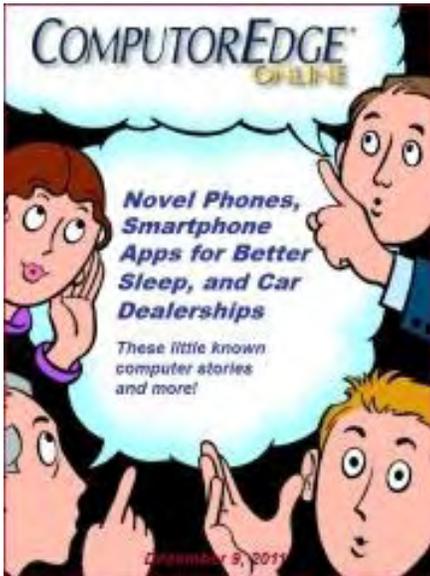


ComputerEdge™ Online — 12/09/11



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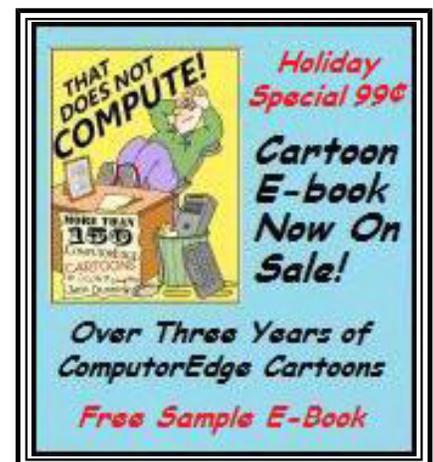
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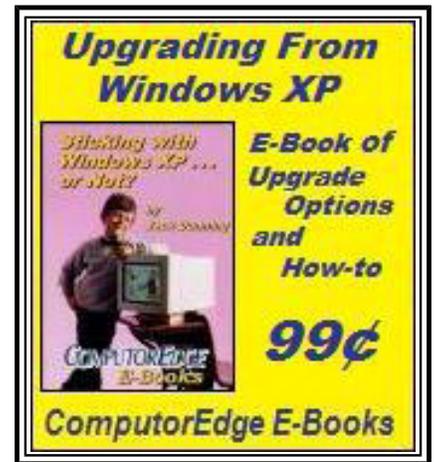
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Digital Dave

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

Backing Up Data; External Drive that accidentally reformatted; Internet Explorer Files from Nowhere; Upgrade to Internet Explorer 9?

Dear Digital Dave,

I have never done backup because most of the stuff I have on my computer is ephemeral. No online banking or bill paying. I am running Windows XP and have a lot of pictures in my picture file. I am thinking of signing up with a service such as Carbonite to backup my PC. Your comments, please?

*Janet Pina
Vista, CA*

Dear Janet,

I don't have a problem with Internet backup services, although I don't use them as my first line of defense. There are a number of reasons not to solely rely on Internet backup which I will address. Everyone who has data that they don't want to lose should have some type of local backup.

I use a number of methods which include saving critical files to other computers, but my primary backup is an external USB hard drive. These drives are inexpensive and there are numerous ways to set up an automatic backup. Windows comes with a backup utility and many USB drives include backup software. (If you're using Windows XP Home Edition, you will need to install the backup utility (support.microsoft.com/kb/302894) from your original system disks.) Traveling with a laptop? If necessary, you can carry the USB hard drive in your pocket.

Now for the reasons that I don't currently use an Internet backup service:

- **Monthly Fee**—I only pay once for a backup drive where as there is a regular fee for a backup service.
- **Security Issue**—Although the backup companies take extraordinary steps to protect your data, there are always holes in any system. I would not want sensitive data in their hands.
- **Internet Access Required**—If you happen to be without Internet service, you can not get to your files.

- **Slow Backup Speeds**—The speed of the Internet restricts how fast you can upload or download backup.
- **Depending Upon an Outside Party**—Employees make mistakes and companies do go out of business. Where are you if this happens to your backup company—and you don't have your own USB backup drive?

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have an external drive and my kids had accidentally click reformat on it and I lost all the old songs and pictures on it. My question now is, if is there anyway I could retrieve all those files.

Please give me some advise.

Thank You Very Much!

*Jake Boleche
San Diego, California*

Dear Jake,

You may be able to recover your files, but it is very important that you don't copy or install any more files to that hard drive before you attempt to recover. When a drive is reformatted the data files are not deleted. The formatting merely resets the directories which keep track of the physical location of the data on the drive.

There is specific software, much of it free, designed for this situation. Most of the programs are used for undoing the accidental deletion of files (not reformatting), which is much more straight forward. (When you initially delete a file, it is only marked for deletion in the directory table. The space the file used is then made available for other data, but the file is not actually deleted. Undeleting removes the deletion mark in the table.) Recovering data from a reformatted drive requires the scanning of the drive surface and identifying recognizable files.

I've seen references to the free program Recuva (www.piriform.com/recuva) as being good for accidentally reformatted drives. If you use this program, you will need to do a "deep scan" for non-deleted files. This operation will actually check the surface of the hard drive looking for intact files. It will not be able to identify the name of the file since that was in the reset disk directory table, but it will tell you the type of file, although it will only recognize the most common types of files. If the file is fragmented (or overwritten), then it will not be able to put it back together. Since the "deep scan" is checking the disk itself, the process can take a good deal of time, depending upon the size of the drive.

I'm sure that there are other products available and would like to hear comments and recommendations from others. You could always send the drive to a data recovery professional, but that will be much more expensive.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I'm a long time follower of your column and have learned many tips, especially one that saved my system. I am running Windows 7 Pro and use Google Chrome as my browser. I have not deleted Internet Explorer from my system, but I never use it. About once a week I use Registry Mechanic to clean my system. Invariably it cleans files from IE even though I never use it. Where are those files coming from?

*Ralph Nebiker
San Diego, CA*

Dear Ralph,

One of the problems with deleting Internet Explorer from Windows computers is that many of the driver files and necessary pieces are used by other programs—in particular ActiveX. If you were able to actually do a complete uninstall of Internet Explorer and all of its components, it could cause problems for other programs which need to use some of those files.

By the same token, the files generated by those other programs could be identified as files from IE even though you never run the browser. There are certain activities, such as Windows Update, which are actually done through IE functions, although you will not see the browser load. In many ways, Internet Explorer is an integral parts of the Windows operating system, although you do not need to use it as a browser.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have a Dell i5 N5010 laptop with Win 7 64-bit, Internet Explorer 8 and would like to know is it safe to upgrade to Internet Explorer 9 now? Everything is running fine and am reluctant to do so. I look forward to your response.

Thank you,

*Glenda
San Marcos, Calif*

Dear Glenda,

Reports are that Internet Explorer 9 is pretty responsive with 32-bit machines, but can drag a little with 64-bit Windows. There were a few issues with Internet Explorer 9 when first released, but most of them seem to be worked out. But remember, Microsoft has always been the most popular target for people trying to exploit security holes.

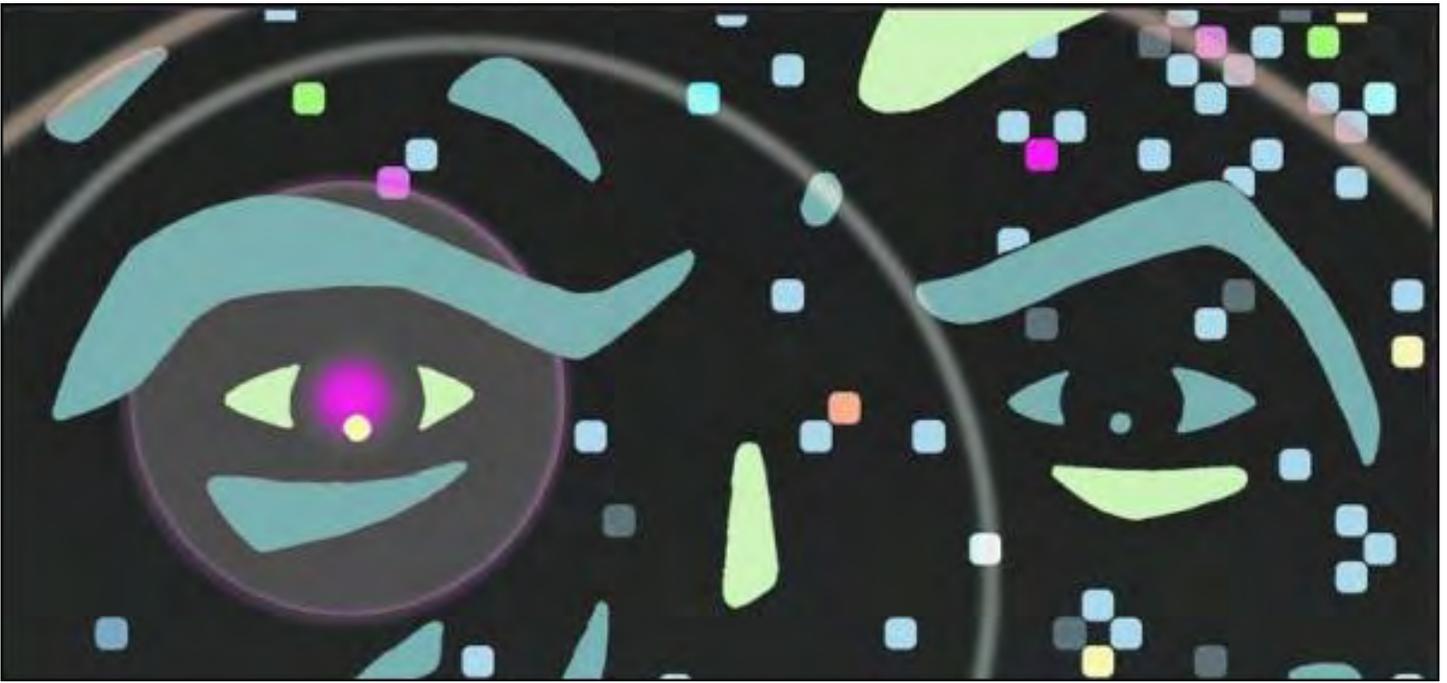
In spite of the fact that you are not likely to have problems, I'm not sure that there is a compelling reason to upgrade to Internet Explorer 9. However, I may not be the best person to ask since I primarily use Google Chrome (www.google.com/chrome). (I've noticed that the new Internet Explorer 9 interface looks a lot more like Chrome now.) I also use Firefox (www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/) for specific purposes and only resort to Internet Explorer when I find issues with specific Web sites.

Internet Explorer 9 fixes some things and breaks some things. I think it fixes more than it breaks. Ultimately, you should upgrade because Internet Explorer 9 will be getting support and patches and Internet Explorer 8 will not. It is not as if Internet Explorer 8 has been left in a perfect and complete state. These questions never seem to come up when there is a new Firefox, Chrome or Safari version.

It's been reported that Internet Explorer 9 actually has more problems with HTML compatibility than its predecessors causing more issue with many Web sites. My recommendation would be to switch to Chrome or Firefox rather than bother with upgrading Internet Explorer. Of course since they are free, you can do all three.

Digital Dave

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Hacker Updates, Revolutions, Live Events...Plus More

“High-Tech News” by Marilyn K. Martin

Start-up, Scoop-up; Paying by Smartphone; Receiving Payments by Smartphone; Global Revolutions Go High-Tech; More Paperless Cockpits; Hacker Update; Electronics Galore; High-Concept Car Showrooms; New and Unusual Smartphone Apps; New Phone Ideas; Better Sleep through Smartphone Apps; Exploding Variety of Apps for Live Events.

Start-up, Scoop-up

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, a Chi-based technology start-up focused on helping companies root out insider trading (www.chicagotribune.com/business/breaking/chi-chicago-startup-compliance11-scooped-up-by-charles-schwab-20111103,0,1660120.story) among their employees, "Compliance11" has been scooped up by Charles Schwab (www.schwab.com).

Financial terms were not disclosed, but this appears to be one attractive start-up that won't be dismantled or jettisoned just for the human talent. According to "Compliance11" CEO, Tad Mitchell, he expects his six year old company to quickly grow, as an attachment to Schwab.

Paying by Smartphone...

According to Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobile_payment), "mobile payments" or "mobile wallets" is a new way of paying for goods or services from your mobile phone. Mobile payment has been embraced in many parts of Europe and Asia, and are even being used in some developing countries for micropayments.



Companies and countries have different rules and regulations. In the U.S., the federal government has still not ironed out mobile payment regulations, and some companies have glaring security issues. So consumers are cautioned to use extra layers of protection if they want to start using their "mobile/virtual



wallet."

An early 2011 article in *CNNMoney* (money.cnn.com/galleries/2011/technology/1101/gallery.mobile_payments/index.html) discusses some of the new "mobile wallet" options of paying with your smartphone. Starbucks has a free downloadable app which, after you enter your Starbucks card number, will display a barcode on your phone that can be scanned at checkout.

...And Receiving Payments by Smartphone

Another free smartphone service called Venmo (venmo.com) is billed as "The Paypal of text message payments." Venmo is especially good for splitting up lunch bills, and paying your share through Venmo to whoever paid the whole bill. It's also good for cashing in/out of poker night.

Venmo insists it takes security very seriously, stating that "our technology...uses advanced encryption algorithms to protect (your) financial information." They add that "any data transmitted from one account holder to another, or to a Web site, are sent over a 256 bit Secure Socket Layer, verified by VeriSign."

And for small businesses, there are now "devices that turn mobile phones into swipe machines." 1st National Processing (www.1nbcard.com/content/epay-swipe-solutions.html) is an entire company offering The Future of Electronic Payment Processing. Other quick swipe applications are the heavily hyped Square, and Intuitpayments which provides swipe devices for smartphones as well as business computers.

Global Revolutions Go High-Tech



"We must call off this protest. Leon just received an iPhone message that Nikolai has invited us over to watch the New Year's Day bowl games on his HDTV."

At a recent Silicon Valley Human Rights Conference (www.contracostatimes.com/business/ci_19322408) the Moscow born CEO of AnchorFree (www.anchorfree.com), David Gorodynsky, touted his company's revolutionary software, Hotspot Shield. Ten million users, in Internet restricted countries around the world, use Hotspot Shield to access blocked Web sites on their laptops and desktops. The company recently released its IS app, with plans for mobile apps soon.

As a free, downloadable app, every Web site visited becomes instantly secure, as the software turns everything into HTTPS. This gives Internet surfers, especially in countries with censorship, access to Web sites they wouldn't otherwise be able to get to. The app strips out everything connected to the

user's identity, and the company neither collects nor keeps any personal data on its users. But they do aggregate data on the domains their users have visited, to place ads for revenue.

According to the *Los Angeles Times* in October 2011 (opinion.latimes.com/opinionla/2011/10/busted-theres-an-app-for-that.html), the Occupy protests have resulted in the development of an "I'm Getting Arrested (market.android.com/details?id=us.quadrant2.arrested)" app for Android. With one click, you can broadcast a custom message to alert your loved ones and your lawyer that you are being arrested. "Free to the other 99%."

More Paperless Cockpits

I wrote in a previous article in this series, about how a U.S. combat pilot in the MidEast uploaded all his cockpit paper maps to his iPad for faster access to ground troops in trouble. Now the commercial airliner, United Airlines, is working on a similar project of iPads preloaded (www.denverpost.com/business/ci_19236016) with aeronautic navigational charts and information that can be updated, appearing in UA cockpits to replace bulky paper manuals.

The move to the iPad is also viewed as a way to cut down on fuel costs, by cutting on board weight. The old UA cockpit flight bag with paper charts and handbooks weighed about 40 pounds, compared to the iPad weighing only 1.5 pounds. After six months of testing to satisfy the Federal Aviation Administration, the UA pilots will be constrained to only use the iPads below 10,000 feet, and never during take-offs and landings because of possible interference.

Hacker Update: Satellite Hacking to Opening Prison Cell Doors

An October article from Bloomberg said that the Chinese Military is suspected in hacker attacks (www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-10-27/chinese-military-suspected-in-hacker-attacks-on-u-s-satellites.html) on U.S. Satellites. These Chinese hackers are accused of interfering with two U. S. government satellites four times in 2007-2008, through a ground station in Norway. The climate/terrain observation satellites had no sensitive data, but the Chinese did successfully demonstrate their ability to hack into U.S. satellites. (As I write this in mid-November, Russia has launched a Mars probe—which is stuck in Earth orbit. This may or may not be a hacker problem, but some military experts have identified Space as "the next battlefield.")

The *Los Angeles Times* reports that federal authorities have arrested and charged seven foreigners (six Estonians, and one Russian still at large) in an elaborate "click-jacking" scheme (latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2011/11/feds-charge-ring-with-click-jacking-scheme-that-hit-4-million-pcs.html). The seven infected millions of computers with "a virus-like program that tricked users' Web browsers into navigating to phony pages stocked with ads, earning the defendants as much as \$14 million." This online fraud involves waiting for infected PC users to click on links to popular sites, then quickly redirects them to similar looking sites loaded with ads that allegedly earned the defendants money each time a user opened that site.

An early November 2011 article in the *Washington Times* says that new research has shown that U.S. prisons with electronic cell doors, could be vulnerable to computer hackers (www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/nov/4/feds-concerned-about-hackers-opening-prison-doors). The fear is that a prison could be hacked, and cell doors opened remotely by exploiting faulty software." (A hacker) could open every cell door, and the system would be telling the control room they are all closed," stated a former CIA operations officer, who had helped develop a

successful cyber attack on a simulated prison computer system.

According to the *ContraCostaTimes* in October a new Stuxnet-type computer worm (www.contracostatimes.com/business/ci_19143325) may already be in the works. The new worm, called Duqu, has been created by programmers who obviously had access to Stuxnet's source code, and has been let loose to gather intelligence data from such entities as industrial control system manufacturers. The expected goal is to use that intelligence data to launch a future attack against a third party, according to Symantec researchers. So far, the Duqu worm has only been found in a handful of organizations in Europe, with a program designed to only last 36 days, then remove itself from the system it infected.

Electronics Galore! Tournament to Toys

In early November, the Florida International University in Miami sponsored their "2011 Americas Venture Capital." They sponsored a 24 hour tournament, dubbed HackDay Miami (www.miamiherald.com/2011/11/10/2495256/hacker-tournament-comes-to-downtown.html), for forty selected inventor programmers to vie for \$10,000 in cash, and the opportunity to present their smartphone app inventions to venture capitalists and investors. In addition, the Miami Downtown Development Authority was offering \$1,500 in cash to the hacker/programmer who developed the best smartphone app to assist people in avoiding traffic jams, by finding alternative routes.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Toys R Us is once again expanding its electronic assortment (latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2011/11/toys-r-us-expands-electronics-assortment.html) ahead of the 2011 Holiday Season. New and expanded offerings include prepaid mobile phones, tablet computers, headphones, iPod docks, digital cameras, MP3 players and Apple accessories. And 450 of its stores are offering layaway on electronics.

High-Concept Car Showrooms—with TBA Cars



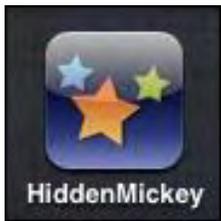
Tesla Motors has just opened its fourth high-concept retail showroom (seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/business/technology/2011/11/2016692809_brier07.html) near Seattle, Washington. Yes, there are a few Tesla electric sedan prototypes on display, which start at \$57,400 and won't enter production until 2012. So the whole idea is to get people into the store to interact with the showroom, and get comfortable and familiar with the product.

So what is pulling in the crowds are the 42-inch touch screen "configurators" to custom design your Tesla, choosing colors and options, like a glass roof. When finished, your customized Tesla is displayed onto a huge 85 inch display screen across the back wall of the store for all to see. There are also iMacs in cubicles with comfortable leather chairs, if visitors want to check their e-mail or play a video game.

So far, hardly anyone has put \$5,000 down on a future Tesla electric sedan, but there are plenty of Tesla t-shirts, travel mugs and baby one pieces with slogans like "Future Tesla Owner" for sale too. Ever hopeful, Tesla also plans to double their service facilities next year, "using heat maps of customer locations to choose sites."

New and Unusual Smartphone Apps

Juicy Development (www.juicydevelopment.com/apps.html) has iPhone, iPad and Android "interactive scanner apps" for catching dispatch calls to law enforcement, fire and EMS—"anytime, anywhere." Users can record and save an interesting event, or alert friends by text to an on going event. It sells through iTunes for \$4.99.



Juicy Development also offers some interesting Disneyland (Anaheim, California) apps. FastTrac creates a "dynamic customized Disneyland ride schedule," so visitors to the theme park can just walk onto popular rides, even during crowded times (\$4.99 through iTunes). Their HiddenMickey app offers a map and stealthy photos taken around the same California theme park (Also \$4.99 through iTunes).

An October article in *NextBigFuture*, reports that IBM Research has teamed with EKZ, the electricity utility provider of the Canton in Switzerland (no Web site in English), on a pilot project (nextbigfuture.com/2011/10/ibm-and-ekz-make-electric-vehicle.html#more). The goal is to make electric vehicle charging more convenient through a smartphone app, which will also provide an integration point between the driver, electric vehicle and the utility provider. This information can "help utility providers better manage power grid loads during peak charging times," which will become more important as more electric vehicles hit the road.

New Phone Ideas—for Work or Play

A cubicle escapee who now works from home, offers advice on outfitting your new home office (seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/living/2016692225_pthomeofficetech05.html) with the most efficient technology and gadgets. Primary is your phone, especially if you make a lot of business calls and don't want sky high phone bills. He recommends an Internet phone system like Skype, which lets you make unlimited calls to both landlines and cellphones in the U.S. for only \$3 a month.



Skype usually requires a headset for the best sound quality, but a Samson Meteor Mic (www.samsontech.com/samson/products/microphones/usb-microphones/meteormic/) or a Calisto 800 Series (www.plantronics.com/us/product/calisto-800) speaker phone, which comes with a wireless microphone that clips to your lapel, are good investments for better Skype phone sound quality. Another helpful suggestion for an efficient mini-office on the go, is a combination laptop and phone, like Motorola Atrix 2 (www.att.com/shop/wireless/devices/motorola-atrrix.jsp?WT.srch=1).

Are you ready for the Next Gen of smartphones? Then you may want to check out HTC phones (www.htc.com/us/). From the Sensation4G, with an 8 megapixel camera and a 1.2Ghz dual core processor, to the Flyer with a digital pen accessory, which instantly saves all your notes and annotations to an Evernote account.

Better Sleep through Smartphone Apps

In our hurry hurry hurry world, combined with stress, worries and jet lag, getting a good night's sleep is harder than ever. But your cell phone can double as a useful sleep device (www.nursingschools.net/blog/2011/04/20-incredible-iphone-apps-for-troubled-sleepers/). There are

multiple apps with soothing music or Nature sounds, most with volume control, timers and alarms.

There are also related apps for self-hypnosis meditation, binaural beat modes and sound generators, or an app to create your own fall asleep mixes. Other sleep apps offer sleep journals and relaxation techniques. The above article has hot links to twenty of their best sleep app choices. And another article, "10 Free iPhone Apps to Help You Sleep Better, Tonight! (www.shape.com/lifestyle/mind-and-body/10-free-iphone-apps-help-you-sleep-better-tonight)", offers different but similar apps for relaxation and better sleep.

Exploding Variety of Apps for Live Events

According to an October 2011 article in *Mobile Sports Report*, FanaticFans (www.mobilesportsreport.com/2011/10/fanatic-fans-an-insiders-look-at-mobile-applications-for-live-events/) is an app to connect with other fans at live events, from sports to concerts, to earn points, cash prizes, and even play games during time outs. This is a still developing market, and FanaticFans so far only applies to college games.

ESPN, CBS Sports and SB Nation, among others, have huge user numbers for mobile sports applications to provide pro sports news and buzz. But apps to "facilitate the live event experience" are still emerging. The Miami Dolphins pro football franchise is a pioneer in the NFL, with a free app (mobileroadie.com/apps/dolphins-app) from Mobile Roadie featuring videos and photo galleries, as well as a live Game Center, breaking news, live blogs, etc.

CrowdOptic (www.fastcompany.com/1758563/profit-off-phish-concert-munchies-with-this-app) is an app aimed at both attendees and businesses near live events, and is considered the "next stage in the event experience." For audiences, there are statistics' and song lyrics' overlays, and snapped photos can be shared through mobile social media. Local businesses can advertise to these audiences, and marketers can data track what specific mini-events prompted the most snapped photos, and where they were sent.

Some professional sports venues are also experimenting with ordering and paying for food from your seat with your smartphone, so you don't have to miss that home run or touchdown standing in line for food. Another app, iConcessionStand (www.iconcessionstand.com), was the Grand Prize winner of the second PayPal X Developer Challenge, and is now in the PayPal Application Showcase. It too is "a new way to shop and pay for products on mobile devices at live events," and can be downloaded from their Web site or iTunes.

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.

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“The Holiday Shopping Season” by Wally Wang

The Holiday Shopping Season; Lotus Jazz and the Future of Windows 8; Amateur Hour is Over; Organizing Story Ideas with Subplot; Browser Data.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Sales of computers often spike near the end of the year because of back-to-school sales along with holiday sales. However, that doesn't seem to be the case this year with Windows PCs (www.cln-online.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2221:pc-sales-down&catid=38:research&Itemid=100) according to Gartner, which says that the "Western Europe PC market declined 11 percent in third quarter of 2011" and that the "Consumer segment showed greatest decline at 18.8 percent."

Instead of buying a Windows PC, many people are likely buying an iPad, a Macintosh, or simply sticking with what they already have. After all, why bother upgrading to a new computer running Windows 7 when Windows 8 will be around in less than a year?

Since so many Windows PC users say they would like an Macintosh if they could afford one, give them an inexpensive Mac mini for the holidays. That way they could either plug their existing keyboard, mouse and monitor into the Mac mini, or they could simply get a device called a KVM (Keyboard/Video/Mouse) switch that lets two or more computers (such as a Mac mini and a PC) share a single keyboard, monitor and mouse. With a KVM switch, you can physically switch to a completely different computer at the touch of a button. A two computer KVM switch will cost approximately \$40 while KVM switches that connect eight or more computers will cost approximately \$300.

Another alternative for Windows PC users who really want a Macintosh is to give them a Mac mini and load it with Parallels or VMware's Fusion. Then connect a USB cable to clone the existing Windows PC as a virtual machine to run on your Macintosh.

This will give you the ability to run your Windows PC within a Mac while also giving you the capability of using the Macintosh as well. With either a KVM switch or a virtual machine, people can make the gradual transition from Windows to Mac at their convenience over time.

You could buy a new Mac mini from the Apple Store, but it's much less expensive to buy a refurbished Mac mini from Apple's online store instead. With refurbished computers, you

basically get a brand new computer with a full warranty, but at a lower price. The drawback is that you can only buy whatever they have in stock at the time.

If the cost of a Mac mini is too high (because you don't think the person is worth that amount), consider buying an older model iPad or refurbished iPad 2 that can work as a mobile companion to an existing Windows PC. Like buying a refurbished Mac mini, buying a refurbished iPad requires purchasing through Apple's online store but you have to buy whatever they have available that day

For an even less expensive gift idea, give an iTunes gift card that lets someone buy music, movies, books, or apps. If someone absolutely hates anything related to Apple even though they may know nothing about their products, consider getting them the book *Why Smart People Do Dumb Things* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0671892584/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0671892584) and see if they catch the hint that irrationality rarely helps anyone, especially the person who insists on making illogical choices purely out of prejudice.

Lotus Jazz and the Future of Windows 8

Back when Lotus Development reigned supreme with their Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet on MS-DOS, they decided to create a Macintosh spreadsheet called Jazz (www.dvorak.org/blog/whatever-happened-to-lotus-jazz/), which flopped because it was too expensive, slow and limited. Lotus then set out to create a version of Lotus 1-2-3 for the Mac. Amazingly, rather than create a product that looked and ran like a regular Macintosh program, they tried making a Macintosh program look and feel like an MS-DOS program.

The theory was that so many people were familiar with Lotus 1-2-3 on MS-DOS so they wanted to make Lotus 1-2-3 on the Mac familiar to those people while ignoring the dedicated Macintosh user. Not surprisingly, Lotus soon abandoned the Macintosh market.

The seeds of failure for Lotus 1-2-3 for the Mac stemmed from the belief that the program had to cater to existing users of older technology rather than adapt to the new rules of the Macintosh. Now consider how these same seeds of failure are seeping into Windows 8.

The main goal of Windows 8 is to provide a touch screen interface on a tablet form while maintaining the familiarity of Windows. The assumption is that people who use computers will want the familiarity of the Windows interface on a tablet, just like the assumption that people who use Lotus 1-2-3 on MS-DOS would want the familiarity of a DOS interface on a Macintosh.

Strangely enough, Microsoft is trying to offer a dramatically different user interface for Windows 8, yet their core audience tends to resist change (which explains why so many people still use Windows XP). By trying to appease people resistant to change, yet also push a new computer interface for tablets, Microsoft hopes that Windows 8 can appeal to diametrically opposite audiences: people who want the familiar Windows interface everywhere vs. people who want an interface designed specifically for touch screens on tablets.

The chance of alienating both audiences is high. Die-hard Windows users won't like the Windows 8 user interface while tablet users want a true tablet operating system optimized for touch

gestures. Anyone think running a copy of Microsoft Office 2010 on a Windows 8 tablet will make for an optimal experience compared to running a dedicated touch screen app like Pages or Keynote on an iPad?

Just as Lotus lost their lead in the spreadsheet market by failing to adapt to the graphical user interface world of Windows and the Macintosh, so Microsoft will likely lose their operating system market lead by failing to adapt to the tablet interface of touch gestures.

The idea of one operating system to run everywhere means it won't run optimally anywhere.

Back in the early days of computers, there were three main rival operating systems for the IBM PC: MS-DOS, CP/M-86 and the UCSD p-System. MS-DOS was designed specifically for the IBM PC. CP/M-86 was an advanced version of CP/M-80 that ran most business applications on older computers like the Kaypro II and the Osborne I. The so called advantage of CP/M-86 was its compatibility with the older generation of computers.

The main advantage of the UCSD p-System was that it could run on different hardware regardless of the processor such as an IBM PC running Intel's 8088 processor or another computer running a Z80 processor that typically ran CP/M-80.

So why did MS-DOS win and CP/M-86 and UCSD p-System fail? Here's one possibility. MS-DOS ran optimally on the IBM PC. UCSD p-System ran slowly while CP/M-86's compatibility advantages meant nothing to the new world of the IBM PC.

Now Microsoft wants Windows 8 to run everywhere on smartphones, tablets and computers while maintaining compatibility with older programs, which is no different than the strategy followed by the UCSD p-System and CP/M-86. Given a choice between an operating system optimized for a specific device (the IBM PC or tablets) vs. an operating system not optimized for a specific device, it seems likely that people will choose the operating system optimized for a specific device simply because it will give a better user experience.

Lotus 1-2-3 was optimized for the IBM PC and MS-DOS. A rival spreadsheet, called Context MBA, ran on the UCSD p-System operating system, which wasn't optimized for any computer. As a result, both the UCSD p-System and Context MBA ran slowly and sluggishly, creating a poor user experience.

Anyone see how Windows 8 is heading down the same poor user experience train wreck that derailed so many other rivals? Not only does Microsoft want to get Windows 8 running on multiple form factors (tablets, smartphones and computers), but they also want Windows 8 to run seamlessly on both Intel/AMD processors and ARM processors. Yet, reports already indicate that Microsoft may be late delivering (www.fastcompany.com/1797987/the-innovative-microsofts-windows-tablets-of-next-year-or-never?partner=gnews) a Windows 8 version that runs on ARM processors.

By trying to create a single program that can run optimally on different processors and multiple form factors simultaneously, Microsoft is attempting the impossible. Will anyone be surprised when Windows 8 runs into a brick wall because of numerous technical problems that stem from so many sources?

For Windows 8 to be a success, Microsoft must get Windows 8 running flawlessly on tablets (running both ARM and Intel/AMD processors), computers and smartphones from day one. If they fail to do this, the tarnished reputation of Windows 8 will likely repeat Vista's mistakes and drive people to avoid Windows 8 just like they avoided Vista. The future of Windows 8 looks complicated and confusing. Since the future of Microsoft depends on Windows just like the future of Lotus Development depended on 1-2-3, Microsoft's fate looks eerily similar to what killed Lotus Development.

Amateur Hour is Over

When Research in Motion first introduced their Playbook tablet, they boasted that "Amateur hour is over," implying that with the Playbook available, the iPad was now obsolete.

Despite offering a smaller tablet that lacked e-mail, Research in Motion tried selling the Playbook at the exact same price as the iPad. Not surprisingly, sales never took off and now the company is dumping Playbooks for a \$485 million dollar loss (www.eweek.com/c/a/Mobile-and-Wireless/RIM-PlayBooks-485-Million-WriteDown-Hints-at-Trouble-453849/).

With the Playbook flopping, Hewlett-Packard's TouchPad all but dead, and Android tablets barely able to crack the market, the so called tablet market is basically an iPad market. With the iPad 3 arriving by spring of next year, today's tablets can't even compete with the original iPad, and now they'll have to struggle against the revised iPad 3.

Why companies ever thought that technical features like a built-in USB port and the ability to run Flash (sort of) could beat the iPad remains a head scratcher. All the technical features in the world mean nothing if they don't do anything useful.

Jeff Johnson wrote a book called *Designing with the Mind in Mind* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/012375030X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=012375030X), which looks at user interface designs from a cognitive psychology point of view. If something is easy to use, it will be more likely to be used. If something is harder to use, it will be less likely to be used.

This is why technical features mean little if the user experience suffers. Comedians Bob Elliot and Ray Goulding (www.bobandray.com) once did a comedy skit about a TV set representative who wanted to demonstrate how to turn on a TV and change channels as a public service. When the host questioned why anyone would need lessons for turning on a TV and changing the channel, the TV set representative claimed that the TV sets that his company sold were more advanced than other TV sets, but required additional training to use.

To turn on this advanced TV set, you needed a second person to lift up one end while you reached underneath to feel for the hidden on/off button. Then after pulling your arm out so the second person could rest the set back on the ground, you then had to insert a special tool into the set so you could twist it to change the channel.

Since the channel numbers were printed in Egyptian hieroglyphics, each TV set came with a translation booklet so you could match up the hieroglyphic with the channel you wanted to watch. Finally after finding the hard to reach on/off button, turning the channel using a special tool, and translating Egyptian hieroglyphics to find the channel you wanted to watch, you could relax by

watching the most advanced TV set in the world.

While Bob and Ray's comedy skit highlighted the absurdity of a TV set that nobody could use, it's no different than the parade of computer products that claim advanced features that wind up being difficult to use, rendering such advanced features pointless. The user experience always comes first. Technical features exist solely to enhance the user experience. Until companies (and people who prefer complexity over usefulness) get this through their head, they'll be no different than Bob and Ray's TV set company representative, selling advanced TV sets that make the simplest tasks nearly impossible to accomplish.

For those who enjoy additional complexity, you can read *ZDNet's* story about how PC manufacturers load computers with bloatware (www.zdnet.com/photos/12-ways-hardware-makers-screw-up-a-perfectly-good-windows-pc/6331812?tag=content;feature-roto) that often degrades the overall user experience of a typical PC. *ZDNet* also offers a similar story about how phone carriers are loading bloatware (www.zdnet.com/blog/hardware/android-crapware-greed-at-the-expense-of-reputation-and-user-experience/14401?tag=content;feature-roto) on to Android phones as well.

ZDNet's Ed Bott said that he had "found a Sony VAIO PC that represented a truly awful PC experience (www.zdnet.com/blog/bott/can-microsoft-cure-pc-makers-of-the-crapware-habit/4231?tag=content;feature-roto). This gorgeous machine was ugly in action: slow to start, sluggish when performing everyday tasks, crash prone, and overloaded with annoying and unwanted software."

A Sony senior executive later admitted the problem, calling his company's PCs "the poster child for negative experiences people had [with trialware]."

If you enjoy wrestling with unnecessary complexity, then have fun untangling the mess that companies deliberately burden you with on a typical Windows PC and Android smartphone. Then ask yourself why you paid money to buy something deliberately designed to frustrate you in the first place. For those who really like to suffer, run around telling everyone how your poor user experience is superior to a rival product that you know nothing about. Be sure to make up plenty of lies to reinforce your point so you'll sound more convincing and that should make you feel better about using a needlessly complicated device.

Organizing Story Ideas with Subplot

A word processor makes writing far faster and easier than a typewriter. However, a word processor simplifies the process of editing, but does little to help organize your thoughts before you start writing. In case you want a writing tool to go along with your word processor, take a look at Subplot (www.afkcreative.com/subplot/index.html).

Subplot basically replaces a stack of index cards that you might use to jot down details of your story so you remember the names and descriptions of certain locations, items, or characters. For example, you don't want to describe a character's 1968 Mustang as blue with a missing passenger seat and then later make the mistake of describing that same car as a 1970 yellow Mustang with a passenger seat. To help you visualize specific items in your story, you can also store pictures of those items. That way you can glance at the picture to remember its details.

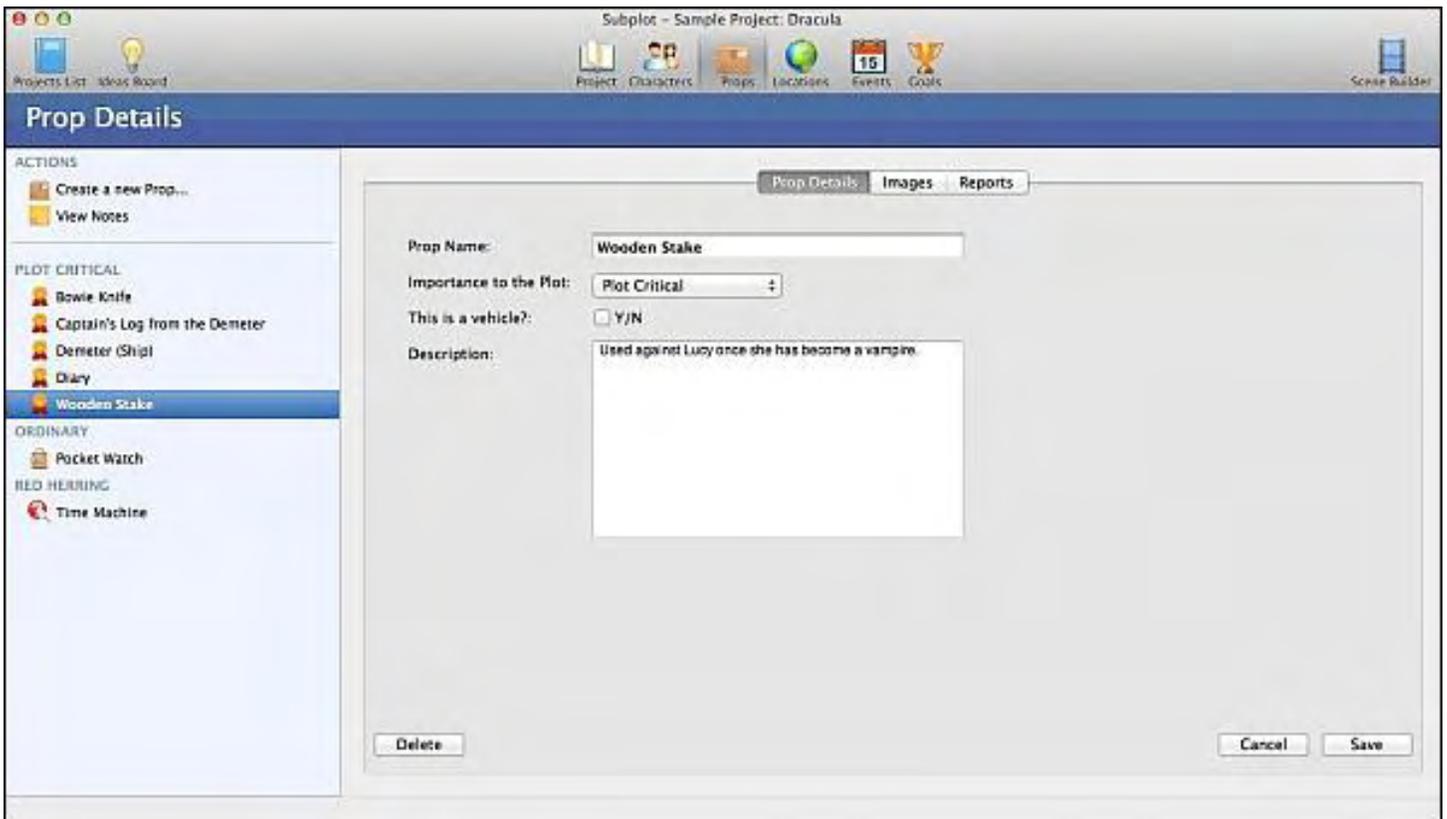


Figure 1. Subplot helps you organize the crucial items in your story.

Besides tracking the physical details of your story, Subplot can also keep track of the different goals your characters may be pursuing. This can insure that you don't forget about a character's goal or suddenly change the character's goal abruptly for no reason.

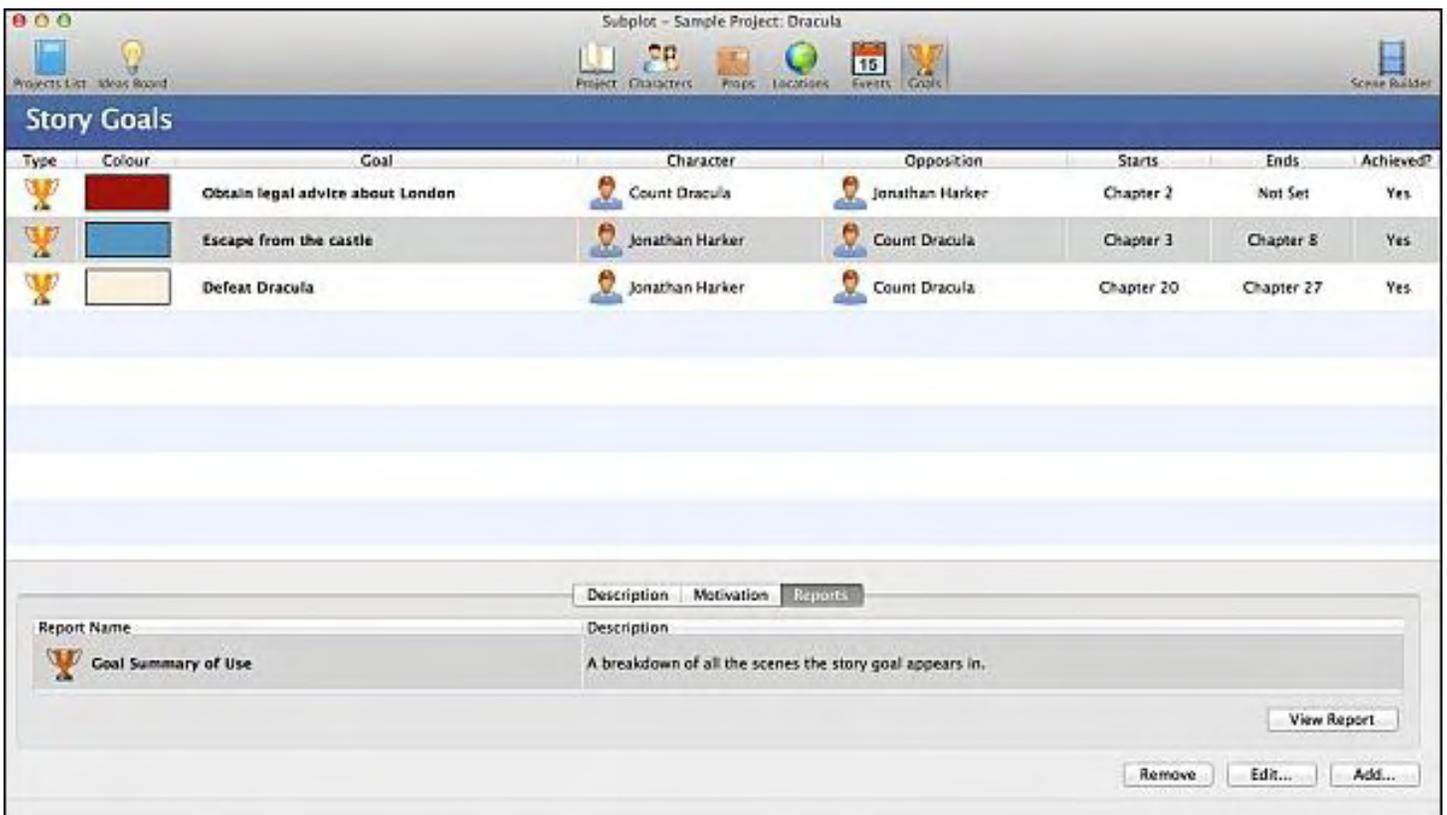


Figure 2. Subplot can track your character goals.

Since writing a novel can be challenging, Subplot lets you schedule a writing goal such as writing 500 words a day. Then as you track your writing, Subplot can show you if you're meeting your goal or not.

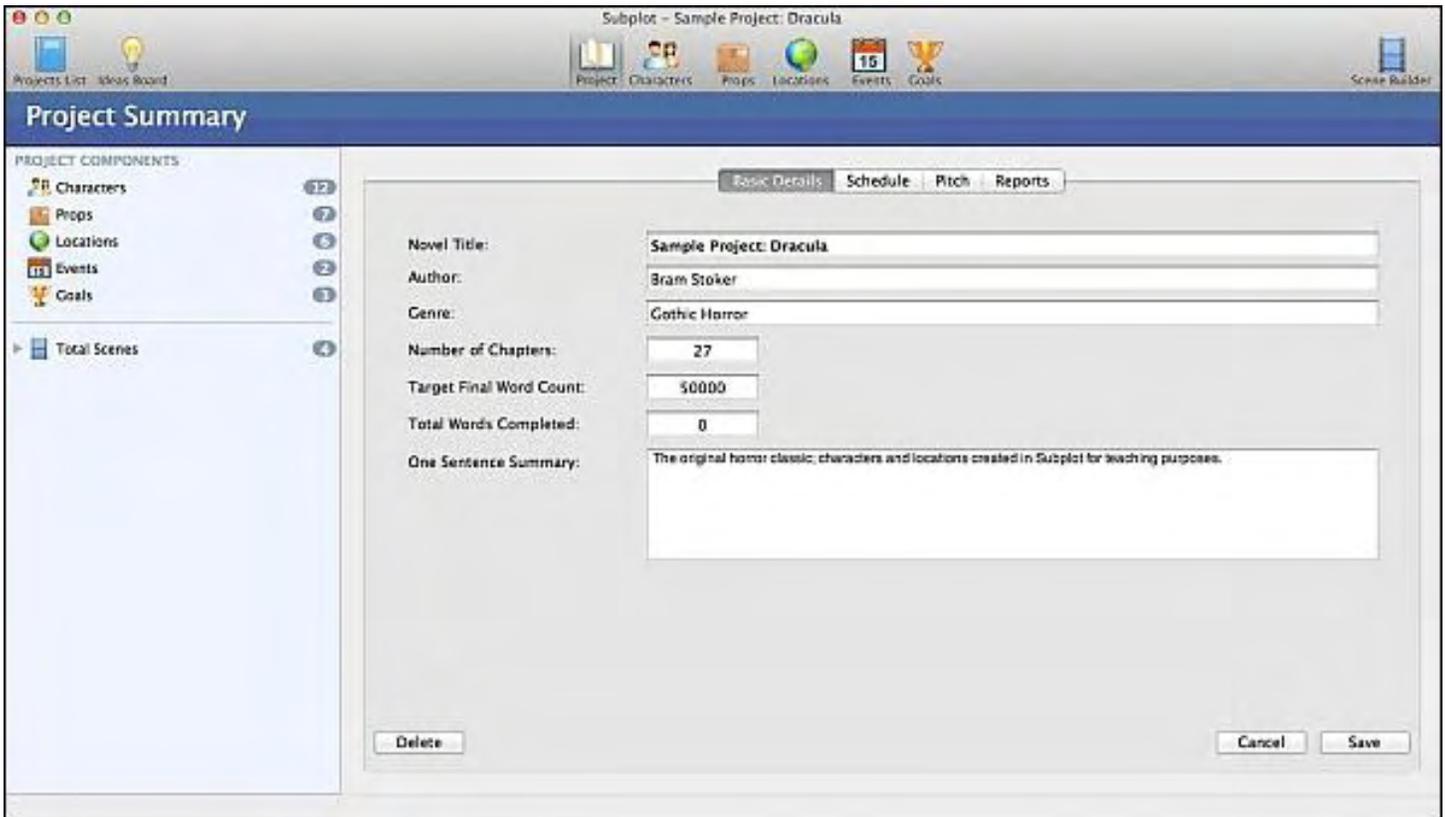


Figure 3. Subplot can help you set and maintain a daily writing schedule.

If you use Subplot, you'll need to use a word processor to do your actual writing while Subplot stores all the details. Instead of carrying a stack of index cards with your story details scribbled on them (and risk losing one or more index cards), you may find Subplot a simpler alternative.

Learning Subplot isn't difficult, but you will need to take time to get familiar with the program and type in all your story details. Subplot can't write your novel for you, but it can replace paper notes. If you like having paper notes, just print your story details from Subplot and you can have printed notes along with your digital files as well.

Subplot is geared strictly for writers such as novelists and screenwriters. Not every writer may need it, but for those who need to stay organized, Subplot can nudge you towards keeping your story details in one place.

* * *

Every time you access a Web site, your browser downloads data. In case you like seeing how much data a particular Web page sends to you while using Safari, chose the Window => Activity command. This will pop up a little window that shows you all the graphics a particular Web page sends. Even for the simplest Web page, you may be astounded at how much junk gets sent.

Address	Status
▼ Technology - Google News	19 items
▶ https://plusone.google.com...lose%2C_open%2C_resizeMe	1 item
data:image/jpeg;base64,/9j...+PJ5wsLABHL4WFhYhD/9k=	3.6 KB
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data:image/jpeg;base64,/9j...MaMxooqQJmNFFFAf/2Q==	2.4 KB
http://clients1.google.com/generate_204	
http://csi.gstatic.com/csi?v...Mg&rt=bol.73,ol.202,aft.396	
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http://i2.ytimg.com/vi/EJUK0Ca8mZE/hqdefault.jpg	19.4 KB
http://news.google.com/ne...=tc&ict=ln&ar=1323102287	333.2 KB
http://news.google.com/news/xhr/mediaStrip?authuser=0	33.9 KB
http://nt0.nqnh.com/news/thn/kHDIxxfErsziPM/1.jpg	2.9 KB

Figure 4. The Activity window can show you how much data your Safari browser receives from a Web page.

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, Lion Edition ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593273908/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593273908/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908)

[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 iPhone ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/159327386X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X)),
My New iPad 2 ([\[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050\]\(http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050\)\),
Steal This Computer Book 4.0 \(\[\\[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\\)\\),
Microsoft Office 2010 for Dummies \\(\\[\\\[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 for Dummies \\\(\\\[\\\\[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\\\\)\\\\),
Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies \\\\(\\\\[\\\\\[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\\\\\)\\\\\),
Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison \\\\\(\\\\\[\\\\\\[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\\\\\\)\\\\\\),
Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon Fisher and Gerald Fisher \\\\\\(\\\\\\[\\\\\\\[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\\\\\\\)\\\\\\\),\\\\\\]\\\\\\(http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-</p>
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How to Live With a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) (www.smashwords.com/books/view/18896),

The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M)

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

[ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)

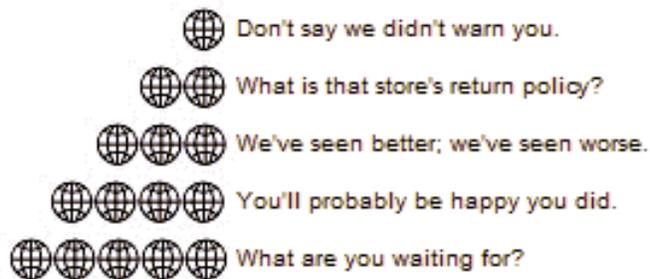
[www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004TMD9K8)

[ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](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/) Wally can be reached at wally@computoredge.com.

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Worldwide & Product news reviews



Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

Browsers Ranked by Performance; Five Easy Steps to Foil 95% (or Higher) of Web & E-mail Threats; Fight the Power; Battlefield 3 for PC (Single Player).

And the Winners Are...

Oliver Baltuch, president of Futuremark Inc. writes in this week with results from his company's latest version of Peacekeeper (*peacekeeper.futuremark.com/*), a free to use browser speed test (Windows PC). According to Baltuch, Peacekeeper has been rebuilt to take advantage of the latest HTML5 standards and can now be used to measure and compare the performance of any browser on any Internet capable device, from desktops and notebooks, to tablets and smartphones:

The new Peacekeeper offers an easy and accurate way to compare browsers on any Internet capable device, from desktops and notebooks, to tablets and smartphones.

Browsers ranked by performance on a Windows PC with an Intel Core i7-2600K processor (higher scores are better):

1. Chrome 15.0.874.121 – Peacekeeper score 4720
2. Opera 11.52 – score 4318
3. Firefox 8.0.1 – score 2554
4. Internet Explorer 9.0 – score 2471
5. Safari 5.0.5 – score 1752

Browsers ranked by performance on a 15" MacBook Pro (early 2011) with an Intel Core i7-2720QM processor (higher scores are better):

1. Chrome 15.0.874.121 – Peacekeeper score 3660
2. Opera 11.52 – score 2747
3. Firefox 8.0.1 – score 2033
4. Safari 5.0.5 – score 1861

For devices where the user cannot change the browser, for example some smartphones and tablets, Peacekeeper offers a straightforward way to compare the performance of competing devices. As a device's browser performance is strongly linked to the power of its CPU, comparing Peacekeeper scores can be an excellent way to evaluate competing devices.

Popular devices ranked by browser performance (higher scores are better):

1. Apple iPad 2 – Peacekeeper score 374
2. Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1 – score 359
3. Acer Iconia W500 – score 343
4. Apple iPhone 4S – score 312
5. Samsung Galaxy S2 – score 255
6. LG Optimus 7 E900 – score 96

Winners and Losers in Two and a Half Years of Browser Wars

- 2.6 million results submitted since Peacekeeper launched in March 2009.
- 3140 different browser versions tested.
- Safari was fastest when Peacekeeper launched. It is now the slowest on Windows and Mac.
- IE has shown the greatest improvement with an average score increase of almost 450%.
- Safari has shown the least improvement, just 160% faster in two years on Windows systems.
- Firefox is most popular with Peacekeeper users, accounting for almost 30% of all results.
- Chrome has held the title of fastest browser since May 2009, but Opera is closing the gap.

Peacekeeper measures browser performance by testing JavaScript functionality. JavaScript is a widely used programming language used in the creation of modern Web sites to provide features such as animation, navigation, forms and other common requirements. By measuring a browser's ability to handle commonly used JavaScript functions Peacekeeper can evaluate its performance. Peacekeeper scores are not influenced by Internet connection speed or latency.

Peacekeeper takes five minutes to run during which time it evaluates the browser's performance with a rendering test, WebGL test, HTML5 video test, HTML5 canvas test, HTML5 Web worker test, data manipulation tests, DOM operations test and text parsing tests.

Five Easy Steps to Foil 95% (or Higher) of Web & E-mail Threats

Michael Sutton, VP Security Research at Zscaler ThreatLabZ (research.zscaler.com/), the research arm of cloud security company, Zscaler, has this information for us about making online purchases this holiday season:

Web security threats are as prevalent as ever. Constantly changing and growing, enterprise users are often unaware of the dangers they face by performing simple tasks such as Web searches, shopping online and visiting social media sites. Information Security experts from Sunnyvale, CA's Zscaler ThreatLabZ, and Cupertino, CA's Voltage Security have provided tips and tricks on how consumers can stay safe when shopping online.

1. *Beware of everything and everybody!* Be cautious, vigilant and wary about everything—your browser search results, what you click on every step of the way, what information you provide online, who's trying to communicate with you on social networks, what e-mails you open or even preview, all manner of forwarded (FW:) e-mails, or messages and links purportedly coming from friends or trusted Web sites. Make sure sites are SSL enabled before sharing any personal information, and don't click on links in e-mails. People, Web sites and links aren't always what they seem. An education about "social engineering" is something every PC and Mac owner should get to make a big dent in halting cyber crime.
2. *Update & patch!* Make sure your browser is the most up to date version; run Windows, Mac and software updates religiously. Most threats leverage vulnerabilities could have been avoided through simple patching, so updating will also protect you from emerging threats.
3. *Block bad content!* Businesses should deploy an automated approach to protect against Web threats. Web content filtering can be delivered through the cloud to enforce policies both locally and for mobile employees at all times. Malicious content can be anywhere on a Web page, so it's important to scan entire Web pages, not just URLs.
4. *Secure mobile devices!* All employees, regardless of device or location should be equally protected. Is an employee working at a coffee shop on an iPad as secure as an employee working on a laptop in the office?
5. *Get security everywhere!* Traditional antivirus, anti-spyware and other security software will only take you part of the way towards protecting enterprise users and corporate information assets. Cloud security provides the fastest delivery of up to date protection and best overall security. Learn more <http://zscaler.com/whycloud.html>. Remember: A single infected user can bring down an entire network.

The holidays are not only big days for retailers, they're big days for hackers and criminals taking advantage of online shoppers by directing them to Web sites which can drop malware and Trojans onto systems—the result being stolen cardholder data. Similarly, fake merchant sites are often set up to lure customers to enter card details. Astute shoppers can avoid these issues by taking the following steps:

1. *Don't open suspicious e-mails.* Prevent yourself from becoming a victim of key loggers, malware and phishers.
2. *Never send unencrypted credit or debit card data in an e-mail.* Always encrypt your e-mail if it's necessary to do this.
3. *Ensure your system is free of malware and viruses by being up to date with antivirus and spyware scans.*

4. *Become familiar with your online merchant.* Make sure they have a valid SSL Web server certificate from a reputable supplier. If SSL is not enabled, don't enter card details, as your data can be intercepted by hackers.

5. *Don't enter card details if you are suspicious.*

Fight the Power!

Power strips and surge protectors have certainly come a long way since the days when one good blast of current would wipe out the delicate MOVs of yore. Today's power protection devices are more durable and much, much, er...more smarter.

When it comes to modern electronic devices, be it computers, DVD players, TV, and chargers of all sorts, so-called "phantom" or "vampire" power is the culprit. Devices in your home or office continue to use power even when you turn out the lights and shut the door.



Cableorganizer.com (cableorganizer.com/smart-strip) offers several Smart Strip Power Saving Surge Protectors, each designed to save you both power and money. The key component of each strip is a built-in circuit called auto-sensing technology by automatically cutting the power to devices plugged into the strip when not in use. The strip is even smart enough to allow you to predetermine which devices you want to continue to receive full power even when others are shut off. The company estimates that, on average, each Smart Strip saves homes 260 watts or more per hour—more than the cost of one of these babies in less than one year.

Models differ by features (number of outlets, level of protection, modem/coaxial surge protection,

etc.) and range in price from about \$25 to \$35 street. All feature the aforementioned auto-switching technology.



Battlefield 3 for PC (Single Player)

Were I completely honest, I would have to admit that I wished the new crop of first person shooters currently popping up on holiday shelves (Modern Warfare 3, Battlefield 3, et al.) allowed players considerably greater freedom of movement and choice.

But I guess I'll just have to settle for spectacular locales, mind-blowing graphics and sound, and a pretty darned good story—even if that story sometimes does feel like you're (I'm sure you'll immediately recognize the feeling) living in a predetermined reality adherent to the precepts of universal causation and relational compatibilism. Hmm...these kinds of games are clearly starting to get to me. Might have to switch to more open ended role playing games like Skyrim or The Witcher 2, or strategy games like Anno 2070.



Back to Battlefield 3: Sure, you might sometimes feel like you're on a track, but, wow, what a ride. You'll fly fighter jets, dodge helicopters, and drive tanks through city streets, sewers, subways, office buildings and open landscapes in locations ranging from Paris, to Tehran, to New York, to Wake Island and more.

As noted, the plot is not particularly notable, it even borrows the device of unfolding events as flashbacks during an interrogation ala Call of Duty: Black Ops. And it borrows another device, a nuclear one, to propel the story forward ala...uh, about 42 other games. Still, the plot did keep my

attention through some pretty nifty twists and turns. The proof: I found myself wanting to play it when I had much more important and normally very engaging things I needed to be doing.



The basic plot, basically: Set in the near future, your character, Sgt Blackburn, leads his squad on a mission to find and safely disarm two suitcase nuclear bombs, all while chasing a truly despicable terrorist named Al-Bashir.

So, in conclusion, we've been here before...but they've really done something with the place.

Those of you who are into multiplayer, feel free to add your impressions by posting below.

Battlefield 3 (www.battlefield.com/battlefield3), for PC and all major consoles, about \$60.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Learn more at www.charlescarr.com.

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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Annoying Chrome? Firefox too!" "Chkdsk in XP Pro," "Directed to AI in Editor Letters," "Targus Truss Case"

Annoying Chrome? Firefox too!

[Regarding the November 18 Digital Dave column:]

I did have IE and Firefox on my computer, but a few weeks ago when using IE and trying to open a random Internet page, Firefox would interrupt my browsing by trying to get me to switch over to Firefox to view that page! That happened a few times and Firefox was deleted off my computer. Call it piracy or whatever but I no longer consider Firefox. Or could it be some other malicious agent, trying to get me to click on that option?? I don't know but I still deleted Firefox.

-Jerry Hughes, San Diego

There is a simple way to disable most ads like the one for Google Chrome: Disable JavaScript! You can leave it off most of the time and most ads disappear (and Web pages load faster!). Then just enable it when necessary for those Web sites too dumb to get by without JavaScript.

Even better, I use a Firefox add-on called Noscript with my Seamonkey browser (a more customizable Firefox variant). It allows me to easily allow JavaScript for a specific domain, either permanently or temporarily, while still blocking outside domains (where the ads come from).

-Jeff, Colorado Springs, CO

While it is true that disabling JavaScript will stop many functions on some Web page, as I recall, the Google ad did not use JavaScript. It was embedded HTML, the basic language of the Web. Therefore, the only way to avoid the message would be to avoid loading Google at www.google.com.

-Digital Dave

Chkdsk in XP Pro

[Regarding the November 25 Digital Dave column:]

Bob said "so now I press <Enter> to stop the process." In my experience Check Disk does not need to be stopped when it's finished. If stopped, it will restart again on the next boot.

Cheers,

-Phil Martin, Pacific Beach

Directed to AI in Editor Letters

[Regarding the November 18 Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column:]

Let's take your points one at a time:

"Do you think that if Apple had 95% of the (personal) PC market that they would still be 'virus' free? So, you are saying that the Apple OS is impenetrable? Bullet-proof? I dare you to put that challenge out there publicly."

The iPad has a major share of the tablet market and is largely 'virus' free. Linux runs a large number of Web servers and has far fewer viruses than Windows, despite its large share of the server market. So a large market share doesn't always translate into a large number of malware.

Now did I ever say that Apple's OS is impenetrable? No OS is impenetrable just like no secret code is ever impenetrable. Why even make this obviously false claim and try to act as if this was a conclusion that I reached as a tactic to discredit anything I may say?

"Turn loose that same army on the Apple OS and we will see just how full of holes the (Apple) OS is."

As I said before, every OS has holes. The problem is that thousands of malware is striking Windows right now while only a handful of malware is even targeting Mac OS X. So do you want to use the OS most targeted by malware right now or one that isn't? A city like Baghdad is no different than a city like Chicago if Chicago also had roadside bombs, snipers and death squads roaming the streets. Given a choice between using Windows and constantly worrying about malware or Mac OS and not constantly worrying about malware, the Mac is simply safer just as Chicago is safer than Baghdad.

"Also, you said it yourself with regard to viruses; they are obsolete malware technology. So with that, you cannot accurately state that PCs would be affected either."

Yes, the virus threat on PCs is nearly gone. No technology can protect against user error and with more malware attacking Windows, there's more chance of getting attacked by using Windows.

"However, he has several friends that use Apple PCs and they constantly complain about the tech support (costs) and difficulty with "variety" in programs and hardware. Especially upgrades."

Are these problems something inherent in Apple products or just their unfamiliarity with computers in general? If there are inherent problems with Apple products, can you provide any proof?

"Almost all of the Apple users that I have come into contact with are what I call limited users; they only work with one or two select applications."

Really? So you concluded that most Apple users just use one or two programs? Most computer users in general at least use a word processor, browser and e-mail and maybe a game or two.

"Most Apple PC users are not the type to explore and try out many other applications."

You have proof of this?

"However, when the Apple (PCs) break (and they will!) the reality sets in; pay an exorbitant repair bill or trade it in on another Apple."

What proof do you have that you must pay an exorbitant bill to fix an Apple product?

"Besides, it is common knowledge about the attitude of Apple developers..."

If it's common knowledge, can you provide evidence to back up this claim?

"There aren't enough applications out there (for the Apple PC) to allow this."

With a virtual machine program, Macs can run Windows if necessary along with Mac software, but Windows PCs cannot run Mac software in a virtual machine.

"Oh, and most of these Apple users were (and are) very careless and ignorant users."

Most computer users are careless and ignorant or else so many people wouldn't fall for Trojan horses, dating scams, financial scams, etc. This has nothing to do with Apple users in particular.

"Frankly, I would love to buy an Apple PC. They look beautiful. But since all I would do with it is surf the Internet and read e-mail, I may as well save myself 2k dollars..."

Buy a refurbished Mac mini from the Apple Web site and it will cost less.

-Wally Wang

Targus Truss Case

[Regarding the November 11 Worldwide News & Product Reviews column:]

It's brown leather with an orange interior according to your text and the product's Web site. So what is the first picture showing a fuzzy blue case?

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego

Yea, that is pretty strange. You can see the orange (correctly) in the other picture, but not the one with the case closed. That's the way it looks.

Thanks,

-Chas Carr, San Diego

ComputerEdge always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the specific article/column at ComputerEdge.com (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?src=ebook). Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later

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ComputorEdge Magazine, P.O. Box 83086, San Diego, CA 92138. (858) 573-0315