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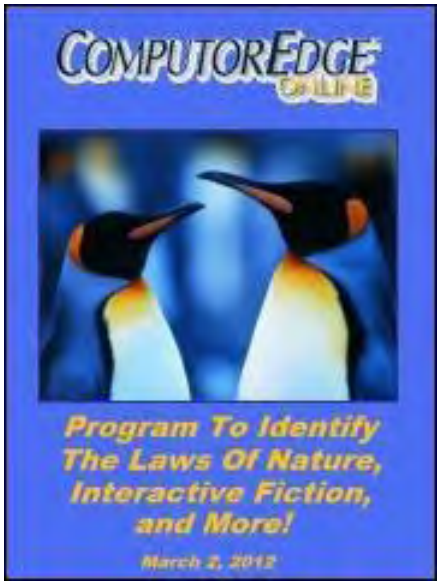

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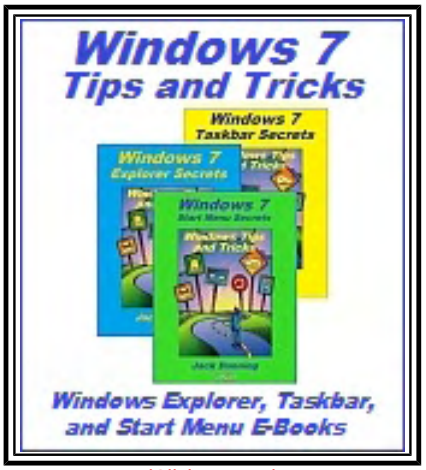

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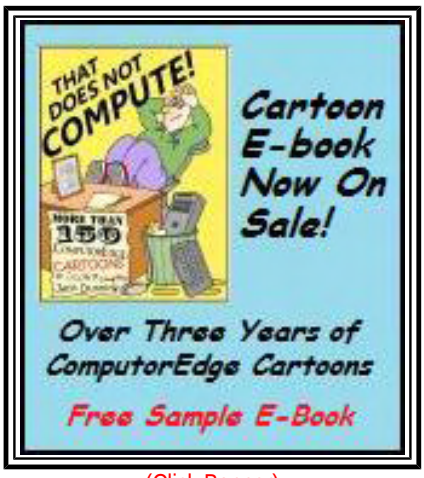

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Digital Dave

"Digital Dave answers your tech questions." by *Digital Dave*

Computer Booting Problem; Faster Web Browsing; Slow Computer on the Internet.

Dear Digital Dave,

I have a HP that's two years old with Windows 7. I don't know if it was a coincidence when I was installing Norton, but later that day when I turned on my computer, I got a black screen that says "reboot and select proper boot device or insert boot media in selected boot device and press a key." I did a full recovery with the disk provided for my computer and it worked fine for two days. Now I've got the same black screen with the same info.

Thanks, Dave, in advance,

Miguel Flores
San Diego, CA

Dear Miguel,

The message you're getting indicates that the motherboard is not finding the drive with the operating system (boot sector) installed on it. While this most likely caused by a corrupted boot sector on the hard drive, I can't completely rule out something as simple as a loose cable connection between the motherboard and hard drive. Although it's probably not a cable since the system restore disc probably wouldn't have worked. However, I would make sure that all the connections are tight and secure. (This will require opening the computer, so disconnect the power first and proceed carefully while inside the computer.)

It is likely that you are encountering the early stages of a hard drive failure. You restored, probably reformatting the hard drive in the process, and it worked for a while until the boot sector became corrupted again. Then the BIOS doesn't know where to look. Be prepared for an eventual drive failure.

Hard drives will often give these type of intermittent problems before failing. If you do not have loose connections and the problem recurs after a full recovery, then I would strongly suspect the hard drive. I'd say try a different hard drive. They are inexpensive (*www.amazon.com/gp/search?keywords=hp%20internal%20hard%20drive&tag=comput0b9-20*) compared to the hassle of dealing with a hard disk crash.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

*I recently read a Tech republic piece about ways to increase Web browsing speed (*www.techrepublic.com/blog/five-apps/five-tips-for-faster-web-browsing/722*) that suggested disabling Flash.*

The article also said the it is possible to save all temporary Internet files to a flash driver instead of a hard drive. The author stated that this measure is best left to more experienced users. But that never stopped me before.

I have some questions that I would like your expert opinion on. First, considering how ingrained Flash is in most Web sites, how advisable is it to disable it? Second, how involved is it to change the settings on Web browsers so that temp files are stored on a flash drive? Also, would doing that add any security to browsing?

Thank you for any help you can offer.

Mike Z
Dacono,CO

Dear Mike,

Remember that the number one bottleneck inhibiting browsing speed is the Internet itself. Either a slow connection or Web sites that try to deliver too much garbage to your computer. Unless you have a computer that's generally bogged down (this is a common occurrence with Windows Vista), there may not be much you can do to get much more speed. You can disable Flash, but then you can't use Flash sites. Of course, you may not need them.

While many Web sites use Flash for animated displays and showing videos, it's not true that most Web sites use it. According to W3Techs (*w3techs.com/technologies/details/cp-flash/all/all*), the usage of Flash is actually decreasing. This drop is not insignificant, nor is it likely to reverse.

Figure 1. The use of Flash in Web sites has dropped over the last year.

There are numerous problems associated the using Flash in a Web site. This is why Steven Jobs refused to support Flash in the iPad. This has been recognized by most of the major Web sites using Flash, such as YouTube for video. YouTube is currently running a beta with HTML5, which is the likely replacement for Flash.

Currently, if you watch a lot of Flash video, then you may not want to disable it. But in the long run I expect that most sites will be switching over to HTML5, which will relegate Flash to the graveyard of once great computer programs. Maybe you can keep Flash in one of your browsers (Internet Explorer?) and keep Google Chrome Flash-free for your other faster non-Flash browsing. This would actually be optimal since IE has better hooks for video acceleration.

As for saving temporary Internet files in RAM disk, this may not be worth the trouble. (I need to point out that RAM disk as mentioned in the article is not the same as a flash drive. RAM disk is generally a portion of the dynamic memory which has been set aside to act as a disk drive. This memory is much faster than flash memory.) The temporary Internet files saved to disk are mostly copies of page that you have already visited. This is done to save the time it takes to download the original Web page every time you visit it. If your browsing takes you to many new sites or the pages are generated dynamically by the Web server, then the load times will be more dependent upon your Internet connection and the speed and load on the Web server. Even if you do save these temporary files to faster memory, you may not notice much difference in your personal Web experience. There are too many other variables.

It looks like it's fairly easy to reassign a drive letter to temporary files in Internet Explorer. I didn't see any obvious settings in Firefox or Chrome.

Saving temporary Internet files to another drive location (memory or otherwise) will not add any security to your Web

browsing. However, it may protect you from other people who use your computer to snoop into your activities. In that case, using an incognito or private browsing mode will have the same effect.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

Every time I turn on my computer and go to the Internet it is so slow. Could it be my AT&T Internet provider?

Alice
Sacramento CA

Dear Alice,

Unless you have a dial-up connection from AT&T, the problem is not likely to be your Internet service provider. Dial-up uses a standard modem and telephone line to connect to the Internet. This is just about the slowest way to surf the Web. If you have a dial-up connection, then it is very likely that it is the problem.

However, if you have DSL or a cable connection, then you should be getting decent speed from your provider. If you want to find out the speed of your connection, AT&T offers a speed test (*www.att.com/speedtest/*). (I check this test against others and found it to be accurate enough.) If you were downloading a file the following would be the times:

4.75 minutes per megabyte on a 28.8k modem (dial-up)
2.5 minutes per megabyte on a 56k modem (dial-up)
1 minute per megabyte on a 128k ISDN connection
30 seconds per megabyte on a 256k DSL connection
2 seconds per megabyte on a 5 Mbit cable connection

You can see how much a dial-up connection could slow you down.

Try a different browser, such as Google Chrome (*www.google.com/chrome*) or Mozilla Firefox (*www.mozilla.org/firefox/*), to make sure that Internet Explorer (or whatever you're using) isn't bogging down the whole system for some reason.

If you find that you have a reasonably fast connection and all browsers are acting the same, then it's either you're accessing slow Web sites (yes, they do exist) or your computer system is slowing you down by hogging the processor. Maybe you have too many programs loaded at start up or other background programs causing problems. You may want to try a system cleaner such as CCleaner (*download.cnet.com/CCleaner/3000-18512_4-10315544.html*). Just be sure not to accidentally wipe your hard drive clean. (If that last statement scares you, then be cautious. CCleaner is a very safe program, but you do want to know what you're doing when you start cleaning the registry, removing Internet file such as cookies, or a running any type of system utilities.) Hopefully your computer isn't busy doing virusy things, which opens another bags of worms.

Digital Dave

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Too Many Apps Among Little Known Tech Stories

“App Saturation, Facebook in Times Square, Cloaking Time and iPad Textbooks” by Marilyn K. Martin

Program To Identify The Laws Of Nature; Facebook News; Classrooms Go Digital; Could Computer Hackers Cloak Time?; Interactive Fiction; Silicon Valley Update; The Power of Social Media; Twitter Issues; Smartphone News; Gates Foundation Opens Visitor Center.

A Computer Program to Identify The Laws of Nature

How about a computer program that generates mathematical formulas (*www.haaretz.com/weekend/magazine/israeli-professor-s-computer-program-identifies-laws-of-nature-1.410881*) which accelerate the process of scientific discoveries by identifying the laws of nature? An Israeli-born Professor Lipson and his students at Cornell University (Ithaca, New York) have developed just such an astonishing computer program. It started out as an experiment to "take data from different systems to generate mathematical formulas that describe the mechanisms producing the data."

The program is named "Eureqa," after Archimedes' famous exclamation (Eureka!), replacing the "k" with a "q" as in equation. The program generated so much buzz, that it is now available for free as a download (*creativemachines.cornell.edu/eureqa*). "At first all the models are garbage," Lipson says. "But they get better and better. It is very non-intuitive, but that is the way evolution produced the living cell."

Facebook News: White Hat Hackers and Times Square

"Eve, that fruit looks tempting, but let me Google it first."

Politics

Facebook's IPO is all over the news as I write this, but it isn't common knowledge that Mark Zuckerberg wrote a 479-word essay called "The Hacker Way (*www.freep.com/article/20120204/BUSINESS07/120204008/Facebook-hackers*)", which he included in the documents filed with government regulators. While some thought his references to hacking could drive away potential investors, Zuckerberg explained in his essay that "The word 'hacker' has an unfairly negative connotation from being portrayed in the media as people who break into computers. In reality, hacking just means building something quickly or testing the boundaries of what can be done."

Amid this hacker ethos of staying innovative, Facebook has a new app (*mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/29/facebook-users-to-put-political-views-up-in-lights-on-times-square/*) where users can now share their political views on digital billboards in New York's Times Square. It is designed to motivate those who are not politically engaged to start talking about the election issues that are meaningful to them. To get around the more polarizing aspects of an election year, the Facebook developers chose to focus on nine issues (from health care to the environment), and not focus on specific candidates.

Facebook users will be asked which of two issues matters the most to them, with their answers showing up in that user's and friends' news feeds, prompting the friends to answer the poll too. Then users will be directed to download the app, and then rank the three issues that are most important to them. They can then opt to have the results, including their Facebook profile photos, broadcast on Times Square billboards.

Classrooms Go Digital

In public school math classes in Chicago, textbooks are on iPads (*www.suntimes.com/technology/8590557-478/technology-in-the-classroom-theres-an-app-for-that.html*). Students take diagnostic tests on their iPads before each chapter and receive instant feedback. For students who need extra help, the program even offers remedial exercises. While educators don't want their students "left behind by (ever more important) technology," teachers report that the presence of the iPads has excited and engaged the students more than standard textbooks. The goal now is to increase the iPad textbooks for an ideal one-on-one ratio with students.

However, columnist David Sirota warns (*www.seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/opinion/2017417930_sirota05.html*) that "despite the celebratory hype, there's no guarantee that a hyper-technologized education system is synonymous with genuine progress." He cites the fact that iPad texts would have to be updated each year, instead of buying new bound textbooks every five years or so. This constant purchase of updated iPad texts could translate to "budget-busting costs over the long haul." And recent studies have found that "full-time online education programs" have lagged behind every students-in-a-real-classroom indicators, from test scores to growth measures and even high school graduation rates. So maybe the embraced educational technology still needs a genuine classroom with student and teacher interaction for kids to learn the best.

Could Computer Hackers Cloak Time?

U.S. military-funded scientists have discovered that a "hidden pocket in Time (*www.siliconvalley.com/news/*

ci_19676504)" can be created by altering the speed of light beams. Researchers from Cornell University (Ithaca, New York) have shown that it's possible to cloak very fast events (of mere fractions of a second). It involves shifting a stream of light through a lens, causing some light beams to travel faster and others slower. This creates a temporal void, where the fastest light beam can't be observed.

If the research can expand the time pocket to nano seconds, government or hacker entities could sneak looks at computer data transmission without being detected. Other uses could include faster emergency processing of data.

Interactive Fiction

As schools are embracing iPad interactive textbooks, now comes word of a Young Adult novel (*www.siliconvalley.com/personal-technology/ci_19878550*) that blends print with digital apps. *Chopsticks* is a 272 page book ($19.99 from Farrar, Straus & Giroux), as well as an app for iPhone and iPad (*itunes.apple.com/us/app/chopsticks-novel/id497983366?mt=8*) ($6.99). It is a mystery of tragic young love that unfolds through "multimedia storytelling."

Through fictionalized photographs and TV news reports, young Glory's life unfolds as a piano prodigy, who descends into madness after personal tragedies. Then young Frank from Argentina moves in next door, who excels in drawing and painting, and they bond over their shared love of the arts. Frank's art is often animated, with YouTube addresses embedded for those who want to view the video the character shoots in the story.

Silicon Valley Update: Wall Street, Anti-Poaching and Japanese Start-Ups

According to the New York Times, "one of the greatest cross-cultural outreach efforts of our time" has begun: Wall Streeters are attempting to bond (*dealbook.nytimes.com//2012/01/15/in-silicon-valley-the-ripe-scent-of-new-money/*) with the hip wealth of Silicon Valley. It's an awkward courting, with the Wall Streeters dangling "can't miss" private boxes at pro sports games, exclusive factory tours of electric sports cars, and even tickets to the final *Harry Potter* movie. Some newly minted billionaires are interested, others aren't. Wall Street's approach is to sell themselves as "money managers" and "estate planners" to the brilliant young entrepreneurs, many just out of college and unsure what to do with their wealth.

In yet another indication of the white-hot competition for tech talent in Silicon Valley, programmers got used to the daily barrage of phone calls from recruiters from rival companies, dangling offers of better pay and perks. Then suddenly the recruiting calls stopped, all due to a "gentlemen's (non-written) anti-poaching agreement (*www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2399555,00.asp*)" allegedly orchestrated by the late Steve Jobs.

A lawsuit has now been filed in federal court in San Jose, claiming that senior executives at Google, Adobe Systems, Intuit, Lucasfilm, Pixar and Apple violated anti-trust laws by entering into secret anti-poaching agreements not to hire each other's best employees. The suit also contends that the companies were able to keep wages artificially low by preventing bidding wars for the best employees. The U.S. Justice Department investigated similar allegations with almost all the same companies back in 2010, and the companies settled without admitting any wrongdoing.

After the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan last March, there is now a small but growing population of young Japanese entrepreneurs (*www.siliconvalley.com/ci_19886177?source=most_viewed*) jumping into the start-up scene in Northern California. Japanese business leaders have also "blamed Japan's dearth of entrepreneurship on a mix of social and structural factors that constrict new innovators." While some venture capitalists feel that the devastation from last March "compelled many Japanese to take an increasingly uncertain future into their

own hands." Silicon Valley Attorney Yoichiro Taku has some of the most active start-ups in the U.S., and reports that he's seeing more Japanese start-up traffic than ever before.

The Power of Social Media: Job Hunters' Advice to Suicide Prevention

In September 2011, CEOs, Human Resources and job recruiters offered their advice to job seekers (*www.boston.com/business/technology/innoeco/2011/09/social_media_advice_for_job-se.html*) about the use of social media. The advice ranged from the expected, such as post complete resumes, accurately describe what job you are currently doing, and link to any job related blogs. To the intuitive, such as not posting inappropriate content or pictures on your Facebook wall. The advice also distinguishes between "inbound job searching," or well read and influential bloggers hired by the industry they blogged about, and "outbound job searching," such as marketing initiatives through a microsite.

The execs also had interesting advice about social messaging, like on Facebook or Twitter. Job hunters are advised to not be too active, since it shows you have too much time on your hands. Also to avoid texting that you are bored-at-work And at all costs, avoid any racist or hater/negative remarks. Hiring execs also advise job hunters to be succinct, like Twitter's limit of 140 characters.

Anxious parents and psychologists are also watching the power of social media to reach people calling out for help—or considering suicide. The Internet's potential to prevent a mental health crisis is being recognized, as more and more people chronicle their daily emotional ups and downs. But too many "suicide notes" are seen, but not responded to until it's too late. So in December 2011, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline revamped their partnership with Facebook. Now Facebook users are encouraged to report their "friends" who post they are suicidal to Facebook. The suicidal poster then receives an e-mail with a number to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and a link directing the user to an online chat with a crisis worker.

Twitter Issues: Privacy, Venom and Global Politics

A curious social phenomenon is being observed, where teens are shifting from Facebook to Twitter (*seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/businesstechnology/2017372375_tweetingteens30.html*). They still maintain their Facebook accounts, but cite the ease of sending Twitter mini-messages to a smaller circle of friends. They also like the privacy, without the social pressure to "friend" parents and friends of friends. Twitter also allows multiple accounts, and doesn't require that a real name be used.

Due to the anonymity of Twitter, it has also become a haven for venom-tweeters (*seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/stevekelley/2017356290_kelley29.html*), or nasty jerks attacking people they don't even know. A high school athlete announces his out-of-state choice for college, and the poisonous messages start. Fortunately, the graduating athletes are often more mature than the venom-tweeters. "I can understand where they're coming from," said a wise young athlete. "Some people have a different passion about things, but I don't think that's a license to go out and bash anybody."

Sometimes, when a social media entity like Twitter goes global, it eventually hits a brick wall of foreign politics (*www.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/technology/when-twitter-blocks-tweets-its-outrage.html*), especially in countries that limit free speech. So Twitter recently announced that, due to pressure from some other countries, they would start blocking certain messages "in countries where they were deemed illegal." The outcry was loud, with calls for a boycott.

Twitter, like most Internet companies, has always removed content objectionable worldwide, like child porn or a copyright violation. But now they will block posts such as insults to the monarchy of Thailand, which is punishable by a

jail term in Thailand. The insult will still be visible in other countries. The question now for Twitter and other global social media is should they stay as a free-speech tool against repressive governments? Or be treated more like a profitable commercial venture, that has to obey the laws of the countries they operate in?

Smartphone News

According to security experts, "breached, infiltrated or otherwise compromised (*www.siliconvalley.com/personal-technology/ci_19831054*) cell phones will be the scourge of 2012." One smartphone security company, Lookout (*www.mylookout.com*), estimates that one million smartphones worldwide have already been compromised. Suggestions to keep your phone more secure range from only buying apps from well known vendors, using subscriber identity module (SIM) cards, and simply pulling out your cell phone's battery when not in use.

At the end of January 2012, a new app (*www.freep.com/article/20120130/NEWS09/120130020/LodgeNet-smartphone-remote-control-hotel-rooms?odyssey=mod|newswell|text|FRONTPAGE|s*) was available for travelers. LodgeNet, the biggest provider of hotel room television entertainment, has created a free app that turns iPhones, iPads and Androids into remote TV controls. The LodgeNet Mobile App (*www.lodgenet.com/OurSolutions/ForHotels/Pages/Mobile.aspx*) can now be used in half a million hotel rooms across the United States. The app will also provide a program guide and menu for pay-per-view movies and TV shows on demand.

Also at the end of January 2012, USA Today reported that we may have reached a saturation point (*www.usatoday.com/money/media/story/2012-01-30/smartphone-app-usage/52891556/1*) with smartphone apps. Surveys reveal that 68% of smartphone owners only open five or fewer apps at least once a week, and that 80-90% of the apps we so eagerly download are eventually deleted. "That's why the number of downloads is a very poor measure of how popular an app is," states the analytic firm Mobilewalla (*mobilewalla.com/Desktop/Home.htm*).

Gates Foundation Opens Visitor Center

At the beginning of February 2012, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation opened a Visitor Center (*seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/localnews/2017386298_gatesfoundation01m.html*) in Seattle, Washington. The Center aims to give people a sense of how the world's largest private philanthropy works, as well as educate visitors with some clever photos and questions to motivate them to become involved in charity work too. Over the drinking fountains is the question, "What if you had to walk three miles for a sip?"

Visitors are also invited to lift 16-pound water buckets, and imagine having to haul them long distances. In the Innovation and Inspiration Gallery, visitors are invited to create "inventions" from Tinkertoys and other supplies. While other interactive galleries let visitors turn wooden rollers, spin a globe, push levers, turn cranks or type on keyboards which modify some feature of the display.

Marilyn is a freelance writer and humorist, with a special interest (besides computers and technology) in Science Fiction. A SF Horror story appeared in July 2011 in Deadman's Tome (*www.demonictome.com/*). And in January 2012 she had a SF Police Procedural appearing in *Cosmic Crime* magazine, and a SF Dystopian Romance appearing in the *Strange Valentines* anthology. She also has almost seventy articles on Helium.com (*www.helium.com/users/573405/show_articles*), and is writing a humorous Young Adult SF series, *Chronicles of Mathias (*www.amazon.com/Chronicles-Mathias-One-Reptilian-Rebirth/dp/1598249002*).* 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.

ComputorEdge E-Books is now converting Marilyn's computer humor columns into e-books. The first book, *Computer Confusion in Paradise: Lo! And in the Beginning There Was Total Befuddlement!*, is now available at our E-Book Store (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Humor-Computer-and-Internet-Anecdotes-and-Jokes_c16.htm*) in both EPUB format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Computer-Confusion-in-Paradise-humor-EPUB-iPad-NOOK-COMPHUMOR0001-1.htm*) for iPad, NOOK, etc., and MODI format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Computer-Confusion-in-Paradise-humor-MOBI-for-Kindle-COMPHUMOR0001-2.htm*) for Amazon Kindle.

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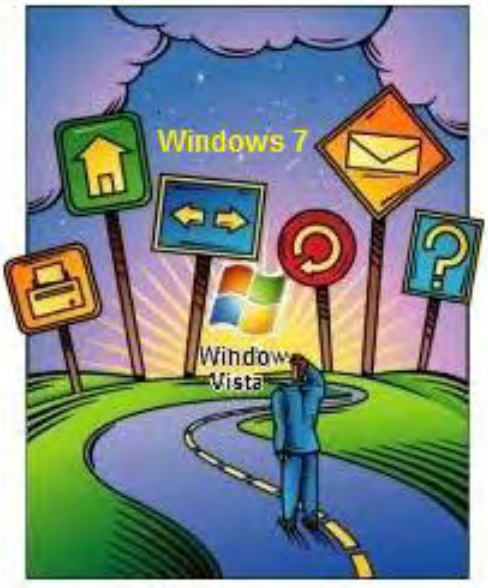

Windows Tips and Tricks

Windows Tips and Tricks: AquaSnap for Window Magic

“AquaSnap is a free alternative to Aero Snap and does so much more.**”** by Jack Dunning

A look at a useful, free window manipulation add-on program for all versions of Windows. Not only are there more window resizing options, but the "always on top" problem is solved.

It's not often that I recommend third-party software, but I've found the free utility AquaSnap (*download.cnet.com/AquaSnap/3000-2072_4-75181446.html*) to be one of the useful window manipulation tools available. It does so much more than the Windows 7 Aero functions, plus it works with Windows XP and Vista.

If you ever have the need to transfer or copy data from one open window to another, then the Windows Aero Snap feature can come in handy. When two open windows are side-by-side it's easy to select text from one window and drag (hold down the left mouse while moving the cursor) the selection to an editing field in the other window. It's easier than using copy and paste. However, the Windows 7 Aero features are fairly limited in functionality. They are not enough for me. I've found that the AquaSnap software not only adds more features to Windows, but it solves a problem I've had with both the Windows 7 Calculator and Sticky Notes.

[This column is included in Chapter Four of the new e-book Windows 7 Desktop Secrets *available in both the iPad EPUB format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-Desktop-Secrets-EPUB-for-iPad-NOOK-etc-Wintips0005-1.htm*) and the Amazon Kindle MOBI format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-Desktop-Secrets-MOBI-for-Amazon-Kindle-Wintips0005-2.htm*).]*

If these features look like they could make your computing life easier, then follow the link above to download and install AquaSnap. It's free!

Snapping

Once AquaSnap is installed and launched, the icon will appear in the Notification Area on the far right of the Taskbar. You can identify the icon by hovering over it and reading the label "AquaSnap." Double-click the icon and the AquaSnap control window will open. If you check the box "Start with Windows," AquaSnap will load every time you start up your computer. (Note: Some of the key combinations used with Windows Aero Snap will not function with AquaSnap activated.) Select the tab labeled AquaSnap (see Figure 1). When you select the various options, the image on the right shows all the possibilities.

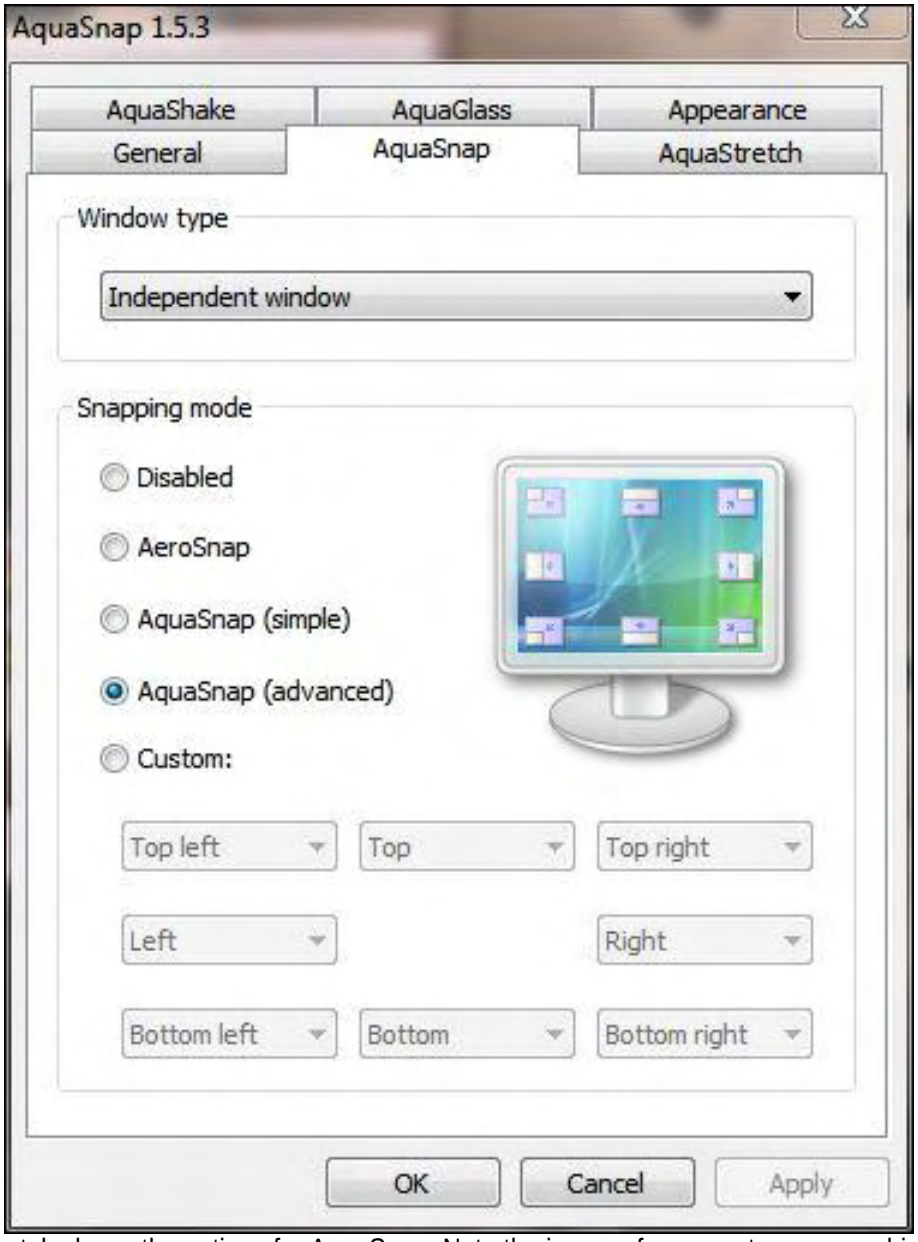

Figure 1. The AquaSnap tab shows the options for AquaSnap. Note the image of a computer screen which displays the possible snap locations.

Whereas Aero Snap only offer three possible configurations (snap left, snap right and full screen), AquaSnap provides eight possibilities, plus full screen when in the custom mode. The snap feature works in the same manner as Aero Snap. Drag the top bar of the window to the edge of the monitor and the new shape will be previewed by a transparent image as seen in blue in Figure 2. Release the left mouse button and the window will take that shape. To return to the original size, click on the same top bar of the active window.

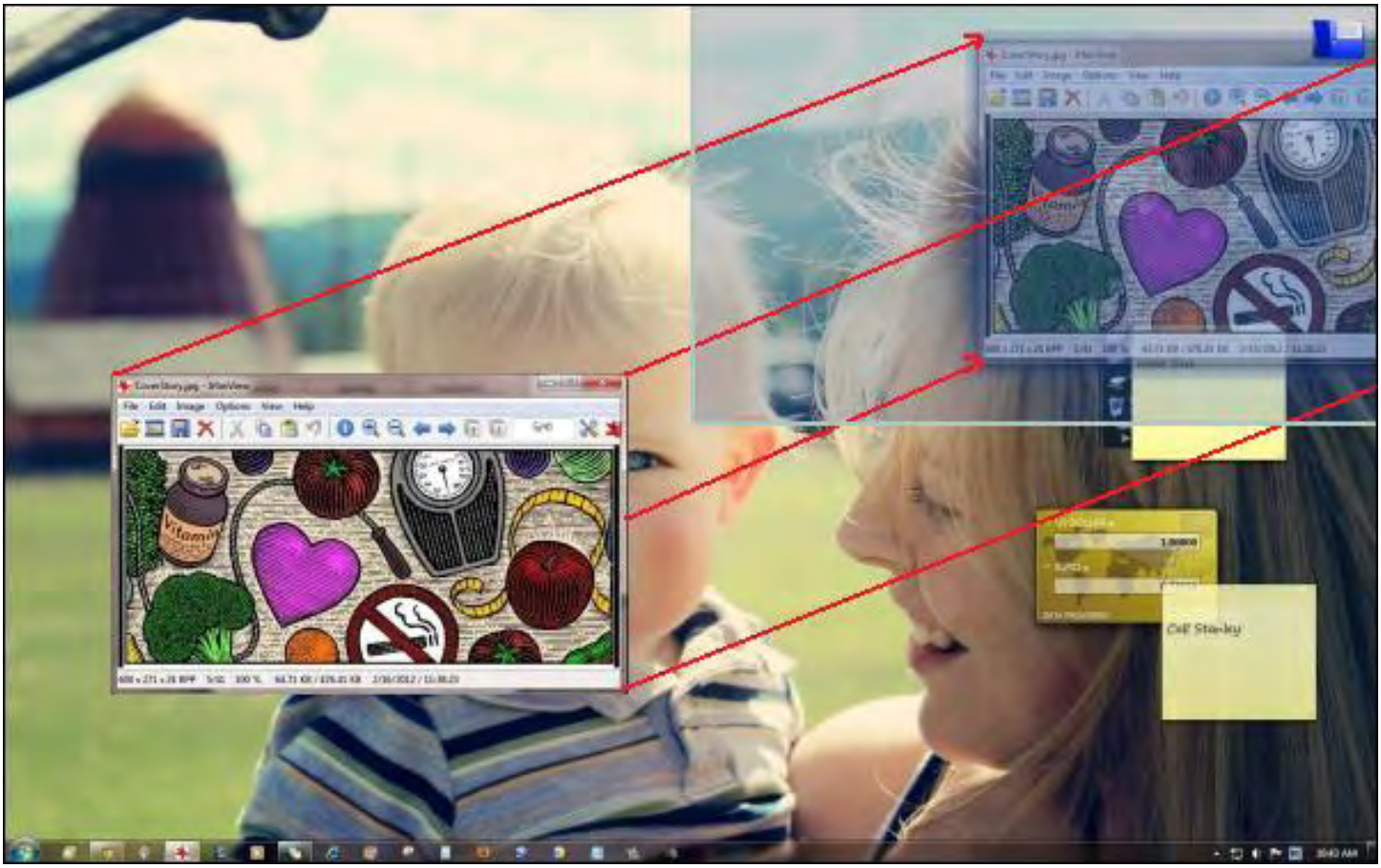

Figure 2. With AquaSnap, when a window is dragged by the top bar to the edge of the screen, the new window shape is shown by a transparent preview (in blue). When the mouse button is released, the window takes the shape of the preview.

Using the Microsoft Windows key (WIN) with the cursor arrow key will have the same effect for the top (WIN+Up Arrow), bottom (WIN+Down Arrow), left (WIN+Left Arrow) and right (WIN+Right Arrow) edge of the computer screen. See Figure 3 for an example of a window moved and expanded at the top of the screen with WIN+Up Arrow. Again, clicking the top bar of a window will return it to its original shape.

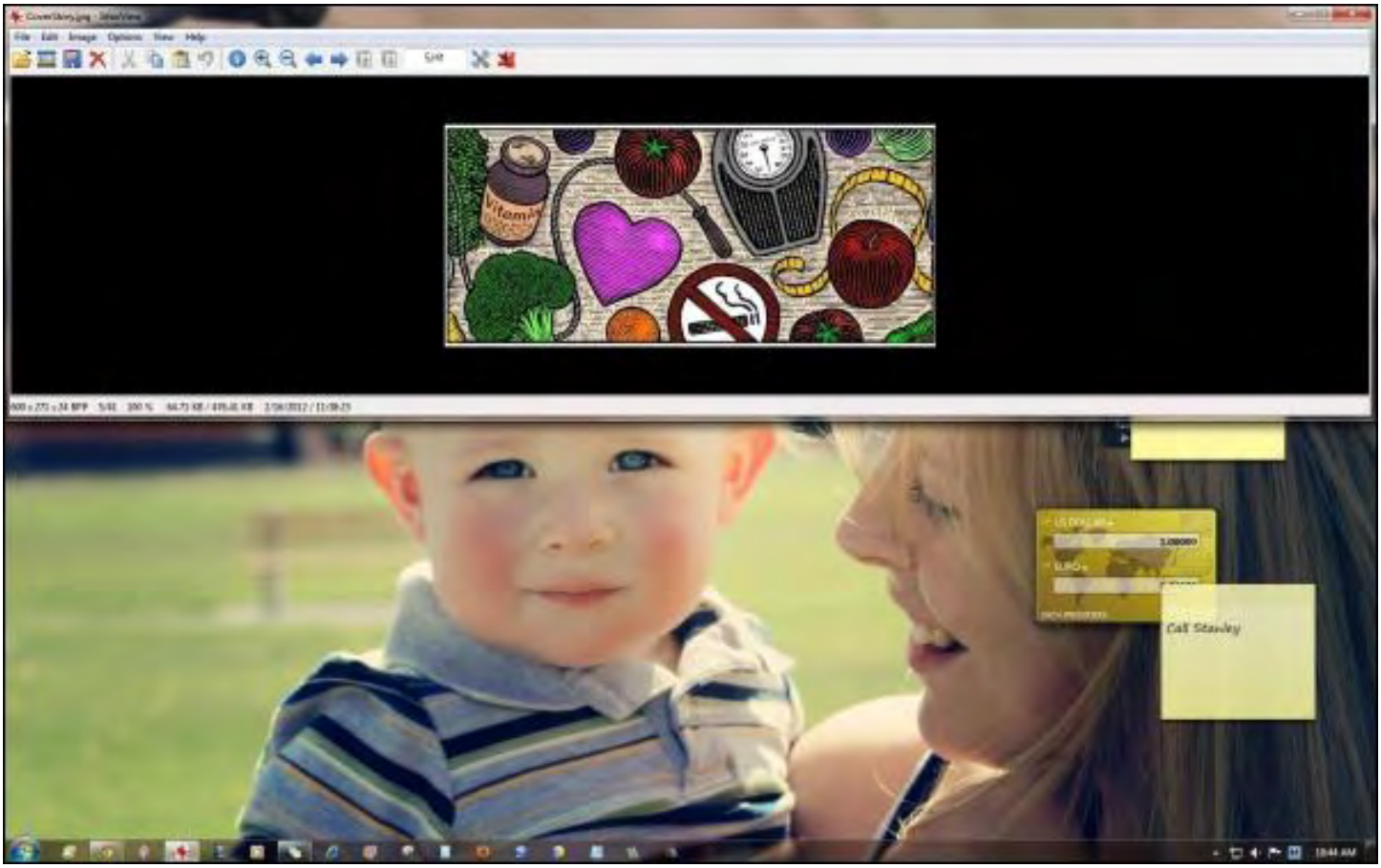

Figure 3. With AquaSnap the WIN+Up Arrow key combination will position the active window to cover the top half of the screen.

To maximize and restore a window merely double-click the top bar of an active window.

The Stretch tab (Figure 4) allows the setting of key dragging and double-click combinations for re-configuring windows to span to the edge of the screen or the entire screen either vertically, horizontally, or both.

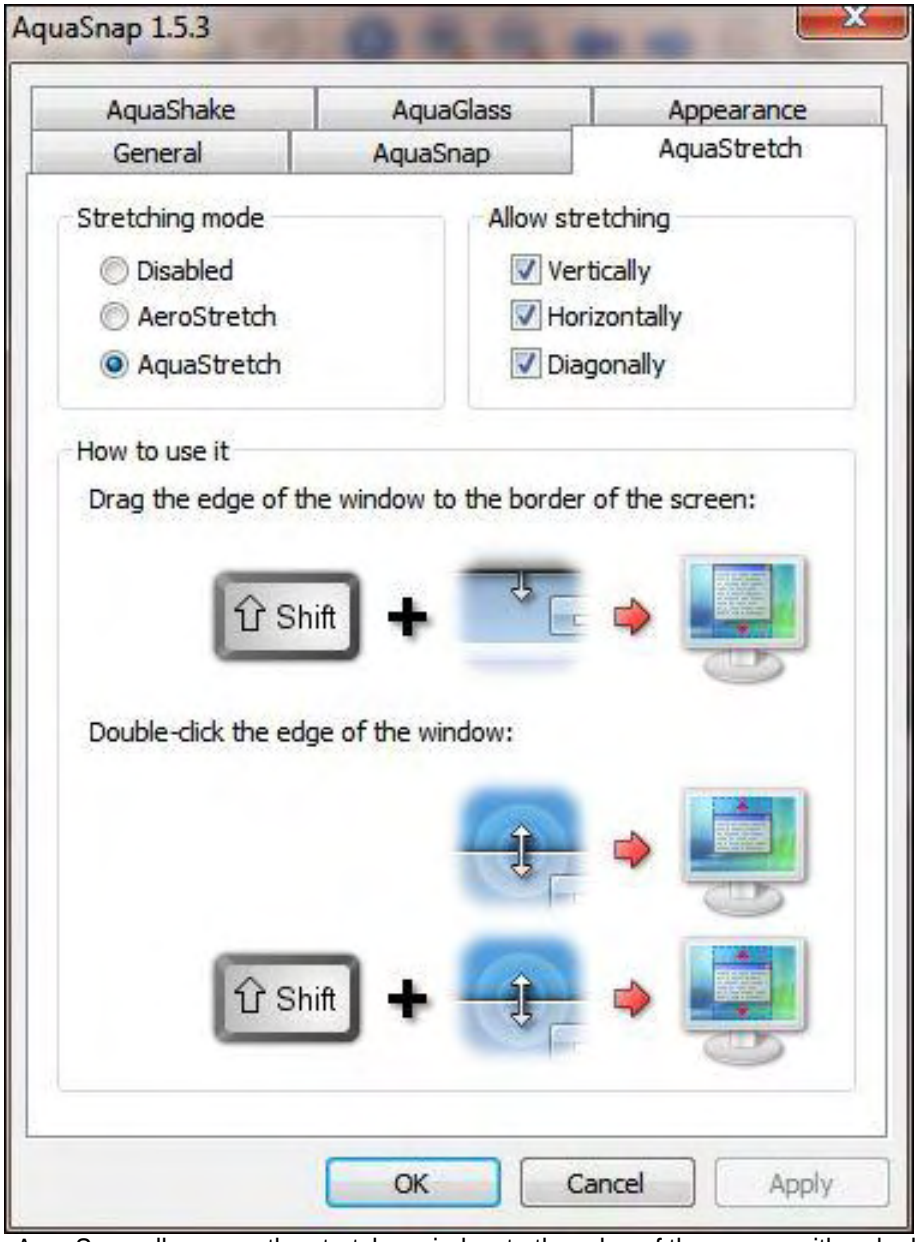

Figure 4. AquaSnap allows you the stretch a window to the edge of the screen with a double-click.

Keeping Sticky Notes or the Calculator Always on Top

There is a Notes gadget in Windows Vista which is similar to the Sticky Notes app in Windows 7. The Windows 7 Sticky Notes has more flexibility, but unlike gadgets, it does not allow the note to be "always on top." This defeats the purpose of a reminder because it is quickly buried beneath other windows. Like writing on your hand or a string around your finger, a reminder needs to continually prod you. When sitting on the desktop, the Vista Notes gadget could be set "Always on top." No matter what else you were doing the memo would be staring you in the face. This is not the case with Windows 7 Sticky Notes.

Windows 7 has a capable calculator with a number of advanced modes. However, I find it annoying to see the calculator disappear every time I need to move to another data window. When making calculations and the values are coming from other open windows it is much easier if the calculator is always in sight (always on top). Then I don't need to go hunting every time I make another calculation. AquaSnap solves this problem with AquaShake.

Unlike Aero Shake, which minimizes all windows except the window being shaken (left-click and hold the top of the

window while rapidly shaking—moving right and left), AquaShake puts the window in an "always on top" mode (see Figure 5). This works for any standard window.

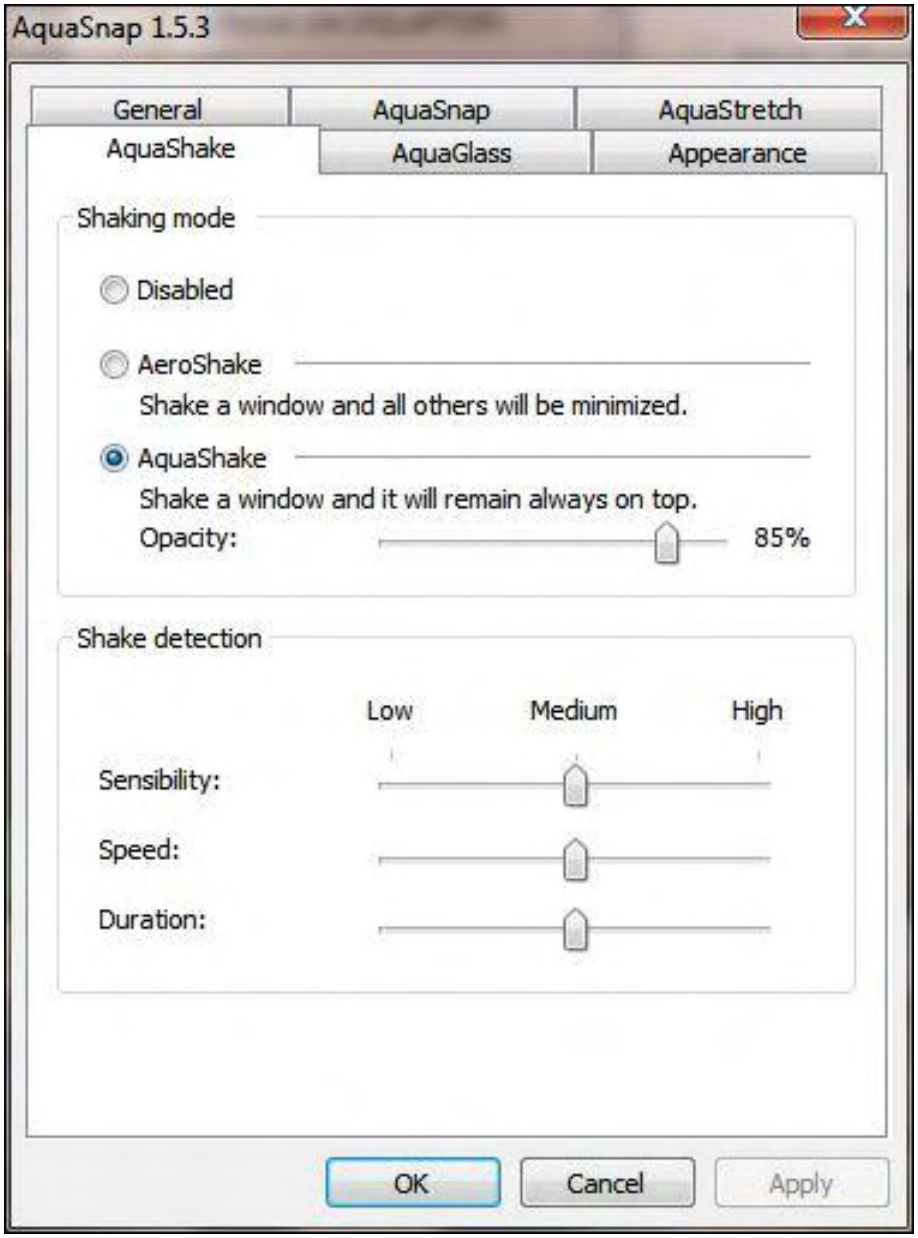

Figure 5. AquaShake allows you the put any window into a "remain always on top" mode.

Problem solved! Shake your calculator or one of your sticky notes and they will remain visible on the desktop (above all other window) until you shake it again (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. The Windows 7 Calculator and one of the Sticky Notes is "always on top" with AquaShake.

I have never found Windows 7 Aero Shake particularly useful. I've replaced it with AquaShake, which I use all of the time.

* * *

For more Windows 7 Desktop tips and tricks, get the new e-book *Windows 7 Desktop Secrets* available in both the iPad EPUB format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-Desktop-Secrets-EPUB-for-iPad-NOOK-etc-Wintips0005-1.htm*) and the Amazon Kindle MOBI format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-Desktop-Secrets-MOBI-for-Amazon-Kindle-Wintips0005-2.htm*).

Jack is the publisher of *ComputorEdge* 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:

Available exclusively from Amazon, *Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007AL672M/?&tag=comput0b9-20*)!*

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

"Working Smarter, Not Harder" by Wally Wang

Working Smarter, Not Harder; The Coming of the iPad 3; Writing Screenplays on an iPad; Elpida Goes Bankrupt; Announce the Time.

Back in 2007, Research in Motion dominated the smart phone market with their Blackberries used in private industry and government agencies. While Blackberry still commands a hefty 70 percent of the corporate market (*reports.informationweek.com/abstract/18/8698/Mobility-Wireless/research-can-rim-be-saved*.html?cid=rpt_press_rls*) according to InformationWeek, only 25 percent of companies surveyed said they plan to keep Blackberries over the next two years.

Research in Motion recently released version 2.0 of their Playbook tablet that finally includes e-mail capability. The company also plans to release new Blackberries running their newest operating systems by the end of the year, but like their Playbook tablet, that will likely be too late. The world has moved beyond Blackberries and it's highly unlikely that anyone will ever dump their iPhone or Android phone just to go back to a Blackberry.

In the meantime, Dell reported sluggish PC sales (*www.businessweek.com/news/2012-02-23/dell-falls-after-forecast-misses-estimates-san-francisco-mover.html*) to go along with Hewlett-Packard's reports of equally sluggish PC sales (*www.pcworld.com/businesscenter/article/250506/hp_profit_falls_44_percent_amid_weak_pc_sales.html*).

Sales of both Blackberries and Windows PCs continue to decline each quarter while sales of Macintosh computers along with iPhones and iPads continue to rise during those same quarters. Clearly people are buying the products they want.

Research in Motion is trying to stave off the inevitable by promising a new operating system, although the appeal of a new operating system is meaningless if it doesn't demonstrate any clear advantages over existing products.

Likewise, Microsoft and PC manufacturers must also boost declining sales of PCs by promising Windows 8, although Windows 8 will be equally meaningless if it doesn't demonstrate any clear advantages over competitors like the Macintosh, iPad, and even Windows XP and Windows 7. (Practically any version of Windows offers clear advantages over Vista.)

Almost no one believed that Research in Motion would ever lose their iron grip on the corporate smart phone market, yet in four years that's exactly what happened. The problem is that instead of innovating, companies like Research in

Motion simply coasted on inertia. Amazingly, while other companies pour money into research and development, Apple spends only a fraction of the amount while still gaining greater benefits.

Quora reports that Apple's R&D expenditure represents two percent of revenue (*www.quora.com/Apple-Inc-2/Why-is-Apples-R-D-budget-so-low-relative-to-competitors*), which is five times lower than Google's and six times lower than Microsoft's.

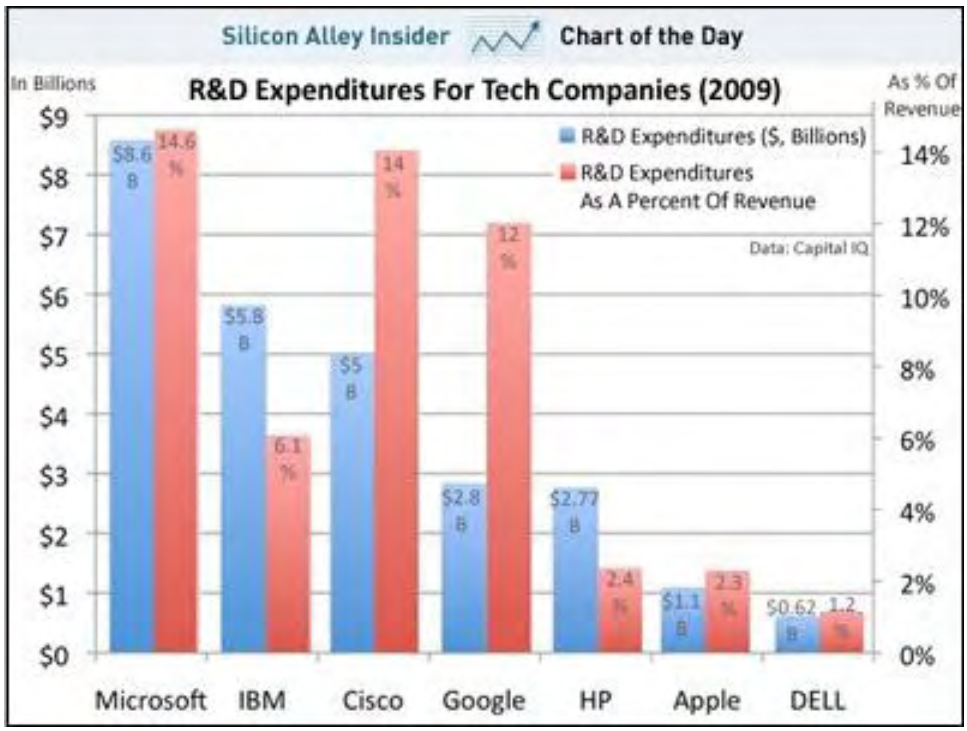


Figure 1. Apple spends far less on R&D than its competitors.

Out of all their major competitors, only Dell spends less on research and development than Apple. Yet major innovations like the iPhone and iPad came from Apple and not from any of these better funded companies like Microsoft, IBM and Google.

The real question isn't how Apple continues to innovate, but rather why other companies spend more and get less for their R&D dollars. Google and Microsoft can afford to hire the brightest people in the world, yet they still slavishly copy Apple.

The amount of money spent on R&D never determines the amount of innovation that comes out of a company. The real secret isn't the amount of money spent but how that money gets spent. More importantly, it's likely that many innovative products at companies like Microsoft get killed because they risk competing against other products from that same company. (Think of the Courier tablet that Microsoft killed because it threatened their Windows 8 tablet strategy or how Kodak invented digital photography but ignored it because it threatened their film business.)

Companies, much like individuals, often shy away from trying something new in favor of what's currently working now, even if they can clearly see that what's working now definitely won't work in the near future.

Companies, just like individuals, need to stay hungry and maintain their start-up mentality. People in start-ups are willing to take risks and do what they have to do to succeed because if their situation doesn't change, they won't succeed.

People in corporate jobs often strive to avoid risks and do as little as possible because they're already getting paid, so doing anything new risks turning their current success into failure. Therefore they have no incentive to change and have more incentive to fight, resist and deny change.

Apple has already proved that it doesn't take a lot of money to innovate. All it really takes is focusing your efforts and not being afraid to march off in a different direction. Other companies have already proved that spending a lot of money is never the answer. By not staying focused on creating the best products possible, spending more money just means churning out mediocrity.

If you're working for a company that is content to do as little as possible (or if you're content to do as little as possible), then you're already heading down the path to failure like Research in Motion. It's time to find a new job and a new attitude before your opportunities dry up completely, just like Research in Motion.

The Coming of the iPad 3

If you're thinking about getting an iPad, wait. The latest rumor is that Apple will announce the iPad 3 on March 7 and start shipping them shortly afterward. The iPad 3 will likely have a better camera (since the camera in the iPad 2 is so feeble), a faster processor, and a sharper display.

One possible surprise could be the official release of Microsoft Office for the iPad. Although Microsoft is already preparing Microsoft Office for Windows 8 tablets, they can't ignore the thousands of iPads already being used in corporations around the world. By selling Microsoft Office for the iPad, Microsoft could further extend Microsoft Office's grip on the corporate market. The possible drawback for Microsoft is that by supporting the iPad, they'll be indirectly competing against Windows 8 tablets.

Given a choice between solely supporting Windows 8 tablets or selling to the fast growing iPad market, a possible Microsoft Office for the iPad makes sense. Microsoft's original goal was to put Microsoft software on every computer, so they should focus on putting Microsoft software on iPads, iPhones and Macs. If Microsoft doesn't maintain their grip on the word processor, spreadsheet and presentation corporate market, someone else will, so Microsoft doesn't have much choice.

The real key might be the pricing for the iPad 3. If Apple maintains the current price structure and keeps the iPad 2 around, they could sell the iPad 3 for the latest prices and sell the iPad 2 at a much lower price. This will help squeeze the low-cost tablet makers while also making it easier for more people to get an iPad.

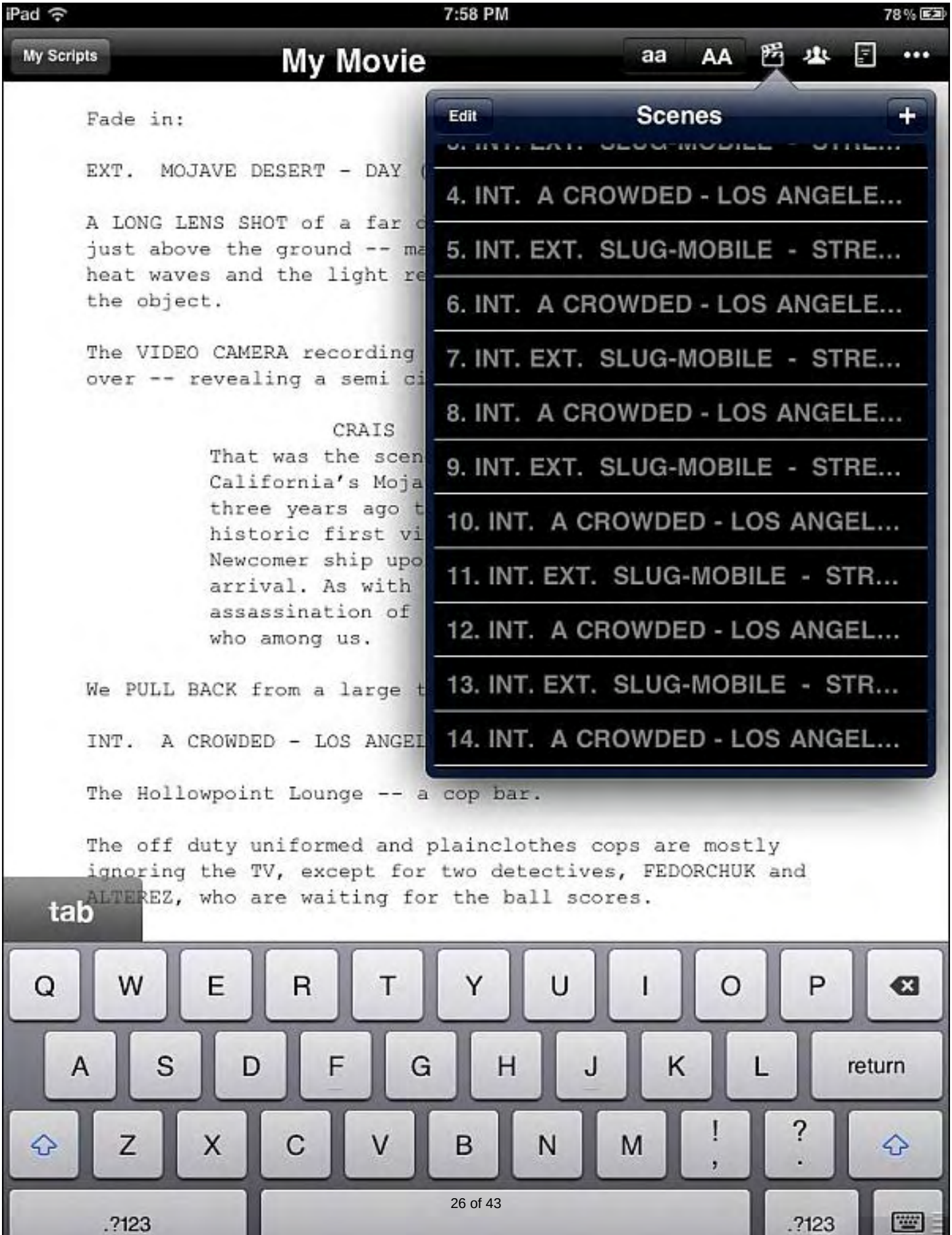
The iPad 3 is coming so there's no point in buying an iPad 2. Whatever additional features the iPad 3 includes, you can be certain that there will be lines and shortages, so be prepared to order one as soon as you can.

Writing Screenplays on an iPad

Many people adamantly insist that it's impossible to type or create anything on an iPad, yet thousands of people are doing just that everyday. While many developers have come out with word processors and note-taking apps for the iPhone and iPad, Nathan Singh has gone one step further and created a $5.99 screenplay writing app for the iPhone and iPad called Scripts Pro (*itunes.apple.com/us/app/scripts-pro/id348543183?mt=8*). Nathan was kind enough to discuss Scripts Pro and offer his insight into the app business in general.

1. Many people consider the iPad a content consumption device, unable to create content. Yet Scripts Pro does allow you to create content on an iPad. Do you see this content consumption vs. content creation dilemma affecting Scripts Pro in any way?

I think the content consumption vs creation debate has been dispelled. Content creation is what the majority of our customers use Scripts Pro for. However, it's interesting that we're finding that many of our customers are actually executives, agents, who review scripts on our app so we can't say we're limited to just content creation.



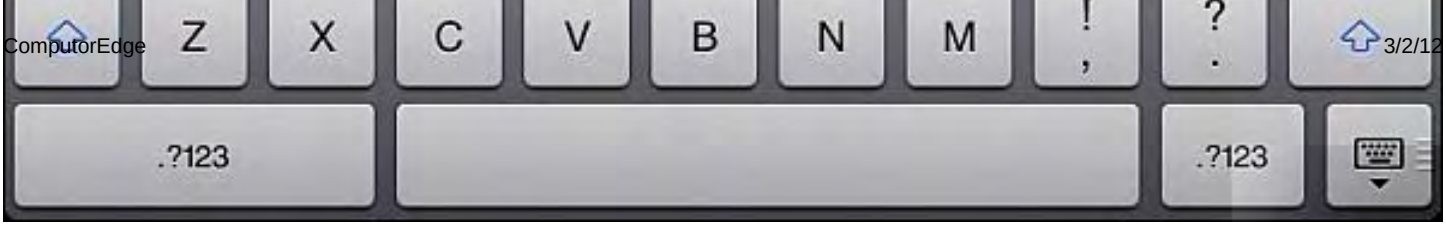


Figure 2. Scripts Pro can keep track of all the scenes in your screenplay.

2. What was the major goal of Scripts Pro?

Really just to provide a cost efficient and easy to use interface to write professional quality scripts on the go. We wanted to provide the essential functions which writers depend on: the ability to import files from their desktop software like Final Draft, rearranging scenes, adding and deleting characters and most importantly writing in industry standard screenplay formatting.

Most beginner and professional writers are on a shoe string budget. So we priced Scripts Pro in the Apple App Store accordingly at $5.99 as a bundled package which includes the iPad, iPhone and iPod software. This is a steal since Final Draft's desktop software is around $200 and does essentially the same thing, just more bells and whistles.

3. How difficult was it to create Scripts Pro? How much time did it take from your initial idea to the final shipping product?

Scripts Pro at first glance is deceptively simple looking. Behind the simple interface is a very robust writing engine. The content is constantly being updated and formatted for various elements like Actions, Characters, Scenes and Dialogues, all of which are being kept track of in a database running the background. This must be kept in line with the very strict rules for movie script pagination, breaks and overall formatting. In all, the original version of Scripts Pro took about a year and a half to conceptualize, develop and release.

4. Are you planning on porting Scripts Pro to other platforms like Android or Windows Phone 7? Why or why not?

We have plans to expand Scripts Pro to Android as well this year. We hesitated a bit with the Android marketplace due to rampant piracy and compatibility concerns with multiple device manufacturers, but it looks like the OS is in a better place then a year ago. Considering Android's growing market share and overall user base we couldn't ignore our user's requests for an Android version. It will definitely be coming soon to an Android device near you.

5. What advice do you have for other iOS developers who want to create content creation apps for the iPad?

a. Identify the need of the target audience no matter how wide or narrow. You want to make sure there is a market for what you plan to produce. So many developers crash and burn with a great idea because there are not enough users to support the app long enough.

b. Make sure the content being created by the app can be considered equal to or better then what's available on desktop. The expectations are increasing for mobile devices and their capabilities.

c. Keep the user experience and user interface a high priority. A large part of iOS's success is not only in its function, but its aesthetics. Users which create content are demanding great looking environments to do it in. Hire a UX/UI person if you're not well versed in this, it'll pay off.

6. Where do you see the future of the iPad heading and what is your opinion of Windows 8 tablets?

I don't think we've scratched the surface of the iPad's capabilities. From a film making perspective I think it will replace so many of the conventional ways of doing things, like it has in the health, business and government sectors. It's by far

one of the most versatile devices of our generation. One of the features we're planning in Scripts Pro is to use Siri to read out the character's dialogues in various male and female voices.

Regarding the Windows tablets, I welcome anything from Microsoft with open arms. As a Microsoft user for many years I know they have what it takes to compete with Apple in the tablet arena.

With the Windows tablet, they really need to be competitively priced and most importantly fuel developers' interest in building an App Store like ecosystem prior to launch. One of the biggest failures with some of the other tablet manufacturers who've crashed and burned is a paltry 3rd party application marketplace. If they're successful in doing this, Scripts Pro app will be a great addition for writers using the Windows tablet.

7. How are you marketing Scripts Pro? What advice do you have for other iOS developers in marketing apps?

It's crazy we really don't use very many conventional marketing techniques for Scripts Pro, yet we still made Apple's New and Noteworthy and have been featured in many publications, Web sites and even a TV show. I think the key to this has been nearly all of the profits from the Scripts Pro have gone right back into fixing bugs and making it better. Right now, we're actually working on a complete rewrite of the original app. But in short, our users do all the marketing for us by spreading the word.

8. You mentioned that you're rewriting Scripts Pro. Why? What did you learn from your initial design that made you decide to rewrite it again?

When Apple announced iOS 5 to developers and provided us preliminary releases for the OS, we were excited about capabilities like iCloud, Siri and some great text processing capabilities. Writing is a creative medium and using an iPad should always be an experience. So we wanted to redesign Scripts Pro to not only provide a better experience but also a beautiful design to inspire our user's creativity. Redesigning for iOS 5 also keeps us ahead of the game, opening Scripts Pro to take advantage of any new features Apple has in store for its devices. For the whole list of features users can check out our blog (*www.scriptsapp.com/blog*).

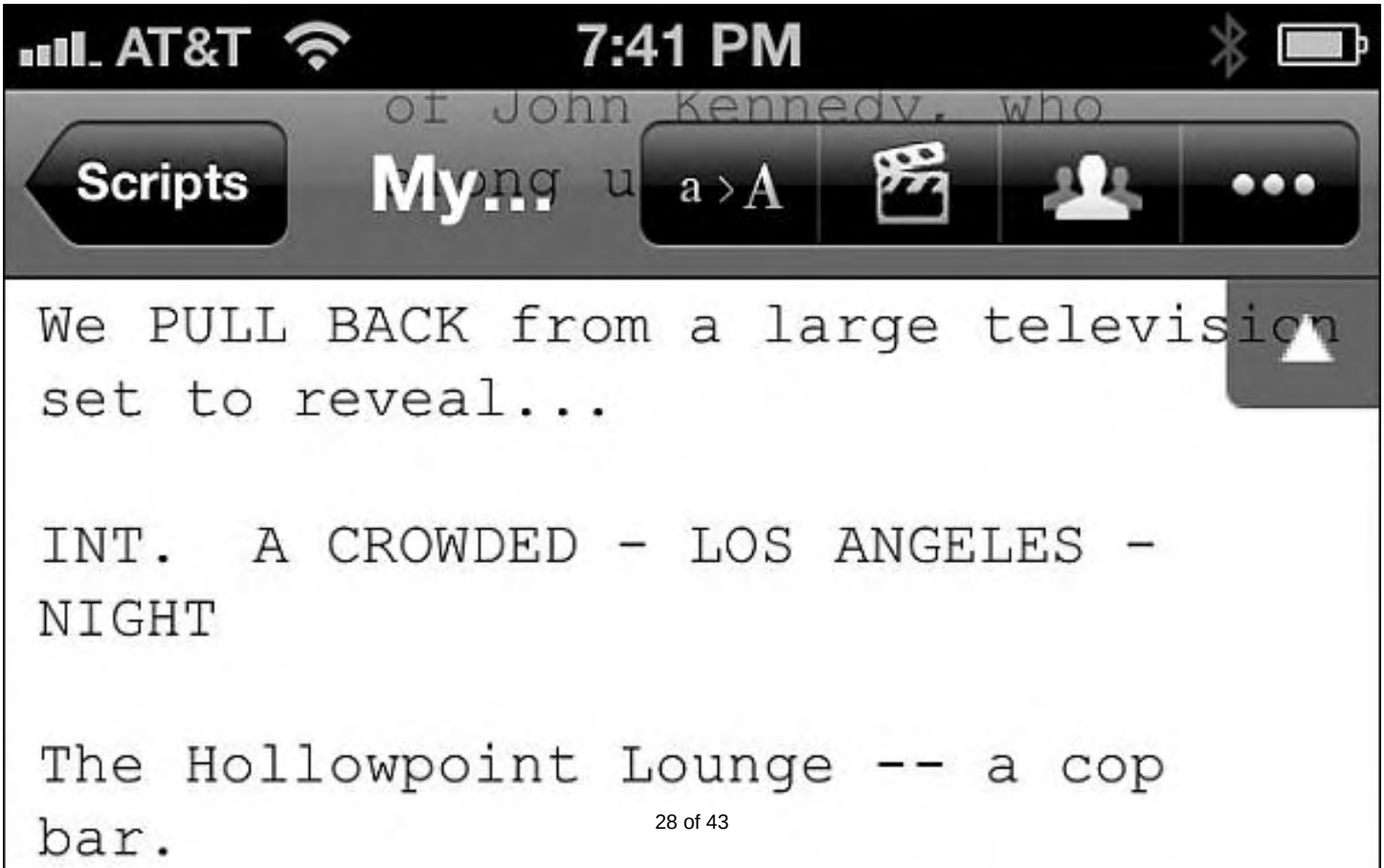


Figure 3. You can even create, read and edit scripts on an iPhone.

9. There are many cross-platform tools that promise to let you write a program once and be able to run it on Android, iOS, Windows Phone 7 and others. What is your opinion of these cross-platform tools and what was Scripts Pro written in?

Scripts Pro was written in Objective-C in Xcode. The concept of cross-platform tools theoretically should be a life saver for developers looking to maintain apps over multiple platforms. The reality is we're just not there yet. Apps written in their native environments provide for a much better user experience in my opinion. In the future, as these tools progress, perhaps I'll eat my words.

10. Do you feel that Scripts Pro can replace programs like Final Draft on a computer? Why or why not?

Good question. It's still too early to say, the truth is Scripts Pro can do essentially what a desktop screenwriting

program can do. All of our beta test user's seem to think so as well. I got a message from a writer the other day telling me he has written 2 full length feature movie scripts solely using Scripts Pro, his iPad and a Bluetooth keyboard. He hasn't written on his desktop in weeks since using Scripts Pro. That's amazing to me. Writers are always on the go and don't have time to sit at a dull desktop. When inspiration strikes they can whip out their cool iPad or iPhone and write away.

11. What do you see as the greatest opportunity for iOS developers in the near and long term future? Why?

Mobile devices are the future; it's inevitable. The greatest opportunity is the ability to create really useful apps for folks making their life easier. I think "pull my finger apps" will continue to exist because they bring joy to people, but apps which enrich people's lives and add value will provide the greatest opportunities for developers.

Elpida Goes Bankrupt

You may never have heard about Elpida Memory, but they used to make memory chips for computers. However, they focused on the PC market and didn't diversify into the smart phone and tablet market. As the world shifted to mobile devices, Elpida's market shriveled up until they had to declare bankruptcy (*www.businessweek.com/news/2012-02-27/elpida-bankruptcy-comes-after-failure-to-follow-smartphone-money.html*), as reported by Bloomberg.

The Bloomberg article highlighted the problem by stating that "Tablet computer sales more than doubled and smartphone demand surged 47 percent in the last quarter, while personal computer shipments declined."

"There was a generational change from PCs to smartphones, and Elpida failed to respond to that with the right technological shift," said Kim Hyung Sik, a Seoul-based analyst at Taurus Investment Securities Co. "Mobile DRAM is where the money is, and Samsung and other Korean companies control more than 70 percent of that market. Elpida couldn't hold out anymore."

If a memory chip company that relied on the PC market can't survive, what's going to happen to the rest of the industry that also relies on the PC market? For those who think that mobile devices are not the future, your own future may soon mirror that of Elpida Memory.

* * *

If you ever saw a cuckoo clock, you know that a mechanical bird pops out every hour and announces the time. Since few people have cuckoo clocks nowadays, you can mimic this auditory reminder of time passing by clicking on the Apple menu, choosing System Preferences, and then clicking on the Date & Time icon under the System category.

Figure 4. Selecting a custom voice to tell you the time.

Select the Announce the time check box, click in the pop-up menu to define how often you want your Mac to announce the time, and then click on the Custom Voice button to customize your Mac's synthesized voice. Your Mac can't substitute for a cuckoo clock, but it can still be amusing to hear your computer tell you the time.

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=159079189*)*
*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*)*
*Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362*)*
*99% Fairy Tales (Children's Stories the 1% Tell About the Rest of Us) (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006QSKM3A/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006QSKM3A*)*
*The Zen of Effortless Selling with Moe Abdou (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006PUFPGI/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006PUFPGI*)*
*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*.

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Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

They Actually Gave a Name to That Thing You Might Have!; The Complete Idiot's Guide to Windows 8 Pre Beta for Dummies; Online Education is Still Education —Initiative Heading Toward 2012 CA Ballot; Casio's Edifice "Black Label Collection" Wristwatch; Cyborg V7 Gaming Keyboard.

They Actually Gave a Name to That Thing You Might Have!

Yvonne Eskenzi from SecurEnvoy (*www.securenvoy.com*), a global leader in and pioneer of mobile phone-based authentication systems, writes in this week with the results of a study done in the UK that presumably has similar relevance here in the states:

First identified in 2008, it would appear nomophobia—the fear of being out of mobile phone contact—is sharply increasing in the UK. A recent survey of 1,000 people...discovered two thirds of respondents fear losing or being without their mobile phone. The study...reveals that 41% of people interviewed, in an effort to stay connected, have two phones or more.

Digging a little deeper, more women worry about losing their phones than men—70% of the women surveyed compared to 61% of the men. Yet it is men that are more likely to have two phones—scoring 47% and 36% respectively, perhaps in an effort to stay connected. When split by age it is the younger age group (18-24) that are more nomophobic at 77%, with the 25-34 age group second at 68%. Perhaps a little more surprisingly is that third most nomophobic are the 55 and overs.

"The first study into nomophobia, conducted four years ago, revealed that 53% of people suffered from the condition and our study reveals this has now risen to 66% in the UK and shows no sign of abating. A reversal on the 2008 findings is that, back then, it was men that were more afflicted yet today it's women. I'd be inclined to draw the conclusion that, perhaps because more men have two phones, they're less likely to misplace both and therefore be left phone-less," said Andy Kemshall SecurEnvoy CTO and co founder. "There is another study into mobile phone use that found people check their phones, on average, 34 times a day so it wouldn't take long for you to realize if you'd misplaced your device."

Another interesting revelation from this study is that, with 49% of people getting upset if their messages and texts were viewed by a partner, they're still lax at securing these devices. Forty-six percent do not use any protection at all; 41% use a four pin access code; and just 10% encrypt their device. A security conscious 3% use two factor authentication. Andy suggests, "With 58% of the respondents using at least one device for business use, this lack of security is a worrying trend that needs addressing."

"What this study does highlight though," concludes Kemshall "is the extent that people now rely on their mobile phones.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Windows 8 Pre Beta for Dummies

Regular *ComputorEdge* contributor Barry Fass-Holmes turns us on this week to a pretty cool PDF (*www.aztcs.org/meeting_notes/winhardsig/win8prebeta/win8prebeta-making-usable.pdf*) titled, "How You Can Make the Windows Developers Preview Pre-beta Usable," offered by the Tucson Computer Society. The document outlines in amazing detail (272 steps) the path to taming the release:

The Windows 8 Developers Preview (*msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/apps/br229516*), which is also known as Windows 8 Pre-Beta, provides us with a look into the rapidly-approaching future of the Windows operating system. Here are some basic steps for making Windows 8 Pre-Beta usable.

The Windows 8 Pre-Beta is missing a few items! When you start a real or virtual computer that is running Windows 8 Pre-Beta and then click on the Desktop tile, you will arrive at the Desktop View which looks a lot like the Desktop of Windows XP, Windows Vista and Windows 7. However, you will start noticing a few differences when you click on various icons and buttons: Clicking on the Start button at the left or bottom end of the gray Taskbar does not bring up a Start menu. Instead, it sends you to the Metro Start screen. Without the Start menu, you now have to figure out how to get to the Control Panel which is critical for configuring Windows. Never fear! The rest of this how-to document shows you how you can get back the Windows applets and configuration screens that you used to see in Windows XP, Windows Vista and Windows 7.

According to Microsoft: "The Windows 8 Developer Preview is a pre-beta version of Windows 8 for developers. These downloads include pre-release software that may change without notice. The software is provided as is, and you bear the risk of using it. It may not be stable, operate correctly or work the way the final version of the software will. It should not be used in a production environment. The features and functionality in the pre-release software may not appear in the final version. Some product features and functionality may require advanced or additional hardware, or installation of other software."

Microsoft claims the Windows 8 Developer Preview works great on machines that can already run Vista and Windows 7:

1GHz or faster 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor
1GB RAM (32-bit) or 2GB RAM (64-bit)
16GB available hard disk space (32-bit) or 20GB (64-bit)
DirectX 9 graphics device with WDDM 1.0 or higher driver
(To run Metro-style Apps, you need a screen resolution of 1024 X 768 or greater.)

Online Education is Still Education—Initiative Heading Toward 2012 CA Ballot

Stu Mollrich, representing EducationForward, notes that the Riverside Unified Board of Education has recently passed a resolution in support of the California Student Bill of Rights. Mollrich adds:

The resolution passed by the board stated, "…the Riverside Unified Board of Education joins a growing list of public school educators, superintendents, and school governing boards throughout the state in endorsing the [proposed] California proposition entitled: Online K-12 Education College Preparatory Courses."

Currently, there are approximately a million students across the state of California that do not have access to course offerings in their high schools that would allow them to meet the basic requirements for admission to the University of California system and similar quality institutions of higher education. Existing California law creates barriers that prevent students from accessing courses offered outside of their home school districts, including online classes.

"All California students should be able to access the coursework they need to enter the California university system,"

said Gayle Cloud, President of the Riverside Unified Board of Education. "This Initiative provides much needed reform to an education code that is hopelessly out of synch with the needs of California's students."

The California Student Bill of Rights Initiative is currently in circulation. 505,000 signatures of registered voters must be collected to place the measure on the November 2012 ballot. Voters can order petitions and learn more about the initiative at www.EducationForward.org (*www.EducationForward.org*).

Casio's Edifice "Black Label Collection" Wristwatch

You might be a nerd (and proud of it), but no one is going to know unless you're wearing something like Casio's Edifice Black Label Collection multi-band atomic wrist watch (model EQWM1100DC-1A2 (*www.casio.com/products/Watches/Edifice/EQWM1100DC-1A2/*), MSRP $500). OK, I suppose you could also wear the "I Am a Nerd" t-shirt you got at the thrift store for 89 cents, but c'mon...

First off, this is just about the second most attractive thing a man can have on his arm. It's also a better conversation starter than your average adorable tiny dog. Prepare to get many involuntary oohs and ahhs and lots of questions.

For example: "What's does that mean: 'atomic'? Should I run away? Am I in danger standing near you?" Answer: Not from the watch. The term atomic refers to the watch's ability to automatically synchronize with the atomic Universal Time Clock up to six times a day using radio signals which keep the timepiece accurate up to less than a second per day. You'll never miss one of your kids' birthday parties ever again!

The EQWM1100DC-1A2 is solar powered. Just park it under a lamp or in a window for a few hours and you're charged up for months. If you manage to get outdoors in the sun more than certain magazine reviews editors, you'll probably never even have to think about charging it.

More specs (from Casio):

• Capable of analog measurement to 1/1000th second via high-speed LSI processing, a process that also allows for

the utilization of 5 independent motors to drive all of the watch functions.
• Multi-Band Atomic Timekeeping (US, UK, Germany, Japan, China)
• Receives time calibration radio signals which keep the displayed time accurate
• Auto receive function up to 6 times per day (up to 5 times per day for the Chinese calibration signal)
• Manual receive function
• Multi-Band 6 Atomic Timekeeping
• Signal: US WWVB, UK MSF, Germany DCF77, Japan JJY40/JJY60, China BPC
• Frequency: US 60kHz, UK 60kHz, Germany 77.5kHz, Japan 40/60kHz, BPC 68.5kHz
• Solar Powered—approx. battery life: 5 months on full charge (without further exposure to light)
• Module: 5122
• 100M Water Resistant
• Neo-brite luminous hands and markers
• World Time
• 29 times zones (29 cities + UTC), city code display, daylight saving on/off, home city/world time swapping
• Daily alarm
• 1/1000 second stopwatch
• Measuring capacity: 23'59.999"
• Measuring mode: Elapsed time
• Full auto-calendar (pre-programmed until the year 2099)
• 12/24 hour formats
• Accuracy: +/-15 seconds per month (with no signal calibration)
• Storage battery: Solar rechargeable battery
• Power saving function and low battery alert
• Weight 199g

There's not much on the minus side: The manual is a bit difficult to understand sometimes. Fortunately, there are plenty of places on the Web you can find information about the incredible number of functions and features this watch has. Also, the 24-hour dial is pretty difficult to read, but that's no biggie. Other than that, the EQWM1100DC-1A2 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00460KFFA/?tag=comput0b9-20*) is an amazing timepiece worthy of any discerning wrist.

Cyborg V7 Gaming Keyboard

The Cyborg V7 keyboard (*www.cyborggaming.com/prod/v7keyboard.htm*) is certainly a diamond in the rough when it comes to budget gaming. It features two modes, a standard typing mode and a "Cyborg," or gaming, mode.

If you tap the bionic head at the top of the keyboard, it switches from half to fully lit up, indicating Cyborg mode is enabled. In this mode, all 12 macro keys are enabled and can be customized using the software provided. You can also adjust the color and brightness of individual parts of the keyboard, not just the whole thing. The macros keys, typing area, number pad, WASD, and arrow keys can each be programmed independently with color and brightness—or turned off. A nifty feature about this keyboard is that, when Cyborg mode is engaged, the Windows Key is disabled so, when you're gaming, the accidental Windows Key press won't shut you down by rudely kicking you back to Windows.

With Cyborg mode disabled, the macro keys are disabled, the Windows Key is re-enabled, and the keyboard lights up as one solid color. The dash on the keyboard features a volume control, music controls, and an on/off switch for the keyboard lighting. The W, A, S, D, arrow keys and the space bar are all metallic silver to highlight the keys most usually used in games. The keyboard also features a USB port and headphone and microphone inserts.

This keyboard is probably the most comfortable one I have ever used. The detachable wrist rest is awesome and can be extended or retracted depending on preference. It's extremely durable, and the keys are sturdy. I have yet to have issues with misfiring or overly-sensitive keys.

The one issue I do have is that the macro keys are a little far out on either side, so if you have smaller hands you're going to be making a stretch that could be a little uncomfortable. Other than that, this keyboard is incredible for a budget gamer. Pick it up online (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000VOE466/?&tag=comput0b9-20*) now for about $80.

Review contributed by Jeremy Halligan

In addition to being an editor and columnist for *ComputorEdge* 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 ComputorEdge Staff

"Internet Explorer vs. the Alternatives," "Back and Forth With Windows and Mac," "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions"

Internet Explorer vs. the Alternatives

[Regarding the February 10 Digital Dave column:]

Dave, love all your help. Thanks!

You just wrote "Perhaps I have been a bit rough on Internet Explorer." No you haven't. I've got IE plus Firefox, Sea Monkey, Opera, Google Chrome and Safari installed on this machine, and I use every one of them in different ways because of their differences. IE just isn't as good as the others.

About the only thing that IE does a little better is saving a Web page as a text document—the resulting HTML-to-text conversion arguably looks nicer, though the actual saved info is the same. It's like when you open a document and need to choose between OpenOffice Writer, Word, Wordpad or Notepad; Internet Explorer is the equivalent of Notepad. If that's all you need, then go for it.

I recommend installing all of these browsers and using them for different purposes. This increases security (they can't look at each other's cookies as far as I know so there's less supercookie cross-tracking of your activities), and you can keep Javascript turned off in the one you use for newspaper sites which seems to make the tabs more "snappy" when you have a lot of newspaper pages open (some sites have more Javascript than others). And for any of your readers who visit some of those "personal" sites, reserving one browser specifically for that activity is one way to make it easy to quickly delete all traces of ever having visited them without also deleting your "acceptable" surfing history and cookies (this is sort of like creating different profiles for different purposes).

-Peter, Los Angeles

Back and Forth With Windows and Mac

[Regarding the January 20 Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column:]

This posting is for readers of "Back and Forth With Windows and Mac" in *ComputorEdge* January 29, 2012.

It states "And if you are smart you will purchase the AppleCare protection; you are prohibited from upgrading—or risk voiding the warranty."

This statement makes little, if any, sense for the following reasons.

1. AppleCare extends the standard one-year warranty for two additional years (*www.apple.com/support/products/mac.html*). It might give some people peace of mind.

2. AppleCare also is like betting that something will break. However, since Apple does not manufacture its own hard drives, CPUs, RAM chips, video boards and other components (but rather equips Macs with third-party components), you're actually betting against Intel, Toshiba, Fujitsu, Samsung and other component manufacturers rather than against Apple.

2. Apple's rate-of-repair and customer satisfaction records routinely are better than other brand PCs. For those who don't believe or trust Consumer Reports, how about PC Magazine which gave the current Mac mini its Editor's Choice award (*www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2388873,00.asp*)?

3. If you do something to a Mac mini that voids its warranty (e.g. spilling a beverage on its innards), AppleCare will be of little benefit because its terms and conditions are extensions of the standard one-year warranty.

4. For users who need/want more than the standard 2GB RAM, adding more RAM is a user upgrade and is supported under the Mac mini's standard warranty (*manuals.info.apple.com/en_US/mac_mini_mid2011_ug.pdf*) (p.41).

* * *

The same posting also states "Remember, you cannot upgrade and repair your own Mac. You will have to take it to an Apple Store/Service center. Then they will either suggest hundreds of dollars in repairs, or '...why not just upgrade to the new iMac?'"

This statement makes little, if any, sense.

First, you can upgrade your own Mac's hard drive and/or RAM while it is under warranty (as specified in each Mac model's user guide), and you can repair it while it is out-of-warranty (if you have the time, skill and knowledge).

Second, while a Mac is under warranty (or AppleCare extended) coverage, Apple Stores and authorized service centers might suggest repairs that would cost "hundreds of dollars," but the customer will not be charged as long as those repairs meet the warranty's conditions.

Third, Apple Store employees are trained to ask customers if they have any questions about the store's products. If the answer is "no," the employees are trained to say "If you do have any questions, I'll be glad to answer them" and walk away rather than say "why not just upgrade to the new iMac?"

Don't believe me? How about believing Ron Johnson, Apple's former executive in charge of the Apple Stores, who has published an extensive narrative about the company's retail philosophy (*blogs.hbr.org/cs/2011/11/what_i_learned_building_the_ap.html*) that focuses on customer experience rather than sales?

Naysayers who don't trust/believe me or Ron Johnson are welcome to find out for themselves by visiting any of their local Apple Stores rather than trusting/believing the above statement in "Back and Forth With Windows and Mac."

-Barry Fass-Holmes, San Diego, CA

The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

[Regarding the February 3 Wally Wangs Apple Farm column:]

Thomas Kuhn's book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/0226458083/?

tag=comput0b9-20*)* certainly makes some good points which are largely ignored by most of the world. I commend anyone who actually reads it. It's an exercise in trying to stay awake. Most people just quote the book without ever reading it. It is commonly assigned in college courses. I know that I was supposed to read it once, but I kept falling asleep. I was going to just get the CliffsNotes (*www.amazon.com/mn/search/?&tag=comput0b9-20&field-keywords=cliff%20notes*), but apparently Cliff couldn't get through it either.

-Richard, Oceanside, CA

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