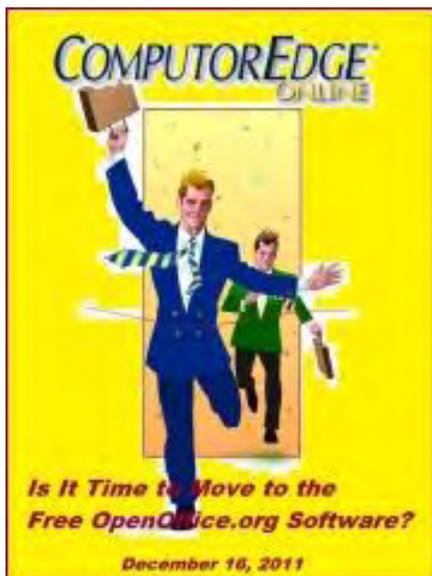


ComputerEdge™ Online — 12/16/11



This issue: Is It Time to Move to OpenOffice.org?

The free OpenOffice.org suite of productivity software may have everything that you need.

Table of Contents:

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

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.
Images Not Showing in E-mails; Netflix and the US Postal Service; Text from HTML.

[OpenOffice.org Free Productivity Software](#) by Rob Spahitz

OpenOffice.org is the free competition for Microsoft Office
Is OpenOffice.org an alternative to Microsoft Office? Rob asks this question while exploring word processing, spreadsheets, database, presentation and drawing in this free suite of productivity software in a new e-book from his previous columns.

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

PC World Satisfaction Survey
PC World Satisfaction Survey; AutoDesk's SketchBook App; The Apple Store in Grand Central Station; More Holiday Gift Ideas; Dead Technology; Free Yellow Submarine E-Book; The Finder Window.

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

Life as a Programmer
Marilyn shares some amusing anecdotes and jokes about life as a programmer.

DEPARTMENTS:



(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)

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

ComputerEdge Staff

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

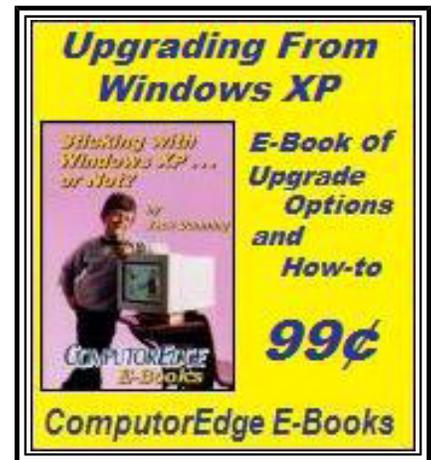
"Cloud Computing," "'USB Boot Hangs...' Comments," "Bing Problem," "Firefox Freezes for 30 seconds," "Business Economics"



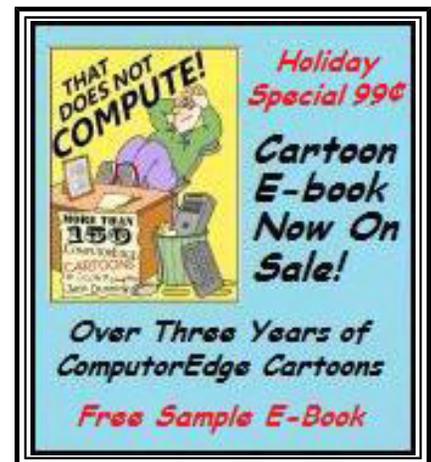
(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)

Send mail to ceeditor@computoredge.com with questions about editorial content.

Send mail to cwebmaster@computoredge.com with questions or comments about this Web site.

Copyright © 1997-2011 The Byte Buyer, Inc.

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

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Digital Dave

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

Images Not Showing in E-mails; Netflix and the US Postal Service; Text from HTML.

Dear Digital Dave,

Recently none of the Outlook 2010 e-mails that I receive from retailers display the images, only text. The e-mails do not provide an option to open the pictures nor can I find an option within Outlook to allow displaying pictures by default. I haven't made any changes in Outlook that would suddenly cause this.

*Poz
San Diego, CA*

Dear Poz,

It seems that this is a fairly common problem for Microsoft Office 2010. However, the causes are so varied that it can be difficult to find the proper solution. Since I don't use Outlook I will cover those things that will commonly cause images not to appear in e-mails.

Since this is new to you (no recent update or setting changed), it is most likely some kind of corruption to your Outlook files. Most commonly it is mentioned that the profile files are damaged. The procedure to fix this would be to create a new profile. Another possible fix would be to uninstall and reinstall Outlook. (Make sure that you backup your Address Book, messages and other data before doing this.)

Other reasons that images won't display in e-mail:

The e-mail program is set to "Text only." This is usually done as a security function to protect against Spam. In the "Text only" mode, HTML code will not be interpreted (required to display images). The security of minimal from the "Text only" setting. HTML is the language of the Web and offers very little risk when read in e-mail.

E-mail programs often have "Image Blockers" which prevent graphics from being downloaded from the Web. Spammers can obtain some data when an image is downloaded, but the actual risk from an image downloading is small. However, there should be a way to display the image with the click of a link—which you apparently are not getting.

Third party ad blocking software can also cause this problem since these programs tend to regard any images as ads. These programs will usually block images both in the e-mail programs and Web browsers.

Another possibility is this particular Outlook setting which may not be easily found:

1. Click on the new "File" tab.
2. Click on "Options."
3. Click on "Trust Center."
4. Click on "Trust Center Settings."
5. Uncheck the "Don't download pictures automatically in HTML e-mail messages or RSS items" check box.
6. Click the "Okay" button.
7. Exit Outlook 2010.

You may need to restart Windows after this procedure.

If anyone has had more specific experience with this problem, please let us know.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

Now that it appears the US Postal Service will be cutting back on delivery and speed of service, I'm afraid that it will take longer to get my Netflix DVDs. Is there something that Netflix will do to deal the the problem?

*Art
Chula Vista, CA*

Dear Art,

The U.S. Postal Service has plans to eliminate Saturday delivery and close many of the smaller post offices, as well as cut the number of sorting centers in half. This is a very real problem for Netflix and anyone who receives DVDs from Netflix. While the price Netflix charges probably will not change, the cost for each DVD rental will effectively double.

If a person is on the one-DVD-at-a-time plan, they can usually get two DVDs a week. Currently if all goes well, it takes three days to receive, watch and return a DVD. Day one (Monday) you receive your DVD and watch it that night. Day two (Tuesday) you return it in the mail. Day three (Wednesday) Netflix receives the old DVD and puts a new one in the mail. Day four (Thursday) you receive the new DVD and watch it in the evening. Day five (Friday) you send it back. Day six (Saturday) Netflix receives it and send a new DVD which will not be delivered before Monday since there is no mail on Sunday.

Under the current postal system you can get two DVDs per week—if there is no holiday without mail service. Under the new system, unless Netflix can set up a priority deal with the Postal Service, the lack of Saturday service will cause at least one day of slippage in the delivery rate each week. But the reduction in sorting stations is expected to cause an additional one day delay in both sending and receiving. This would amount to getting only one DVD per week as follows:

Day one (Monday) you receive your DVD and watch it that night. Day two (Tuesday) you return it in the mail. Day four (Thursday since it is expected to take at least two days) Netflix receives the old DVD and puts a new one in the mail. Day six (after two days, oops, it's Saturday, no mail delivery) you receive the new DVD on Monday and watch it in the evening. That's one DVD per week and half the value on your monthly subscription.

This is a worst case scenario for Netflix. Netflix currently presorts the DVD mailers and sends them directly to the appropriate processing center. This could keep the turn around to one day. However, it is not so clear that the same will happen when a DVD is returned to Netflix. It depends upon whether the Postal Service will give Netflix priority service. In any case, the lack of Saturday delivery will have an impact.

These changes by the Post Office will certainly have an impact on any business which depends upon the US Mail. It may be an opportunity for UPS or Federal Express.

In the long term Netflix is focusing more and more on streaming content to deal with the problem. With the exception of limited availability of streaming movies, there is no longer any reason to physically mail this data back and forth. As DVD sales continue to drop, the content owners just have to decide they want to get on board and make some money instead of no money from an outdated business model.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I save news articles into my Information directory as text since I don't need the ads or the site's sidebars. Firefox can save as Text, but Google Chrome cannot, and even Firefox's Save As Text has some embedded HTML.

The Windows "Generic/Text Only" text printer driver isn't really a solution because it keeps the original page format so inserts are in the middle of paragraphs and margins are shrunk, plus for some reason the output is different with every browser (Chrome, Firefox, IE, Opera, Safari). Copying and pasting is the fastest way I know of for a "clean" text copy that can be immediately used in e-mail or a word processor, but have you found a better way (or maybe an "HTML Stripper" plug-in that works on the received HTML document rather than what the browser has rendered)?

*Peter
Los Angeles*

Dear Peter,

I took a shot at this problem with a text copying tip that I offered a couple of week ago. If you check the comments at the bottom of the column you will find that people are dealing with this issue in a number of ways. The problem seems to be (as you point out) that not all software has a way to paste (or copy) text only. Even when the feature is present, it may not work as advertised.

It seems that PureText (www.stevemiller.net/puretext/) recommended by Sol may be the best bet for your situation. As a last resort, you can always use my tip and copy the words to Notepad, then reselect it and recopy it to the desired location.

If this is about e-mailing the entire article to somebody, I recommend e-mailing the link. Then the original Web site

gets the credit and the traffic. Just a point of net etiquette.

Digital Dave

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



OpenOffice.org Free Productivity Software

“OpenOffice.org is the free competition for Microsoft Office” by Rob Spahitz

Is OpenOffice.org an alternative to Microsoft Office? Rob asks this question while exploring word processing, spreadsheets, database, presentation and drawing in this free suite of productivity software in a new e-book from his previous columns.

Anyone who uses a computer to do anything productive is likely to eventually need some productivity tools.

Productivity tools are often consider those tools that let you write letters, manage e-mails, perform calculations, manage collections, make pictures or prepare presentations.



“I know that it is out in paperback, but I’m going to wait for the e-book.”

Most people have probably heard of Microsoft's productivity suite: Microsoft Office. This suite of products contains various combinations of tools to help with your productivity, depending on which version you get. The latest collection includes the following:

- Microsoft Word—a word processor used to write letters and other documents.
- Microsoft Excel—an electronic spreadsheet tool for performing calculations, managing inventory, plotting charts and a variety of other things related to numbers.
- Microsoft Outlook—a tool for managing messages and time, including pieces for e-mail, a calendar, a contacts collection and a task manager.
- Microsoft PowerPoint—a tool for organizing

“I know that it is out in paperback,
but I’m going to wait for the e-book.”

pages that collectively can be displayed in a slide show.

- Microsoft Access—a database manager for handling collections, including tools to assist with data entry and reports of that data.
- ...and a few other tools such as Publisher and OneNote.

Over the years, Microsoft spent a lot of time and effort to make these very useful products, available on both the Windows operating system and Macintosh platforms. And, of course, they like to get paid for their efforts. In exchange for their products, they ask for several hundred dollars for any one of these products, or several hundred dollars more for various collections of these.

I previously reported on the offering for Microsoft Office 2010 edition and felt that the pricing structure was rather steep for upgrading from previous versions to the newest version. I also felt that the overall cost of any one product (\$250) was a bit high for the average consumer who simply wanted to write a letter or store a collection of names and addresses—especially since products like Microsoft Windows includes a basic text entry tool called Notepad for writing letters or storing names and addresses, and a calculator (although you can't store the results). And I also felt that the combinations offered in their suite (e.g. Word, Excel, Outlook and OneNote) didn't offer the right combination of things that people would like in order to do all the productivity tasks that may be needed. This meant that you either had to buy multiple versions of the product to get the individual pieces (and, of course paying twice for the same products at \$400-\$500 each), or buy the "ultimate" version that included everything (with things you probably didn't need, but still paying yet a higher price of about \$1000).

That's too bad. Microsoft's pricing led me to look at alternative productivity software available on the market.

As most of you know, there are other Internet Web page browsers on the market besides Microsoft's Internet Explorer. Probably the most widely known competitor these days is a product called Firefox. Oddly enough, this product is not created or maintained by a company in the normal sense. Basically, a collection of people from around the world got together and decided to create their own version of a Web browser. Part of the rules they set up is that nobody can own or sell the product, but anyone can make modifications to the computer code needed to create the product (at least within some managed criteria). This and other similar ventures are collectively called the Open Source initiative. The idea is that the original computer code (the "Source Code") is put out in a way that it is "Open" to everyone who wants to explore it. By the way, would the average consumer want to look at the Source Code? Not really! It's like trying to learn about how a combustion engine works when all you want is to drive a car. Some people will be interested, but most won't.

This same collaborative effort was applied to various productivity tool and collected together into a product called OpenOffice.org (technically the title is now known as Apache OpenOffice.org (*openoffice.org*)).

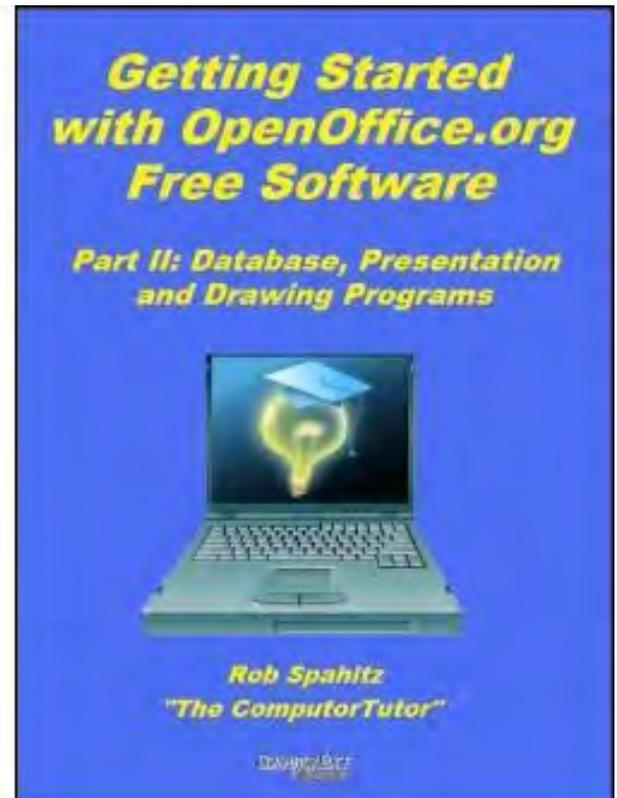
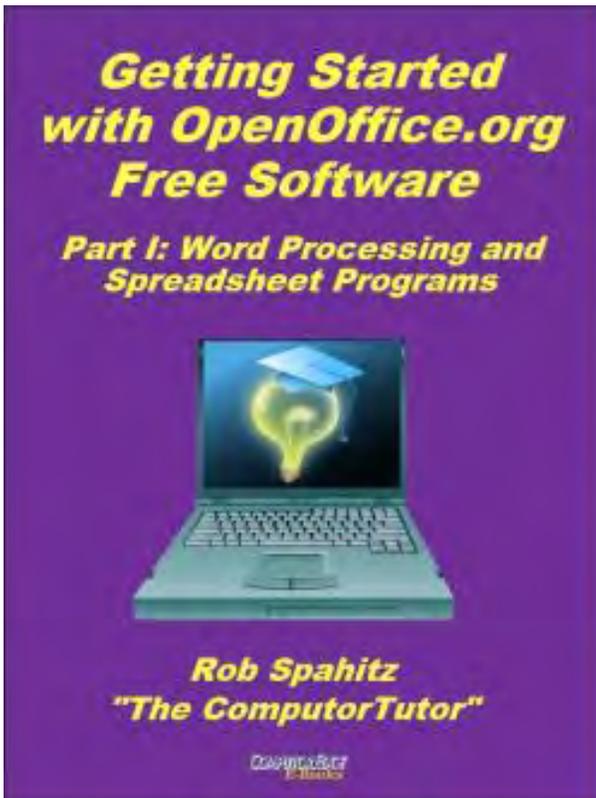
The OpenOffice.org product, as with other Open Source products is free of cost. It can be found at the OpenOffice.org Web site where you can download the latest version.

One note about this product: the creators have done a wonderful job at replicating many of the features and feel of Microsoft Office 2003 edition. The files from Office can typically be imported into OpenOffice.org or exported from OpenOffice.org into Microsoft Office format.

However, with Microsoft Office 2007 edition, the native (built-in) file formats were changed so you may not be able to load them into OpenOffice.org without a convert (which may be in the product by now) but you can always ask a friend

to save the file in Microsoft Office in the 2003 format. This is not a problem if you try to load an OpenOffice.org file in Microsoft Office since it can read the 2003 format and even the Open Document Format (ODF) file type that is commonly used by Open Source documents such as the OpenOffice.org products.

I wrote a series of articles for *ComputerEdge* which both compared OpenOffice.org to Microsoft Office and introduced how to use OpenOffice.org. You can find these articles which include numerous screen shots on *ComputerEdge*, but for more convenience they have been compiled into e-books (www.computoredgebooks.com/OpenOfficeorg-Free-Productivity-Software_c7.htm) in both iPad, NOOK, etc. (EPUB) and Amazon Kindle (MOBI) format.



The "OpenOffice.org Getting Started" guide is broken into two parts as separate e-books. In the first e-book, *Getting Started with OpenOffice.org Free Software Suite: Word Processing and Spreadsheet (Part I)*, you will find introductory information and comparisons with Microsoft Office covering the following products offered in the OpenOffice suite:

- Writer—a word processor comparable to Microsoft Word.
- Calc—a spreadsheet comparable to Microsoft Excel.

In the companion OpenOffice.org e-book, *Getting Started with OpenOffice.org Software Suite: Database, Presentation and Drawing (Part II)*, you will find introductory information and comparisons with Microsoft Office covering the following products offered in the OpenOffice suite:

- Base—a database tool comparable to Microsoft Access.
- Impress—a presentation tool comparable to Microsoft PowerPoint.

- Draw—a tool useful for drawing images, not found in the Microsoft Office product.

Note: The primary piece missing from OpenOffice.org is a product comparable to Microsoft Outlook for e-mail. For an Open Source product comparable to Outlook try Mozilla Thunderbird (www.mozilla.org/en-US/thunderbird/).

Both e-books are available at ComputerEdge E-Books (www.computoredgebooks.com/OpenOfficeorg-Free-Productivity-Software_c7.htm).

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

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



[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“PC World Satisfaction Survey” by Wally Wang

PC World Satisfaction Survey; AutoDesk's SketchBook App; The Apple Store in Grand Central Station; More Holiday Gift Ideas; Dead Technology; Free Yellow Submarine E-Book; The Finder Window.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

One of the many strange twists of logic among anti-Apple critics lies in their insistence that Windows PCs provide greater choice for consumers. Yet when one of those choices might be a Macintosh, suddenly these so-called technology experts recommend anything but Apple.

The truth is that for some people a Macintosh would be a better choice, while for others a Windows PC might be a better choice. It all depends on what that person needs and wants. Avoiding the Macintosh without even considering its advantages means eliminating one possible choice, and that goes against the very freedom of choice that anti-Apple critics promote.

At one time, PC oriented magazines like PC World completely ignored the Macintosh. Nowadays, they often cover the Macintosh and other Apple products because those are the products leading their categories. In the latest PC World satisfaction survey (www.pcworld.com/article/244481/desktop_pc_reliability_and_satisfaction_dell_and_hp_home_pcs_get_poor_grades.html), both Dell and Hewlett-Packard got low marks for durability and product support while Apple got top marks for reliability, service and features.

Given the choice between spending a little more and getting a computer with the highest reliability, service and features, or spending a little less and getting a lesser computer, is a low price really that important? Most people rarely use price as the determining factor when buying anything.

There's a high probability that every anti-Apple critic owns and drives a car, yet it's so much less expensive to buy a monthly bus pass instead. The reason most people pay more to own a car than ride the bus is because the cost is worth the greater convenience. (Even many people who work for the city bus system drive cars to work, which tells you what they really think of the bus system.)

Rather than buy groceries at a supermarket or eat at a restaurant, you can save money by yanking food out of a dumpster in an alley. Instead of living in an apartment or house, you can live in a homeless shelter for free and get meals at the same time. Many homeless shelters even provide facilities for families so you, your spouse and your children can live for free in a homeless shelter to save money.

Obviously price is far less important than convenience. Given a choice between buying an identical product at two different prices, it only makes sense to pay less. However, given a choice between paying less to get less or paying more to get more, it also makes sense to consider whether paying less will be worth the savings. In some cases it will be, but in many cases it won't.

Despite the lower price of Windows PCs, demand has continued to drop by eight percent (tech.fortune.cnn.com/2011/12/09/black-friday-apple-zigged-while-the-pc-market-zagged/) over the year, according to the NPD Group. Morgan Stanley's Katy Huberty listed several possible factors, but concluded that "we believe the biggest factor is simply weaker end demand." Huberty did note one exception: "Apple was a relative bright spot during the week of Thanksgiving. Unit growth rebounded to 17% Y/Y from 7% in the prior week and 10% in the prior four weeks." DigiTimes also notes that PC notebook sales may fall (www.digitimes.com/news/a20111212PD207.htm) as much as 10 to 15 percent in the next quarter.

With Apple sweeping the top ratings in PC World's satisfaction survey, it only makes sense to consider a Macintosh, iPhone, or iPad for your next computer, smart phone, or tablet. You may find a product made by another company that meets your needs, but make sure the price you pay is worth it. If you wind up paying less and getting less (or paying more and still getting less), don't pretend otherwise and then convince others to make that same mistake. Misery may like company, but deliberately deceiving others by steering them away from all their options is a fast way to lose the trust and respect of others in a hurry.

AutoDesk's SketchBook App

Two years ago, AutoDesk sold high end CAD programs to big companies. When two AutoDesk employees decided to make a drawing app for the iPhone/iPad, even the CEO didn't think it would work. At the time, AutoDesk sold a low end program called SketchBook for computers, but the revenue generated by this program hardly made the effort worthwhile.

When two programmers created a SketchBook app (www.technologyreview.com/business/39208/page1/) for the iPhone/iPad, they hoped to get 100,000 downloads within one year. They wound up getting one million downloads in fifty days. AutoDesk's SketchBook app has now reached more customers than AutoDesk managed to reach during its past 29 years of existence.



Figure 1. SketchBook lets you turn your iPhone or iPad into a drawing tool.

The money AutoDesk makes from their SketchBook app is still trivial compared to the amount of money they make through AutoCAD, but their SketchBook app has opened a new market for them simply because they were willing to take a chance and see what could happen. With the low cost of entry and high profit return the SketchBook app offers, AutoDesk has made approximately \$15 million from their app, which they would never have made if they had avoided the iPhone/iPad altogether.

If AutoDesk could see unexpected benefits by developing an iPhone/iPad app, how many other people could repeat their success by either developing an app of their own or simply finding a creative way to use the iPhone/iPad in their own line of work?

Now consider all those people who absolutely refuse to consider touching, let alone buying and using, an Apple product. How many opportunities might they be missing out because of their own prejudice? If you don't want to limit yourself unnecessarily, just keep an open mind about everything. Like AutoDesk, you might be surprised at what you'll learn next.

To learn more about keeping an open mind, read Roger Von Oech's book *Expect the Unexpected* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1576752275/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1576752275), which is based on the cryptic sayings of the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus.

The basic idea behind this book, and Roger Von Oech's other creativity books, is that people tend to get stuck in mental ruts so they need to think beyond their own mental limitations to recognize solutions and opportunities staring at them right in their face. By learning to think creatively, you can solve problems faster and more efficiently than you might have thought possible.

The Apple Store in Grand Central Station

Apple recently built an Apple Store in New York's Grand Central Station (www.nydailynews.com/news/apple-store-opens-grand-central-terminal-article-1.988964) and crowds of people mobbed it on opening day. Not surprisingly, Apple simply opened a store full of their products and invited people to come in and shop. Compare this with every store Microsoft opens that only attracts a crowd because Microsoft gives away free concert tickets (www.geekwire.com/2011/microsoft-store-fans-scalping-free-passes-seattle-concerts). Many people who get the free concert tickets from Microsoft even sell them afterwards to make a profit.



Figure 2. Mobs of people lined up to shop at Apple's Grand Central Station store.

Whatever you think of Microsoft or Apple, just look at the situation objectively. Company A can attract crowds of people who want to buy their products. Company B can't attract people unless they bribe them with free concert tickets. People wait in line for the privilege of buying Company A's products. People don't wait in line to buy company B's products. Can anyone guess which company's store is going to make a profit? More importantly, can anyone guess which company's products are growing in popularity?

For one indication on how well Apple products hold their value, AT&T reports hefty sales of the old iPhone 3GS (news.cnet.com/8301-13506_3-57340101-17/iphone-3gs-shipments-still-strong-after-all-these-years/?tag=mncol;cnetRiver), a two year old model that AT&T either gives away for free or for one cent when you also purchase an accompanying two year contract.

Once people get an iPhone, they may wind up buying apps and music, and eventually upgrading to a newer model one day. In any case, people who get a free iPhone will simply expand the market for iPhone apps, which attracts more developers, which attracts more customers.

Remember the old argument that Windows PCs were the best computers to get because you could get so much software for it? That now applies to the iPhone, so all those Windows PC users who bought Windows for the software library should now be rushing to get an iPhone and iPad for the same reason. Even many Microsoft employees use iPhones (online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703455804575057651922457356.html), although they take great pains to hide this while at work (<http://>), which tells you what they really think of Microsoft's

own Windows Phone 7 phones.

More Holiday Gift Ideas

Many people have a mobile phone and many more are getting iPads along with other tablets like the Kindle and Nook. While most mobile devices offer plenty of battery life, there's nothing more frustrating than forgetting to charge your device for the day. To help others avoid this problem, consider getting them the Energizer USB Charger (www.energizer.com/charging/usb-chargers/Pages/dual-car-universal-charger.aspx).



Figure 3. The Energizer USB Charger offers two USB ports.

Just plug the Energizer USB Charger into your car's cigarette lighter, start up your car, plug your device's USB cable into the charger and into your mobile phone or tablet, and now as you drive, you'll recharge your device. Since the charger offers two USB ports, you can charge two devices at the same time (as long as you have two USB cables for both devices).

The Energizer USB Charger is small enough to throw in a purse or a pocket, although with the addition of your device's USB cables, you'll probably want a small carrying bag or case to hold everything. If you pick up the Energizer USB Charger from Amazon (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004YZI1T4/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004YZI1T4), it will cost you approximately \$12.

Just leave the Energizer USB Charger plugged into your car along with the USB cables for your mobile devices and you'll always be able to charge them whenever you're in the car. Now if you forget to charge your devices at home or work, you'll never worry about running out of power again.

If someone has an Apple Trackpad, get them the Micro Solution Trackpad Slick Film (www.amazon.com/gp/

product/B0043QYJPO/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B0043QYJPO) that applies to the Trackpad surface. This transparent film protects the trackpad surface while still allowing it to respond to touch gestures.



Figure 4. Protect the surface of your trackpad.

For someone who needs help getting organized, consider getting someone the simple, but interesting little database program called Bento (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004MSQKCS/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004MSQKCS), which links to your existing Address Book and iCal data on your Macintosh. Besides its low cost (\$49) and ease of use, Bento also provides plenty of free templates to give you custom solutions for handling every day problems. Bento's latest template is a Holiday Kit (solutions.filemaker.com/database-templates/detail.jsp?serial=2551722703) that can help you organize and print greeting cards, party invitations and manage gift lists.



Figure 5. Bento offers a holiday kit.

In case you don't have Bento, you can download a free 30-day trial version along with the holiday kit template so you can see how it can help organize your holiday season as well. With Bento's help, you can make the holidays less hectic and disorganized so you might actually have time to relax and enjoy yourself for a change.

Give yourself an early present by buying Bento or give Bento as a gift to someone who needs help organizing their busy life. With Bento, you can actually have fun getting organized, which means you'll be more likely to use the program more efficiently as well.

Dead Technology

Microsoft has announced the release of Silverlight 5 (www.zdnet.com/blog/microsoft/microsoft-releases-silverlight-5/11391?tag=mantle_skin;content), their latest update to their Adobe Flash clone. There's no word yet on whether this will be the last update ever to Silverlight or if Microsoft will continue with one last version, but just as Flash has pretty much died, so has Silverlight's time come to an end.

Microsoft initially developed and promoted Silverlight as a faster and better alternative to Adobe's Flash, and in many ways it was superior. The problem is that by copying the leader, Microsoft ran into the same problem as the leader. When mobile devices took off, the technological foundation of Flash couldn't make the transition.

The same focus on mobile devices not only doomed Flash, but also killed Silverlight just like the shift away from online services to the Internet killed CompuServe (then the online leader) and also Microsoft's copycat online service, The Microsoft Network. Microsoft tried to copy the iPod with the Zune and suffered when the market for dedicated MP3 players suddenly evaporated.

Why Microsoft insists on always copying the leader in a market and then suffering at the same time the leader suffers

remains a questionable business strategy as the latest problem with Silverlight demonstrates. Hewlett-Packard tried Microsoft's strategy of copying Apple by acquiring Palm Computing for \$1.2 billion dollars, mostly for their webOS operating system. After Hewlett-Packard's TouchPad tablet flopped and their webOS phones failed to get much attention, Hewlett-Packard has now announced that webOS will be an open source project (news.cnet.com/8301-1001_3-57340396-92/webos-lives-on-as-an-open-source-project-hp-declares/).

Whether webOS has a future any more depends less on its technical abilities and more on people willing to put up with Hewlett-Packard's schizophrenic nature in promoting webOS then dumping it. Basically, Hewlett-Packard spent \$1.2 billion to create an Open Source project. Developers will likely see a small webOS market, which means most developers will likely focus on iOS, Android, or Windows 8. With few developers, webOS will likely remain an interesting niche product that should have been a contender.

Free Yellow Submarine E-Book

Apple recently updated their iBooks app with more fonts and a nighttime reading theme to make reading in the dark easier on the eyes. To see all the new features of iBooks, download the free *Yellow Submarine* (itunes.apple.com/us/book/the-beatles-yellow-submarine/id479687204?mt=11) e-book by The Beatles.

This psychedelic children's story tells of a land where Blue Meanies are trying to abolish music while The Beatles are trying to save Pepperland from losing their sense of rhythm. Along with looking at the odd artwork and reading the bizarre story, you can tap on certain items on each page to hear sounds and make them move along with playing short video and audio clips from the "Yellow Submarine" film.

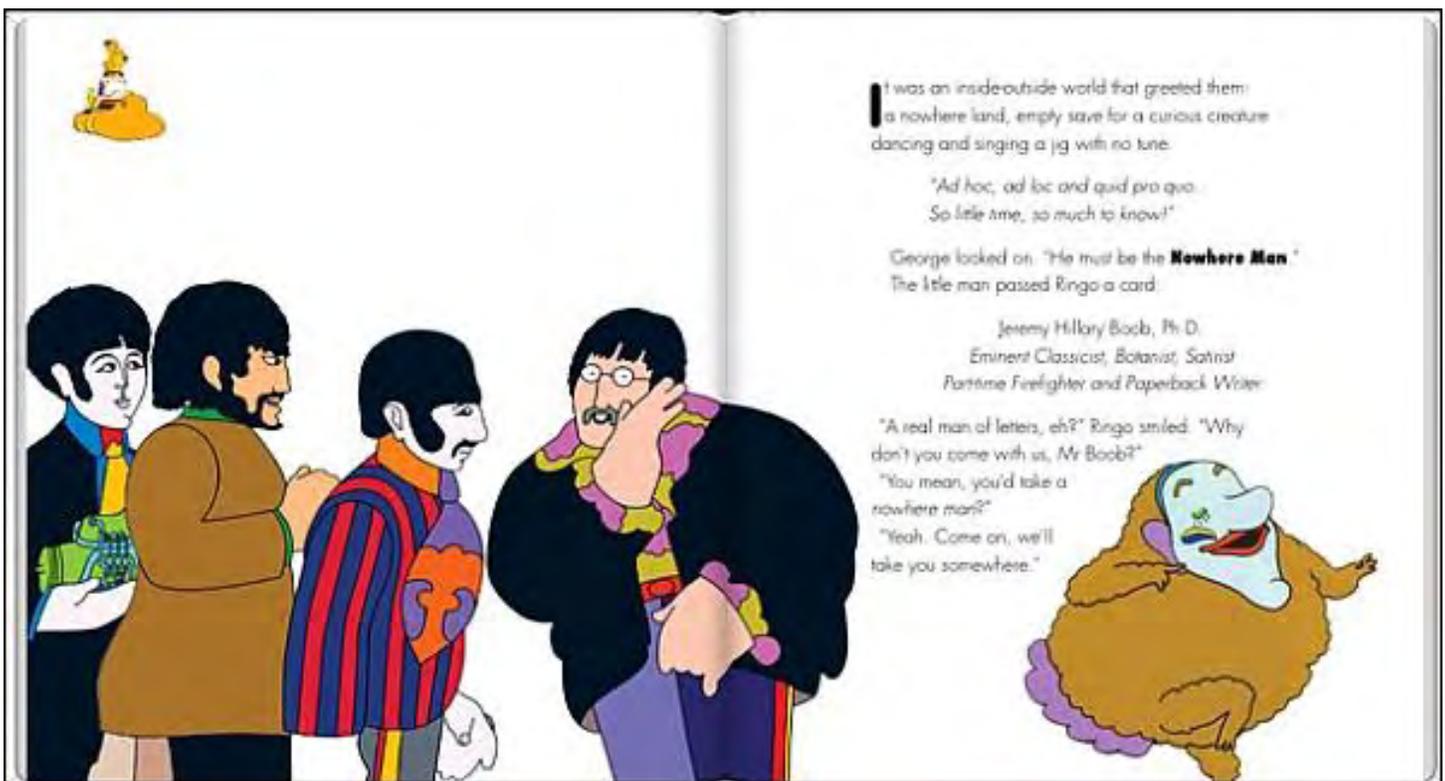


Figure 6. You can read "Yellow Submarine" for free through iBooks.

This animated e-book can be relatively slow to load and respond to touch gestures, but it shows one more example of how animated e-books can incorporate interactivity, audio and video to provide a more compelling reading experience than just text and graphics alone. Looking beyond children's books, imagine interactive e-books that can show you

how to cook a certain dish from a recipe or how to identify the type of pests eating the plants in a garden.

Interactive e-books are the future of reading. With printed books being too expensive to make, ship and store any more, expect e-books to continue growing in popularity with each new generation. If you have a library of printed books, save them. They're going to be a rare collector's items one day.

* * *

When you have a Finder window open, you can change the way files and folders appear by clicking the Arrange icon and choosing an option such as Name or Kind.

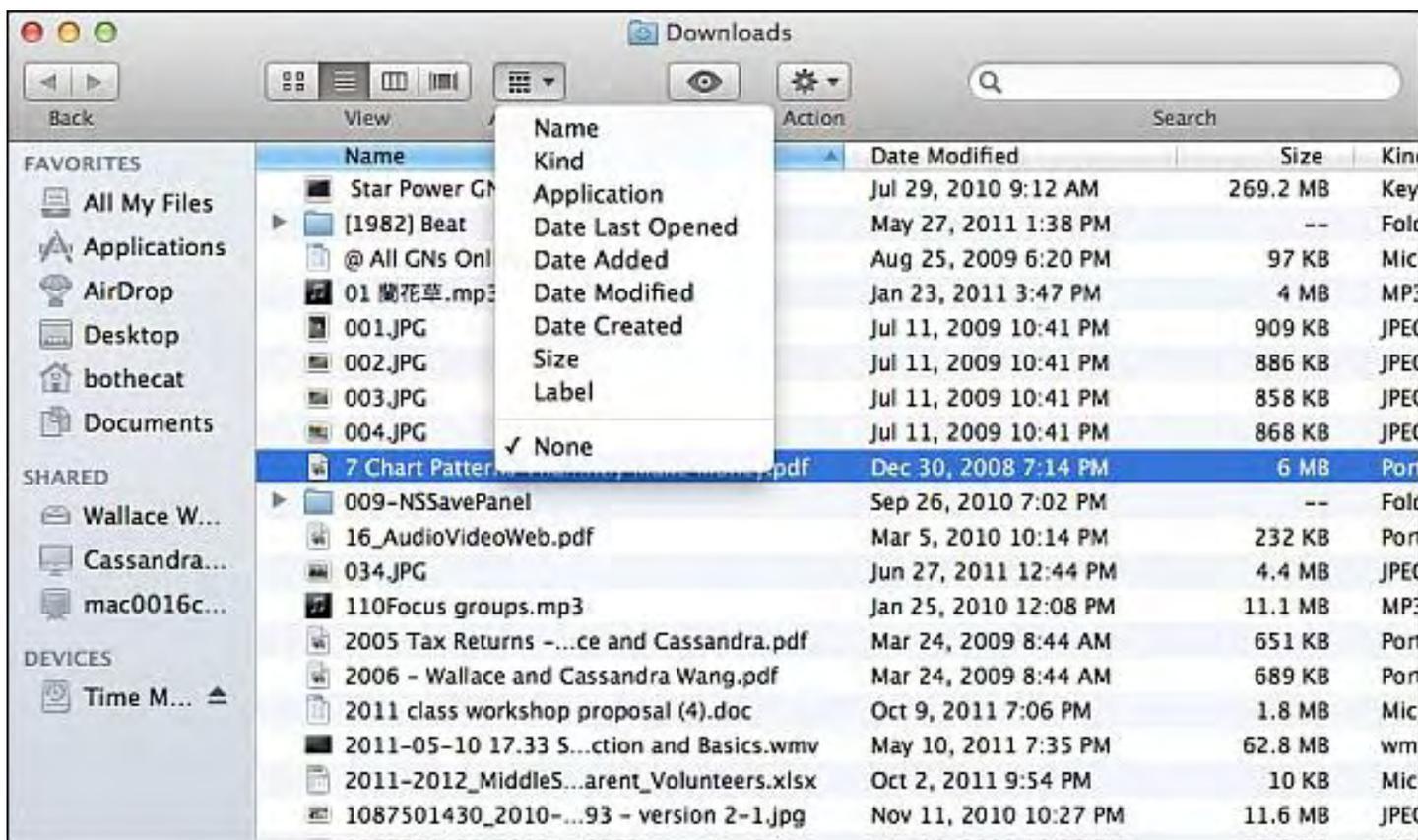


Figure 7. The Arrange icon lets you choose how to display items in a Finder window.

However, if you're displaying items in List view (choose View => as List), then an even quicker method to rearrange the order is to click on a category heading in the Finder window such as Name or Kind.

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

Wally is responsible for the following books:

My New Mac, 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=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908),
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 2 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/159327386X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X),
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),
The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M),
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/) Wally can be reached at wally@computoredge.com.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Beyond Personal Computing

“Life as a Programmer” by Marilyn K. Martin

Marilyn shares some amusing anecdotes and jokes about life as a programmer.

Definition of a Computer Program

Program (pro'-gram)

(n) A magic spell cast over a computer allowing it to turn one's input into error messages.

(vi) To engage in a pastime similar to banging one's head against a wall, but with fewer opportunities for reward.

Life of a Programmer in a Nutshell

1. If at first you don't succeed, call it version 1.0.
2. Programming today is a race between programmers striving to build bigger and better idiot proof programs, and the Universe trying to produce bigger and better idiots. So far, the Universe is winning.
3. The beginning of a programmer's wisdom is understanding the difference between getting a program to run, and having a runnable program.
4. How's my programming? Call 1-800-DEV-NULL.
5. When someone asks a programmer, "I want a programming language in which I only need to say what I wish done," he's given a lollipop.
6. Old Programmers never die. They just give up their resources.

A Couple Programmers Driving on a Highway

While dodging and weaving around traffic, they switch on the radio. A traffic warning comes on: "Please note that there is a car on Highway 75 driving the wrong direction against traffic."

The passenger programmer looks around, then turns to the driver programmer: "Only one? I'm seeing hundreds of cars driving the wrong direction."

Truth in Acronyms

ARG = Agree to Run Garbage

BDM= Branch and Destroy Memory

CMN= Convert to Mayan Numerals

DDS= Damage Disk and Stop

EMR= Emit Microwave Radiation

ETO= Emulate Toaster Oven

FSE= Fake Serious Error

GSI= Garble Subsequent Instructions

GQS= Go Quarter Speed

HEM= Hide Evidence of Malfunction

IDD= Inhale Dust and Die

IKI= Ignore Keyboard Input

IMU= Irradiate and Mutate User

JPF=Jam Paper Feed

JUM= Jeer at User's Mistake

KFP= Kindle Fire in Printer

LNМ= Launch Nuclear Missiles

MAW= Make Aggravating Whine

NNI= Neglect Next Instruction

OBU= Overheat and Burn if Unattended

PNG= Pass Noxious Gas

QVC= Question Valid Command

RWD= Read Wrong Device

SCE= Simulate Correct Execution

SDJ= Send Data to Japan

UBC=Use Bad Chip

VDP= Violate Design Parameters

VMB= Verify and Make Bad

WAF= Warn After Fact

XID= eXchange Instruction with Data

YII= Yield to Irresistible Impulse

ZAM= Zero All Memory

Literally Instructed to Death

A programmer was missing from work for a week. Unable to reach him, the Supervisor asked the police to check out the programmer's home. They broke down the door, and found the programmer dead in the shower. Clutched in his dead hand was his shampoo. The instructions read:

*Wet hair

*Apply shampoo

*Wait a few minutes

*Repeat

Got Those "SEGMENTATION Violation—Core Dumped Blues"

Well, my terminal's locked up, and I ain't got any Mail,
 And I can't recall the last time that my program didn't fail.
 I've got stacks in my 'structs, I've got arrays in my queues,
 I've got the - Segmentation Violation, Core Dumped Blues.

If you think that it's nice that you get what you C,
 Then go - illogical statement with your whole family.
 Because the Supreme Court ain't the only place with Bus error views.
 I've got the - Segmentation Violation, Core Dumped Blues.

On a PDP-11, life should be a breeze,
 But with VAXen in the house even magnetic tapes would freeze.
 Now you might think that unlike VAXen I'd know who I abuse,
 But I've got the - Segmentation Violation, Core Dumped Blues!

Programmers' Philosophy

Every program has at least one bug, and can be shortened by at least one instruction. So, by induction, one can deduce that every program can be reduced to one instruction which doesn't work.

If God Was a Computer Programmer

Q: Did God really create the world in seven days?

A: He actually did it in six days and nights while living on cola and candy bars. On the seventh and last day, He went home and found out his girlfriend had left Him. Despondent, His creation stopped.

Q: What causes God to intervene in earthly affairs?

A: If a critical error occurs, the system pages Him automatically and He logs on from home to try to bring it up. Otherwise, things can wait until tomorrow.

Q: How come the Age of Miracles ended?

A: That was the development phase of Program Earth. Now we're in the maintenance phase.

Q: Who is Satan?

A: Satan is an MIS director who takes credit for more powers than he actually possesses. So non-programmers become scared of him. God thinks he's irritating, but irrelevant.

Q: Why does God allow evil to happen?

A: God thought he eliminated evil in one of the earlier revisions.

Q: How can I protect myself from evil?

A: Change your password every month, and don't use a name, common word or your birthday.

Q: If I pray to God, will he listen?

A: You can waste His time telling Him what to do, or you can just get off his back and let Him program.

Q: Some people claim they hear the voice of God. Is this true?

A: They are much more likely to receive e-mail.

The Programmer and the Talking Frog

A computer programmer happens across a frog in the road. The frog pipes up, "I'm really a beautiful princess and if you kiss me, I'll stay with you for a week." The programmer shrugs and puts the frog in a pocket.

He takes it to his office and puts it in a fish bowl with food and water. A week later it pipes up again. "If you kiss me, I'll give you great sex for a week." The programmer nods and goes back to work.

A week after that, the frog pipes up again. "Turn me back into a princess and I'll give you great sex for a whole year!" The programmer nods and smiles, and goes back to work.

A few days later, the frustrated frog pipes up yet again. "What's wrong with you? I've promised you great sex for a year from a beautiful princess, and you won't even kiss me? Why won't you take a chance and kiss a frog?"

"Cause I'm a programmer," the man replied with a sigh. "I don't have time for sex. But a talking frog on my desk is really cool."

Top Excuses by Programmers When Their Programs Don't Work

1. Hmm. That's weird.
2. Gosh, it's never done that before.
3. It worked just fine yesterday.
4. It must be a hardware problem.
5. What did you type in wrong to get it to crash?
6. You must have the wrong version.
7. It's just some unlucky coincidence.
8. I can't test everything!
9. So where were you when the program blew up?
10. Did you check for a virus in your system?
11. Somebody must have changed my code.
12. Even though it doesn't work, how does it feel?

Twass The Night Before Implementation

Twass the night before implementation
And all through the house
Not a program was working
Not even a browse.

The engineers hung by their tubes in despair,
With hopes that a miracle soon would be there.
The customers were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of progress danced in their heads.

When out in the courtyard there arose such a clatter
I sprang from my desk to see what was the matter.
And what to my wondering eyes should appear
But a Super Programmer with a six-pack of beer!

His resume glowed with experience so rare,
He turned out great code with a bit pusher's flair.
More rapid than eagles, his routines they came,
And he whistled and shouted and called them by name:

On Update! On Add! On Inquire! On Delete!
On Batch Jobs! On Closing! On Functions Complete!

His eyes were glazed over, fingers nimble and lean,
From weekends and nights spent in front of a screen.
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know, I had nothing to dread.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
Turning specs into code, then turned with a jerk;
And laying his finger upon the "Enter" key,
The system came up and worked perfectly.

The update updated; the deletes, they deleted;
The inquiries inquired and closings completed.
He tested each whistle, and tested each bell,
With nary an APPEND, thus all had gone well.

The job was finished, the tests were concluded,
The engineer's last changes were even included.
"Hey!", the customer exclaimed with a snarl and taunt -
"It's just what I asked for, but not what I want!"

(Many of these amusing anecdotes/jokes can be found on multiple online joke sites. Special thanks to *Computer-jokes.net*, *Computerjokes.net*, *101funjokes.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](#)



Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Cloud Computing," "'USB Boot Hangs...' Comments," "Bing Problem," "Firefox Freezes for 30 seconds," "Business Economics"

Cloud Computing

[Regarding D'Artagnan Fischer's December 2 article, "Some Clouds Can Block the Sun!":]

"The current vision of Cloud Computing is that one can access the Internet from anywhere, but now you can have your data wherever you are too!"

The twenty-five year old Electronic Communications Privacy Act means the authorities may access *all* third party stored e-mail (hotmail, yahoo and Gmail) and file content (your documents) without warrants if it's older than six months. The law considers as abandoned any files housed on any third party servers for more than six months.

Read more at *Wired* (www.wired.com/threatlevel/2011/10/ecpa-turns-twenty-five/).

But if you are doing nothing wrong, you have nothing to worry about.

-C Farmer, Broomfield, CO

I enjoyed this article very much. Nothing about the wordage Cloud Computing had clicked with me until now. This article is clear and makes sense to me, and now I can share.

-Barbara Lutnick, Yuma, Arizona

"USB Boot Hangs..." Comments

[Regarding the November 11 Digital Dave column:]

Hello USB Boot Hanger.

Interesting issue.

First, we know it's a pre-OS hang, so it must be BIOS/firmware/hardware related. More importantly, where/how is this being plugged in? (Direct to the USB or through a hub. More specifically, if a hub, is this a powered hub?) What other USB devices do you have?

Since this is a USB 3, it needs to be in a USB 3 port to use the speed. If plugged into a USB 2, it must negotiate the speed down. When that happens, it will also check the other devices. If there are 1.0 and 1.1 and 2.0 with a 3.0 device on a digital bus, that's a lot of negotiating. This is usually dictated by the CPU timing. If the CPU can't get a timing down right with the devices, you're not going to boot until it gives up and times out from the latency. (I've also seen this type of issue if someone had a USB cable attached to the hub but the device itself was not present—it could not

terminate the signal reply on the digital bus I'm assuming. Remove the empty plug!

Best case scenario, start to eliminating the variables.

If this was mine, my first step would be to connect the drive on board to a USB 3.0 plug. Remove all other USB devices. (May require getting a PS/2 keyboard+mouse for the test.) If no USB 3.0, then USB 2.0, but make sure direct the motherboard (or laptop—no docking station, no hub). A huge issue with USB hubs are lack of power. It's splitting 500Ma (1/2 amp) for all devices, good for a mouse and keyboard = horrible for a scanner all-in-one or external drive/burner. A powered USB hub is really the only USB hub worth spending money on. If you don't need the additional power, you don't have to plug it in—nice to have when you need the juice though.

If that works, keep adding variables until it breaks.

If the 1st test fails directly to the main port, then you're looking at the BIOS for settings and updates from the manufacture.

Good luck!

-Chris, San Diego, CA

Bing Problem

[Regarding the December 2 Digital Dave column:]

What Dave Vail didn't say was where Bing showed up. Just last week I noticed a Bing toolbar appearing in my IE. I didn't like it either, and accidentally stumbled onto how to get rid of it: I went to View => Toolbars and unchecked it. Voila. That could be all Dave needs to do on his wife's computer too.

-Jan, Murrieta, CA

Firefox Freezes for 30 seconds

[Regarding the November 25 Digital Dave column:]

I get the same "Firefox freezes for 30 seconds every 15 minutes or so" problem (Win XP SP3). Note that the CPU meter does *not* kick up at all, so nothing else is hogging the CPU. Also, the router doesn't show large activity so it's not caused by the network. (WinXP does not have an I/O meter so I don't know what's going on with the hard drive or USB drive.)

My perception is that the 30 second freeze is either a) too many tabs open or b) too much Javascript running in the open tabs (I look at a couple dozen news sites and two of them are notorious for "hanging" Firefox).

Here's an experiment: Go to www.HuffingtonPost.com and open 20 news items in 20 separate tabs. In my Firefox and in my Chrome, this causes a slowdown (and the occasional freeze). The other news site that causes this is www.nydailynews.com, at least here. I cannot figure out how to report this to the Firefox or Chrome teams. I wish there were mailing lists for the Chrome, Firefox, IE, Opera, Safari and Seamonkey browsers so I could compare my user problems with others.

-Peter, Los Angeles

Business Economics

[Regarding the December 2 Wally Wangs Apple Farm column:]

Sir,

Why doesn't Apple simply buyout all the other Smartphone manufactures? At first glance, your graph looks fine, but it doesn't account for the rules of "Economics 101." For those that didn't pay attention during class, as the market learns of pending buyouts the price of stocks go up. The stockholders of companies targeted by Apple would force up the cost of these companies. Simply put, Apple doesn't have the funds.

In your recent goings on about Lotus you really missed the point as to why Lotus doesn't rule the spreadsheet market today. Lotus lost market share because it was priced to high. IBM owned and sold Lotus and their model was to sell to businesses. Microsoft had a price point for Excel that swayed more people. Businesses (Corporations) are people, at least according to the Supreme Court.

In a free market why doesn't the best products or services win the day? I point to Betamax which was far and away better than VHS. Betamax lost because of Sony's unwillingness to license to other manufactures. At the time, OS/2 was far and away better than either Windows and Macintosh combined, yet it died as well. The reason it died was the same reason that it was better—OS/2 was the last of the "three" to market.

Best regards,

-Dan Schmitt, Colorado MultiValue Users Group (CMUG)

Why Lotus Failed:

The comparison of Apple buying the smart phone industry is more to compare the value than to consider whether they would actually buy it up or not. The fact that Apple has enough cash to theoretically buy the bulk of the smart phone industry is the point to consider, not whether they would actually do so.

Actually Lotus 1-2-3 was priced at \$495, which was the exact same price Microsoft Excel was priced at. Lotus 1-2-3 failed because it didn't adapt to Windows. By the time Lotus ported 1-2-3 to Windows, the world had already moved on to Excel. Microsoft bundled Excel in Microsoft Office for one low price, but Lotus did that too with their Smartsuite bundle so price wasn't a factor at all. Borland International released a 1-2-3 clone called Quattro, which they priced at \$99 vs. Lotus 1-2-3 at \$495. Yet Quattro never conquered the market despite its lower price.

As far as the VHS vs. Betamax comparison goes, one theory I've heard about why VHS won was because it was the standard adopted by the porn industry, which pushed sales of VHS players. The porn industry also adopted Blu-ray, which helped push Blu-ray as the new standard.

OS/2 failed partly because you had to buy OS/2 separately, but MS-DOS and Windows came free with most computers. Given that choice, it was easier for people to just use what they had rather than buy a new operating system altogether. OS/2 also had the ability to run Windows programs, so developers figured why bother writing OS/2 programs when you could just write Windows programs and sell to both the Windows and OS/2 market? With a lack of native OS/2 programs, there was little reason to use OS/2 if all you used it for was to run Windows programs.

-Wally Wang

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 time in the "Editor's Letters" section. If you want to submit a short "ComputerQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at ceeditor@computoredge.com. If you would like to contribute to **ComputerEdge** endeavors, please visit ComputerEdge E-Books (www.computoredgebooks.com/Contribute-to-ComputerEdge-Magazine_c3.htm).

Send mail to ceeditor@computoredge.com with questions about editorial content.

Send mail to cwebmaster@computoredge.com with questions or comments about this Web site.

Copyright © 1997-2011 The Byte Buyer, Inc.

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