to promise revenge on whomever started the post, and things quickly escalate from there.

iPads and New Apps in Combat



A September 2011 article (www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-isoldiers-20110926,0,1192172.story) in the Los Angeles Times describes how the military in combat zones are turning to iPads and smartphone apps for quicker access to needed information. It started when a Cobra attack helicopter pilot, Marine Captain Jim "Hottie" Carlson, was running support missions over Afghanistan last summer. He was frustrated that it was taking far too long to find where U.S. troops were under attack, especially as he had to flip through dozens of paper maps stuffed inside his chopper.

Carlson later uploaded all the paper maps into his personal iPad. After that, he was able to quickly move from one

digitized map to another in his chopper, with the added ability to zoom in and out of a map's features. This significantly shortened the time to pinpoint a location from "three minutes to about 30 seconds," reported Capt. Carlson. The Marines now have more than 30 iPads in their helicopters and fighter jet cockpits.

Smart devices of all kinds are now being tested in all branches of the military, with software companies and defense contractors rushing to develop mobile applications for soldiers in a combat zone. Although military strategists continue to voice concerns about passing military secrets on a device that can easily be hacked into—although the technology is performing well in simulated U.S. security raids and checkpoint stops, from taking pictures of Arabic writing to gathering biometric data like fingerprints and iris scans.

One military smartphone app is called Soldier Eyes (www.overwatch.com/products/soldiereyes.php), developed by Overwatch Mobile Solutions out of Textron Inc. When a soldier is dropped into an unknown area on a moonless night, the app uses GPS coordinates to identify where the soldier is, and where his adjacent units are located. It can also provide cumulative information about a hostile region, such as showing how many local roadside bomb attacks have occurred, and exactly where and when.

Online Counseling Therapy

According to a Los Angeles Times article in September 2011 (www.latimes.com/health/la-he-unreal-web-therapy-20110926,0,7886192.column), Telepsychiatry has advanced beyond interactive television or satellite hookups. Today, according to the Online Therapy Institute (www.onlinetherapyinstitute.com), psychiatrists only have to use the Internet to reach remote patients. And U.S. insurance companies are beginning to understand and pay for video conference style therapy sessions. Experts agree that "Web-based therapy actually gives a patient more options for finding a therapist who can be 100% objective."

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), 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), and are available from most on-line bookstores.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“The New iPhone 4S” by Wally Wang

The New iPhone 4S; iPads in the Classroom; Lego's Life of George; The Old World Continues Collapsing; Chasing the Leaders; VMWare's Fusion 4; With Mac OS X 10.7 Lion and a trackpad, browsing in Safari is even easier.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

On October 14, you can buy the new iPhone 4S at AT&T, Verizon, or Sprint. The least expensive iPhone 4S will cost \$199 with a two-year contract. However, you can still get the older iPhone 4 (presumably only at AT&T and Verizon) for just \$99. If you want an iPhone but don't want to spend any money at all, you can pick up the iPhone 3GS (presumably only at AT&T) for free if you sign a two-year contract.

This variety of prices for older iPhone models is probably more important than the iPhone 4S technical specifications since it means that price is no longer a barrier for anyone who wants an iPhone. The more people able to afford an iPhone, the more likely the iPhone app market will increase, attracting more developers to an expanding market. This will help keep the iPhone as the most lucrative app market while Windows Phone 7 still struggles to attract customers and Android struggles with fragmentation, piracy and malware.

Besides the price structure that can help the iPhone capture a greater market share, the second biggest non-technical change will be the official release of iCloud, which can synchronize all your data (contacts, appointments, documents, etc.) between your iPhone and other devices such as an iPad, PC, or Mac. Make an appointment on your iPhone and it automatically appears on your iPad, PC, or Mac. Once you start relying on iCloud, you'll find it difficult to switch to a non-Apple device.

Competitors like Google and Microsoft can develop smart phones with better technical specifications, but if they don't offer a similar automatic synchronization feature like iCloud, all that advanced technology will be pointless. Apple can offer users the best tablet on the market (iPad), the most popular smart phone on the market (iPhone) and second most popular computer on the market (Macintosh).

On the other hand, Google can only offer Android smart phones, weak selling Android tablets, and far less popular ChromeOS computers. Microsoft can only offer far less popular Windows Phone 7 phones, Windows 7 computers, and no tablets until Windows 8 arrives a year from now. Right from the start, Apple's iCloud already has a huge advantage over rivals that has nothing to do with technical specifications and everything to do with a comprehensive and popular product line.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the iPhone 4S is its natural language assistant dubbed Siri. By just talking to your iPhone 4S, you can make appointments, get weather forecasts, and get directions. Instead of clumsily typing on

the iPhone's virtual keyboard, Siri frees you to turn your iPhone 4S into a virtual personal assistant. To see a short demonstration of how Siri works, just watch Apple's official iPhone 4S video (www.apple.com/iphone/#video-4s).

The iPhone 4S isn't a massive technological breakthrough, but it doesn't matter since it offers plenty of improvements such as a sharper camera and the ability to eliminate shakiness while capturing a movie. Every rival will once again measure themselves against the iPhone 4S. With availability on AT&T, Verizon and Sprint along with major price reductions for older models, the iPhone is poised to continue growing at the expense of rivals like Research in Motion's Blackberry and Microsoft's Windows Phone 7 phones.

Even if you don't get an iPhone, you'll likely get another phone strongly influenced by the iPhone, so you'll still have Apple to thank.

iPads in the Classroom

Like many schools, Gilbert Elementary once had a traditional computer lab with regular PCs, monitors and keyboards. This year, Gilbert Elementary decided to dump their traditional computer lab and replace it with 75 iPads (www.catwalkchatt.com/view/full_story/15773391/article-A-computer-lab-no-longer—iPads-wow-teachers—students-at-Gilbert-Elementary?instance=home_Most_popular). Despite the school year just beginning, teachers have already noticed an improvement.

"It's a night and day difference in behavior," said teacher Jay Lemons. "It's still early in the year, but I've had very little behavior problems compared to previous years...They're so relaxed and they're having fun learning. They don't even know they're learning. They're just having fun."



Figure 1. Elementary school students behave and learn better with an iPad.

Lemons first introduces a lesson on a smartboard and briefly demonstrates the apps and games the students will be using to reinforce the lesson on their individual iPads. Then the students play educational games such as Pizza 1, which teaches fractions using a cartoon pizza. Lemons claims that the iPad has made learning more interactive and fun for the students while being more cost effective than computers.

"The apps aren't that expensive. When we buy 25 or more, we get them at half price anyway, plus there are a lot of free apps," said Lemons. "I was telling a colleague the other day that I had just had absolutely the best class I've ever had in my 13 years of teaching...I can't believe it. It really is blowing my mind."

The iPad isn't just helping elementary school students, but students of all ages as well. At Brookfield High School in Connecticut, students are using the iPad with electronic textbooks (finance.yahoo.com/news/Many-US-schools-adding-iPads-afp-1245885050.html?x=0&.v=2).

At Burlington High in Boston, principal Patrick Larkin said that \$500 iPads are a better long term investment than textbooks, although he emphasized that they'll still use traditional textbooks in some courses if suitable electronic textbooks on the iPad aren't available.

"I don't want to generalize because I don't want to insult people who are working hard to make those resources," Larkin said of textbooks, "but they're pretty much outdated the minute they're printed and certainly by the time they're delivered. The bottom line is that the iPads will give our kids a chance to use much more relevant materials."

Boston-based Houghton Mifflin Harcourt created an HMH Fuse algebra program for the iPad. The HMH Fuse online app is free to give users an idea of how it works, and the content can be downloaded for \$60. By comparison, the publisher's 950-page algebra text is almost \$73 per copy, and doesn't include the graphing calculators, interactive videos and other features. For a school that need to purchase 300 textbooks, they could save almost \$4,000 just by using the iPad app.

In case you have an iPad and a child going to school, you can browse through this list of free apps (www.woowoomac.com/blog/50-free-iphone-and-ipad-apps-for-college-students.html) that students might find useful, such as myHomework to keep track of homework, projects and tests. With the right apps, you can turn the iPad into an educational tool at minimal expense.

Lego's Life of George

Both kids and adults seem to like Lego building blocks. Now for \$29.99, you can buy Lego's latest kit called Life with George. Unlike other kits that give you instructions for how to build Harry Potter's house or the Star Wars Millennium Falcon, Life with George works with a free iPhone app that you can download. The free app displays different designs and using the Life with George kit, you have to try to build that design using real Lego blocks. Then you take a picture to verify that your design is accurate.

Two people can compete with each other to see who can build the designs the fastest, or you can compete online against others. Rather than always follow the Life with George examples, you can also design your own creations and challenge others to see how fast they can build it.

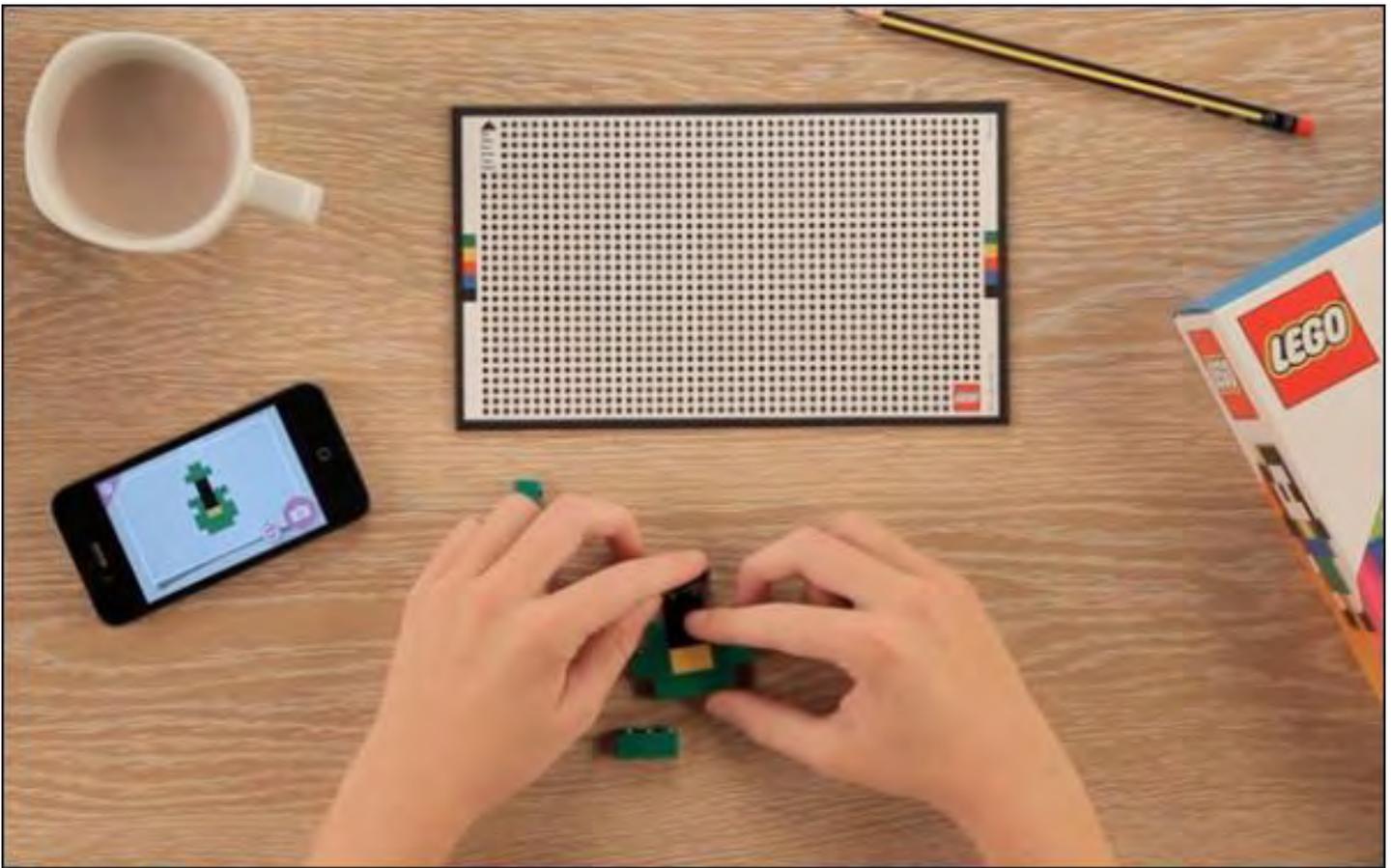


Figure 2. Life with George combines an iPhone app with Lego building blocks.

Life with George is a unique game that brings the world of Legos to the world of iPhone apps while retaining the basic appeal of building objects with real Lego blocks. You might never aspire to become a master builder at LegoLand, but with Lego's Life with George game, you can have fun with Legos and your iPhone wherever you go.

The Old World Continues Collapsing

After Hewlett-Packard realized that few people had a reason to buy their TouchPad tablet, they dropped the price to \$99, took a loss on each sale, and cleared out their inventory while tentatively abandoning their entire \$1.2 billion dollar investment in webOS through their acquisition of Palm Computing. Hewlett-Packard may also exit the low-margin world of PCs as well, which is odd since Hewlett-Packard still remains one of the top PC sellers in the world.

While Hewlett-Packard flounders in the tablet market after boldly proclaiming that they would soon become "number one plus," Research in Motion has started selling their Playbook tablets at a reduced price (www.foxnews.com/scitech/2011/09/26/blackberry-playbook-tablet-prices-slashed-after-lagging-sales/) as well. While not as cheap as Hewlett-Packard's \$99 TouchPad, stores have been selling the Playbook as low as \$250.

Once the leader in smart phones, Research in Motion has seen profits plummet as sales of Blackberries dries up and sales of the Playbook never took off in the first place, despite Research in Motion's boastful claim that with the arrival of the Playbook, "Amateur hour is over."

Research in Motion has already laid off (www.ibtimes.com/articles/186336/20110725/rim-jobs-blackberry-playbook.htm) 10 percent of their workforce to cut costs and remain competitive. In the meantime, Nokia, who once also led the smart phone market, has begun another round of layoffs (www.theregister.co.uk/2011/09/29/nokia_jobs_axe/) to reduce costs.

How did former market leaders like Hewlett-Packard, Research in Motion and Nokia suddenly stumble so badly with little hope of returning to their previously profitable business model? If such huge corporations can lose their market practically overnight, which major corporations might be next to fall? More importantly, what are you going to do to adapt to such inevitable change?

The traditional way to adapt to change is to go back to school and learn new skills. Of course, this assumes that schools are also adapting to change because if they aren't, they'll just wind up teaching you obsolete skills that won't help you one bit in the real world while saddling you with huge tuition bills in the process.

A better approach is to simply start learning on your own by pursuing a topic that interests you. Unlike the built-in pressure of classroom assignments, learning by yourself requires self-motivation. If you're not interested in a particular topic, then the outside influence of class deadlines and assignments isn't going to help much either other than to force you to study a topic you really don't care about and won't remember anyway.

For free courses on a variety of topics, visit iTunes University (www.apple.com/education/itunes-u/) and get free college courses from the top universities in the world. For another source of free education, learn lessons in a variety of topics at the Khan Academy (www.khanacademy.org/). You can also visit the University of the People (www.uopeople.org/), which offers free courses but does charge a minimal processing and examination fee.

By continuously learning, you'll be able to apply your new skills at work and make yourself more valuable and useful as a result. Ultimately, depending on yourself is the only security you'll ever find in the working world.

Chasing the Leaders

One sure way to fail in life is to copy someone else. Even in elementary school, teachers encourage children to be themselves and not try to imitate others. Yet this childhood lesson seems lost on major companies like Microsoft.

Microsoft spent millions of dollars developing Silverlight to copy Adobe Flash. Then the market fell apart for Flash due to its inability to work efficiently on mobile devices, so Microsoft has had to reposition Silverlight as a programming tool.

Microsoft spent millions developing and marketing their Zune digital music player to copy the iPod, and now Microsoft has officially stopped making the Zune as the dedicated digital music player market (gizmodo.com/5846184/rip-microsoft-zune-the-media-player-we-all-loved-but-never-used) has dried up.

Microsoft continues losing a billion dollars (techcrunch.com/2011/09/22/as-bing-bleeds-billions-microsoft-applies-tourniquet/) a quarter with Bing, their attempt to copy Google. Now the biggest threat to Google isn't another search engine but a social media site like Facebook.

Microsoft spent billions developing the xBox to copy the PlayStation, and finally has made a profit, but how much profit does the xBox need to make until it pays off its initial billion dollar investment?

Instead of trying to develop a more innovative product that makes the leading product obsolete, Microsoft is content to merely copy the leader and suffer at the same time the leader suffers. Rather than aim for the future, Microsoft simply tries to duplicate the past.

Learn a lesson from Microsoft and don't copy others. Instead, look to the future and leapfrog past the current successful leaders. You may not always be right in guessing what the future will bring, but copying someone else is rarely the path to success. Just ask your elementary school teacher.

VMWare's Fusion 4

The two most popular virtualization programs are Parallels 7 and VMWare's latest Fusion 4 (www.vmware.com/products/fusion/overview.html), which brings Mac OS X 10.7 Lion compatibility. Like Parallels 7, Fusion 4 now lets you run Mac OS X as a virtual machine, which lets you clone a Macintosh within your Macintosh. This can let you test different Mac programs safely within the isolation of a virtual machine so if you download the rare piece of Macintosh malware, it will remain trapped inside your Mac virtual machine and not attack your actual Macintosh instead.

Since Fusion 4 offers nearly identical features as Parallels 7, the main difference is cost. Both Parallels and Fusion offer a special "switcher's" price so if you're currently using Fusion, you can switch to Parallels for a low fee (or switch from Parallels to Fusion for an equally low fee).

To see how Fusion 4 works, I downloaded the .iso file for the latest Windows 8 preview build. Then I created loaded this .iso file to install Windows 8 in a virtual machine. The entire process worked flawlessly, letting me play with Windows 8 on my Mac.



Figure 3. Windows 8 running as a Fusion 4 virtual machine.

Rather than move forward to the future, you can also return back to the past and run FreeDOS (www.freedos.org/), which is an open source clone of MS-DOS. Just download the FreeDOS .iso file, load it in Fusion, and you'll have a FreeDOS virtual machine, which lets you run your favorite MS-DOS programs.

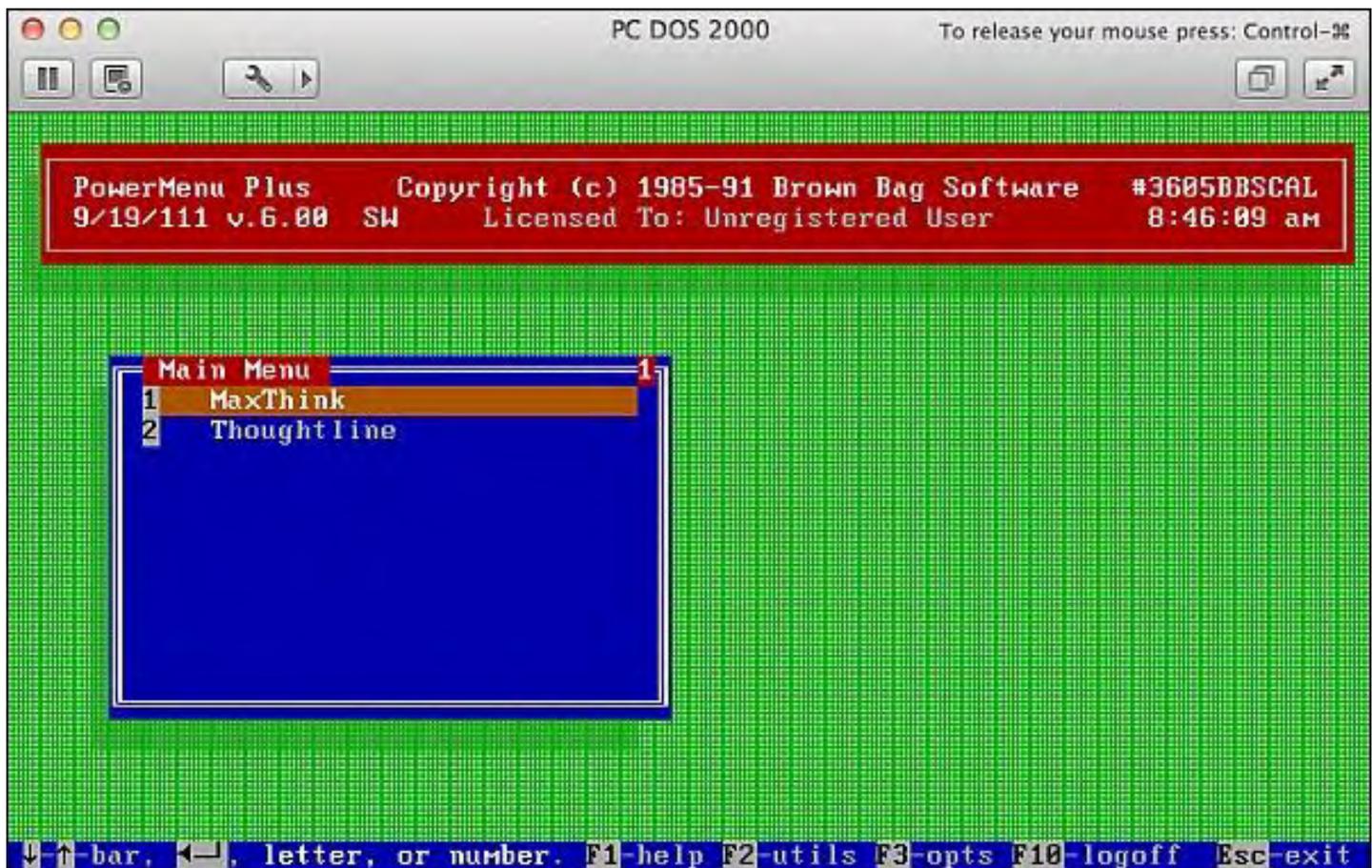


Figure 4. Fusion 4 can run MS-DOS programs as a FreeDOS virtual machine.

Once you have FreeDOS running in Fusion, visit the DOS Games Archive (www.dosgamesarchive.com/) to download free MS-DOS games. With Fusion and FreeDOS, you can turn your Macintosh into an MS-DOS gaming machine at no cost (except for buying Fusion).

One problem with running Windows as a virtual machine is that you have to buy a copy of Windows. To avoid this problem, try downloading a copy of ReactOS (www.reactos.org/en/index.html), which is a Windows XP clone. The goal of ReactOS is to run Windows programs without Windows. Although the ReactOS software is still in an early alpha stage, just load it into Fusion and see if it runs the Windows programs you need.

With so many different operating systems available, you can waste time installing them on separate computers or you can simply install them as virtual machines on a Macintosh.

By installing different operating systems in Fusion, you can continue running crucial programs while still enjoying the benefits of a Macintosh. If you're a Web designer, install different operating systems as virtual machines and use different browsers to make sure your Web pages appear exactly the way you want. If you're creating a cross-platform program, you can test your Macintosh version in Mac OS X and your Windows version in a Windows virtual machine.

Fusion 4 can handle any Intel-based operating system so feel free to install as many operating systems as you want since they won't gobble up memory until you actually run them. With Fusion 4, your Macintosh can run all your favorite

programs in a separate Mac OS X window as easily as running a regular Mac OS X program. Download a free trial version and test Fusion for yourself. With Fusion's ability to migrate a Windows PC to a virtual machine, you may find that the most versatile upgrade from your current Windows PC might just be a Macintosh running Fusion and the operating systems of your choice.

* * *

If you're using Mac OS X 10.7 Lion and have a trackpad, browsing in Safari has just become much easier. Normally you can view your previously viewed Web pages by clicking on the Back button. Then you can click on the Forward button to see the latest Web pages you've viewed.

However with Mac OS X 10.7 Lion and a trackpad, you can just swipe two fingers horizontally across the trackpad to slide the Web pages out of the way and view the previous or next Web page.

Of course, you can still click the Back and Forward buttons if you want, but you may find swiping two fingers horizontally across the trackpad to be faster and more intuitive.

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:

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

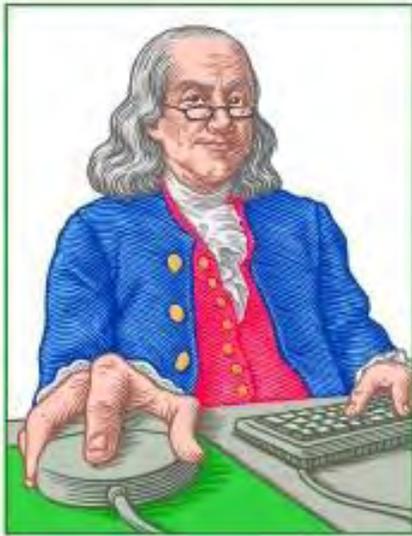
Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)

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)

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

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



LINUX LESSONS

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

Linux Lessons:
Tips and Tricks
from Users
"RAID Configuration
Issues" by Tony J.
Podrasky

Tony answers a question on how to know if a drive goes down when two hard drives are in a RAID configuration.

Hi, Tony,

I have a problem and I don't know the solution. I have two hard drives in a RAID configuration for each of my Linux servers. I often wonder how I would know if one of the drives goes down. I'm over 1000 miles away from the computers, so I can't go look at the machines.

I would be grateful if you could supply a quick answer.

Jack

Hey Jack,

There are two kinds of RAIDS that I have worked with:

- Made out of individual disks that *you* configure with LVM.
- An intelligent controller that you plug disks into and it does all the work on its own and the actual disks are transparent to the system.

If there is a problem with one of the disks, you should see something in the `/var/log/message` file. If you have your system set up to send you e-mail locally (I get my outside e-mail from gmail.com but my root account gets internal e-mail from the system), you could set up a shell script to `<grep>` for words such as ERROR and WARNING and have it sent to you nightly.

If the disks are independent (configured by LVM and not an intelligent RAID controller) you should see them when you look at `/proc/partitions`. Since all known disks appear in `<partitions>`, regardless whether they are in use or not, you could write a shell script to just count the lines in the file when all is well (such as after a boot), save that as your control file, then nightly do a current count on `<partitions>` to see if it has the same amount of lines. If it has less, that would mean that one of the disks has disappeared.

I haven't played around with RAID on my Linux box, but when I was with Hewlett Packard I supported the high-end systems and they all had RAID arrays on them.

Hope that helps. If not, let me know and I'll see what else I can dig up.

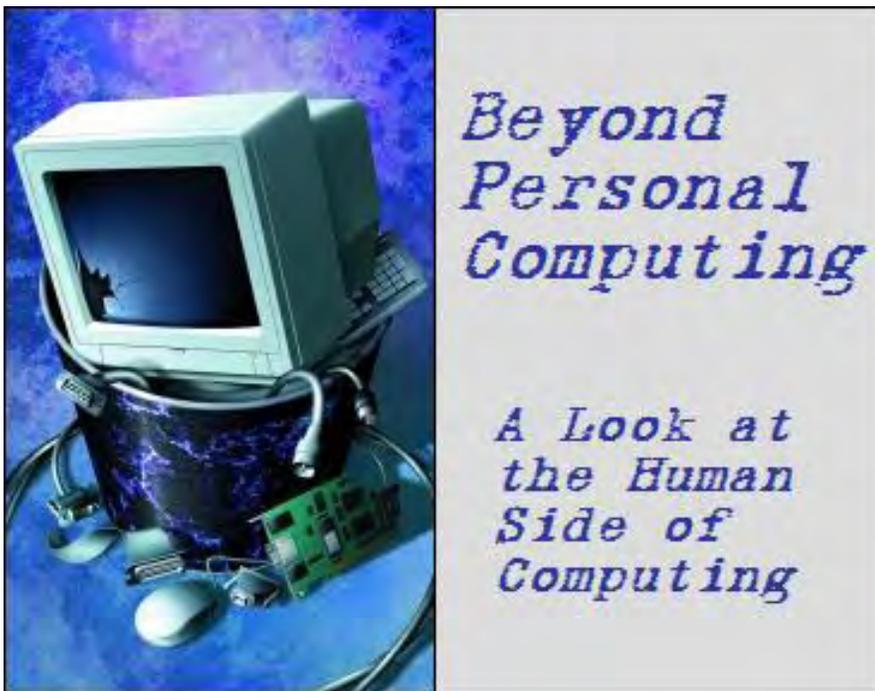
Regards,

Tony

If you would like to ask Tony a Linux question, you can use the Linux Tips and Tricks submission button on the left, submit the question at the top or bottom of the column with the "Tell us what you think About This Article!" link, or e-mail him directly at the address below.

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*).

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Beyond Personal Computing

“If Computer Brands or Operating Systems Made Other Products” by Marilyn K. Martin

Marilyn shares some amusing anecdotes that describe how various computer brands or operating systems would make other, non-computing products.

One game techs play among themselves, is to try and describe how various computer brands or operating systems would make other, non-computing products. Some of these stories are dated, but they are still funny—and revealing.

If Operating Systems Drove Your Car to the Store

MS-DOS: You get in the car and try to remember where you put the keys.

Windows: You get in the car and drive to the store very slowly. Because attached to the back of the car is a freight train.

Mac System: You get in the car to go to the store, and it drives you instead to the church.

UNIX: You get in the car and type *grep store*. After reaching 2,000 mph en-route, you arrive at the barber's shop.

Windows NT: You get in the car and write a letter that says "go to the store." Then you get out of the car and nail the letter to the dashboard.

S/36 SSP: You get in the car and drive to the store. Halfway there, you run out of gas. While walking the rest of the way, you are run over by kids on mopeds.

AS/400: An attendant kicks you into the car and then drives you to the store, where you watch everyone else buying filet mignon.

If Computer Companies Made Toasters

Oracle: Claims their toaster is compatible with all brands and styles of bread. But when you got it home, you discover that the Bagel Engine is still in development, and the Croissant Extension is still three years away.

Hewlett-Packard: Claim they market a Reverse Toaster. You put in toast, and it gives you regular bread.

IBM: They would want one big toaster where people could bring tons of bread for overnight toasting. IBM would claim a worldwide market for just six of their toasters.

Xerox: Claim that you could toast one-sided or double-sided. Successive slices of toast would get lighter and lighter. Although the toaster would "jam" your bread for you.

Radio Shack: The staff would sell you a toaster, but not know anything about it. Or you could buy all the parts to build your own toaster.

Cray: Their toasters would cost \$16 billion, but would be faster than any other single-slice toaster in the world.

RAND Corporation: Would make a large, perfectly smooth and seamless black cube of a toaster. Every morning, a perfect piece of toast would be on top. But their service department would have an unlisted phone number, and the blueprints for the toaster would be highly classified government documents.

Sony: Their "ToastMan" (much smaller than the single piece of bread it is meant to toast) could be attached to your belt.

Microsoft: Would make it so that every time you bought a loaf of bread, you would have to buy a new toaster. If you don't want the toaster, you'd still have to pay for it. The toaster would weigh 15,000 pounds and draw enough electricity to power a small city. It would claim to be the first toaster that lets you control how light or dark you want your toast, and would secretly interrogate your other appliances to find out who made them.

Apple: Would make a toaster that could do everything that the Microsoft toaster does, but 5 years earlier.

If Intel Made Breast Implants

Intel Corporation announced a major expansion of its successful "Intel Inside" campaign with a new line of silicon breast implants. "We thought this would be a natural market for us, because of our unparalleled knowledge of silicon," announced the company spokesman. "Besides, Intel has a wealth of experience forcing new technology on the mass market. We feel that we're *the* company that makes cosmetic upgrades a part of the average person's life."

Implant beta-test subject reported that her acting career is 133% faster since receiving her "Pointium-II" implants. Industry experts agree that the new Intel product will turn plenty of heads. But they believe that the market will be soft through the third quarter, as women wait for faster, second generation models that feature new "plug and play" capabilities.

If Operating Systems Were Beers

DOS Beer would require you to use your own can opener, and insist you read the directions carefully before opening the can. Comes in a new 16 oz. can divided into 8 compartments of 2 oz. each, which have to be accessed separately.

Mac Beer now comes in a 32 oz. size, and is considered a Lite Beer by many. All the cans are identical, and it opens itself. No list of ingredients, and if you have to call for a list, you are told that you "don't have a need to know."

Windows Beer is the world's most popular, and looks a lot like Mac beer. Claims that it allows you to drink several DOS beers simultaneously, but you really can only drink them very slowly. Sometimes a can of Windows beer will explode for no reason when you open it.

UNIX Beer comes in several different brands, in 8-64 oz. cans. Drinkers display fierce brand loyalty, even if they admit

all the different brands taste almost identical. Sometimes the pop top breaks off when you try to open it. So you either need to keep a can opener around, a complete set of instructions, or a friend who has been drinking Unix beer for several years.

Amiga-DOS Beer has gone out of business, but their recipe has been picked up by a strange German company. This beer never sold well, because the original maker didn't understand marketing. Fans of this brand are extremely loud and loyal, although its original flashy and colorful design is now dated. Critics claim this beer is only good for watching TV anyway.

VMS Beer requires minimal user interaction, except for opening and sipping. Cans have been known to explode, however, or contain extremely un-beer-like contents. Best drunk in high pressure development environments. Rumors that this beer was once listed in the Physicians' Desk Reference as a tranquilizer, could not be confirmed.

Help Desks—If Cars Were Really Like Computers

Customer: How do I turn my windshield wipers on?

HelpDesk: There's a little button on the radio console shaped like a piece of pie. It's more efficient to have all the controls in one central position. People should be more familiar with the principles of graphic design.

Customer: I can get in the driver's side door just fine, but I can't get in the passenger's side door. I pulled up on the handle, just like the driver's side door. So what's wrong?

HelpDesk: People always make that mistake. You have to push on the passenger's side door. Remember, you're always moving the handle toward the left of the car. It's more consistent that way.

Customer: My car will go forward. But when I put it in reverse, nothing happens. It's a brand new 2011 Mongoose.

HelpDesk: Is that a 2011R with a big R or a small r? I think you probably have a small r model, so you'll need to upgrade to the big R version to go in reverse.

If Operating Systems Were Airlines

DOS Air makes passengers walk out onto the runway, grab hold of the plane, push it until it gets in the air, hop on, then jump off when it hits the ground. They grab the plane again, push it back into the air, hop on, jump off...

Mac Air has cashiers, flight attendants and pilots who all look the same, talk the same, and act the same. When you ask them questions about the flight, they reply that you don't really want to know the answer, don't need to know the answer, and please return to your seat.

Windows Air has a neat and clean terminal, courteous attendants and capable pilots. The fleet of Lear jets the carrier operates is immense. Your jet takes off without a hitch, pushes above the clouds, then explodes without warning.

Windows NT Air has their passengers carry their seats out onto the tarmac, and place them in the outline of a plane. Then they all sit down, flap their arms, and make jet swooshing sounds as if they are flying.

UNIX Air has their passengers bring a piece of the airplane and a box of tools with them to the airport. They gather on the tarmac and argue over what kind of plane they want to build. The passengers split into groups and build several different aircraft, but give them all the same name. Only some passengers actually reach their destinations, but they all

believe they've "arrived."

(Many of these amusing anecdotes can be found on multiple joke sites. But special thanks to *Computer-jokes.net* and *Funny-jokes-portal.com*)

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), 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), and are available from most on-line bookstores.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher



“Steve Jobs will be sorely missed.” by Jack Dunning

It wouldn't be right to ignore the passing of a true legend.

One month ago, Jim Trageser wrote a eulogy for Steve Jobs on the occasion of his retirement. Now with Steve's passing, Jim's words are even more appropriate. Steve has left us too soon.

Most people are lucky if they have one success in their business life. Steve did it over and over again. In fact it seems that he has been taken down mid-stride. I wouldn't be surprised if there aren't some secret projects initiated by Steve still underway in Apple. His legacy will certainly live on for many years, if not decades.

Steve Jobs and his contributions deserve our respect and admiration.

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

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Mac Considerations," "Add Comments to Directory Listings," "Mac Fax," "df, Human Readable"

Mac Considerations

[Regarding Jack Dunning's September 23 article, "Just Buy a Mac—or Not!":]

Thanks for the nice article. I especially appreciated the way you began from the premise that there is no single "right" answer—it always starts with the user's specific needs and priorities.

Here's a new consideration to factor into the "should you buy a Mac or PC" equation: have you adopted the iPhone or iPad deeply into your digital life? These devices work well in any environment, but Mac users unlock an additional level of functionality from many apps—from Apple and others—that are knit tightly together across the platforms. The same might be true of Windows computers and some mobile devices, but not, I believe, to the same extent or as seamlessly.

I continue to look forward to *ComputerEdge* every Friday, and recommend it to others.

-Krasna Svoboda, Carlsbad, CA

You mentioned that a Mac keyboard has a key labeled Delete which does the same as a Windows Backspace key, and that there is no Mac key that works the same as a Windows Delete key. This only applies to the keyboard in your MacBook Pro, and that only partially. Apple's full sized keyboard, which is their default USB keyboard for iMac and Mac Pro, has a Delete key where Windows keyboards have a Backspace key, which works exactly like the Backspace key. There's a second Delete key, where Windows keyboards have the Delete key, that acts exactly like the Windows Delete key—it removes the characters to the right of the cursor.

So much for the full sized Mac keyboards, what about the smaller keyboards on the MacBooks, or the Bluetooth keyboard? They only have the one Delete key, which works like Backspace. However, if you hold the Fn (Function) key while you press the Delete, it will act like the Windows delete—removing the characters to the right of the cursor.

Like yourself, I use both Windows and Mac at home and at work, as well as a few flavors of Linux/Unix. Just wanted to set the record straight on the keyboards. Otherwise, great article.

-Phillip Helfenbein, Alexandria, VA

An important consideration in Mac vs. PC is the software you use or expect to use and the PC wins this hands down. Many software makers don't even make Apple versions of their products available. Although the Mac is more mainstream now, it was not that long ago the many device drivers were not available for the Mac. And in the engineering or scientific communities, 99% of the software is PC based.

-Aaron, San Diego, CA

Jack,

Which to upgrade to? That is the question, but not necessarily the first question to ask. Especially in these tough economic times. So what's the first question? How much will one or the other cost? The Mac price was nearly \$2000, the 23" touchscreen, all in one Gateway was \$655 out the door at Best Buy. Being 72 and now living on Social Security (which makes me feel neither social nor secure), the choice was a given.

-Ron Gosewisch, San Diego

Your article is a very practical approach to the decision making process. However, you left out the fact that Apple products "just work." No more spending hours and hours running down "solutions" to Windows bugs that *don't* work.

I went Apple when Windows Vista came out and I could no longer use programs I could use before; that's not progress. I had wasted most of a precious Saturday failing to get a router to work with my Windows laptop, before bitterly placing it in storage to collect dust.

The Wi-Fi on my MacBook Pro was working minutes after start up, with no effort expended! Instant romance! And *no* blue screen of death, viruses or "safe mode" in the three years of use! I only use Windows now for the few things I can't do on an Apple, such as running a DOS program. Time is the ultimate currency.

-Don Setliff, Del Mar, CA

Add Comments to Directory Listings

[Regarding the September 16 Digital Dave column:]

To me Windows Explorer is lacking far too much to consider. I use PowerDesk (www.avanquest.com/USA/software/powerdesk-pro-138876). You can add comments to your directory listing. You can also look at a file to see what is in it. I find PowerDesk far superior to WE.

-Paul Lee, San Diego, CA

Mac Fax

[Regarding the September 16 Digital Dave column:]

I love OpenOffice.org. It is a free word processing program. The most used feature for me is that there is a button at the top that turns any file into a PDF file. I even turned a JPG file into a PDF and a Word spreadsheet when a roofer sent me a spreadsheet as a contract. So if you want a easy way to convert any file to a PDF, OpenOffice is the way to go. I can then e-mail or fax the file.

-Melba Kalaher, Denver Colorado

df, Human Readable

[Regarding the September 16 Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users column:]

I use `df -h` quite frequently. The `-h` stands for human readable. Instead of blocks it lists bytes, a form I'm more familiar with.

dennis:~\$ df -h

Filesystem	Size	Used	Avail	Use%	Mounted on
/dev/sda6	46G	27G	17G	61%	/
none	1.7G	320K	1.7G	1%	/dev
none	1.7G	132K	1.7G	1%	/dev/shm
none	1.7G	292K	1.7G	1%	/var/run
none	1.7G	0	1.7G	0%	/var/lock
none	1.7G	0	1.7G	0%	/lib/init/rw
/dev/sda5	586G	42G	545G	8%	/media/D

Partitions sda1 through sda4 are not shown because they are not mounted.

-Dennis, San Diego, CA

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