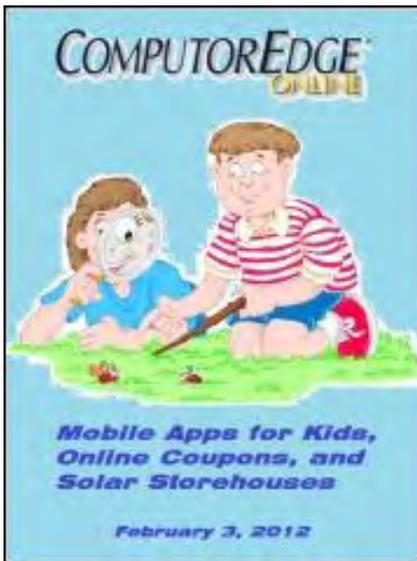


ComputerEdge™ Online — 02/03/12



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Mobile Apps for Kids, Online
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More little known high tech stories, plus
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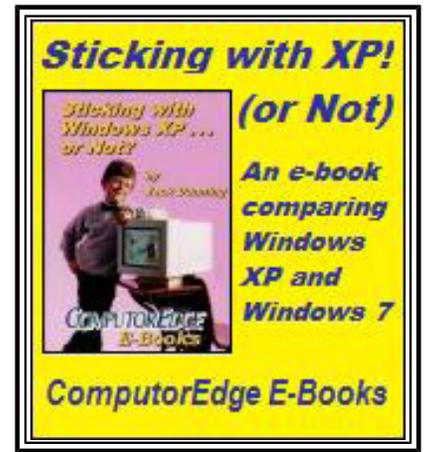
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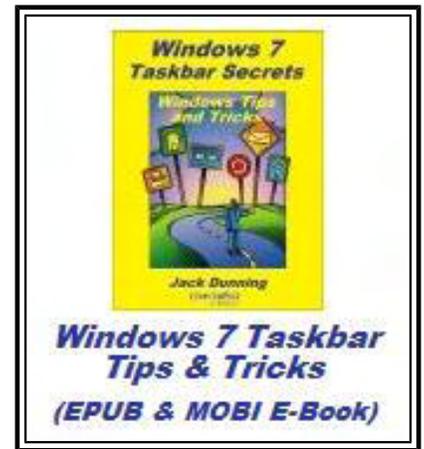
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ComputerEdge Staff

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

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

Disabling Internet Explorer's Windows 7 Control Panel; Scam Review Web Site; A Better Free Text Editor.

Dear Digital Dave,

I was in the Control Panel, hit hardware and sound, then programs, hit turn Windows features on or off by clicking on box, saw Internet Explorer 9 checked, I guess by default. I don't use Internet Explorer, so I unchecked this box and another box came up telling me if I uncheck this I'll lose other functions. I left as is, what do you know about this area?

Thanks,

*Tom
San Diego, CA*

Dear Tom,

The window you had open is called Windows Features, as shown in Figure 1. (Figure 1 shows Internet Explorer 8 because I've never bothered to upgrade the program on that particular computer.) In Windows 7 it can be opened by typing "features" into the Start search field or as you did it through Programs and Features in the Control Panel. In Windows Vista you also use Programs and Features as a gateway and in Windows XP access Add and Remove Programs, then Add/Remove Windows Components will open the Windows Components Wizard.

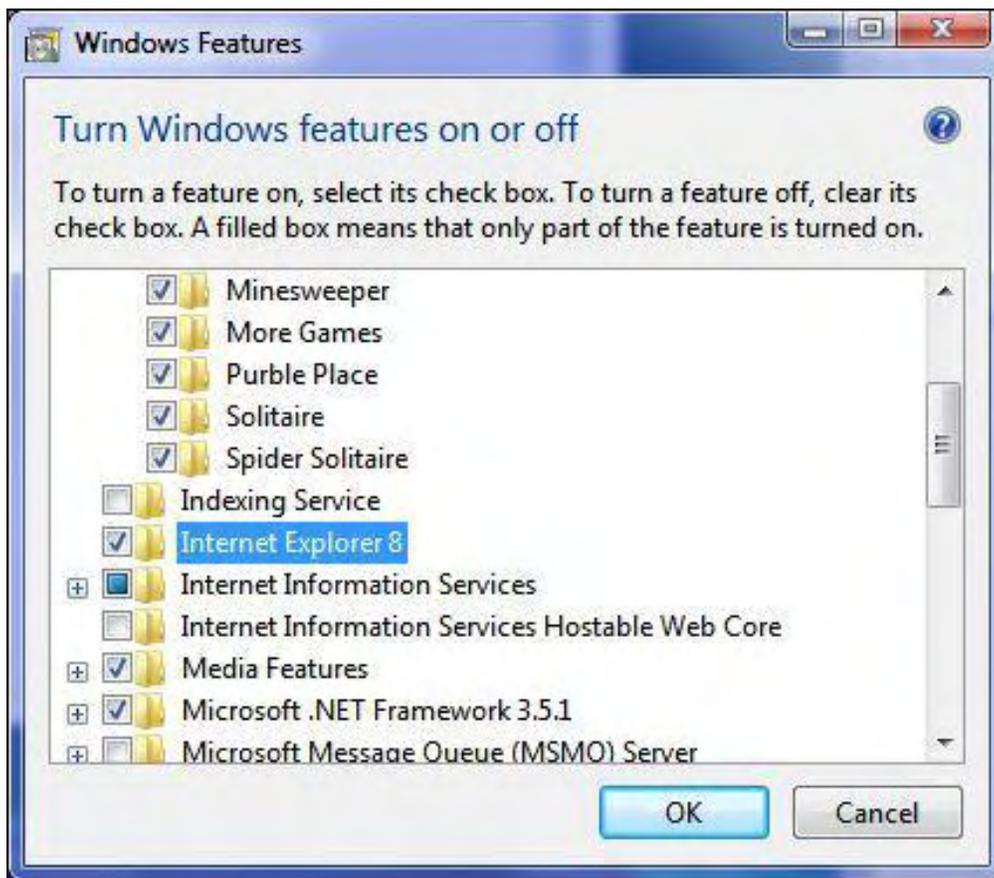


Figure 1. The Windows 7 Windows Features window.

Microsoft does not allow uninstalling Internet Explorer because it is considered an integral part of the operating system. Even when Internet Explorer is disabled, the engine remains available for use by other programs. So, at best, you are removing it from view.

You should be able to disable Internet Explorer without a problem. The reason you get the warning is because it is possible that there is third-party software which uses IE as part of an application. This is not likely, but if you notice any software issues, especially Internet access, after disabling, you can always enable IE again.

Digital Dave

Comment on Dave's response to Julianna's question dated January 6, 2012:

Hi, Dave,

I usually find your comments quite useful, but was very surprised that you consider "resellerratings.com" to be a "scam review Web site" simply because their reviewers average a 5-star rating for the site the letter writer was asking about. I use resellerratings.com all the time and find it very useful. As a comparison, take a look at how they rate the Ace Hardware site. Their ratings appear to come from legitimate third-party reviewers (like myself) and you certainly don't see every online store getting rave reviews on their site!

*Ed Wullschleger
Longmont, Colorado*

Dear Ed,

I may have been a bit harsh since my initial reaction to the reviews on ResellerRatings.com was based on the fact that the discussed Web site had a *perfect score*—not an average near 5.0. In the real world, that would rarely happen unless the numbers were fixed. That was purely a mathematical supposition, but your comments made me look deeper.

It can be difficult to find third-party reviews of ResellerRatings since the site itself tends to dominate any searches. However, I did manage to find some comments from vendors who use Google Merchant Center (www.google.com/support/forum/p/base/thread?tid=64d1bddb2a282f4b&hl=en). There are links to more supporting comments in this forum.

While I have no doubt that the majority of the reviews at ResellerRatings are probably legit, it appears that some of their strong-arm (some say extortion) tactics with resellers taints their credibility. As a business, ResellerRatings needs to make money, but the problem is that they have resorted to putting the squeeze on people who do not conform to their business model. In order to properly respond to legitimate claims and protect their reputation a retailer must pay a tribute to ResellerRatings. This means that ratings cannot help but be biased toward the paying merchants. There are also suggestions that merchants who don't participate are granted bogus negative reviews. Anyone who opts out does not get protection. (Is this the equivalent to cyber-kneecapping?)

At the very least, some of the reviews at ResellerRatings are suspect. The best review sites require that buyers submitting reviews supply a legitimate invoice number from the vendor. That way the vendor has an opportunity to fix the problem. As I understand it, ResellerRatings does do that, but limits access to paying members. It seems that a person looking for unbiased information is better off going to Yahoo or Amazon for reviews where there is no ax to grind between the Web site and the merchant.

Digital Dave

Digital Dave's Tip

Sometimes all you want in a word processor is a text editor. Windows comes with Notepad, a simple text editor which won't add any extra formatting to your files. If you're doing any programming or even writing a simple batch (BAT) file to run in Windows, then it is important to use clean text files.

Notepad will do the job, but it doesn't give you any extras at all. In programming there are some features which can be quite valuable. If you're looking for more in your text editor, then try the free program Notepad++ (notepad-plus-plus.org/). It's designed to make programming easier (see Figure 2).

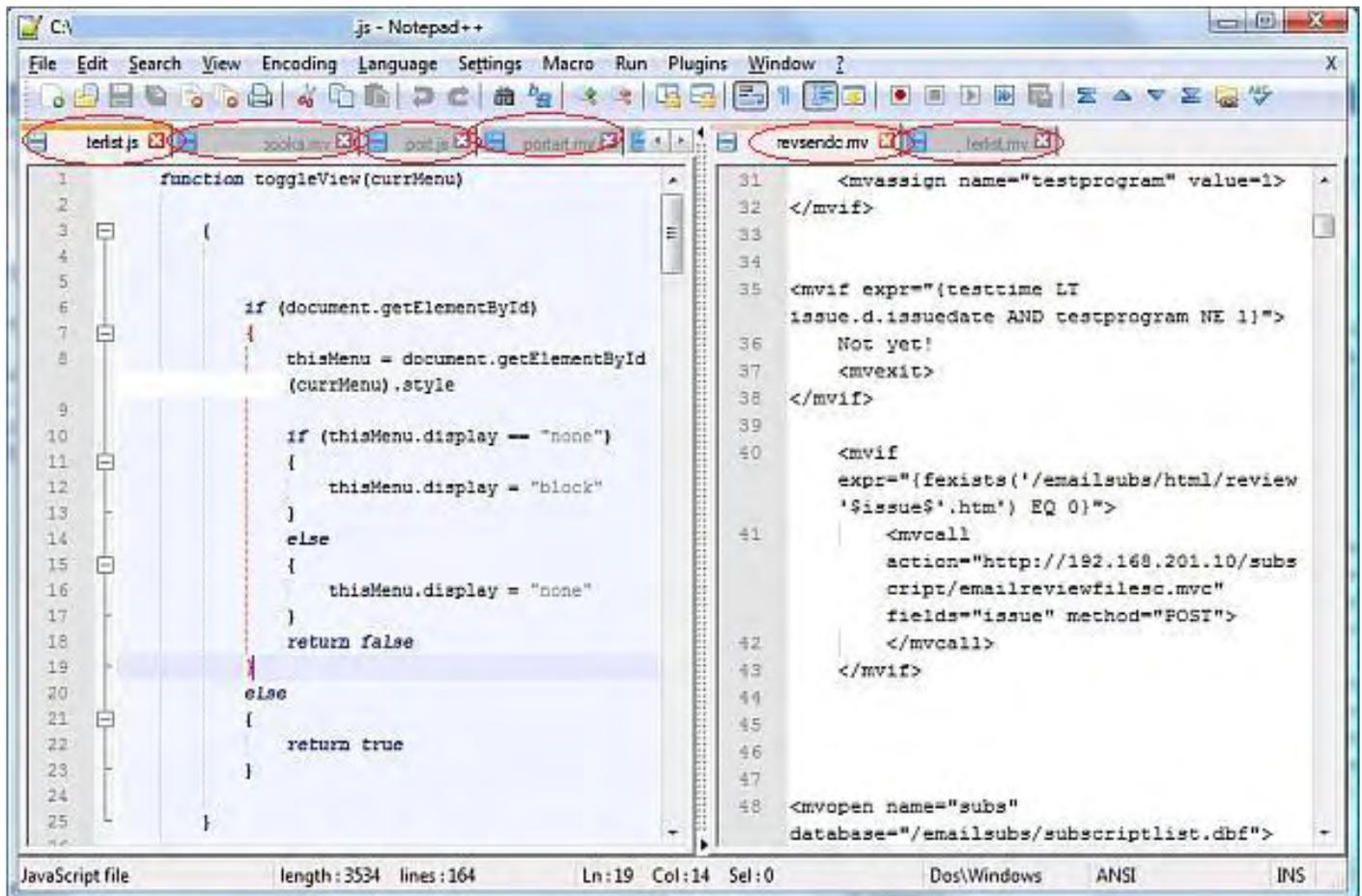


Figure 2. Notepad++ will display two open files side by side.

There are a number of styles associated with specific programming languages built into Notepad++. When you select a language, the coding is highlighted based upon the syntax associated with that language. Loops and conditionals will display opening and closing tags as seen in the open JavaScript program on the left side of Figure 2. The circled tabs indicate opened files just a click away.

Notepad++ also has robust Find and Replace tools that support regular expressions and a pretty decent file comparison tool. It does lots of neat stuff.

While not ideal for writing letters, I can recommend it for writing programs which require text files. Best of all it's free.

Digital Dave

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“More Little Known High Tech Stories” by Marilyn K. Martin

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2012's Shiny New Gadgets—and Old Gadgets You Should Ditch



While we are still trying to get our new Christmas electronic gadgets to work properly, the *Seattle Times'* Brier Dudley sagely notes (seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/business/technology/2011135749_brier02.html), "You'd think the (electronic) industry elves would let their soldering guns rest sometime, but consumers have an unlimited appetite for new toys."

Larger and snazzier TVs top his 2012 wish list, such as big-screen OLEDs with ultra-sharp displays, and the connected ability to use smartphones or tablets as remote controls. He also thinks that 2012 may be the year for home automation to break out, especially since broadband companies (like Verizon and Motorola) are now selling bundles for remotely monitoring energy and cameras in the home.

Meanwhile, the *Chicago Tribune* offers a list of older gadgets (www.chicagotribune.com/features/tribu/ct-tribu-ditch-12-devices-pg,0,6506848.photogallery) which only do one thing, that can now be abandoned because of the consolidation power of newer gadgets. Voice recorders, Fax machines, Palm Pilots and Flip cameras were much loved in their day, but smartphones and tablets can now do all those functions and more.

How to Get Rid of Your "Old Stuff" to Make Room for the New

As we upgrade to new gadgets and electronics, our "old stuff" becomes a problem. We may not have the storage, yet normal disposal is a problem because of their toxic contaminants. CompuKiss.com (www.compukiss.com/articles/getting-rid-of-old-computers-gadgets-2.html) offers up some ideas, mainly along the lines of donating your old electronics. You may have a relative who'd love your cast-off computer or printer, as well as local churches and schools.

Not all charities accept old electronics, but the National Cristina Foundation (www.cristina.org) promotes the reuse of technology, both soliciting donations and helping users find an organization that will take their old computers and peripherals. Certain electronic stores (like Best Buy) and computer manufacturers also offer trade-in or recycling programs.

Consumer Affairs filled an entire magazine issue last year about this time, with tips of how to get rid of everything from cast-off electronics to toys (www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2011/02/spring-cleaning-tips-how-get-rid-of-practically-anything.html). They too lean heavily toward donating items, but also offer some ideas of where you might sell your older electronics. Ecosquid offers a marketplace (www.ecosquid.com/client/index.jsp) to sell or recycle your not-too-old electronics.

Do Video Games Make You Smarter—or More Violent?

And the controversy over video games (www.cbsnews.com/8301-505245_162-57347339/researchers-video-games-wont-make-you-smarter/) continues. Newest studies can't verify previous studies that violent video games can cause violent actions. But then it also hasn't been verified that video games can make players smarter or improve cognitive abilities.

On the positive side, most parents who have played their kids' games have realized their fears were unfounded. While researchers advise that people trying to improve specific skills (like driving or flying) "should look to simulators that focus on those skills, instead of video games."

Solar Storehouses

Solar power has long been hobbled by a nagging problem (www.nytimes.com/2012/01/03/business/energy-environment/building-storehouses-for-the-suns-energy-for-use-after-dark.html): storage. Solar is great when the sun is out in a cloudless sky, but the generated power drops precipitously at night or on cloudy days. Now the thinking is that a slightly different form of power—solar thermal—may be the answer. This technology makes electricity by using the sun's heat to boil water, then heat salt that stores the energy until later.

I recently wrote how solar is becoming more affordable because of China's global oversupply of inexpensive photovoltaic (PV) cells, and how some of California's solar thermal projects are retooling back to just PV solar. But other solar thermal plants are still on track, and are planned to "complement" daytime solar energy from PV cells. SolarReserve (www.solarreserve.com) and BrightSource (www.brightsourceenergy.com) will "use thousands of computer operated poster size mirrors aiming sunlight at a tower that absorbs it as heat."

Using Social Media to End Slavery

Berkeley, California, rocker Justin Dillon had a 2003 experience (www.contracostatimes.com/business/ci_19649490) while touring with his band, that would change his life forever. He met Eastern European college students who had paid over \$2,000 to "facilitators" to get them service industry jobs in the West. They were giddy over prospects of a new MTV-like lifestyle, even after Dillon warned them that they would probably end up as sex slaves or imprisoned in sweatshop servitude.

Today Dillon heads up a social media campaign to combat slavery through his Web site SlaveryFootPrint (www.slaveryfootprint.org). He is aided by a State Department grant, and is a member of a coalition of anti-slavery labor

groups sharing a \$11.5 million grant from Google.

The Social Media Threat to Adopted British Children

Adoption agencies in Britain have become alarmed over how to protect adopted children (www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/05/us-britain-adoption-facebook-idUSTRE8041FH20120105) who have been removed from abusive homes. Increasingly, abusive birth parents are turning to social media to track down their children, without any established safeguards to protect the children and their new families.

Under British law, birth parents cannot access the adoption records of their removed children, making it very difficult to track down these children—until social media arrived on the scene. Adoptive agencies have become proactive, from asking the government to put a system in place for agencies and adoptive parents to get in touch and share their experiences, to recommending that adoptive parents be more honest with their children about the reasons they were removed from their birth parents.

Helping Train Tech in the Third World

The technological divide between high tech and low tech countries is slowly shrinking thanks to Digital Divide Data (www.digitaldividedata.org), a ten-year-old non-profit "that trains disadvantaged workers in the developing world for entry level technology jobs." Operating in Laos, Cambodia and Kenya, "Digital Divide Data" offers a five year program (www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-asia-jobtraining-20120102,0,1259025.story) where foreign trainees work six hour shifts digitizing books, while also attending university.

The trainees earn \$85 a month, and also get a college scholarship (worth 65% of costs), healthcare insurance and extensive English lessons. Graduates can earn up to three times the average monthly salary for college graduates in their country, and the best students are encouraged to become business and government leaders. In addition, the digitized libraries are making more and more books available online for a worldwide population.

Online Coupons—Great Deals or Ripoffs?



Despite Groupon's success, there is a growing group of businesses who are unhappy with their Groupon-offered discount deals (www.entrepreneur.com/articles/four-rules-to-avoid-being-burned-by-groupon/). Based on a Rice University study, unhappy business owners report that 87% of initial coupon customers never return to pay full price for the same or similar services/products.

Counter-arguments blame the businesses who rely on Groupon as "a stand alone cure-all to slow sales, (instead of) one element in a well-honed marketing plan." Four mistakes small businesses can make using Groupon are: 1) Treating coupon customers as second-class citizens; 2) Failing to recognize and reward returning Grouponers; 3) Discounting opportunistically or randomly (instead of predictably); and 4) Blaming the customer (when services or products are sub-par).

I've already written about people using Groupon "deals" for minor health and dental services. Now comes word out of Chicago of a new African American coupon site (www.suntimes.com/business/9956113-646/an-african-american-groupon.html), to give Chicago's African American business owners some exposure. Blackmark-it (blackmark-it.com/blackmarkit/) will offer one week deals at first, then ramp up to daily deals later on.

HighSpeedInternetDeals.org last year offered a list of their top 15 "Penny Pinching Coupon Sites" (www.highspeedinternetdeals.org/blog/2011/top-15-penny-pinching-coupon-sites/) that don't require you to sign up or join anything. They offer their top five sites in three categories: General, Travel and Groceries.

Mobile Apps for Kids

For parents looking for engaging and educational smartphone apps (digitallife.today.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2011/11/23/8966502-meet-the-parents-behind-the-best-kid-apps) for their younger kids, that don't center on purple dinosaurs or muppets, one boutique developer is leading the way. Duck Duck Moose Design (duckduckmoosesign.com) started out with a touchscreen version of "Wheels on the Bus" (Apple store for \$.99) that employed playful goofiness, but could also be sung in other languages or gibberish, with different instrumentation from piano to kazoo. The developers continue to market interesting mobile apps for kids, mirroring their own growing children's ages.

In October 2011, the *Chicago Tribune* ran a story about how mobile apps are becoming the preferred reward (articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-10-25/features/sc-fam-1025-app-bribe-20111025_1_apps-reward-parents) offered by parents for their kids' good behavior. Recent polls have found that 75% of U.S. kids ages 2 to 13 have access to smartphones, and 33% of tweens ages 10 to 13 have their own smartphone.

Educational apps are preferred by most parents, of course. Although parents who download games like "Angry Birds" to a shared smartphone, soon learn themselves how addictive these games can be. There is even a Web site, iKidApps (www.ikidapps.com) that offers reviews and recommendations on the best children's mobile apps. Other sites to reference for kid apps are Cool Mom Tech (www.coolmomtech.com) and The iPhone Mom (www.theiphonemom.com).

A December 2011 article (travel.nytimes.com/2011/12/25/travel/apps-to-keep-children-happy.html) in the *New York Times* offers a parent's guide of how to use mobile apps to keep kids entertained while traveling. The best "engagement" mobile apps for kids are listed and grouped by age (1 to 12 years old).

One of the most popular apps in the pre-teen group, is "Casey's Contraptions HD" (\$2.99 from iTunes for iPad). The app is about young Casey "trying to get his toys back by building crazy contraptions. Create Rube Goldberg-like machines with toys and everyday items to solve puzzles and playtime scenarios." There's also an optional social network for kids to share their solutions. For parents wanting to raise the next Innovative Genius, this app may be just the ticket.

New Product Power—Mommy Bloggers!



“Today would be a good day to ask Mommy to buy us something. In her blog she says she’s in a good mood.”

In addition to kids' mobile apps reviewers above, Silicon Valley reports that blogging mothers have moved beyond diaper-drama testimonials to have significant impact reviewing toys and electronic gadgets for children (www.siliconvalley.com/personal-technology/ci_19587846). In fact, they have become so influential that toy makers now go to great lengths to get their seal of approval. For a long time, toy manufacturers gave away samples of their new toys to TV stations, newspapers and magazines. Today, almost 70% of those reviewable toys go to mommy bloggers instead.

Mattel, Inc, even has a database of 400 mommy bloggers, with their locations, interests and their children's ages. Small toy maker Cepia, Inc. solicits feedback from mommy bloggers before their toys ever hit the shelves. And "BSM Media" even helps

toy companies pick the mommy bloggers with the most reach on Twitter and Facebook.

Mobile Apps That Can Make You Money!

Did you know that there are smartphone apps that can help you earn money (www.moneytalksnews.com/2011/07/08/5-smartphone-apps-earn-money/)? They won't replace a job, but you can make a little extra cash as you go about your regular daily routine. *MoneyTalksNews* recommends five apps, such as Gigwalk.com. If you also have a PayPal account, Gigwalk will pay you \$3-5/minute to snap photos in and around restaurants. While other apps like WeReward.com, pay you with points to photograph yourself in local business and/or with products you've purchased.



Another little known way to passively make a little extra cash, is by renting out your urban home's driveway (www.thepennyhoarder.com/2011/07/make-money-renting-out-your-driveway). You can go through a site such as ParkAtMyHouse (us.parkatmyhouse.com), which is the largest online parking community and offers users "a marketplace to rent out their available spaces."

Crisis Survival? Yup, There are Apps for That!

UrbanSurvivalSite offers nineteen survival apps (urbansurvivalsite.com/survival-apps/) for everything from CPR & Choking to Emergency Radio to GotoAID apps. Most are downloadable for iPhone and Droid. Another site offering the Seven Best Survival Apps (health.msn.com/health-topics/articlepage.aspx?cp-documentid=100270824) is at MSN.

SciPhoneApps offers an extreme survival app (www.sciphoneapps.com/details/Education/SurviveVideo!/37959) for \$1.99 (downloadable from iTunes) that is already in a "new 1.0.9 version." The app contains over 25 survival videos, mainly for surviving environmental disasters. You may never need to know how to survive a nuclear winter, shark attack, airplane crash or being stranded at sea. But for those who want to be prepared for "extreme survival" of anything and everything, such as world travelers, this is a handy app to have.

Winter blizzards can strand motorists, especially in the MidWest plains, and leave them with few resources beyond what they have in their vehicle. So Bob Bertsch and Jake Joraanstad of the North Dakota State University, teamed up to create a free app called Winter Survival Kit (www.ajc.com/news/nation-world/survival-app-aims-to-1291642.html). Downloadable through iTunes, the useful app is both "a primer to help motorists prepare for winter driving, and a beacon for when things go seriously wrong."

Drivers can use the app ahead of time to input important phone and roadside assistance numbers and insurance policy numbers. It also instructs users how to put together a physical survival kit in a vehicle. In a crisis, the app offers tips to stranded motorists on everything from pinpointing their location and calling for help, to how to use parts of the vehicle to stay warm.

Apocalypse Survival Apps



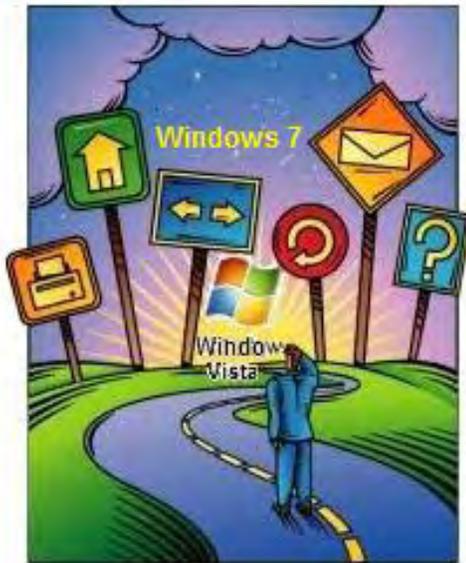
And for those who are looking forward to an extreme planetary crisis—or a life-extension of a favorite video game, here's a Nuclear Wasteland Survival app (www.pipclock.com). PipClock is an app advertising "Before leaving the Vault, check for health hazards like Acid Rain, Toxic Frogs or Fallout Vapors. Measure the radiation with the built-in Geiger Counter, or scavenge the wasteland by keeping track of distance and direction with Target Maps and a Compass!" Modeled after the fictional "PIP-Boy 2000" multipurpose survival device from

the "Fallout" games, Piplock is already in a "new 1.3 version." It's available from Apple for \$.99, or you can download a "Lite Version" for free.

In 2010, *MacWorld* offered up an article on Six Essential iPhone Apps for a Zombie Attack (www.macworld.com/article/146810/2010/03/zombieattackapps.html). These iPhone apps range from a free "Zombie Survival Sheet" to various Zombie Survival Guides offering must have knowledge such as a zombie translator ("next door tastes like chicken") and appropriate anti-zombie pants and weaponry. And lastly, a virtual "Zombie Saw" app, complete with sound and spurting blood, to try and scare off approaching zombies.

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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Windows Tips and Tricks

Windows 7 Tips and Tricks: Adding More to the Start Menu

“Configuring the Windows 7 Start Menu for Quick Access and Flexibility” by Jack Dunning

In the beginning the Windows 7 Start Menu doesn't seem like anything special. However, by default, only the bare minimum shows up when opened clicked for the first time. Dig a little deeper and make the Start Menu a power tool.

As we dig deeper into the Windows 7 Start Menu, we find that there is very little that can be done with earlier versions of Windows that can't be done in some way with Windows 7. Plus, the extras in Windows 7 help us to do so much more. In this column we will look at settings which will allow us to explore our folder and file structures without ever leaving the Start Menu.

Packing More into the Windows 7 Start Menu

Last week, we looked at how to extend the size of the Start Menu to take advantage of our screen size. But there is also a setting which allows us to fit more items on the menu. It is one of the many settings found in the Taskbar and Start Menu Properties window Start Menu tab when we click the "Customize..." button. In the opened Customize Start Menu window, the top portion is a list box of settings for controlling how the Start Menu acts (see Figure 1). (Right-click on the Start button or a clear area of the opened Start Menu and select Properties to open the Taskbar and Start Menu window, then "Customize...")

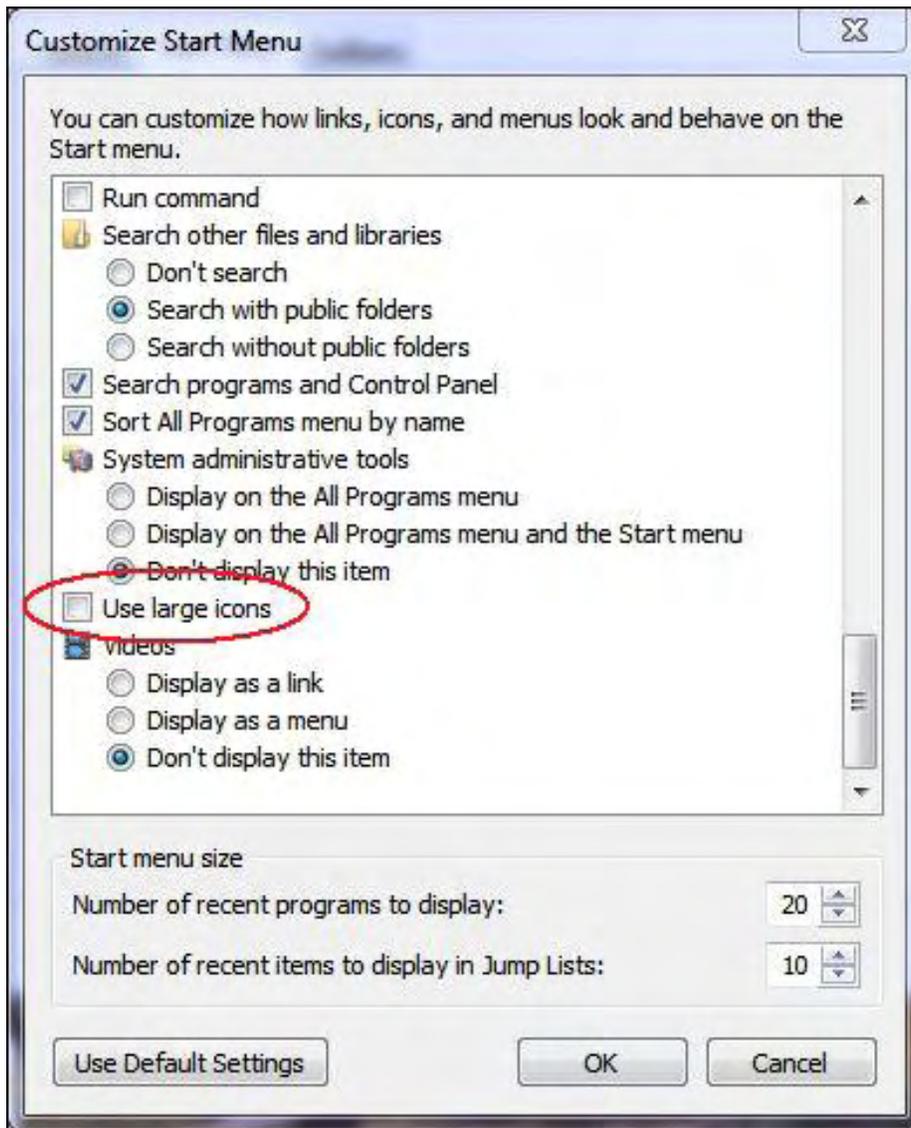


Figure 1. The Windows 7 Customize Start Menu window.

If you scroll down the list to "Use large icons" you might see it checked, which is the default setting. Uncheck the box, click OK, then Apply in the next window. This will reduce the size of the program icons, thereby allowing more to be displayed in the menu (see Figure 2).

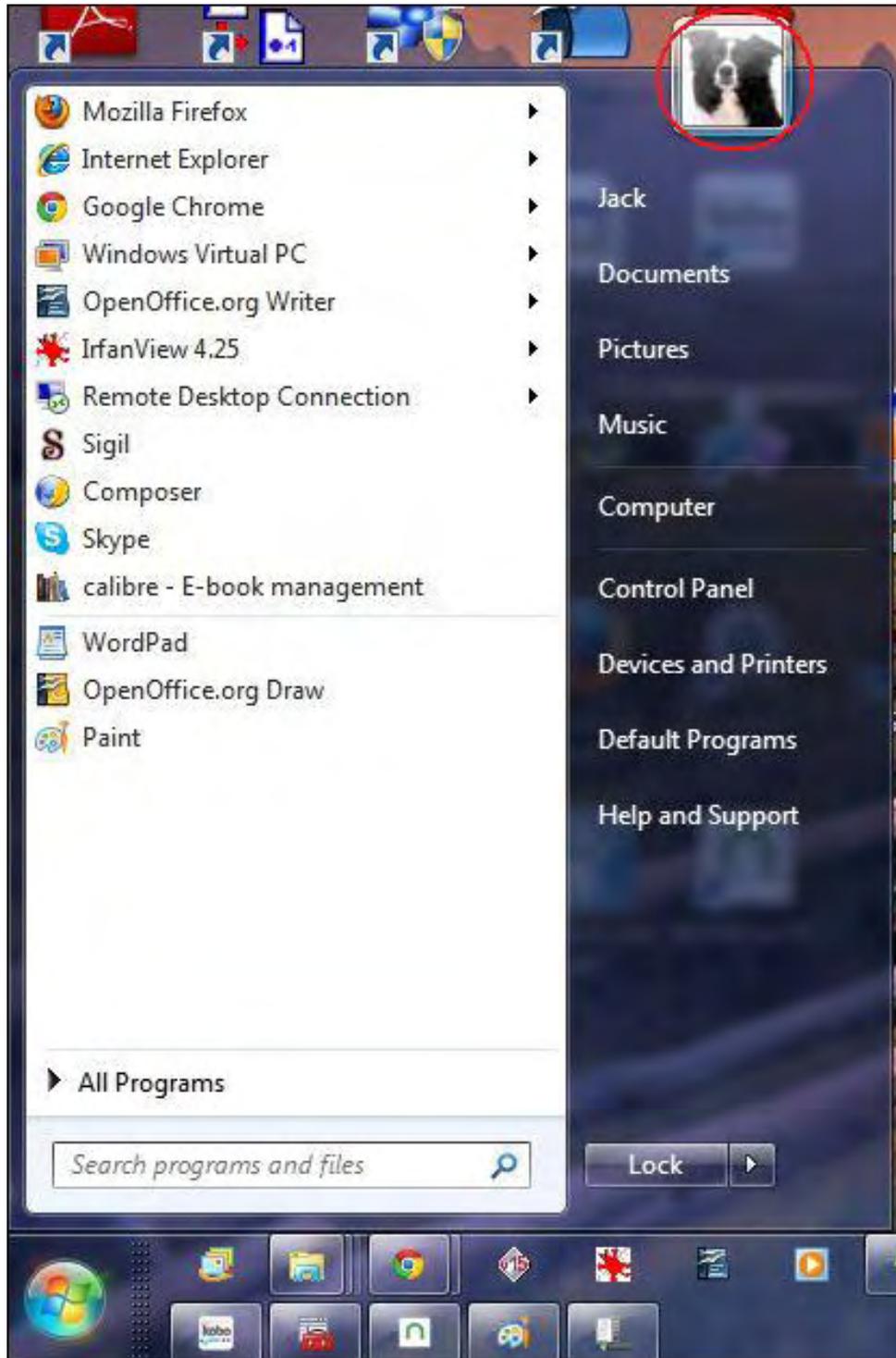


Figure 2. The smaller Windows 7 Start Menu when "Use large icons" is not set.

However, there is so much more that can be done with these settings. Notice that all of the labels on the right side of the Start Menu are merely links which will open the appropriate window. While Windows XP could be set up exactly that way (with less options), by default XP would show a menu of items when the cursor hovered over the link.

Changing Start Menu Links to Menu Lists

In the same Customized Start Menu window (Figure 1), there are numerous options for adding, removing, displaying as a link, or displaying as a menu. This is where you can tailor your Start Menu for the way you work. There may be some items that you will never use, in which case, you either uncheck the box or select "Don't display this item." Or, maybe

there are some items which don't appear in the default setup, such as the Favorites menu, Games, or Videos, that you would like to add to the Start Menu. Then you would either check the item or select either "Display as a link" or "Display as a menu" (see Figure 3). "Display as a link" adds the item to the Start Menu and will open the Windows Explorer window when the link is clicked. "Display as a menu" adds the item to the Start Menu and will display a menu of choices when you hover over the label.

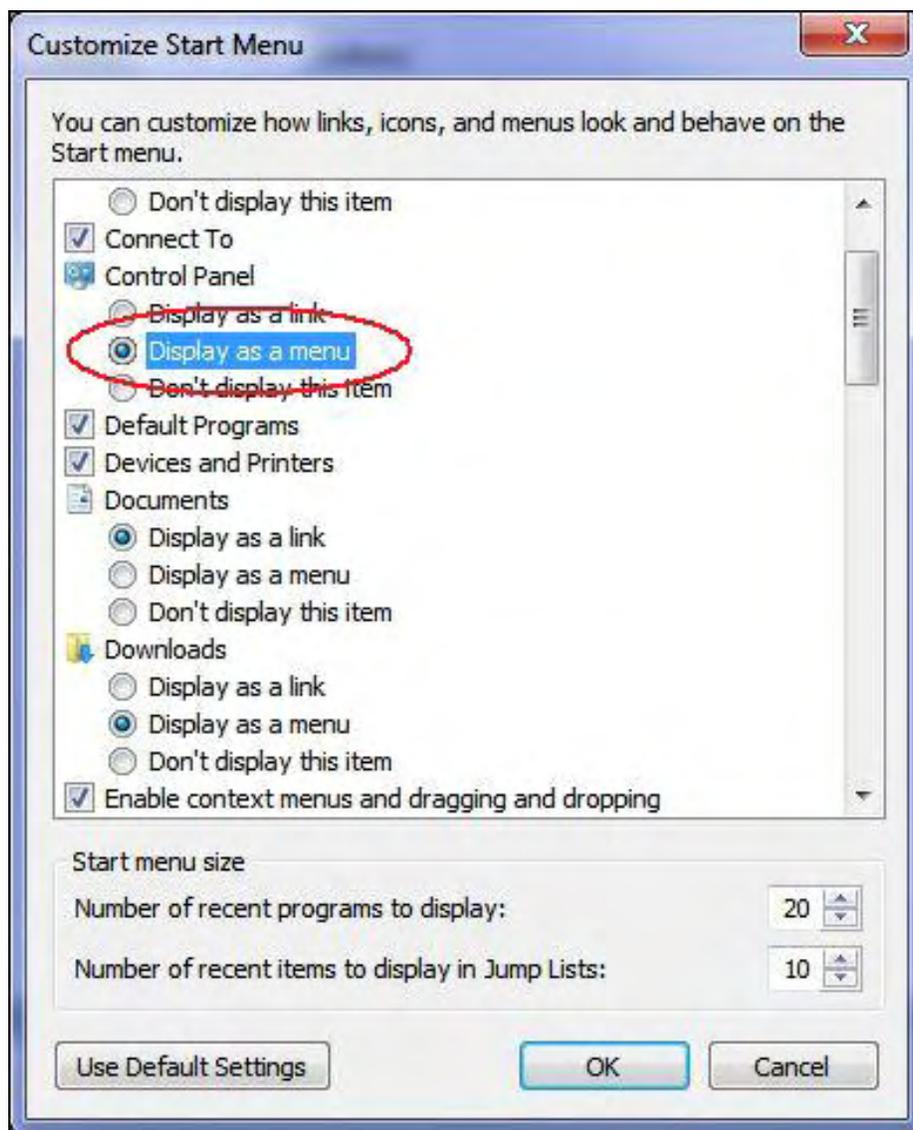


Figure 3. By selecting "Display as a menu" the Control Panel label on the Start Menu will be set to display a list of options when the cursor hovers over it.

These settings go a long way toward restoring some of what we had grown accustomed to in Windows XP. By selecting the appropriate features and turning them into menus, there is immediate, quick access to many folders, files and functions without first opening a window and navigating through a series of levels. For example, opening the Control Panel in the Category view, while helpful with user friendly suggestions, can be annoying for the experienced user. By setting the Control Panel to "Display as a menu," there is quick access to Control Panel features (see Figure 4).

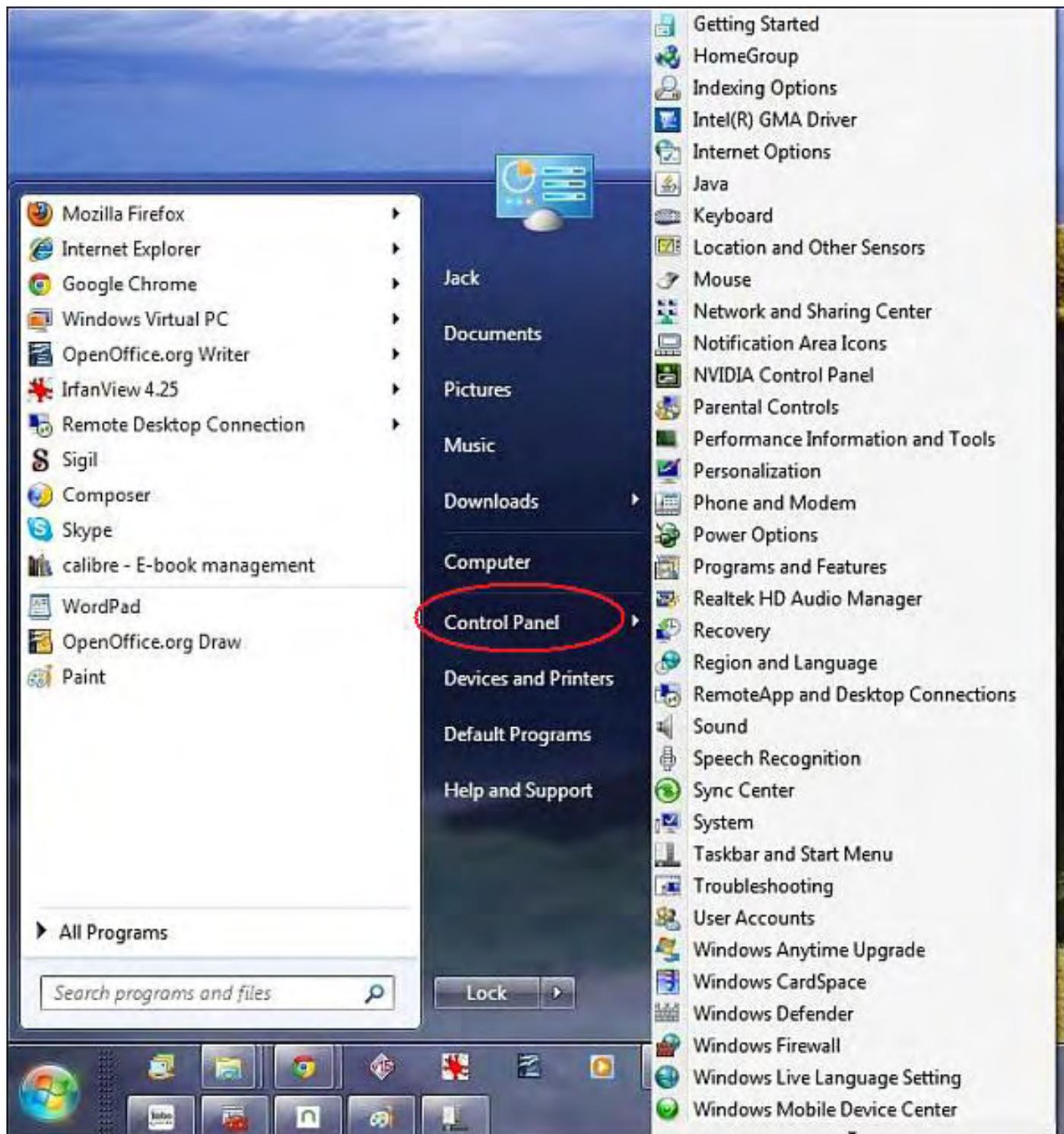


Figure 4. With "Display as a menu," there is quick access to Control Panel features in the Windows 7 Start Menu.

I recommend that you test the various settings, checking out how they affect the Start Menu. With some items you will want the quick menu; with others, the link opening a working window will be desirable. It is purely your preference.

Windows 7 Libraries on the Start Menu

As I mentioned last week, one of the significant differences in the Windows 7 Start Menu is that Documents, Pictures, Music, Videos, Recorded TV are Libraries rather than folders. That means that when in the "Display as a menu" mode, they will open a menu tree of all the folders and files in the selected Library. Those items may be located on the same computer or on any other shared computer or storage device on the network. In Figure 5, the Start Menu is displaying

right-clicking on the feature name will give the same option.

More Right-Click Options

Right-clicking on any of the feature labels on the right side of the Windows 7 Start Menu will offer a variety of options, depending upon the particular item. Some right-clicks will allow only the opening of the item from the Start Menu, while others may offer more, such as "Send to" and "Include in library." When you're considering an action, it is always worthwhile to right-click on an appropriate item to see if that action is available in the menu. For example, a right-click on Downloads will show a security scan option and "Include in library," but not "Show/Don't show in navigation pane" since Downloads is not a Library (see Figure 6).

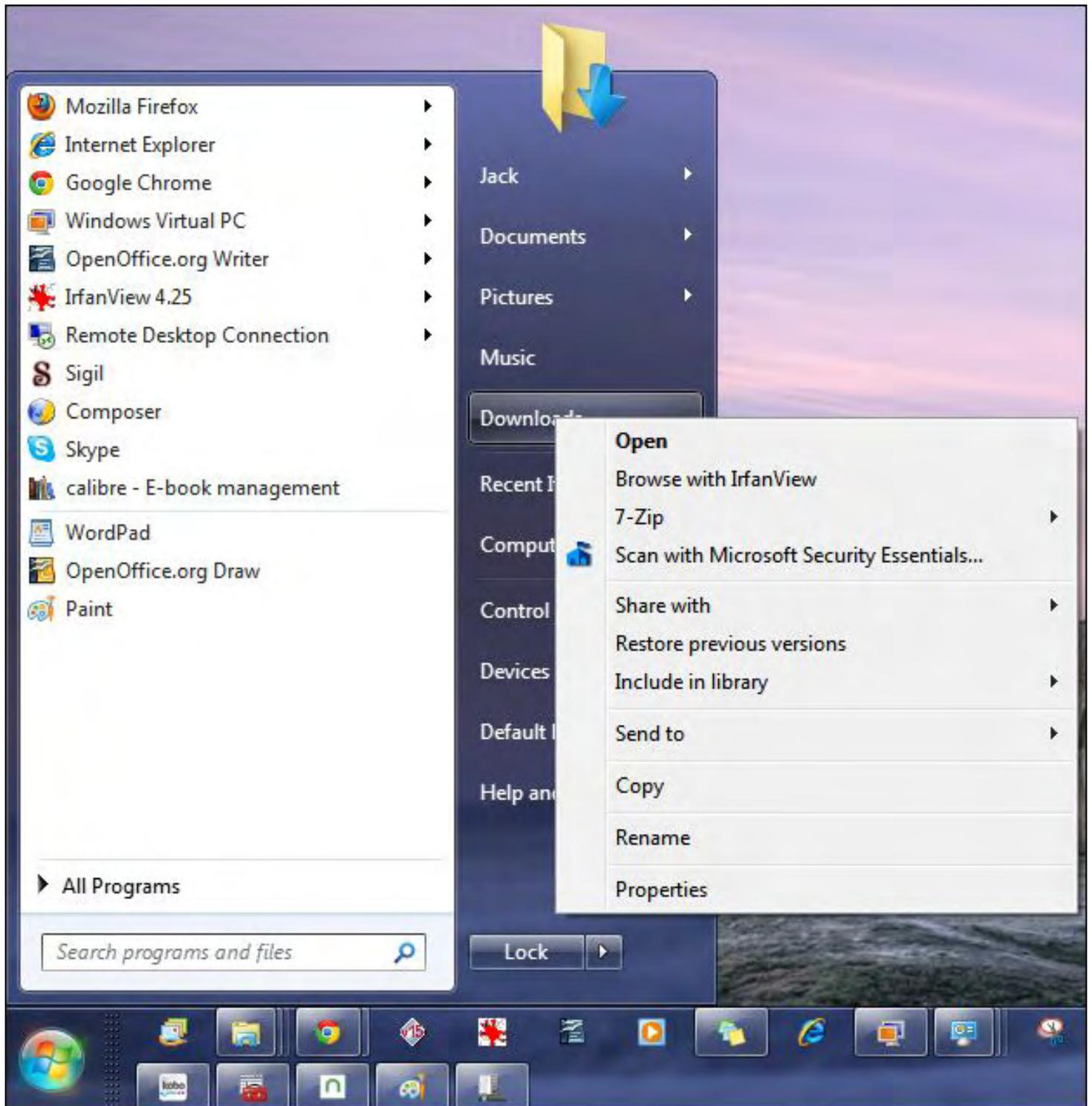


Figure 6. A menu pops open when Downloads is right-clicked.

Next week's column will dig into special interest items, such as how to simulate the old All Programs menu tree in the Windows XP Start Menu. Plus, ways to add Internet searches, how to disable features in Windows Professional and above that kids like to accidentally activate, and adding the "GodMode" to the Start Menu. These are also available in the new e-book *Windows 7 Start Menu Secrets* (www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-Tips-and-Tricks_c4.htm).

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is www.computoredge.com. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoredge.com. Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

Windows 7 Start Menu Secrets (EPUB for iPad, NOOK, etc.) (www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-Start-Menu-Secrets-EPUB-for-iPad-NOOK-etc-Wintips0004-1.htm?sourceCode=writer)

Windows 7 Start Menu Secrets (MOBI for Amazon Kindle) (www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-Start-Menu-Secrets-MOBI-for-Amazon-Kindle-Wintips0004-2.htm?sourceCode=writer)

Windows 7 Explorer Secrets (EPUB for iPad, NOOK, etc.) (www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-Explorer-Secrets-EPUB-for-iPad-NOOK-etc-Wintips0003-1.htm?sourceCode=writer)

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Windows 7 Taskbar Secrets (EPUB for iPad, NOOK, etc.) (www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-Taskbar-Secrets-EPUB-for-iPad-NOOK-etc-Wintips0002-1.htm?sourceCode=writer)

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Apple's Financial Results” by Wally Wang

Apple's Financial Results; Making Your Plan B; E-Books vs. Printed Books; One in Five Global Information Workers are Using Apple Products; Dashboard Widgets.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

While some people continue to ignore Apple as a niche computer maker, it's hard to argue about their latest financial results (www.apple.com/pr/library/2012/01/24Apple-Reports-First-Quarter-Results.html): "The Company sold 37.04 million iPhones in the quarter, representing 128 percent unit growth over the year-ago quarter. Apple sold 15.43 million iPads during the quarter, a 111 percent unit increase over the year-ago quarter. The Company sold 5.2 million Macs during the quarter, a 26 percent unit increase over the year-ago quarter. Apple sold 15.4 million iPods, a 21 percent unit decline from the year-ago quarter."

It's no surprise that iPods are fading. Why buy a separate MP3 player when you have a built-in iPod when you buy an iPhone or iPad? The iPod touch is great for people who want to run apps without the monthly cost of a cellular phone bill, but otherwise the market for dedicated MP3 players is long gone. Even Microsoft realized this when they killed their Zune MP3 player.

What's more incredible is that sales of the iPhone keep skyrocketing (www.zdnet.com/blog/bott/with-apples-us-dominance-smartphone-race-heads-overseas/4407?tag=mantle_skin;content). In the United States, Verizon sold 4.2 million iPhones vs. 3.5 million Android phones while AT&T sold 7.6 million iPhones vs. 1.8 million Android phones. Now that the iPhone is available on other carriers besides AT&T in the United States, it seems clear that the iPhone is more popular. Over time, we can see if this trend continues, which will verify if Android phones were only popular because they were available on multiple carriers while the iPhone initially was not.

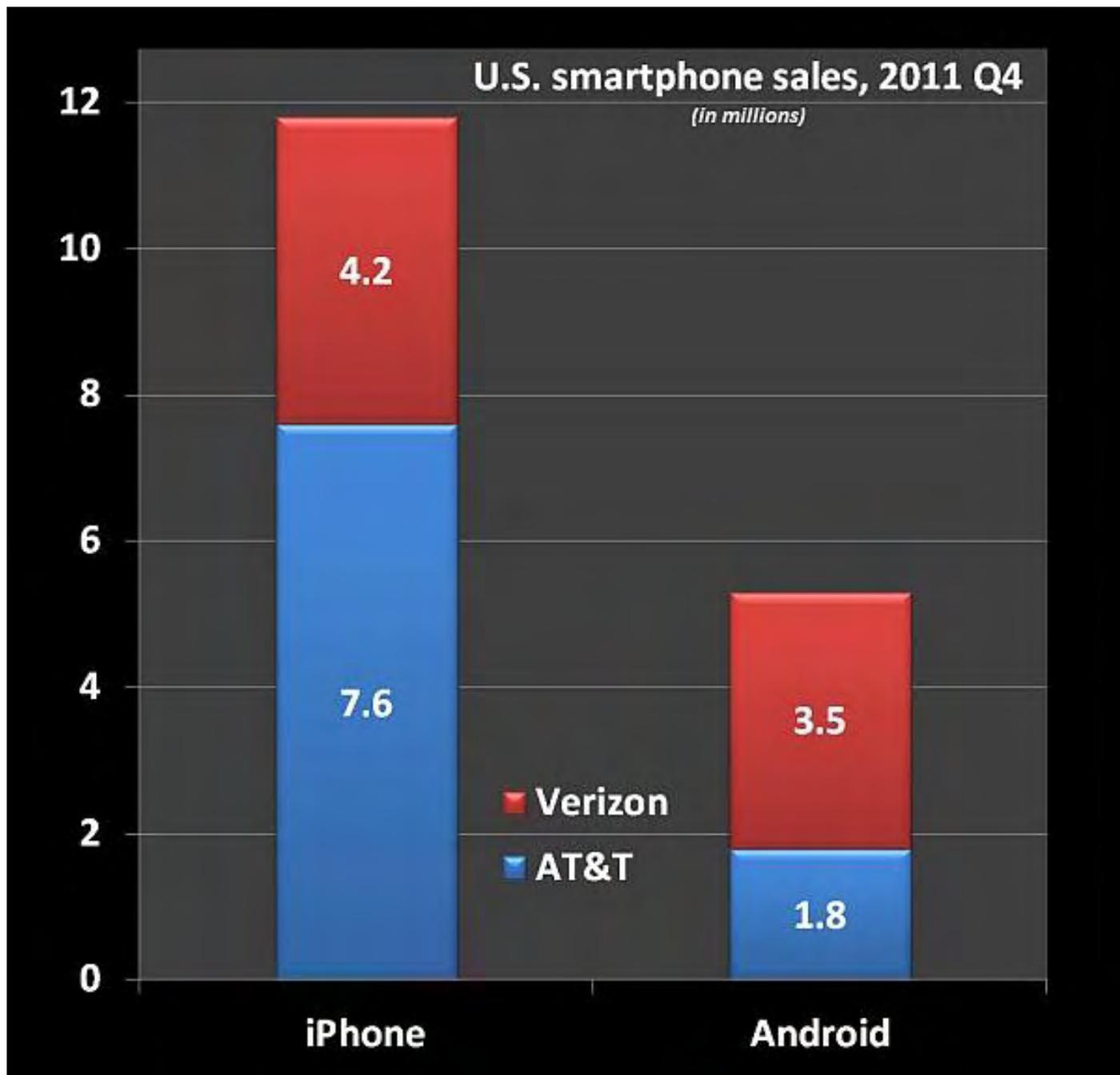


Figure 1. Both Verizon and AT&T sold more iPhones than Android phones.

The iPhone alone generated \$24.42 billion in revenue (betanews.com/2012/01/24/iphone-generates-more-revenue-than-all-microsoft/) while every product line from Microsoft only generated \$20.89 billion in that same quarter. For one product, such as the iPhone, to exceed all revenue from every Microsoft product on the market means nobody can ignore Apple's influence on the technology market any longer.

Curiously, as PC sales keep dropping for multiple reasons, Macintosh sales increased 26 percent despite costing more than the average PC. Perhaps the real reason PC sales keep dropping is because many people no longer want them no matter how cheap they may be.

The increase in iPad sales makes sense because no company has come up with a credible iPad competitor (www.infoworld.com/slideshow/28336/happy-birthday-ipad-rip-pretenders-185053#slide1) yet. Amazon's Kindle Fire is more of a souped up e-reader and perfect for its audience. For people who don't want an iPad, a Kindle Fire

might be a less expensive option. For someone who wants an iPad, a Kindle Fire is probably too limited with its smaller selection of apps and greater difficulty of typing directly on its smaller screen.

Good Technology recently released a report comparing iOS device (www.good.com/resources/Good_Data_Q4_2011.pdf) (iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch) to Android device activations. In the last quarter, iOS activations grew while Android activations slipped.

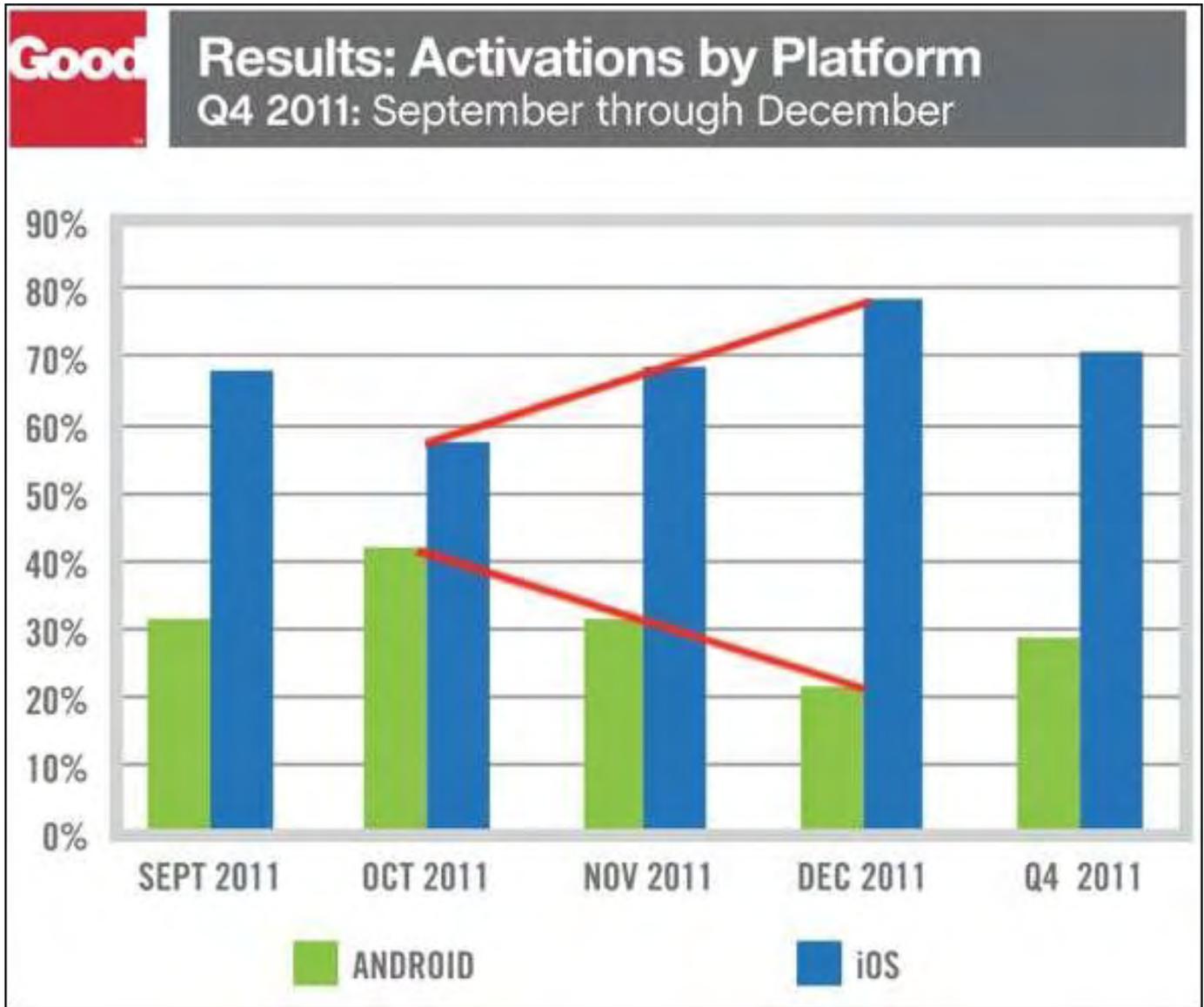


Figure 2. Android activations slowed during the last quarter vs. iOS.

More telling is the number of Android activations by device type. While iPhone activations dominated, iPad activations nearly matched Android smart phone activations while Android tablet activations look practically non-existent.

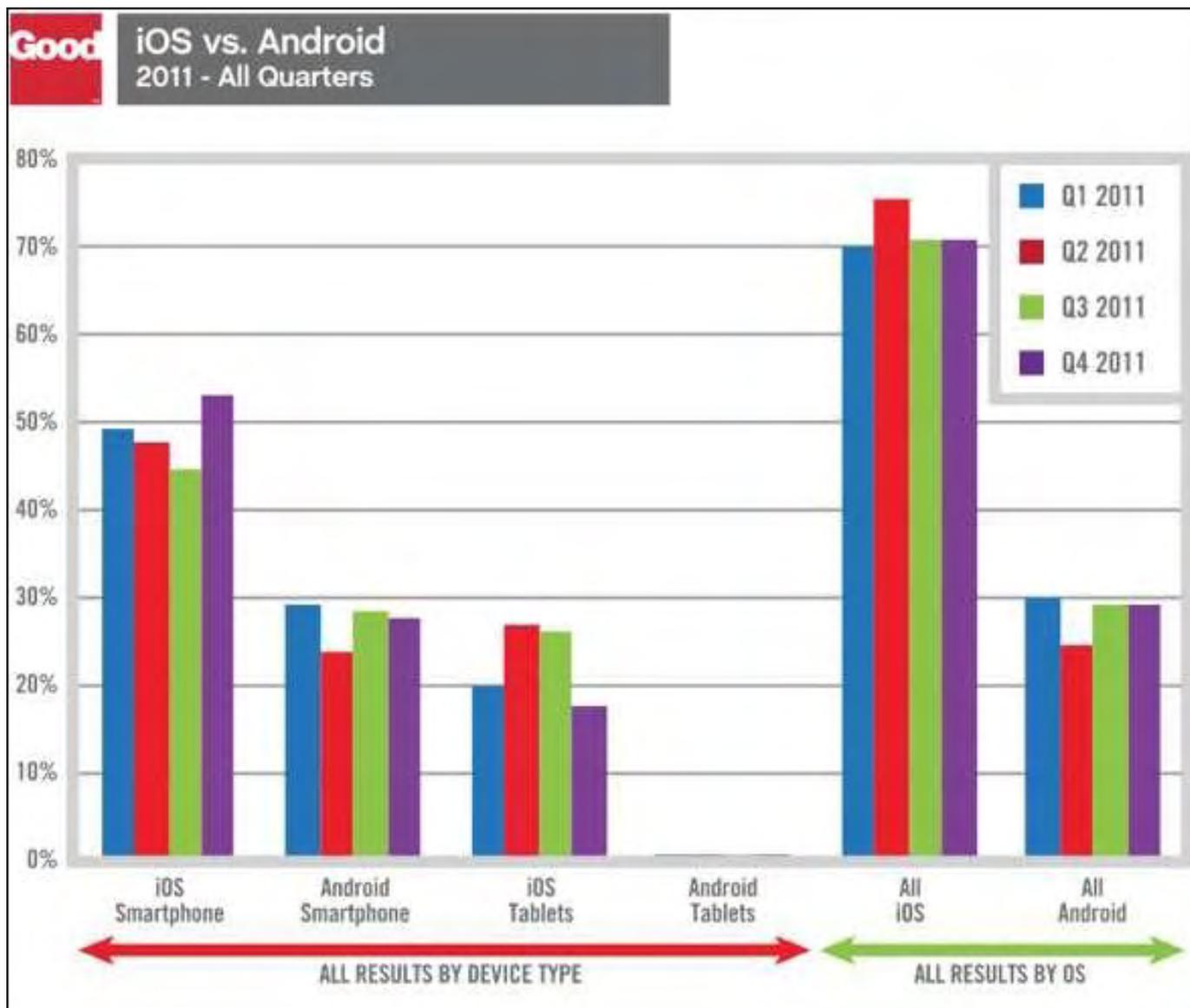


Figure 3. Android tablet activations remain far behind Android smartphone activations.

What's likely happening is that with mobile devices like smartphones and tablets, people no longer feel compelled to keep buying the latest and greatest PC any more. They can often accomplish the bulk of their tasks on a smartphone or tablet, and keep using their current PC for a few more years where in the past they might have upgraded their PC instead. The longer people hold on to their PCs (or get rid of them altogether), the fewer people will keep buying PCs at the rapid pace they did just a few years ago.

Combine the shift to mobile devices with the growth of the Macintosh and you have a recipe for continual declines in PC sales. Will Windows 8 save the PC market? If people aren't buying new PCs now, what will they get out of a touch-screen, tablet-oriented operating system running on a desktop or laptop? Windows 8 is a giant leap forward for tablet devices, but offers less compelling reasons to use it on a regular PC.

Microsoft hopes that Windows 8 will sell more tablets, yet their tablet strategy is badly flawed. One reason people are flocking to the iPad and other tablets like the Kindle Fire is because tablets are much simpler to use than an ordinary computer. Now look at Microsoft's solution at bringing the complexity of the desktop PC to the Intel/AMD tablets through Windows 8 and you have to wonder about the wisdom of this strategy.

The big advantage of Windows 8 tablets is that you'll be able to run all your legacy Windows programs on a tablet (unless

you get an ARM-based tablet). Does anyone want to run an old copy of Word 2003 on a tablet, especially through an interface that was never designed for touch gestures?

Back in the early days of the PC world, Z-80 processors and CP/M-80 were considered the "business" standard for computers. When the IBM PC came out, one company came up with a unique solution called the Seequa Chameleon PC (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seequa_Chameleon), which included both a Z-80 and an Intel 8088 processor inside.

The idea was that you could run both CP/M-80 and MS-DOS programs on a single computer, much like you can run both older Windows and newer Metro-style programs on a Windows 8 tablet. Unfortunately for Seequa, people either wanted to run their old CP/M-80 programs or they wanted to run the newer MS-DOS programs; they rarely wanted to do both on the same computer. As a result, the Seequa Chameleon PC sold poorly and faded from the market of IBM PC compatible manufacturers.

If people didn't like the idea of running a combination of old and new software on one machine back then, will that change today with Windows 8 tablets using Intel/AMD processors? Windows 8 tablets running ARM processors looks interesting. Windows 8 tablets running Intel/AMD processors just to maintain compatibility with older programs while also running newer Metro-style apps does not look as compelling, just like the Seequa Chameleon PC.

Perhaps Microsoft could subsidize other manufacturers for making Windows 8 tablets, just like they're subsidizing Nokia (informationweek.com/news/windows/microsoft_news/232500622) for selling Windows Phone 7 phones. If Microsoft fumbles the launch of Windows 8 tablets, Windows 8 has the potential to make Vista look like a roaring success.

Making Your Plan B

Watching Kodak stumble over digital photography and Borders stumble over e-books and e-commerce highlights the biggest problem with most companies. They have a Plan A but they don't have a Plan B.

Kodak's Plan A was that their film business would last forever. After all, it lasted for decades, so it's only logical to expect it will continue to last. When Kodak's Plan A failed, they failed. Borders's Plan A was that people would keep buying books from their retail stores. When that Plan A failed, Borders failed.

Most people also don't have a Plan B. Their Plan A is to stay in a "safe" and "secure" job for the rest of their life. When their "safe" and "secure" job, not to mention their company or even their entire industry disappears, they have no Plan B.

For everyone who thinks Windows will be around forever, the evidence suggests otherwise. At one time, Paradox was one of the fastest growing database programs and people even flew trainers around the country to teach Paradox programming. When Paradox disappeared, those people's jobs disappeared.

The same thing happened to Lotus 1-2-3, WordStar, WordPerfect, and dBASE experts too. They believed that because dBASE, Lotus 1-2-3, WordPerfect, Blackberries, WordStar, Nokia's Symbian OS, Novell NetWare, or Paradox was the leader, it will always be the leader. The arguments are always the same:

"Business is too entrenched with _____ to switch to something else."

"The installed base of _____ is too large to use anything else."

"Everyone already knows and uses _____ so they won't want to retrain and use something else."

"_____ is the standard so it will always be the standard."

"There's too much third-party support for _____ so it will never go away."

When I ask Windows book authors if they have a Plan B in case the Windows market drops, they not only don't have a Plan B, they deny that they'll ever need one. In their mind, business is too entrenched with Windows to switch to something else, the installed base of Windows is too large to use anything else, everyone already knows and uses Windows so they won't want to retrain and use something else, Windows is the standard so it will always be the standard, and there's too much third-party support for Windows so it will never go away. With this type of mentality, these people could just as well be CEOs at Kodak or Borders. If they fail at that, they can always become dBASE, Lotus 1-2-3, or Paradox consultants.

Nothing lasts forever, and the evidence of growing sales of mobile devices and sinking sales of PCs, along with an endless parade of former leading products that are no longer in use simply confirms their belief that Windows will be the sole exception and magically last forever because they want it to.

In the last quarter, Windows sales dipped 6 percent, and this was during the holiday buying season when you'd expect sales of everything to increase. If Windows PCs can't sell well during the holiday shopping season, what will the next few quarters of Windows sales look like without the impetus of holiday shopping?

One day the Macintosh, iPhone, and iPad will also fade away and all those people who claimed that Windows would never disappear will argue just as vehemently that Apple will never go away. When you look at the track record of the human race, it's hard to believe that evolution could ever be possible. If anything's more likely, it's that the human race is gradually degenerating instead, led by hordes of people who think denying facts makes those facts disappear and that clinging to fantasies makes delusions become real.

E-Books vs. Printed Books

Beyond the decline of Windows PCs and the rise of the Macintosh, iPhone, and iPad, another interesting area of change revolves around e-books vs. printed books. Printed book advocates claim that e-books can never duplicate printed books, and they're right. E-books will simply surpass them.

In the old days of movies, films were little more than stage plays captured on film. Only as film evolved did directors discover how to take advantage of features that stage plays could never duplicate such as close ups, special effects, or rapid cuts between a variety of different locations.

Once filmmakers freed themselves from the mental limitations of trying to duplicate a stage play, they could exploit the advantages of film as a medium in itself. The same will likely happen with e-books.

Today's e-books are simply awful. Take a PDF file of a printed book, throw it on the Internet, then charge nearly as much for this PDF as for a printed copy of the book, and call that your e-book strategy. That's basically what most publishers are doing.

What e-books need to do is offer features that printed books simply can't duplicate. Printed books stay in print as long as the book sells a certain number of copies. Once it falls below that fixed number, the book goes out of print and you can only get it by finding a used copy. Each sale of a used copy does nothing for either the publisher or the author.

In comparison, an e-book never needs to go out of print since you can store it for a trivial cost on a computer. Even outdated books can still sell an occasional copy despite their age, which means you can continue making money off an out of print book by simply making it an e-book.

In most printed books, there's a list of other books by the same author. The hope is that if you like the current book, you'll be more inclined to find and buy other books by the same author. Yet hoping people will do something is far different than actually improving the odds that they'll do what you want.

With an e-book, you can not only list other books by the same author, you can make each title in that list a link to Amazon.com. Now instead of hoping a reader will buy your book, a live link embedded in an e-book can lead readers to purchasing that book. Make that live link an affiliate link with Amazon and you'll make money from book royalties and additional money through your affiliate link all while increasing the chances that someone will actually look up your other books and buy them. That's something no printed book can ever do.

These are just two advantages of e-books over printed books, and that still ignores the inclusion of video, interactive graphics, and audio that an e-book can offer that a printed book cannot. Toss in the greater and faster distribution of an e-book over a printed book and suddenly printed books look as antiquated as a mechanical sewing machine that you have to pedal instead of relying on electricity.

NBC News even plans to create their own e-books (www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2399240,00.asp) based on their vast resources of video from their decades of broadcasting. Right now all those videos are collecting dust, but store them in an e-book and suddenly those videos can start earning money. Once again, e-books have another advantage over printed books.

Printed books will always hold certain advantages over e-books, but the number of advantages that e-books offer continues to increase. The technology for printed books is basically standing still. The technology for e-books is yet to be explored. Can you guess which market offers the greatest potential opportunities for the future?

One in Five Global Information Workers Using Apple Products

The latest Forrsights survey asked over 10,000 workers what devices they use at work (blogs.forrester.com/frank_gillett/12-01-26-apple_infiltrates_the_enterprise_15_of_global_info_workers_use_apple_products_for_work_0) and found that one in five are now using a Macintosh, iPhone, or iPad.

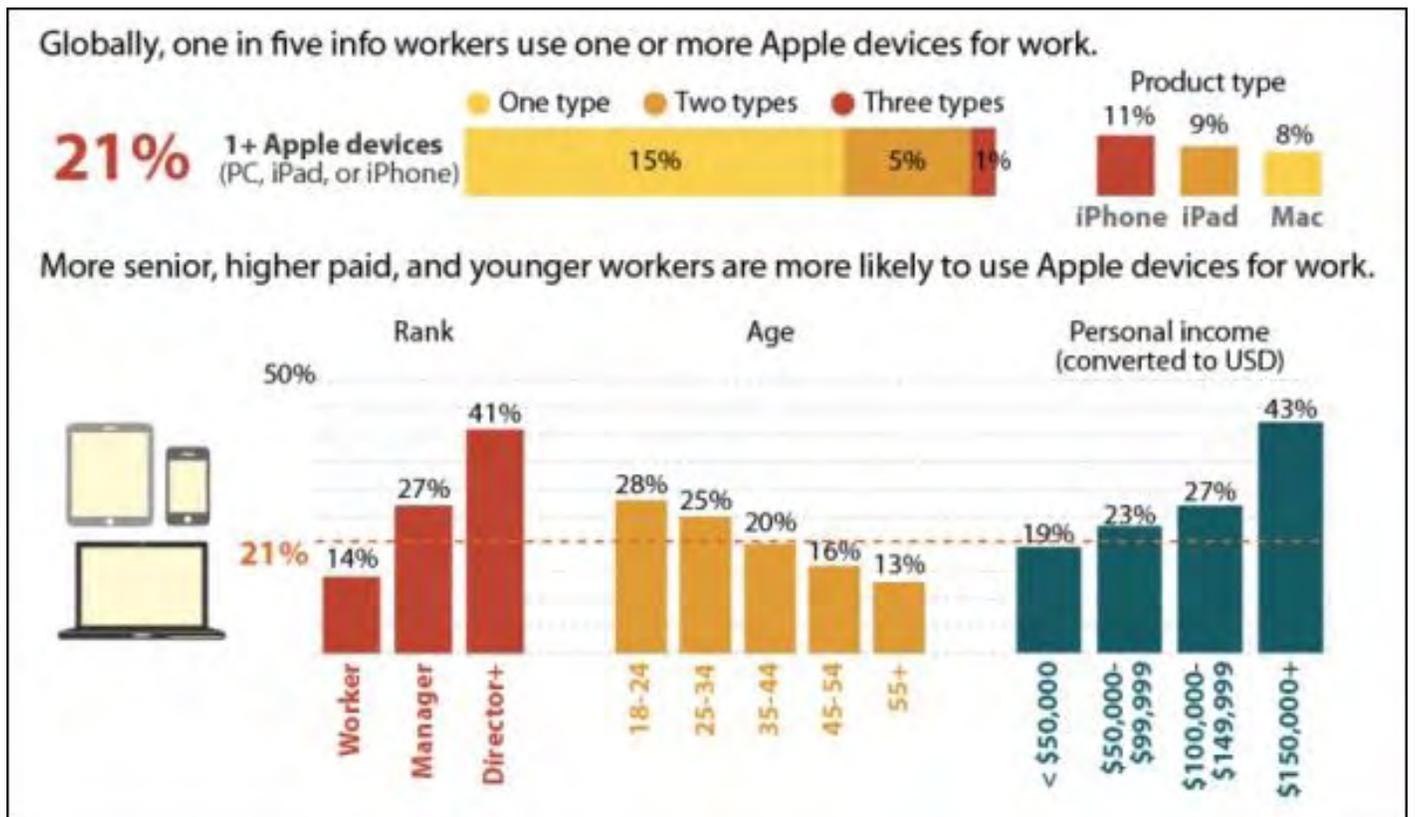


Figure 4. Higher ranking, younger, wealthier people are more likely to use Apple products.

What's particularly interesting is that this survey found that people most likely to use Apple devices are higher ranking, younger, and higher income individuals. That also indicates that the people least likely to use Apple products are lower ranking, older, and lower income individuals.

While you can't physically get any younger, you can always get mentally younger by learning to think with a more open mind. For guidance, read Thomas Kuhn's book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0226458083/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0226458083). This book coined the term "paradigm shift" where people can't see anything beyond the world that they're already immersed in. Anything inside their world makes sense and anything outside of their world is completely illogical.

If you're a lower ranking, older, lower income individual who's also tech-savvy, chances are extremely high you might be caught within this paradigm shift where you can't see beyond the world of Windows PCs as the rest of the world changes to mobile devices and bring-your-own-device (www.zdnet.com/blog/btl/cisco-nearly-half-of-it-managers-still-against-byod-trend/67804?tag=content;feature-rot) policies that allow workers to choose the technological tools that work best for them, despite the fears of the IT department. Rather than change your thinking and adapt to a new world, it's often easier to cling to your thinking and deny change until it's too late.

Just remember that in his book *Unlimited Power* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0684845776/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0684845776), Anthony Robbins tells the story of how Colonel Sanders retired at age 65, took one look at his meager Social Security check, and decided he couldn't live on that pitiful income.

A close-minded person might simply complain that the world was unfair, but Colonel Sanders thought with an open mind and decided that if he wanted a better life, he would have to take action to make it happen. His only asset was a fried chicken recipe so he approached over 1,000 restaurants and offered to let them have his fried chicken recipe in return for a share of the profits.

Naturally, nearly all of these restaurants turned him down but one finally agreed, and that was the start of the entire Kentucky Fried Chicken chain of restaurants that allowed Colonel Sanders to retire in comfort.

So if you're a lower ranking, older, lower income person, you can either stay where you are and be happy about it (and keep all your negativity to yourself), or you can decide to change and take action to make your life better like Colonel Sanders. If you start thinking with a more open mind, you might get a higher rank in your job and with that higher rank, earn more income. Then with higher disposable income, you can really make a choice between buying a Macintosh or a Windows PC based on what you want rather than what you think you can afford. Just like Colonel Sanders, you can change your life for the better, but only if you believe it's even possible for you and everyone else.

* * *

Press F12 or slide three fingers horizontally to the right on a trackpad and you'll see the Dashboard, which consists of individual widgets that perform specific tasks such as displaying calendars or calculators.



Figure 5. The Dashboard lets you view widgets that display useful information.

While the current list of widgets might be all you need, visit Apple's Dashboard page (www.apple.com/downloads/dashboard/) and you can download and install other widgets to put on your dashboard so you can view practically any information you want at a moment's notice.

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.

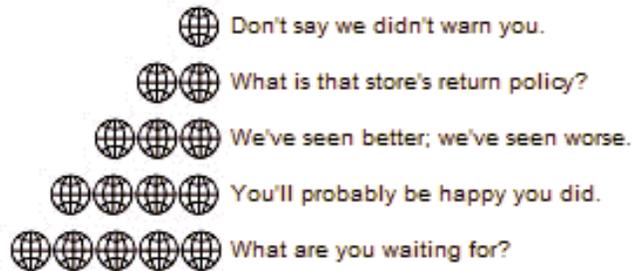
Wally is responsible for the following books:

- My New Mac, Lion Edition* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593273908/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908)
- 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* (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 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.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DJYL70)
- 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)

ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M)
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)
www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006QSKM3A/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006QSKM3A)
99% Fairy Tales (Children's Stories the 1% Tell About the Rest of Us) ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006PUFPGI/ref=as_li_tf_tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006PUFPGI/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006PUFPGI)
[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))

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 News & Product Reviews

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

Have You Made Your Digital Will?, The Problem with RIM—One Perspective, Service Desk Horror Stories, Kodak ESP C315 All-in-One Printer.

Have You Made Your Digital Will?

Sonia Blumstein, representing the American Institute for Economic Research (AIER (www.aier.org/)), an independent nonprofit whose research helps individual Americans protect their personal financial interests, notes:

Including digital assets in your estate planning is essential in the Information Age. Digital assets range from online financial accounts to e-mail and social networking accounts and domain names. Photographs, documents and other files also can be included.

"Most people store vast amounts of information on computers and online, yet few think about what will happen to their digital assets after they're gone," says Steven J.J. Weisman, a lawyer and contributor to AIER. "This is a big mistake in the Information Age."

Consider the example of the famous U.S. conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein, long-time music director of the New York Philharmonic, who, in addition to his many published works—including the music to *West Side Story*—left behind a memoir in a password-protected file. The memoir, undisclosed in his estate, remains inaccessible.

Bernstein's story, unfortunately, is all too common.

"The law has been slow to recognize the importance of digital estate administration. Currently, Oklahoma is the only state that specifically grants executors power to deal with digital assets," Weisman says.

Weisman suggests that for under a few hundred dollars, "...the best way to ensure continuity is through a trust created by a lawyer versed in both estate planning law and digital assets. The trust should specify your digital assets, provide passwords and include instructions for accessing, administering and deleting assets."

"Effective digital estate planning can also be a critical part of protecting the deceased from identity theft after death, which can be a considerable problem," said Weisman.

There is no substitute for digital estate planning. Web sites with policies for posthumous accounts and digital executors such as Entrustet and DataInherit are relatively new and untested and they cannot act in place of a Will or a trust for effectively passing on intellectual property.

"Failing to consider your digital afterlife may prevent or complicate the distribution of financial and other assets," advises Weisman.

The Problem with RIM—One Perspective

According to Alex Goldfayn, CEO of the Evangelist Marketing Institute (www.EvangelistMktg.com), a marketing consultancy with clients that include T-Mobile, Sprint, Logitech, TiVo and Yelp!:



I believe RIM's rather massive problems begin and end with marketing. Here are the primary reasons, in order of importance, for the company's damaging recent struggles:

The Wall Street Journal reported a few months ago that the two CEOs disagreed and openly argued about who the customer was—corporate or consumer. If you don't know who your customer is, how can you develop effective products? How can you market well? What language do you use? With this problem, you basically have no chance.

RIM stopped making excellent products. To focus on the poorly-received Playbook tablet, RIM got away from innovating the product its evangelists came to it for—the Blackberry smartphone. Good tech marketing begins with excellent products. RIM doesn't have them.

RIM stopped communicating effectively with the market. Tech companies must never stop communicating. If they do, somebody else will fill the empty space. We've seen it with TiVo, and we're now seeing it with RIM and Netflix. RIM stopped talking to its smartphone customers, and all the Android makers, not to mention Apple, were happy to take over.

As a result—no clearly defined target audience, no excellent products, and little outbound communication—customers simply fled in droves. In technology, companies must continue to innovate their marketing as aggressively as their products not only to attain success, but to retain it. RIM has not, and the results are obvious and rather brutal.

Service Desk Horror Stories

Courtney Cooper, from the provider of integrated information and communications technology (ICT) solutions, Logicalis (www.us.logicalis.com), writes in IT horror stories and possible remedies:

By now, almost everyone has a help desk or service desk story to tell. Usually, it's the bad ones people hear about most—calling a service desk in some remote corner of the world, being unable to communicate with the person who answers the phone, calls being dropped, or worse yet, users being placed on hold for what seems like an eternity. To find out what IT pros think the pitfalls really are with service desks, Logicalis compiled a list of their top six concerns and how these concerns could be alleviated.

1) Quality of Service: Companies know that their reputation is on the line when they trust someone else to interface with their customers; the people doing the job are not physically located in their building, and aren't a member of their in-house staff. The fear is that they don't have a vested interest in preserving the company's image with clients. The solution? Engage with service desk providers that create a branded experience that is transparent to the end user. Choose a provider that delivers support on a dedicated phone line, answers with the client company's call script, and incorporates the client's corporate messaging. The experience should be so seamless that the end user never even realizes they are calling someone off-site.

2) Cost Savings Won't Materialize: Most companies that do operate their own internal service desk have one that is pretty lean. Even in sizable organizations, it's typical to see a service desk manned by a small number of full-time employees, which gives employers the impression that partnering couldn't improve their costs. But when employees take sick days, vacation days or even just go to lunch, their absence is often handled by creating rotations or pulling other employees away from their normal positions to fill in. With a smaller staff, these absences can cause a significant and costly problem—one that doesn't happen when service desks are handled by a partner. Additionally, many companies just don't have the

bandwidth to offer the 24/7/365 support end users want today. Filling that need would require the organization to hire many more full-time people, whereas with a service desk, its resources are its people and they can be leveraged across accounts, particularly at night and on weekends when call volumes are lower. Want to test a partner model without fully committing? Look for one that offers an after-hours-only service, and use it to extend the 9-to-5 workday into a 24/7 operation.

3) Jobs Will Be Lost: This is both true and false at the same time. By definition, outsourcing a service does mean that the company purchasing that service will be able to offer that functionality with a leaner staff. But that doesn't have to mean dismissing those employees; in many cases, employees who once worked as in-house service desk agents can be redeployed into new roles in the organization. In the end, if the goal is to offer 24/7 support, the question isn't as much what may be lost, but what may be gained.

4) Service Levels: This is a valid concern, but only if the service level agreements (SLAs) don't specify the metrics by which the provider will be measured. Choose an organization that records every call so it can be referenced and reviewed in the event a complaint is lodged. Make sure the service desk team performs regular quality checks and that SLAs define exactly what is expected—average answer speed, rate of dropped/abandoned calls, how many incidents are to be resolved. Other service-level concerns may be a matter of logistics: Where is the provider—and more importantly—where are its service desk agents located? Choose a service desk that has its location in the same country as the users it will serve and has agents who speak the same language and dialect as the client's users or, in the case of a multinational client, has its location in a central location for the company's business with bilingual agents who are completely fluent in both languages and common dialects so communication barriers won't present a problem.

5) Current In-House Team is Efficient & Effective: This may be true! Some in-house service desks are efficient and effective. In this case, the client may want to retain their in-house, full-time staff, but if they don't have a 24/7/365 offering, perhaps extend what they are already doing well by offering their after-hours service through a qualified partner capable of providing a transparent and branded option. In today's 24-hour, instant-results society, around-the-clock access to IT support is no longer a luxury, but an expectation. Another consideration is cost: If a company needs to trim its IT budget, a service desk partner may be one way to meet that requirement, offering an equally efficient and effective help desk at a lower cost.

6) Bad Experiences with Outsourcing in the Past: No one can guarantee that a client won't have a bad experience with a particular provider. However, explicit SLAs, an experienced team, ITIL best practices, and a low turnover rate among service desk agents are all good signs that the company's methodology and delivery methods are sound. Ask for customer references and find out how long the company retains its average customer as well—these are good indicators of satisfaction and give prospective clients a benchmark by which to measure the provider's level of expertise.

Kodak ESP C315 All-in-One Printer

Ever been to an inexpensive all-you-can-eat buffet that gave its customers really tiny plates? That's a pretty good analogy to describe the way Kodak handles ink usage with their ESP C315 All-in-One printer (store.kodak.com/store/ekconsus/en_US/pd/productID.237360300/#accessories, \$99.99 list).



While it's true that the ESP C315's refill cartridges cost about half as much as those of other printer manufacturers (which are ridiculously overpriced), you'd better factor in the price of gas down to your local Staples or Office Depot while you're at it, because you're going to be driving down there more often to buy those cheap Kodak refill carts—at least twice as often, from my experience.

Adding insult to injury, I also had quite a bit of difficulty getting the printer to recognize brand new cartridges and—something that made me feel like someone was stealing my wallet—the printer would stop printing if either the color or black cartridge was deemed to be low. Imagine desperately needing to print a text document at 11pm and being told you couldn't because the color cart was low—even though your black cart had plenty of ink. I also experienced paper jams more often than I have become used to, perhaps because of the rear-feed design, which is not my favorite.

I also had quite a bit of trouble getting the wireless feature working consistently and reliably. On several occasions I just gave up and plugged the darned thing into my desktop computer.

On the plus side, the ESP C315's print quality is quite good. Pages print quickly and the ink dries reasonably fast. The scanner also worked without incident. The 2.4" color display is bright and easy to read and the ESP C315 accepts a wide variety of memory cards (Secure digital (SD) / Secure Digital High Capacity (SDHC), Multimedia Card (MMC), Memory Stick (MS) / Memory Stick Pro (PRO)) enabling computer-free printing of photos.

All-in-all, this all-in-one is definitely not the printer for me.

SPECS (from Kodak):

Connectivity

Built-in Wi-Fi, 802.11 b/g/n

Google Cloud Print ready

Kodak E-mail Print Service ready

iPhone, iPod touch, iPad, Blackberry, or Android device with the Kodak Pic Flick App
USB 2.0 High Speed

Copying

Copy speed: 5 copies per minute in black, 3 copies per minute in color
Copy up to LTR/A4
Up to 99 copies at a time on a 20-500% scaling or fit to page range

Scanning

1200 DPI optical scanner (CIS), 24-bit 9600 interpolated DPI
Scan multiple photos simultaneously and get separate files automatically
Scan and edit documents with optical character recognition

Print speed

Photos: borderless Kodak Lab-Quality 4 × 6 in. photos in as little as 38 seconds
Documents: 6 ipm in black, 4 ipm in color

Print resolution

9600 optimized DPI for high-resolution color photo printing / 1200 × 1200 DPI for highest monochrome text resolution

Paper capacity

Rear feed paper tray holds 100 sheets of document paper or 20 sheets of photo paper

Mobile printing

Print on the go from your smartphone, computer, or tablet using Google Cloud Print enabled apps
Send e-mails and attachments to your printer from anywhere, using any e-mail capable, Web connected device with Kodak E-mail Print Service
Print photos directly from your iPhone, iPod touch, iPad, Blackberry, or Android device with the Kodak Pic Flick App

System Requirements

Windows

Microsoft Windows 7, Vista Home Basic, or XP-Home (SP2 or above)
Internet Explorer 7 or higher
Intel Celeron 1.2GHz or compatible processor
512MB memory
500MB available hard disk space
CD-ROM drive
USB port

Macintosh

Macintosh OS 10.4.8 or higher
PowerPC G4, G5, or Intel-based Mac
1.2GHz clock speed
512MB memory
200MB available hard disk space
CD-ROM drive
USB port



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

"Checking on Web Vendors," "Dave to the Rescue!" "The Bottom Line on Age of Empires II," "OpenOffice vs LibreOffice," "Addressing Your 'Irony of the Year'"

Checking on Web Vendors

[Regarding the January 6 Digital Dave column:]

Hi Dave,

I usually find your comments quite useful, but was very surprised that you consider "resellerratings.com" to be a "scam review Web site" simply because their reviewers average a 5-star rating for the site the letter writer was asking about. I use resellerratings.com all the time and find it very useful. As a comparison, take a look at how they rate the Ace Hardware site. Their ratings appear to come from legitimate third-party reviewers (like myself) and you certainly don't see every online store getting rave reviews on their site!

-Ed Wullschleger, Longmont, Colorado

[See Dave's response to Ed's comment in his column this week. —Editor]

My favorite method of checking online vendors is to put their domain name into **BetterWhoIs.com** to get their actual registration information. Where are they actually located? Are they "hiding" their owners' name? How long have they been in business? What's their real phone number? And then I Google the phone number to see what other businesses the owner is running, and I Google and GoogleMap-StreetView the address (I have been **very** surprised on two occasions with what else a Web site owner is involved in). And I've called the listed domain registration phone number on several occasions before doing business with an online company. Sometimes they're quite surprised to get a phone call but I've always been treated nicely when I do call.

-Peter, Los Angeles

Dave to the Rescue!

[Regarding the January 6 Digital Dave column:]

Dave has always comes to my rescue. **His answers** are always in the type of understandable English that I am able to use with much satisfaction. The best of help has come from Dave. Can never thank him too much.

-Mugs Satran, Columbus, NM 88029

The Bottom Line on Age of Empires II

[Regarding the January 6 Digital Dave column:]

I have Age of Empires 1, 2 and 3:

Windows compatibility will ask for a compatibility mode. You *must* select the W2000 mode because I have seen the same bad graphics in XP. Right now, I'm too lazy to change them because I switched to AOE 3.

On the "reluctant to change": I have killed off UAC (annoying as he-double hockey-sticks) and changed the system performance to maximum performance.

control panel => system => advanced system settings => performance => visual effects => maximum performance. This unchecks every Aero related box.

That gets you back to XP type visuals. I didn't like the eye candy in the latest Kubuntu and the same applies to W7.

-Art Blackwell, Evergreen, CO

OpenOffice vs LibreOffice

[Regarding the January 6 Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column:]

I was forced to go to LibreOffice because the OO upgrade turned OO to a "trial copy" which will turn into a "pay to play" situation. I'm now using LO and removing OO when I upgrade systems. Here is the latest on the Oracle spat (arstechnica.com/open-source/news/2011/04/oracle-gives-up-on-ooo-after-community-forks-the-project.ars).

The "pay to play" was a temporary situation...

-Art Blackwell, Evergreen, CO

Addressing Your "Irony of the Year"

[Regarding the January 6 Wally Wangs Apple Farm column:]

When it comes to Enterprise Applications, such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) or Line of Business (LOB) Software, businesses run these applications on Linux and UNIX. For years ERPs and LOBs have run on UNIX and a large number have been ported to Linux. Either way if you are running your ERP or LOB in the Cloud then you need a Linux VM. That is the reason IT people using Microsoft's Azure would like to see VM for Linux.

The real "Irony" is that Microsoft Azure has done a good job with their price point, but if Microsoft doesn't provide a stable Linux VM then, to quote Steven J. Vaughan-Nichols, "...Amazon, Red Hat and VMware, to name three of its cloud rivals, are already happy to fully support Linux users on the cloud."

You asked, "If businesses prefer Linux over Windows, why do so many businesses still rely on Windows?"

The answer:

Businesses still rely on Windows to access and manage the input and output of data from the ERP and LOB applications, and to manage functions such as word processing and spreadsheets on the desktop. Sure businesses could switch to Linux and use OpenOffice. But there would be costs, a learning curve to overcome, and to date, when you look at the big picture, not that many companies have made that switch.

You also asked, "If so many businesses would choose Linux over Windows, what does that say about the future of Windows in business?"

The answer:

As long as it's seen by companies that there's not enough value to make the switch to Linux at the desktop level, then Windows will remain the platform of choice for business desktops. The day this paradigm changes and companies switch ... good luck if you own stock in Microsoft.

-Dan Schmitt, Colorado MultiValue Users Group (CMUG)

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).

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