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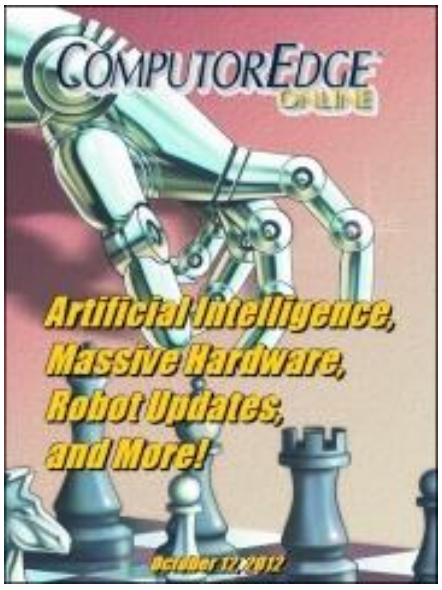

This issue:
Artificial Intelligence, Massive Hardware, Robot Updates, and More!

More little know high tech stories, plus Digital Dave, Wally Wang, and how to find your Windows specs, and trading in iPhones.

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The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.

Study: The Best and Worst Times to Trade in an iPhone; Handwriting Recognition in the Tablet Age; Borderlands 2 (Xbox 360); Half-Life Reborn as Black Mesa.

DEPARTMENTS:

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers by ComputorEdge Staff

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

"Mapvertising, Colonel Sanders in Nevada," "Older Scanner with Windows 7," "School and Student PC Security," "Thanks to ComputorEdge," How Would Google Via Maps Affect Apple?" "Pinnacle Studio for iPhone?"

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Digital Dave

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

How Do I Change My E-mail Address for ComputorEdge?; PC MightyMax 2012; Video Card Failure on Intel Chip iMac.

Dear Digital Dave,

I've been a long time ComputorEdge *subscriber and need to change my e-mail address. If there was any other way to ask this I would, but would you help me please?*

Stuck
San Diego, CA

Dear Stuck,

Apparently you need to send an e-mail to *onlinesubscriptions@computoredge.com* with both your old e-mail address and new e-mail address, then *ComputorEdge* will make the change for you.

I asked Jack Dunning why it wasn't easy to change e-mail addresses in the *ComputorEdge* e-mail subscription system (*webserver.computoredge.com/subscript/subscriptlist.mvc*). He said to build a proper system to allow people to change their own e-mail address would require asking for too much information from the subscriber. At this point all that is needed for sign-up is an e-mail address. However, that makes it easy for anyone to log-on to any address they happen to know (or guess). That means they could also change any or all addresses that they manage to access—possibly corrupting the database.

To keep it simple and prevent others from abusing the system, you must send address changes to *ComputorEdge* at the address noted above. It is easy to opt out of the system and add a new subscription, but then you would lose your recorded Start Date. Jack says that your Start Date is November 18, 2005 which must make you one of *ComputorEdge's* longest e-mail subscribers.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

Some how PC MightyMax 2012 is was downloaded on my computer and keeps popping up. I can't get rid of it. It says I have bad things on my computer—like 900 things. Any thoughts on this?

Howie Pray
El Cajon, CA

Dear Howie,

It sounds like you've been hit by one of those particularly nasty malware programs masquerading as virus protection software. When it is installed it replaces your old virus protection, then taking control of many system functions. The reason that PC MightyMax is supposedly finding so many problems is to extort money for the program. I was surprised to see that it is available as a download at CNET, although all the comments do state that it is malware.

This is yet another warning to *never* download anything from the Internet unless you know you can trust the site and the software. At least at CNET the poor reader reviews should steer you away from anything dangerous—although it would have been better if CNET had banned PC MightyMax.

If you Google the program, you will see a long list of sites with instructions for removing PC MightyMax (*guides.yoosecurity.com/cannot-uninstall-pc-mightymax-2012-completely-how-to-remove/*). Since the program interferes with so many system processes, you will need to reboot into Safe Mode before you can start the procedures. You may want to print those instructions before you start—that's if PC MightyMax will let you print. Once you completely remove this malware, your computer should be fine.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I started noticing crashes when Skype would receive a message sometimes, or when playing video games occasionally, or during videos such as news stories. This is getting worse. The [local] authorized Apple shop said it is probably the video card, which is about a $400 repair.

How long do video cards typically last? Do replacement ones typically last longer than the original (upgraded over time)? Does this repair cost seem reasonable?

Dennis Faulkner
San Diego, CA

Dear Dennis,

Your video card could well be the culprit. They do fail from time to time although many will run for years without ever causing a problem. There is no guarantee that a new card will last longer since it is usually a random component failure that causes the problem. I did note that this is a fairly common problem with iMacs.

As for the pricing, I would have to say that it is probably reasonable at $400. The price of the video card alone can run between $200 and $300. It is always more for labor. From looking at what's involved in replacing a video card in an iMac, it certainly isn't as simple as swapping out an expansion card in a PC. I understand that the Apple Store could charge over $1100 for the fix, but they may swap out more than just the video card.

However, if you are usually interacting over the Internet when you experience crashes (and you are not seeing any other video symptoms—lines, flickering, distortion), it could just as easily be the network card (which I believe is built into the motherboard in an iMac). If that is the case, then the problem will continue even after the video card is replaced, plus you will need to replace the motherboard.

The fact that the problem is getting worse is an indication that it is some type of hardware problem. It would be nice if you could easily swap out components to isolate the problem.

Digital Dave

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More Little Known High Tech Stories

"Keyboard on a Keychain, Updates on Robots and Driverless Cars, Apps for Cow-Tracking" by Marilyn K. Martin

Holiday Gift Ideas; Artificial Intelligence; Massive Hardware; Robot Updates; Smarthomes; Television Tech; Rural Goes Digital; Latest Car Tech; Driverless Cars; Digital Child Raising.

Holiday Gift Ideas—Keyboards, Bike Speakers and Portable Scanners

Jerry has finally set up his tablet to do almost everything that his desktop computer does.

It seems that no one is thrilled with tablet computers' small touchscreen keyboard. In August 2012, *Gizmag* reported on a new wafer-thin iPad keyboard attachment (*www.gizmag.com/zagg-backlit-ipad-keyboard/23947/*) with color-changing backlight. Zagg (*www.ZAGG.com*) has introduced its newest and thinnest iPad keyboard, which attaches magnetically to hold the iPad upright. The new backlit keyboard is for typing in dim light, and users can choose from up to eight customized colors. Released at the end of September, the keyboard runs $99-$129.

Wired reported in September 2012 on a new combo iPad case and keyboard (*www.wired.com/geekdad/2012/09/cruxskunk-ipad-keyboard-case/*) that turns a tablet into a small laptop. The CruxSkunk (*www.cruxcase.com/products/cruxskunk/*) lets the iPad snap into the top half of the case, with a full-sized keyboard in the bottom half that connects to the iPad via Bluetooth. The CruxSkunk keyboard-case is ultra-thin, cheaper than a laptop, and adds

flexibility for times when you just want the iPad—or the expanded keyboard. It doubled its funding request on Kickstarter, so it is destined for Fall production, and should cost around $155.

Or how about a keyboard on a keychain? *Gizmag* reported in September 2012 that CTX (*www.ctxtechnologies.com/*) has developed a virtual keyboard (*www.gizmag.com/ctx-bluetooth-virtual-keyboard/24077/*) that is laser projected onto any flat surface. A Bluetooth connection lets it sync wirelessly to most smart devices. It projects a laser outline of a full-sized QWERTY keyboard, with optical sensors to track a user's finger movements. CTX's virtual keyboard isn't the first on the market, but it is the smallest and most affordable, selling for about $100 through Brookstone (*www.brookstone.com/laser-projection-virtual-keyboard*).

Do you wish you could hear music and even enjoy hands-free access to phone calls while out on your bike? A company called NYNE (*www.nyne.com/*) has developed a portable speaker (*www.usatoday.com/tech/products/story/2012-09-08/bike-speaker-tech-products/57691626/1?loc=interstitialskip*) that attaches to bike handlebars. NYNE's NB-200 Bluetooth speaker can stream music and handle incoming phone calls—without blocking vital traffic sounds, as does biking with headphones. Available online from OneCall (*www.onecall.com*) for about $130.

Colorado start-up Couragent (*www.couragent.net/*) has created a mobile scanner (*www.denverpost.com/business/ci_21603211/handy-portable-scanner-but-flip-pal-carries-steep*). Called the Flip-Pal, it weighs only 1.5 pounds, and can produce high-quality digital scans of photos and documents. Powered by AA batteries, its 1.7-inch color LCD screen displays the snapshot being scanned, and can stitch together multiple scans of larger documents or a newspaper page. It costs about $150.

How Artificial Intelligence is Changing Our Lives

In September 2012 the Christian Science Monitor tried to gauge the AI Revolution (*www.csmonitor.com/Innovation/Tech/2012/0916/How-artificial-intelligence-is-changing-our-lives*)—and how it's changing our lives. The long article cites current examples, from self-driving autos to telemedicine robots to smartphone apps that act as personal concierges. Sensor-wired smarthomes are being studied, and we already have verbal-command dashboards in cars.

The speed of smart-tech innovation has supposedly made us blase. Or as one futurist put it, "Our expectations are a moving target." And the Grand Prize still eludes us—AI that can think and communicate like a person. But we are settling for advances in robotic AI which can can take verbal and gesture commands from us, or communicate with other AI devices. (See later posts in this article on smarthomes, robots and driverless cars.)

Massive Hardware—Innovation and News

A recent study by Pike Research estimated that 1.5% of all electricity generated worldwide goes to data storage centers (*green.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/06/cooling-a-computer-server-with-mineral-oil/?ref=technology*). Since most of that energy goes to coolers/chillers, corporations are looking for more natural ways to keep these massive systems cool. Google has a data center in Finland, and Facebook plans to build a center in Sweden.

But chip maker Intel keeps its servers cool with oil immersion, saving 10-20% energy. Intel just completed a one year trial with oil immersion tanks designed by Texas start-up Green Revolution Cooling (*www.grcooling.com/*). The company's CEO, Christian Best, insists that "oil is a better conductor of heat away from computer components, and doesn't conduct electricity, so components don't short out or damage."

Robot Updates: Darpa to Baxter

In September 2012 Gizmag reported on a science-fiction-to-fact idea, an organic robot (*www.gizmag.com/light-muscle/24002/*) like the one introduced in a 1972 Arthur C. Clarke novel, *Rendezvous with Rama*. Both MIT and the University of Pennsylvania are now working on "genetically engineered muscle tissue that responds to light." MIT's approach is to take light-sensitive elements from invertebrates, and graft them onto mammalian cells, for cells that flex in response to light. The eventual goal is for androids who can appear totally life-like.

NextBigFuture also reported in September 2012 that Rethink Robotics (*www.rethinkrobotics.com/*) has designed a revolutionary industrial bot called the Baxter Manufacturing Robot (*nextbigfuture.com/2012/09/rethink-robotics-reveals-its.html*). At six feet tall and 300 pounds, Baxter has expressive screen-eyes that let human coworkers know if it is done, stumped or has possibly made a mistake. In a country full of complex manufacturing plants with robotics, and too few people trained in the math and engineering skills to program the robotics, Baxter is a giant leap forward. Human co-workers can tell at a glance if Baxter is ready for a new task, then simply demonstrate the next task as Baxter "watches." No complex reprogramming required.

Also in *Gizmag* in September 2012 was DARPA's video of their new-and-improved military LS3, or the quadruped Legged Squad Support System (*www.gizmag.com/new-ls3-quadruped-robot/24098/*). Built by Boston Dynamics (*www.bostondynamics.com/*), this robot pack mule is designed to carry heavy military gear over rugged and varying terrain. It can follow a military patrol autonomously, and even respond to verbal and visual commands. The newest improvements are a quieter beast-of-burden robot, which can now run up to 7 miles-per-hour, as well as right itself when it falls over.

Smarthomes of the Future

In September 2012 *The New York Times* reported that while we were promised automatic-homes decades ago, progress is finally being made through synchronized electronic gadgets (*www.nytimes.com/2012/09/06/technology/06iht-srifa06.html?ref=technology*) which can "talk to each other." Experts blame the lag on consumer indifference, competing technical standards, and a global recession. Still, iPads can now serve as wireless remotes, and "wireless home connectivity" is being toted in European consumer electronics shows.

In Pacific Palisades, California, a new Mission-style smarthome is on the market for $3.5 million. Electronic thermostats and sensors monitor electricity and natural gas for maximum efficiency, while A/C, security and irrigation systems are managed by iPads. Video, audio and Internet stream through a multimedia system made by Elan Home Systems (*www.elanhomesystems.com/*). Washer, dryer, and bathroom fans are connected wirelessly, and lighting is controlled by motion sensors. Front and back doors, as well as the garage door, can be activated remotely with an e-mail. With Ethernet connections (required for Wi-Fi) set to double by 2016, and low-bandwidth networks for monitors and sensors to also surge over seven times the current number by 2016, automated homes may finally arrive in the near future.

Television Tech—Better TVs, Skip the 3D

In early September 2012 *The New York Times* reported that TV makers Toshiba, LG Electronics and Philips Electronics are banding together (*www.nytimes.com/2012/09/06/technology/06iht-srtvs06.html?ref=technology*) against Apple and Google, after witnessing the powerful pair muscle aside all competitors in the smartphone market. The TV makers want to synchronize a joint operating system for consumers to listen to music, watch videos and play games via the Internet on home TVs. The Smart TV Alliance (*www.smarttv-alliance.org/*), wants to make sure developers can create offerings that will run on different sets. Larger TV makers like Samsung, Sony and Panasonic have developed their own multi-use systems, and think "unified platforms" are really only for

smaller TV makers trying to get a stake in the market.

The Seattle Times reported in September 2012 that a recent Nielsen poll shows how homes without traditional TV services (cable or satellite) continue to increase—and still have content to watch (*seattletimes.com/html/entertainment/2019120300_apustvchanginghabits.html*). Many un-hooked consumers use their TVs for gaming, viewing DVDs or using services like Netflix or Apple TV. Internet offerings like YouTube also have steady viewership. Gaming consoles are also becoming entertainment hubs for playing video games and also watching videos.

In line with the above, *The New York Times* reported in September 2012 that more people are watching Internet video on TVs (*bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/26/more-are-watching-internet-video-on-actual-tvs-research-shows/?ref=technology*) now, rather than computers. Tired of squinting at YouTube or Hulu shows on small computer or gadget screens, the new report states that users watching Internet video on their home TVs has gone up 45%. Netflix' instant streaming service was the most popular (40%), followed by Hulu Plus (12%) and Vuvu (4%). The shift is aligned with the rising sales of Internet-enabled TV sets, and also signals a maturing of online video, with audiences moving from dorm rooms to living rooms.

Also in *The Seattle Times* in September 2012 it was reported that 3D TV has such a tiny audience (*seattletimes.com/html/businesstechnology/2019284462_apus3dtv.html*) that it can't be measured by ratings systems like Nielsen. It's estimated that only 115,000 American homes are watching 3D channels at any one time. ESPN 3D gauges its viewership through Twitter posts during live events. It was one of nine 3D channels launched after the 3D movie "Avatar" grossed billions at the box office, and supposedly heralded a mass market appeal for 3D. But the translation of 3D to television was small, with only 2% of U.S. TVs now able to show 3D channels. Despite most TV makers including a "3D capable" option in all new high-end TV models, expensive and limited 3D content, and consumer resistance to wearing the special glasses, had resulted in low demand for a 3D experience at home.

Rural Goes Digital—Internet Connections to Cow Tracking

Bloomberg reported in September 2012 that Dish Network is launching a new broadband-Internet service for rural users (*www.denverpost.com/business/ci_21648526/dish-network-launching-new-broadband-internet-service-rural*) who have slow or no Internet access. DishNet (*www.dish.com/entertainment/internet-phone/*) is offering a new $40 package for download speeds of 5 megabits per second with data plans of 10 gigabits, aimed at 14.5 million rural Americans who have slow or no Internet access. The new Dish service will rely on a satellite launched into orbit on July 5th by sister company EchoStarCorp (*www.echostar.com/*), so Dish can now handle several million new Internet customers.

Futurity reported in September 2012 that dairy farmers now have access to a DairyCents app (*itunes.apple.com/us/app/dairycents-track-income-over/id549872815?mt=8*) that helps farmers estimate income over feed cost per cow (*www.futurity.org/science-technology/got-milk-profits-dairy-app-keeps-track/*). The net number tells farmers how much money is left over for non-feed costs, and even compares feed prices at several locations across the country. It's hoped that the app will help farmers deal better with the financial aspects of dairy-farming, against the unpredictable variances of weather and market conditions.

Since dairy cows need to have a calf ccasionally to keep their milk flowing, an experiment in Switzerland has sensors placed in dairy cows (*seattletimes.com/html/nationworld/2019317379_cowteets03.html*) to alert farmers when a particular cow is in heat, or ready to breed. When a dairy cow's sensors are triggered by a rise in genital heat and restlessness, indicating they are ready to breed, the sensors send the farmer a SMS in one of five languages. The developers brag of a 90% success rate in detecting dairy cows in heat, and say their sensor-devices should be on the

market next year. Although objections remain from animal rights groups, and the price is steep at about $1,400 per unit.

Latest Car Tech—Deciphering Icons to Engine Reinvention

In September 2012 Cars.com (*Cars.com*) through the *Chicago Tribune* offered a helpful gallery (*www.chicagotribune.com/classified/automotive/chi-what-does-this-button-do-photos,0,4483343.photogallery*) of what some mysterious car dash icons really mean. Most seem to be on sportier models, like "LC " on the Ford Shelby GT500 which means "Launch Control," to launch the engine from a standing start with minimal wheel spin. Mercedes-Benz cars also seem to have their share of mysterious buttons, from several options to open/close windows, to a $4,090 "active suspension" that adjusts shock firmness as well as ride height for comfort, handling and to improve aerodynamics.

Fossil fuels currently deliver energy to end users with just 33% efficiency. For the sake of the environment and increasing future energy demand, we need to increase engine efficiency by considering new reciprocating engine designs. The California Energy Commission is working on ARES and ARICE programs of Advanced Reciprocating Engine (*www.energy.ca.gov/distgen/equipment/reciprocating_engines/future.html*) systems. *Popular Mechanics* offered five ways to redesign (*www.popularmechanics.com/cars/news/industry/5-alternative-engine-architectures#slide-1*) the internal combustion engine, from free-piston to the opposed-piston, opposed-cylinder (OPOC). And *PopSci* reported last year on a new split-cycle engine (*www.popsci.com/cars/article/2011-01/split-cycle-engine-design-could-improve-fuel-economies-50-percent*) design that could improve fuel economy by 50%.

Another innovative idea in Futurity in September 2012 is that one way to make future cars lighter and more fuel-efficient would be to replace the jumble of wires under the hood with beams of light (*www.futurity.org/science-technology/for-lighter-cars-turn-wires-into-light-beams/*). The University of Warwick (Britain) is working on this concept of "optical wireless." This idea has been explored for aviation, but Warwick engineers are exploring its use in private ground vehicles. Optical wireless in cars could not only reduce wiring weight and save fuel, but could also reduce manufacturing costs, since LED lighting is currently being mass-produced.

Driverless Cars

Our fascination with robotic, self-driving cars seems endless, even if they aren't in our garages just yet. In September 2012, California's Gov. Jerry Brown joined Google's Sergey Brin when he signed a new driverless car law, which would allow self-driving cars (*www.denverpost.com/business/ci_21627191/google-driverless-robot-car-law-jerry-brown-signs-law-sergey-brin*) on California streets by 2015. Brown traveled to Google headquarters in Mountain View to sign the landmark legislation, and reportedly had a look of "utter amazement" after a test drive with Brin in an "autonomous" Prius.

The multi-part bill requires automakers to have their driverless cars approved by the California Dept. of Motor Vehicles. And drivers will need to obtain a separate operating permit, as well as sit behind the wheel of the car, in case its computer crashes and a human needs to take control. Similar legislation has already been enacted in Nevada and Florida.

At the end of September 2012 Brad Templeton in NextBigFuture discussed how "robocars" will end up changing the design of all cars (*nextbigfuture.com/2012/09/new-designs-enabled-by-robotic-cars.html*). The idea is that in the near future, driverless robotaxis will be roaming everywhere, and people could "call" them when in need. Theoretically, people would then only have to purchase cars for their most common needs, such as a one-passenger, no-cargo vehicle just to commute to work. Roads of the future could therefore be narrower, to accommodate just one-

passenger vehicles. And rented robotaxis could have reverse or face to face seating, sleeper cars for long trips, and could park and refuel themselves with no human assistance.

Digital Child Raising

Kids born and raised today have never known a non-digital world. One mommy-blogger in *The New York Times* in September 2012 marveled that some of her children's first toys were software apps (*www.nytimes.com/2012/09/06/technology/personaltech/sparkabilities-babies-1-hd-talking-tom-cat-and-other-apps-for-babies-app-smart.html*) on mobile devices. She suggests some educational baby apps for mommy's iPhone or tablet, like Sparkabilities Babies 1HD (*www.sparkabilities.com/*) . The app has colorful graphics, sound effects and video inserts, with dynamic use of colors, shapes, numbers, music and noises. Young babies are fascinated by the scene changes and noisy graphics, and older babies can be taught about the colors and numbers. Outfit7 (*outfit7.com/*) and The Moogies (*itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-moogies/id459434006?mt=8*) have similar recommended baby-play apps.

In September 2012 in *USA Today* another mommy-blogger reviewed some great new apps for preschoolers (*www.usatoday.com/tech/columnist/jinnygudmundsen/story/2012-09-02/kids-apps/57513862/1*). Little Digits (*itunes.apple.com/us/app/little-digits/id511606843?mt=8*) is not just a counting app, but the app also "knows" how many little fingers are touching the screen, with animated numbers appearing under their fingers. Preschoolers learn how to add and subtract by recreating equations with their finger-touch. Another recommended app is Alien Assignment (*itunes.apple.com/us/app/alien-assignment/id531359578?mt=8*), which is a scavenger hunt that uses the gadget's camera to capture things, as parent and child help the crash-landed alien Gloops find things to repair their spaceship so they can fly home.

I discussed in a previous article how some mommy-bloggers are questioning certain child apps that send the wrong message, like how to calculate how much the tooth fairy owes a child. But kid apps that help with allowances (*www.nytimes.com/2012/09/08/your-money/managing-a-childs-allowance-the-online-version.html*) are getting better reviews. A *New York Times* article in September 2012 discusses how paying cash allowances and conventional piggy banks are behind-the-times. While child allowance apps that track chores, savings and spending are all over the Internet, a new allowance app garnering outstanding reviews is named Tykoon (*www.tykoon.com/*).

The founders of Tykoon are fathers with executive-level experience at banks and other financial companies, and their app is getting good reviews for going beyond the money, and turning allowances into "a multiyear conversation about how families use money." The site isn't a bank and doesn't link to parents' bank accounts, but parents can set an allowance level and "deposit" virtual dollars into categories for Save, Give and Spend. Parents can link chores to the allowance—or not. When kids want to cash out, they can "Spend" their money in Tykoon's Amazon.com store of pre-approved products. Or they can take money from their "Give" option for a charity donation, again with Tykoon offering handpicked nonprofit groups to choose from.

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 has converted many of Marilyn's computer humor columns into four e-books.

* *Computer Confusion in Paradise: Lo! And in the Beginning There Was Total Befuddlement!*, in both EPUB format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Computer-Confusion-in-Paradise-humor-EPUB-iPad-NOOK-COMPHUMOR0001-1.htm?sourceCode=writer*) for iPad, NOOK, etc., and MOBI format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Computer-Confusion-in-Paradise-humor-MOBI-for-Kindle-COMPHUMOR0001-2.htm?sourceCode=writer*) for Amazon Kindle.

* *Computer Hardware: "Parts Is Parts"*, in both EPUB format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Computer-Hardware-Parts-Is-Parts-humor-EPUB-iPad-NOOK-COMPHUMOR0002-1.htm?sourceCode=writer*) for iPad, NOOK, etc., and MOBI format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Computer-Hardware-Parts-Is-Parts-humor-MOBI-for-Kindle-COMPHUMOR0002-2.htm?sourceCode=writer*) for Amazon Kindle.

* *Computerholics Anonymous: PC Users, Abusers and Confusioners*, in both EPUB format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Computerholics-Anonymous-humor-EPUB-iPad-NOOK-COMPHUMOR0003-1.htm?sourceCode=writer*) for iPad, NOOK, etc., and MOBI format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Computerholics-Anonymous-humor-MOBI-for-Kindle-COMPHUMOR0003-2.htm?sourceCode=writer*) for Amazon Kindle.

* *My Computer, My Nemesis: Bravely into the Smiley-Face Virtual Void!*, in both EPUB format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/My-Computer-My-Nemesis-humor-EPUB-iPad-NOOK-COMPHUMOR0004-1.htm?sourceCode=writer*) for iPad, NOOK, etc., and MOBI format (*www.computoredgebooks.com/My-Computer-My-Nemesis-humor-MOBI-for-Kindle-COMPHUMOR0004-2.htm?sourceCode=writer*) for Amazon Kindle.

* All four e-books can be found at our E-Book Store (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Humor-Computer-and-Internet-Anecdotes-and-Jokes_c16.htm?sourceCode=writer*).

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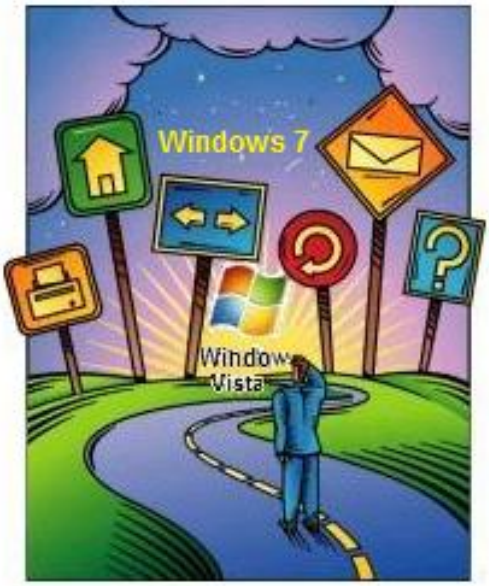

Windows Tips and Tricks

Windows Tips and Tricks: Basic Information about Your Windows Computer

“A Look at the Windows System Feature**”** by Jack Dunning

Sometimes you just want a quick look at what's inside your computer, but Windows System is also a portal to other Windows tools.

There are times when you want to access basic information about your Windows computer. What version of Windows are you running? What type of processor is in your computer? How much memory is installed? Knowing where to find this information is helpful.

The basic Windows system information is located in the System window. (In Windows XP, this data is found on the General tab of the System Properties window (see Figure 1). It opens in the same manner as the System window in other versions.) The System window is found at Control Panel => System. The WIN key plus Pause (+PAUSE/ BREAK) also opens the System window (or System Properties in Windows XP).

As can be seen in Figure 1, the version of Windows XP and its Service Pack are listed, as well as, the computer name and the product ID activation code for that copy of the operating system. The CPU type and the amount of memory are also available.

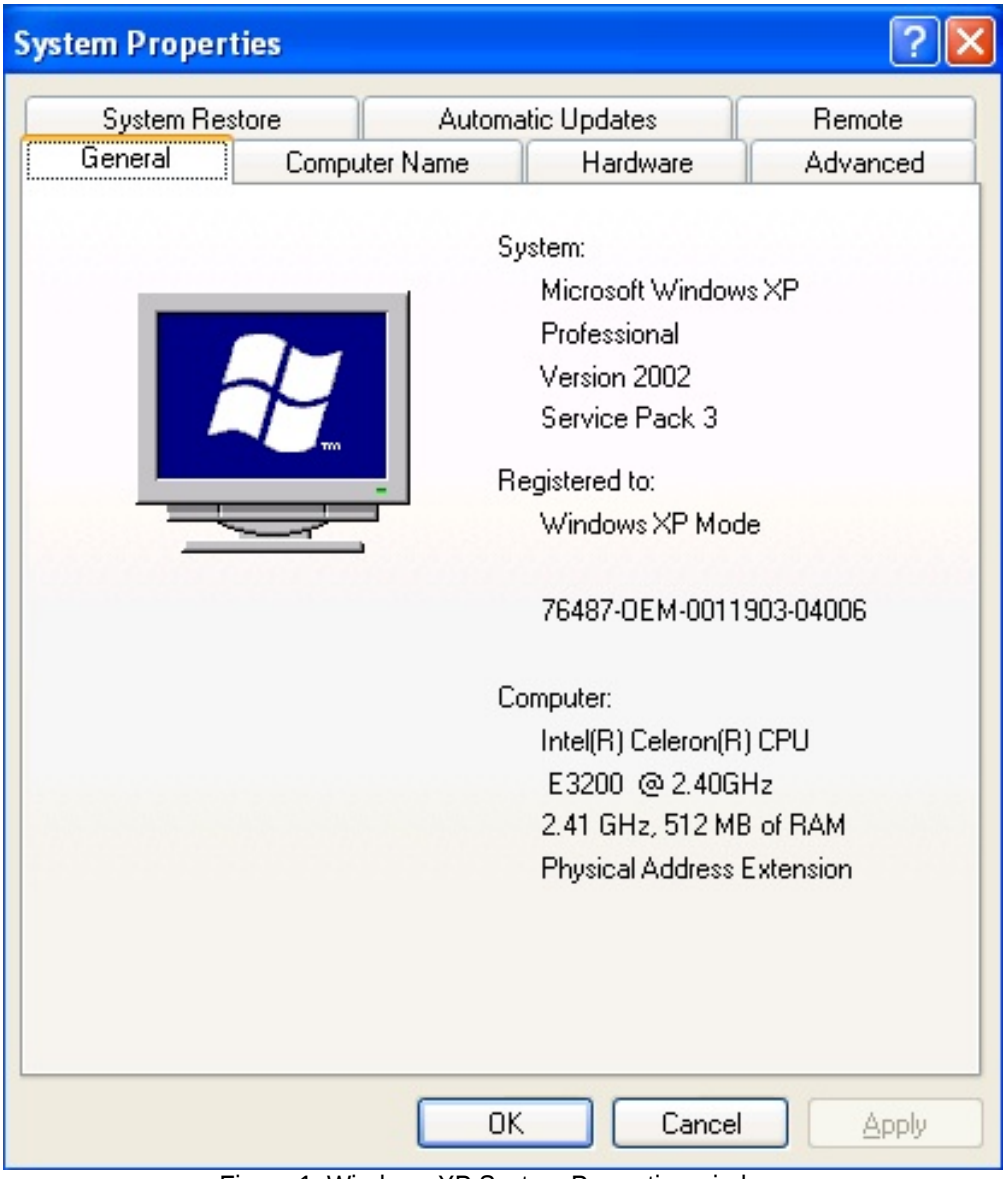

Figure 1. Windows XP System Properties window.

Starting with Windows Vista, Microsoft removed the General tab from the System Properties window and added a new System window with the same information plus a little more (see Figure 2). System type (32-bit or 64-bit), Windows Experience Index, and availability of pen or touch input (Windows 7 and 8 only) were added.

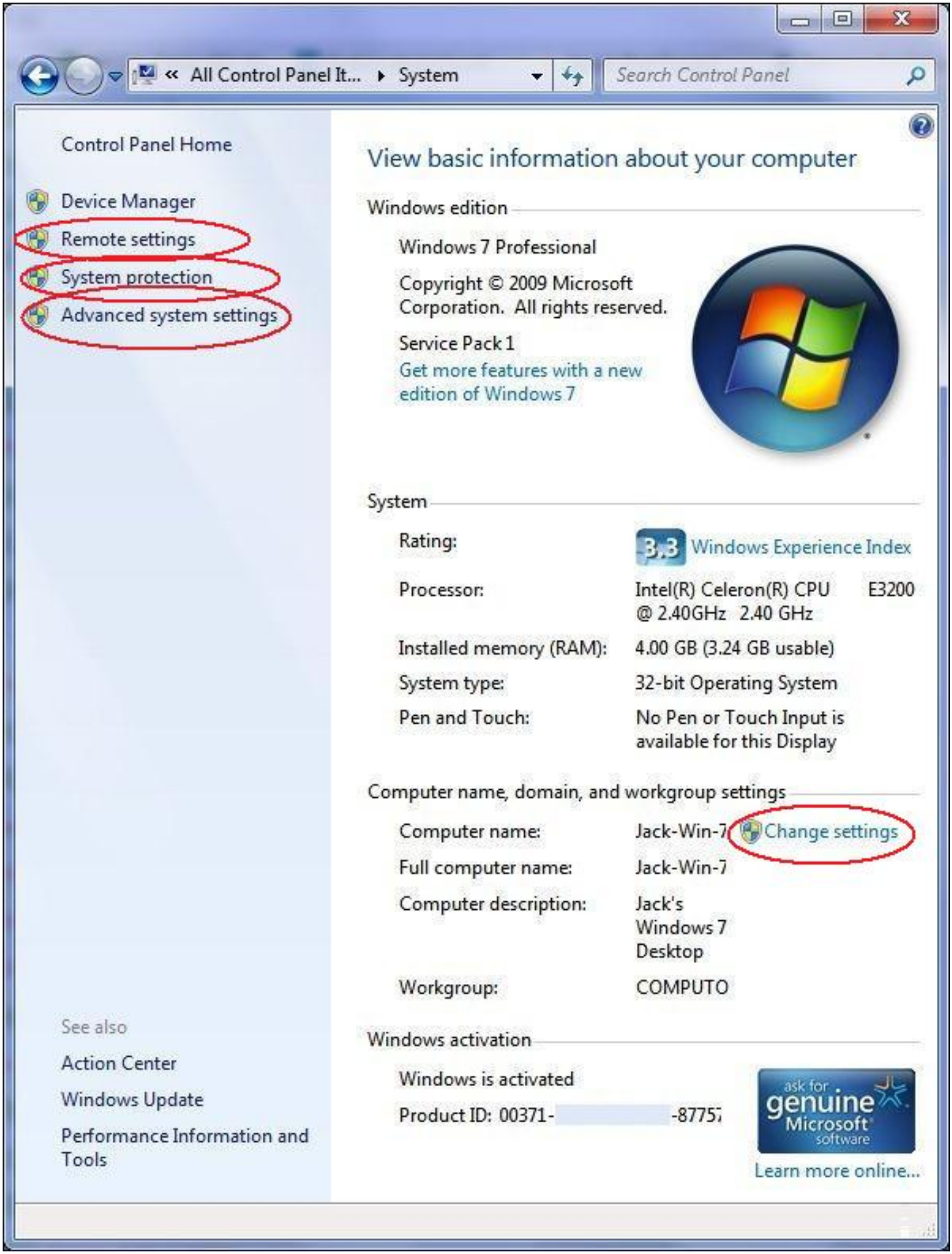

Figure 2. Windows 7 System window.

Rather than combining all of the features in the old Windows XP System Properties window, the new System window accesses System Properties through the "Change settings" link next to the computer name. The links "Remote settings", "System protection", and "Advanced system settings" in the left-hand navigation pane also open the same Properties window with their respective tabs opened. Essentially, while adding a couple of features, the new System window for Windows Vista, Windows 7, and Windows 8 offers a series of links for opening the different tabs in the System Properties window. Also noted in the left-hand navigation pane, the Device Manager is directly accessible from the System window, but it is also found via the Hardware tab of the System Properties window.

While the System window gives basic information, the System Properties window accesses many of the most fundamental settings in the system, such as the name of the computer and its workgroup (see Figure 3). The Computer Name tab of this window is where the computer name, description, and network workgroup are assigned and changed.

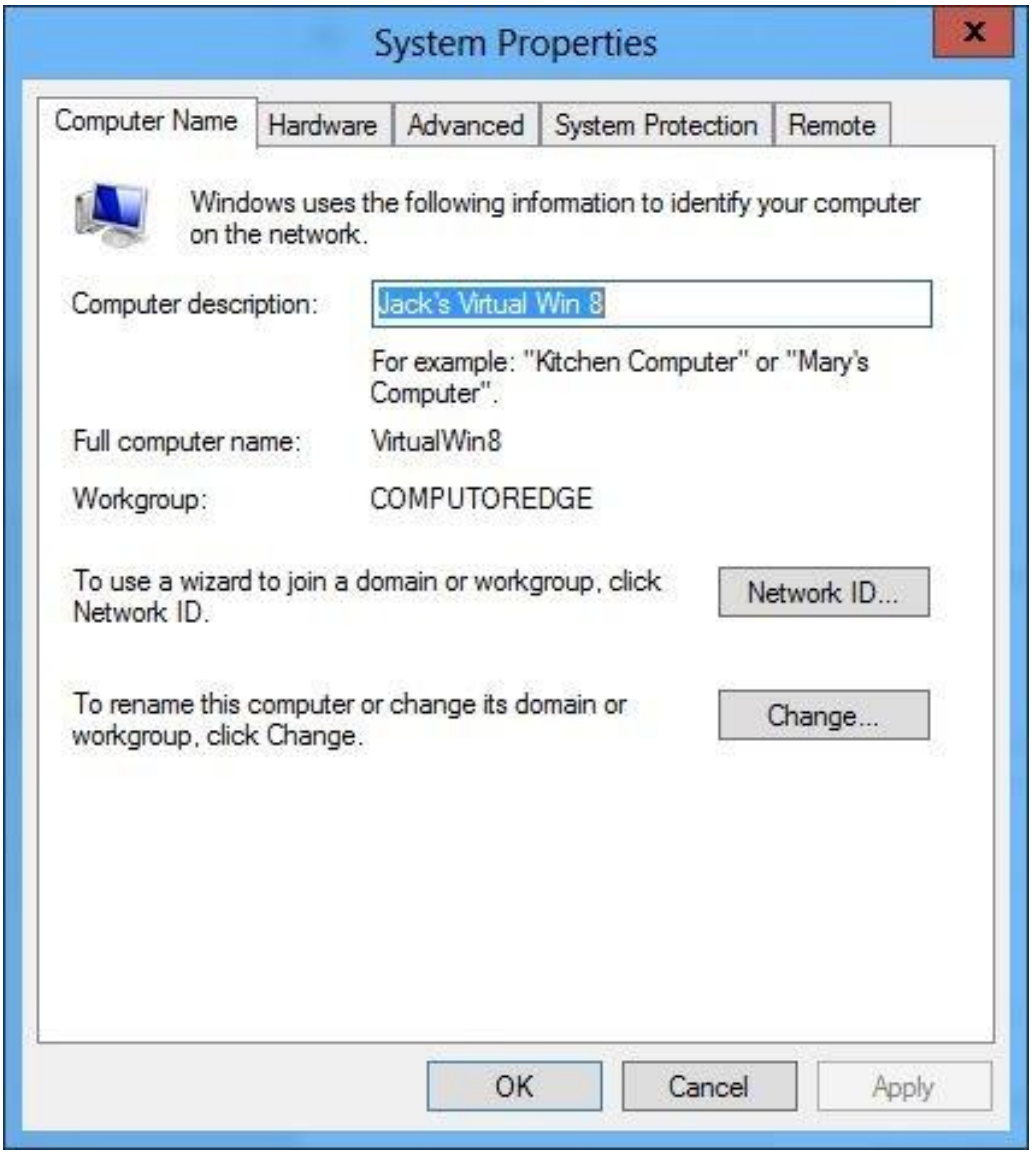

Figure 3. Windows 8 System Properties window with the Computer Name tab selected.

The Hardware tab gives access to the Device Manager (see Figure 4). The Device Manager is a complete listing of all the installed hardware in the computer system. It is used for troubleshooting hardware problems. Disable and enable

devices, install hardware drivers, and look for device conflicts or malfunctions through the Device Manager.

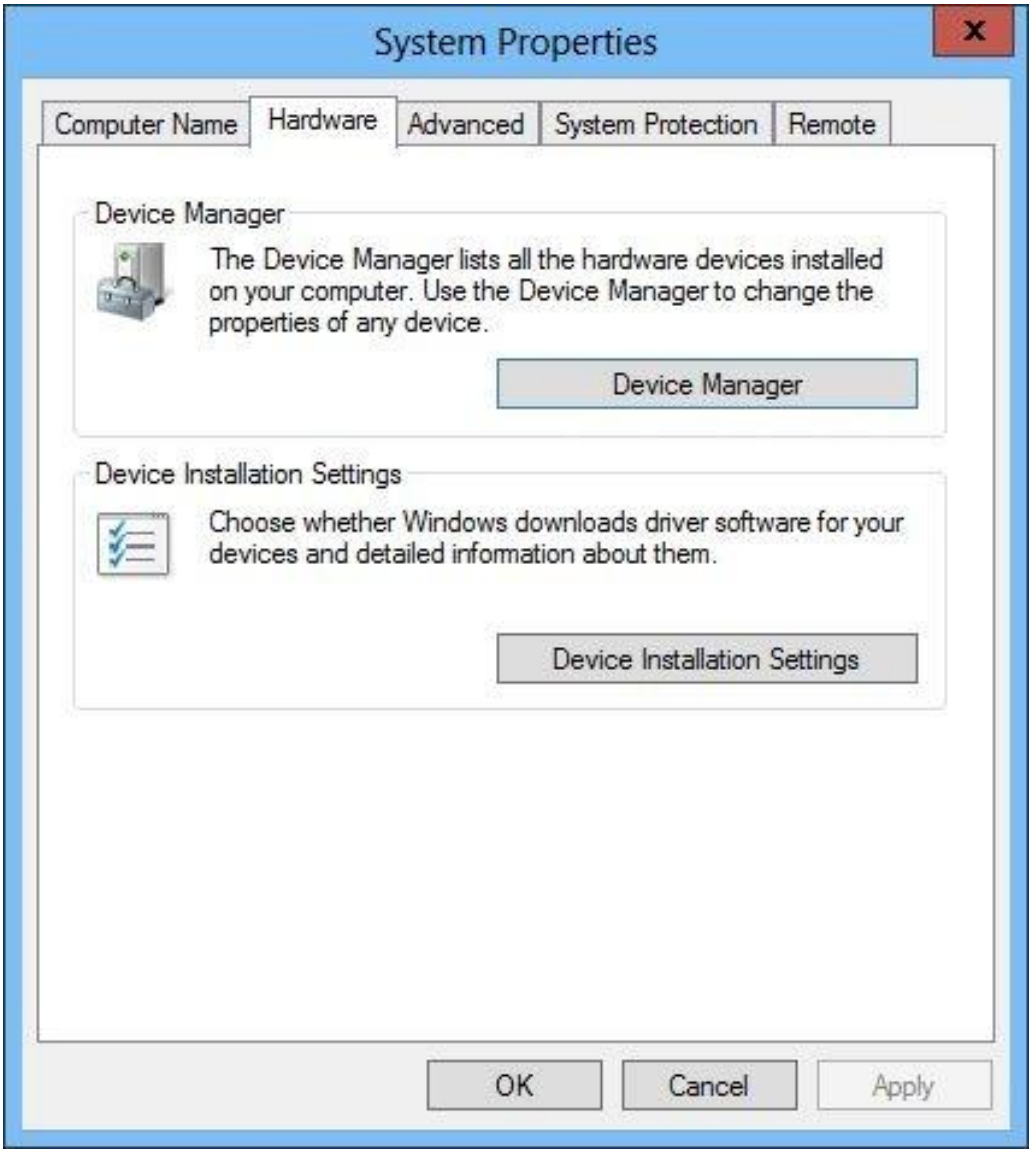

Figure 4. Windows 8 System Properties window with the Hardware tab selected.

The Advanced tab of the System Properties window gives access to Performance settings which affect visual effects (display of windows and cursors), as well as, User Profiles and Startup and Recovery (see Figure 5).

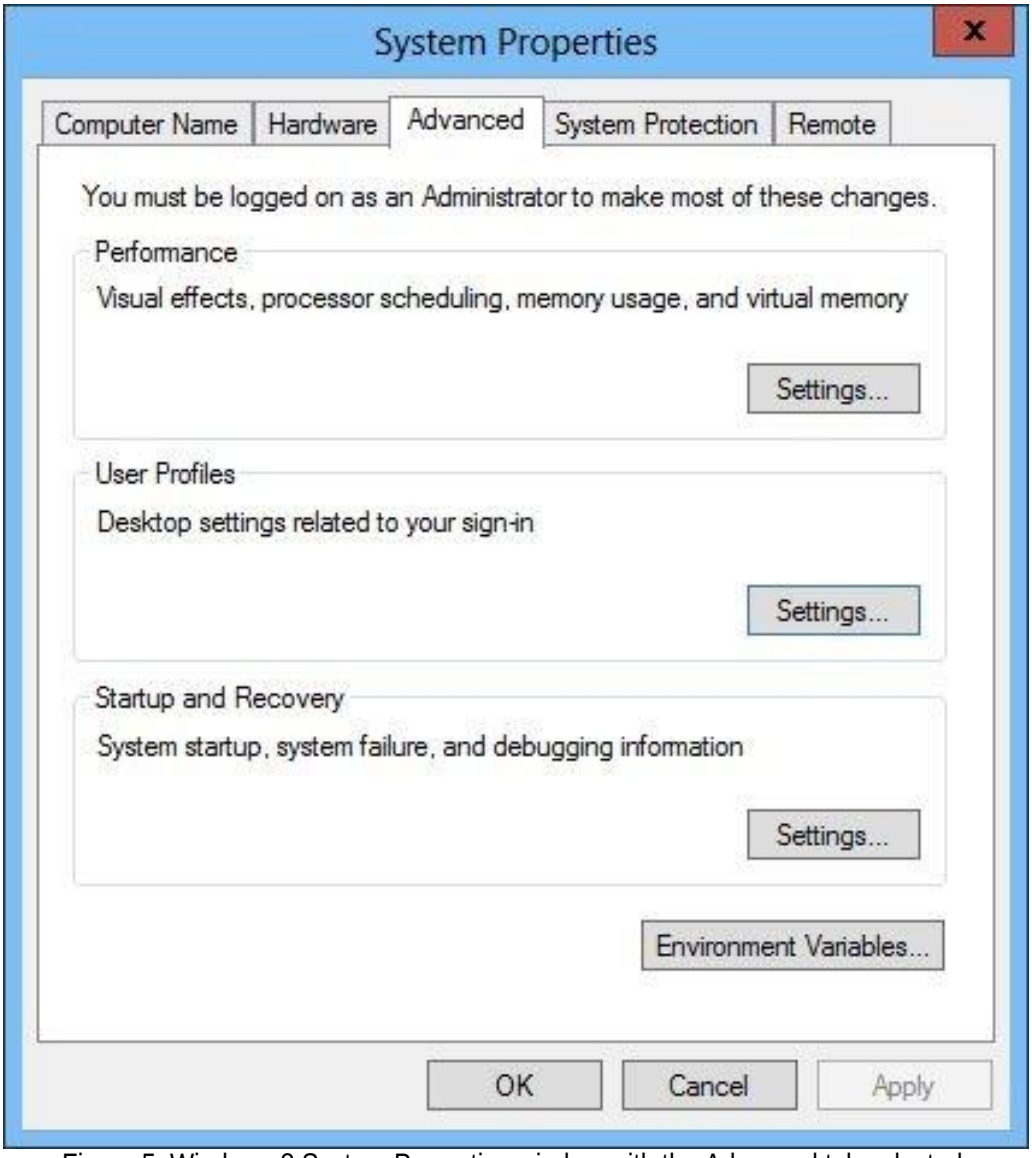

Figure 5. Windows 8 System Properties window with the Advanced tab selected.

The System Protection tab in the System Properties window is about System Restore (see Figure 6). System Restore periodically saves system settings in Restore Points allowing you to roll back to an earlier time. You should create a new Restore Point when you're installing new hardware or software. Creating a new Restore Point is automatic with many update features of Windows. This feature has often saved people from problem installations.

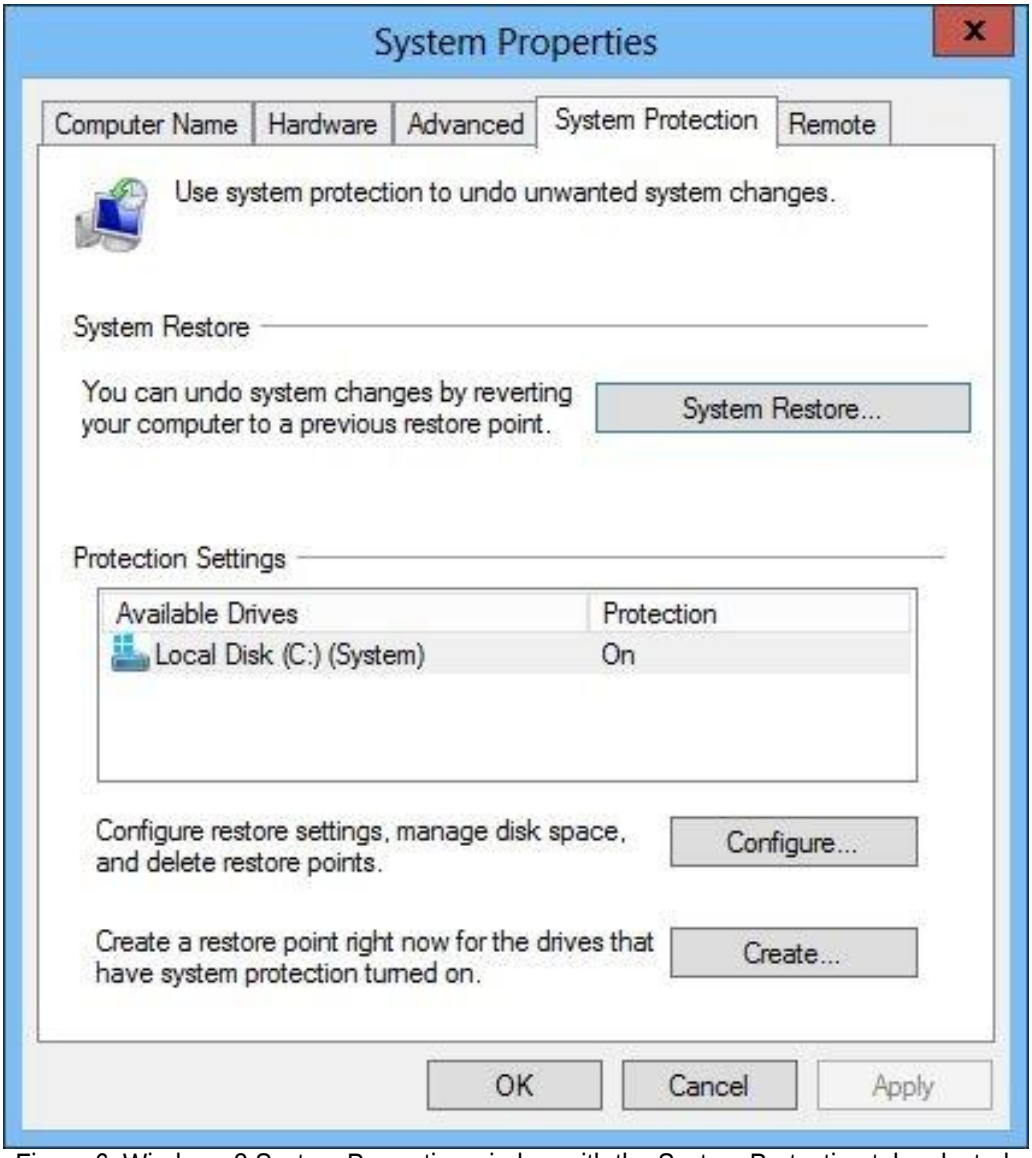

Figure 6. Windows 8 System Properties window with the System Protection tab selected.

If you're planning to use Remote Assistance or Remote Desktop to get access to your Windows computer, then you may need to adjust the setting in the Remote tab.

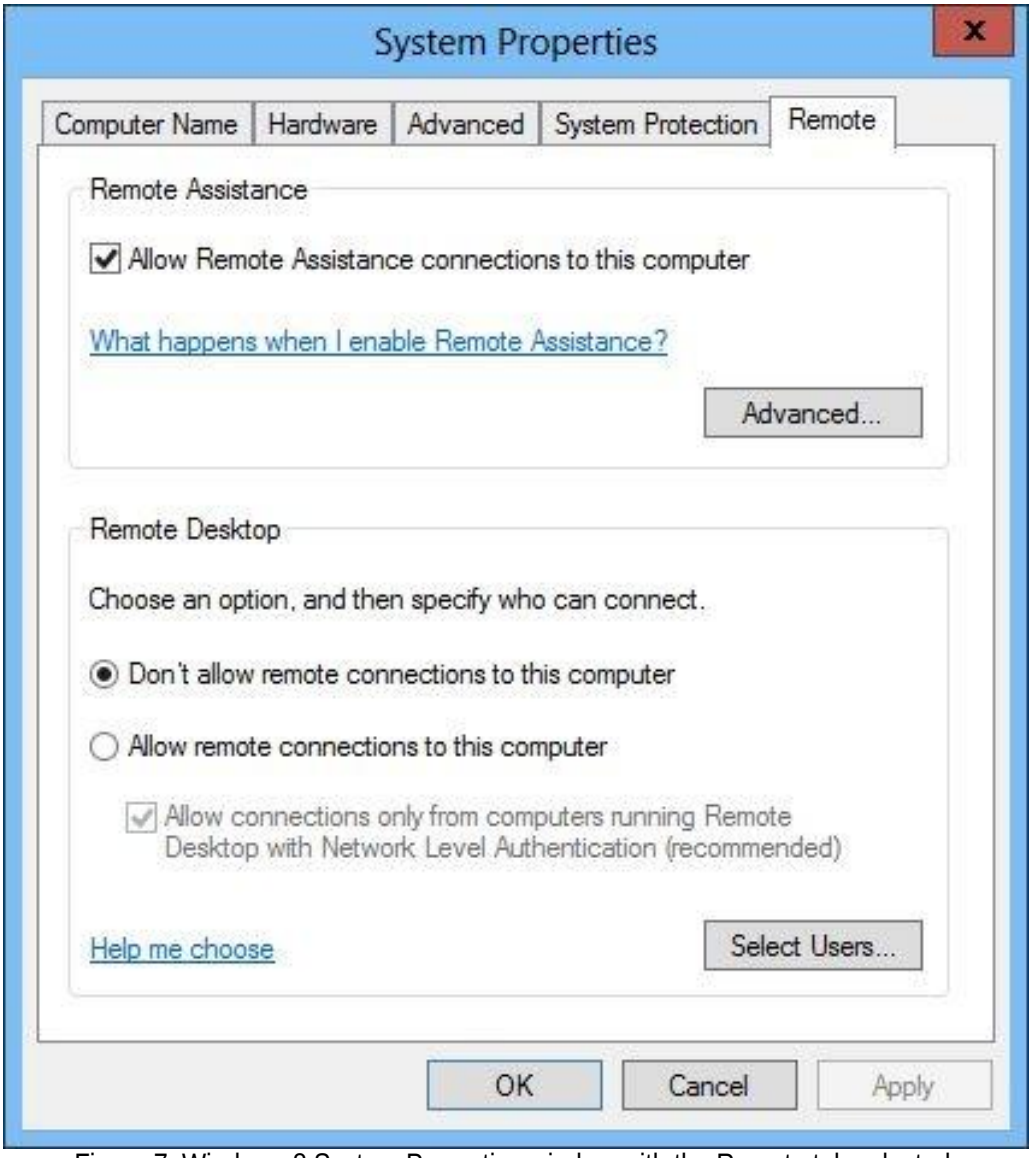

Figure 7. Windows 8 System Properties window with the Remote tab selected.

While the Windows System window and System Properties window give access to the settings for a number of Windows features, they only scratch the surface of what tools are hidden in Windows. Many tools, such as Device Manager, have multiple ways to find them. Using System Properties is merely one more option. The System window is primarily a quick way for accessing basic information about your computer system.

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:

Currently only at Amazon.com, *Jack's Favorite Free Windows Programs: What They Are, What They Do, and How to Get Started! (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B008BLUZRS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*).*

Just released and available from Amazon, *Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007RMCRH8/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*)!* Also available at Barnes and Noble (*www.barnesandnoble.com/w/misunderstanding-windows-8-jack-dunning/1109995715?ean=2940014229463*) and ComputorEdge E-Books (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-Tips-and-Tricks_c4.htm?sourceCode=writer*).

Available exclusively from Amazon, *Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00801M5GS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),*
*Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007AL672M/?&tag=comput0b9-20*),*
*Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00758J4L6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),*
and *That Does Not Compute! (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0052MMUX6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),* brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

"Turning a Blind Eye" by Wally Wang

Turning a Blind Eye; The Efficiency of Apple Maps; Broken Android Promises; Slow Minds Dealing with Change; Mobile Apps; Patent Wars; Show Package Contents.

When faced with any negative news, critics are quick to attack Apple as loudly and prominently as possible. Every time the news reports problems at Foxconn, everyone blames Apple even though Dell, Microsoft, Nintendo, and other companies contract through Foxconn to make their products as well. Yet if any negative news appears about Foxconn, the anti-Apple critics only blame Apple and ignore the role Microsoft or other companies might have played in the situation.

Such selective vision prevents people from seeing any facts that contradict their way of thinking. So if you don't want to read anything that might contradict your beliefs about Apple, you might not want to read that the China Labor Watch organization has determined that a major supplier to Samsung (a company called HEG Electronics) has reportedly been relying on child labor (*chinalaborwatch.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/samsung8-271.pdf*) in violation of Chinese labor laws. Independent auditors responsible for investigating labor violations were reportedly bribed by company officials to avoid reporting these problems.

In addition to making products for Samsung, HEG Electronics also makes products for Motorola and LG. With such information clearly visible to all, where's the outrage and boycotts directed towards Samsung, which reported $7.3 billion dollar record profits (*www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hZd6xK8UxlzjWELqVOwEVLjWxhOw?docId=CNG.11dfe52b40f094180e54fca888002253.71*) for the third quarter? Certainly all those people who blamed Apple for Foxconn's problems (while ignoring the role of Microsoft, Dell, and other companies who do business with Foxconn) should be equally outraged that Samsung has been directly accused of relying on child labor to create their record profits. Unless, of course, these people never really cared about protecting workers' rights in other countries and only really cared about attacking Apple.

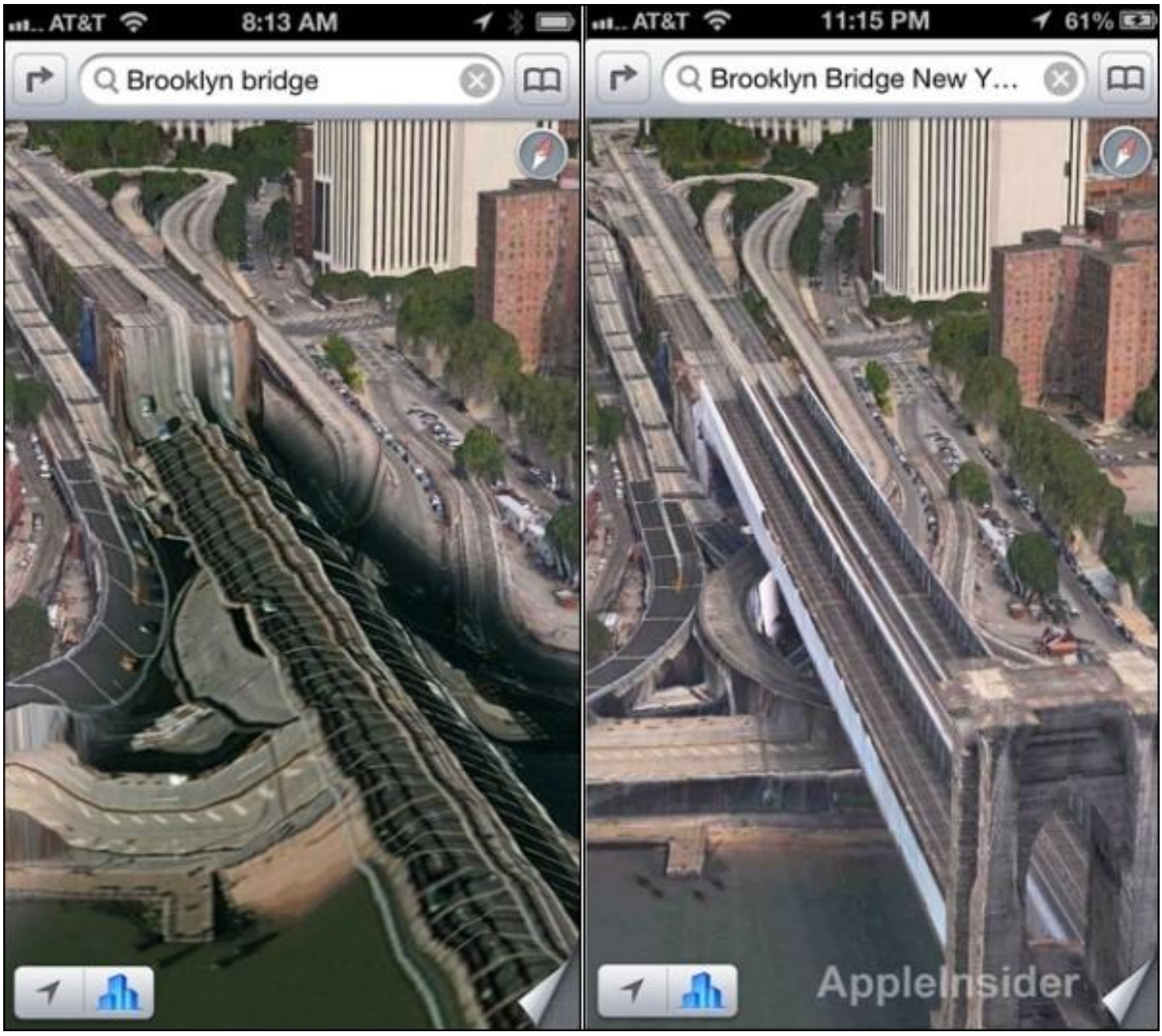
Child labor and worker mistreatment is a global problem that isn't the sole responsibility of any one company because multiple companies share the blame. So if you're truly outraged, put pressure on every company including Apple, Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard, Dell, Lenovo, Nintendo, Motorola, Sony, Google, and practically every other major company in the world. Just don't blame Apple alone while turning a blind eye towards other companies that get caught violating labor laws while maximizing profits.

The Efficiency of Apple Maps

The big difference between Apple Maps and Google Maps is that Apple uses vector-based graphics while Google uses bitmapped graphics. With bitmapped graphics, Google has to resend the complete image every time your map needs an update, such as when you zoom in or out. With vector-based graphics, the map data consists of mathematical data that the computer can quickly process without downloading the data all over again.

That's why a company called Onavo discovered that Apple's Maps is nearly five times more efficient (*www.loopinsight.com/2012/10/01/apple-maps-up-to-five-times-more-data-efficient-than-google-maps/*) than Google Maps when it comes to downloading mapping data. Onavo claims that Google Maps required an average of 1.3MB of data to display its maps while Apple Maps only required 271KB of data, which is approximately 80% less data. When zooming in, Apple Maps' efficiency edges even higher at nearly seven times better than Google Maps. Looking at the satellite view in Maps showed Apple's app used about half the data of Google's mapping application.

With cellular network carriers charging for every bit of data, such mapping savings can help reduce your monthly data usage. Now as Apple Maps continues to fix their errors (*www.bgr.com/2012/10/05/apple-maps-fix-ios-6-improvements-begin/*), we might actually be able to drive where we want to go.



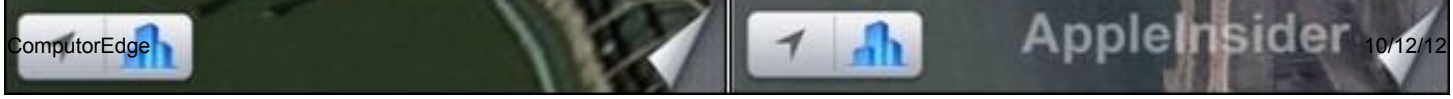


Figure 1. Apple has fixed many of its mapping errors (left image) with corrections (right image).

Broken Android Promises

After Google acquired Motorola, they promised to update the latest Motorola's phones with the most recent version of Android. Now Motorola and Google are backing off from that promise (*news.cnet.com/8301-1035_3-57526994-94/android-users-outraged-over-motorolas-broken-promise/*).

The big problem with Android manufacturers is that they don't make money spending resources testing and upgrading phones for each new version of Android that arrives. Therefore it's much easier to sell a phone with whatever version of Android the manufacturer wants to put on there, and then never bother offering an upgrade ever again. If you want an upgrade, you'll have to buy another Android phone.

While even older versions of Android can still work just fine, being promised upgrades and then not getting them seems to be an unfortunate and common practice in the Android world. If you buy an Android phone, just assume you'll never get an operating system upgrade ever again despite any manufacturer promises. Then if you still like the Android phone knowing this, buy it. Now if the company keeps their promise and actually issues an operating system upgrade for your phone, it will be a pleasant surprise, but if they never issue an operating system upgrade, you won't be disappointed.

In the meantime, iPhone 3GS users can still upgrade to iOS 6 (*arstechnica.com/apple/2012/09/tempting-fate-installing-ios-6-on-the-iphone-3gs/*) although they won't get all the fancy features such as Siri, but at least they will get some benefits. If you don't want an iPhone and don't mind wading through broken promises (your phone can be upgraded to a newer version of Android) and blatant lies (Android offers the full Web experience with complete Flash support), then feel free to look at products that mimic Apple products and see how happy you'll be.

Slow Minds Dealing with Change

Years after the Wright Brothers flew, many people still scoffed at the idea that heavier than air machines could ever fly, despite photographic evidence right before their eyes. When the first primitive personal computers appeared on the market, mainframe computer users laughed at these "toys" and predicted they would never affect the "real" computer market. When the iPad first appeared, many critics derided the iPad as useless because it lacked such "crucial" items as a USB port, a physical keyboard, and a replaceable battery.

Now the iPad has defined the tablet market (*news.cnet.com/8301-13579_3-57450079-37/u.s-tablet-usage-hits-critical-mass-comscore-reports/*) to the point where "Tablets are one of the most rapidly adopted consumer technologies in history and are poised to fundamentally disrupt the way people engage with the digital world both on-the-go and perhaps most notably, in the home," according to Mark Donovan, ComScore's senior vice president of mobile computing. "It's not surprising to see that once consumers get their hands on their first tablet, they are using them for any number of media habits including TV viewing."

With so many examples of people finding uses for the iPad, how was it possible that so many critics were absolutely convinced that the iPad would fail? Taken in a larger context, why do so many critics angrily rally against anything new that ultimately changes the world for the better?

If you examine the critic's arguments, they always repeat the same mistakes. First, they never honestly examine the new item but instead immediately attack it. Second, when they attack the new item, they ignore facts that contradict their beliefs and either distort those facts or come up with outright lies to support their way of thinking. Third, they

attack the new item in order to defend the existing status quo. Fourth, they completely ignore the flaws of the status quo and often apply these same flaws to attack the new item.

For example, one common argument that Windows users give for not switching to the Macintosh is that they don't want to learn a new user interface. Yet they're willing to adopt Windows 8 despite its radically different user interface even though the Macintosh (and Linux) user interface is more similar to Windows 7 than Windows 8's user interface might be. Another argument that Windows users give is that Windows has the largest market share so that's why they use Windows. Yet the iPad has the largest market share in the tablet category, so logically they should be buying and using iPads too. Of course, logic never enters the minds of critics who are already prejudiced against anything that threatens their own beliefs.

In the old days, doctors resisted Florence Nightingale's pleas for better hygiene in hospitals. That simple step alone saved numerous lives, yet doctors dismissed Florence Nightingale's results as irrelevant and unimportant. Of course, doctors later discovered she was right, but only after countless soldiers had to die before the medical community finally realized that better hygiene really could reduce infections.

In today's world, Dr. Daniel Amen, the author of *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/0812929985/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0812929985&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20*),* discovered that capturing images of the brain could allow him to physically see brain abnormalities that could affect depression, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies. By treating certain parts of the brain through diet and medication, Dr. Amen discovered he could not only treat psychiatric patients successfully, but also provide objective proof of brain changes as patients got better. Despite his own clinical studies over the past few decades, Dr. Amen still can't convince many doctors who dismiss his work as useless and impossible.

If you're one of those critics who tries to block change through deliberate lies and deception, you can congratulate yourself for spreading misery and suffering to others through your own selfishness. In the meantime, the rest of us can objectively analyze new technology, put aside our doubts, and objectively decide the merits of something new compared to the old way of doing things.

There's nothing wrong with criticism and doubt when it's based on facts, but there is something wrong when criticism and doubt can only be supported by lies and avoidance of facts. As Apple reportedly prepares the iPad mini and Microsoft gets ready to launch their Surface tablets, it's clear that tablets are here to stay in one form or another. Now we just have to figure out why we haven't heard from all those vocal anti-iPad critics in a while who claimed tablets were useless. Unless, of course, they're getting ready to use lies and avoidance of facts to block progress in another field all over again.

Mobile Apps

What anti-tablet critics failed to recognize was that tablets offered a new way to compute on the go. Such mobile computing apps could work on a regular computer, but really needed to work on the go to be truly useful. One such app is Google Translate (*click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/stat?id=15PJQz44Qcc&offerid=146261&type=3&subid=0&tmpid=1826&RD_PARM1=http%253A%252F%252Fitunes.apple.com%252Fus%252Fapp%252Fgoogle-translate%252Fid414706506%253Fmt%253D8%2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30*) that lets you type in English phrases and the app displays the translated version in a different language such as French or Chinese. Such an app could be used on regular computers, but if you're in a foreign country and need a translation right away, a desktop computer program back in your home or office won't help you much.

Another interesting mobile app is Property Fixer (*click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/stat?id=15PJQz44Qcc&offerid=146261&type=3&subid=0&tmpid=1826&RD_PARM1=http%253A%252F%252Fitunes.apple.com%252Fus%252Fapp%252Fproperty-fixer-real-estate%252Fid372066393%253Fmt%253D8%2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30*), designed for real estate investors who "flip" properties. Basically "flipping" means buying property, upgrading it, and then selling it for a profit later. While holding on to property, you can make additional income by renting it out.

Figure 2. The Property Fixer app lets you analyze properties for profit potential.

Anything you can do with Property Fixer, you can also do with a spreadsheet on an ordinary computer, but Property Fixer lets you walk into a home, punch in some numbers, and immediately calculate the potential profit you could make without waiting until you get back to your office.

Remember when critics claimed that netbooks were superior to the iPad because netbooks could run regular Windows programs? Such critics ignored the fact that dedicated mobile apps would prove more useful on the go than using a regular program that was never designed to be used while roaming around.

Another useful mobile app is the $3.99 Highlight app (*click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/stat?id=15PJQz44Qcc&offerid=146261&type=3&subid=0&tmpid=1826&RD_PARM1=http%253A%252F%252Fitunes.apple.com%252Fus%252Fapp%252Fhighlight-by-cohdoo%252Fid422247746%253Fmt%253D8%2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30*) that lets you

record audio, which can be useful when recording interviews. Just recording audio isn't that important, but Highlight lets you mark certain parts of an audio file with descriptive text so you can go back and listen to that portion of the audio file again.

Figure 3. Highlight can tag parts of an audio recording.

Mobile apps are as different from regular computer programs as airplanes are as different from balloons. Both may perform similar tasks but they work completely differently and that difference is what separates smartphone and tablet apps from desktop and laptop computer programs.

Understand this difference and you can make a fortune or at least stay current. Deny this fact and you can cling to your delusions as the rest of the world passes you by.

Patent Wars

Whatever you think of the patent wars going on between technology companies, the latest news from FOSS Patents is a bit strange. Apparently Motorola tried suing both Apple and Microsoft over patent infringement, but now Motorola has been forced to withdraw (*www.fosspatents.com/2012/10/googles-motorola-mobility-pulls-most.html*) its own smartphones and tablets from the market to avoid patent infringement. Rather than being a victim of patent infringement, Motorola is the infringer.

Using patents to protect ideas is still a sound idea even if the actual implementation of patent law remains shaky, but deliberately copying patented ideas is still wrong. Other Android smartphone manufacturers have agreed to pay a royalty to Microsoft for Android use, but Motorola has refused.

If people are outraged that Apple is suing Android for patent infringement, why are these same people not outraged that Android smartphone manufacturers must pay Microsoft royalties to avoid patent infringement?

If you believe patents are wrong, then start protesting against Microsoft for collecting royalties from Android. For most people who attack Apple for protecting their patents, the fact that Microsoft protects their own patents against Android is yet another unpleasant fact that they don't wish to acknowledge lest it undermine their entire argument that only Apple is wrong for protecting their patents against rival companies.

* * *

If you look at a typical Windows program, it often consists of multiple files jammed into a single folder. Delete or modify just one of those files by mistake and your entire program won't work. In comparison, look at a Macintosh and you'll see that every program appears as just a single icon.

The real trick isn't that Macintosh programs consist of a single file, but that the Macintosh hides the details of a program from view. By doing this, Mac OS X makes it harder to accidentally delete or modify a program file.

Just in case you're curious to see all the files that make up a Macintosh program, just right-click on it and when a pop-up menu appears, choose Show Package Contents. Now you can peek at all the files that make up your program so you can see that Macintosh programs contain just as many files as a Windows program, but Mac OS X shields you from this complexity unless you specifically ask to see it.

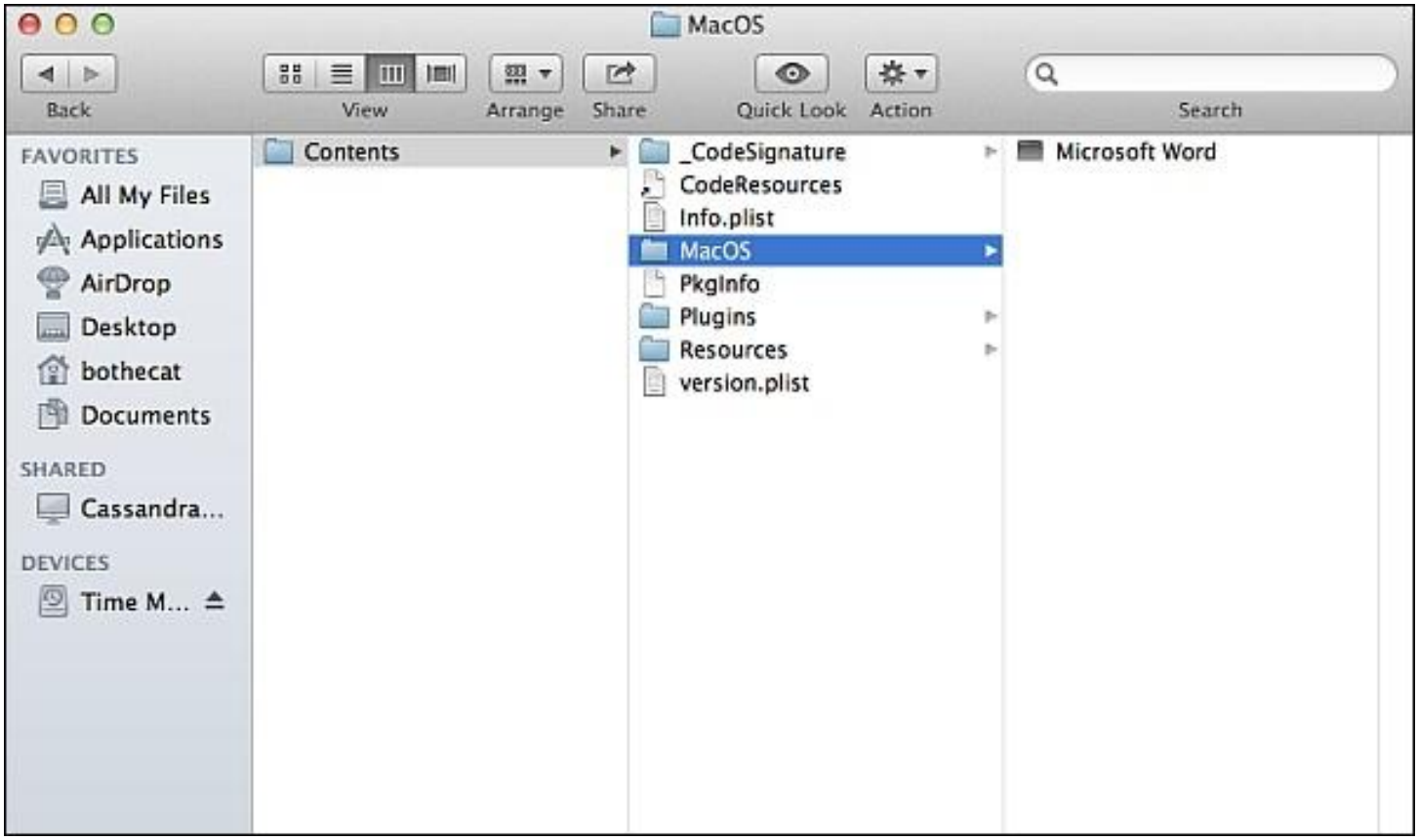


Figure 4. The Show Package Contents option lets you view all the multiple files that make up a program.

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

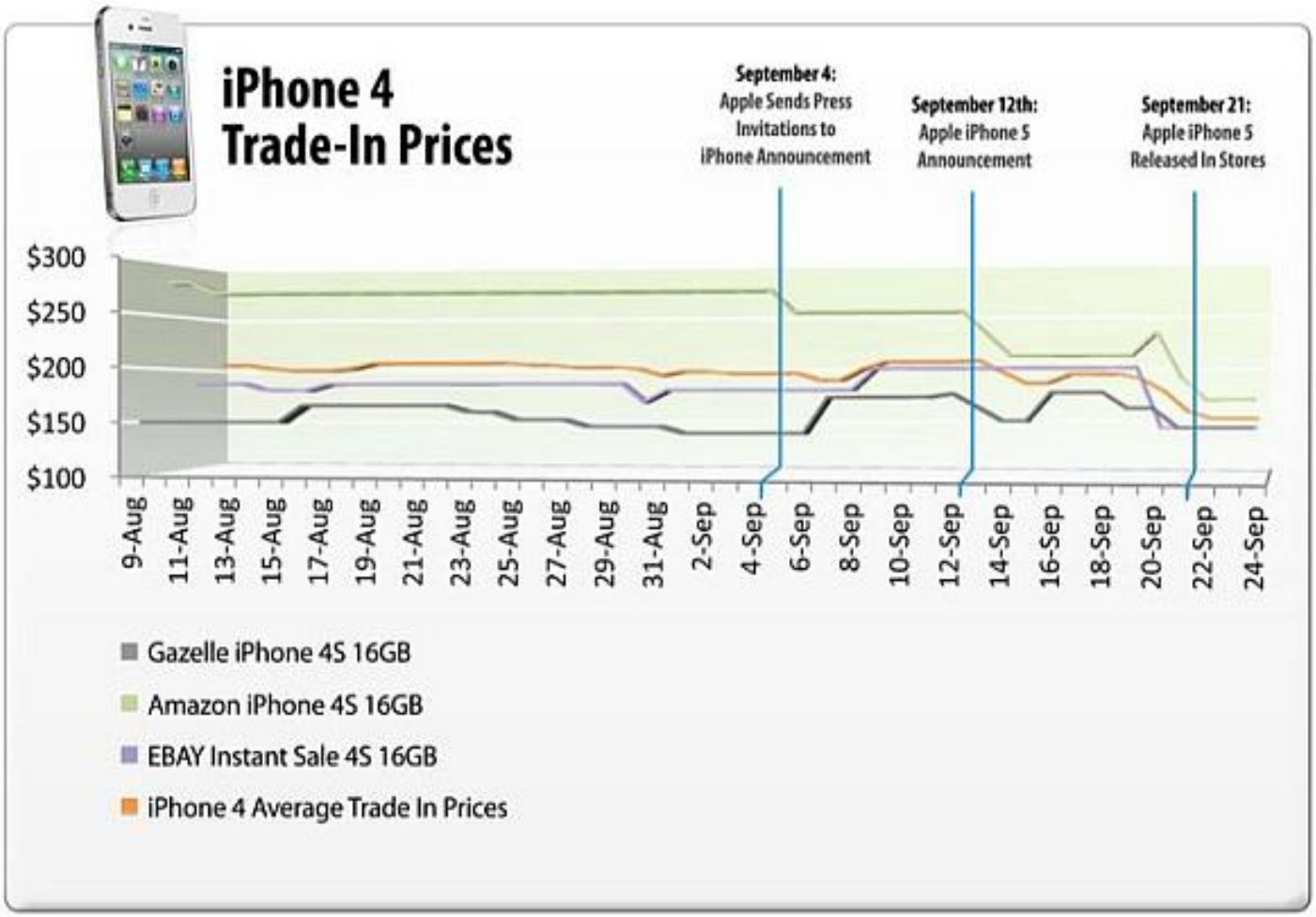
"The latest in tech news and hot product reviews." by Charles Carr

Study: The Best and Worst Times to Trade in an iPhone; Handwriting Recognition in the Tablet Age; Borderlands 2 (Xbox 360); Half-Life Reborn as Black Mesa.

Study: The Best and Worst Times to Trade in an iPhone

Julie Vlahon at the deal aggregation Web site TechBargains.com (*TechBargains.com*) has info for cellphone users thinking about reselling their old iPhone 4 or 4S and buying a shiny new iPhone 5:

Apple devices are unique in that they hold their value more than the majority of consumer electronics. However, owners of the iPhone 4 looking to upgrade to the iPhone 5 should watch the calendar. There are windows of time that are better than others to trade in an old iPhone for cash.



TechBargains.com tracked and compared iPhone 4 trade-in values from August 9 through September 24 from Amazon, eBay Instant Sale and Gazelle. The data reveals consumers received the highest trade in value for the iPhone 4 the day of Apple's iPhone 5 announcement on September 12 and within the four days before the announcement. Trade-in prices were also high three weeks prior to the announcement amidst mounting rumors of Apple's new iPhone from August 16-22. Prices were lowest the days after the iPhone 5 was released in stores, September 22-24, when average resale values dropped by over 4% or $7 in a day. Further, the data indicated that average trade in prices for the iPhone 4 also fell about 11% or $21 two days following Apple's official announcement, September 14-15.

"The price of older models typically decline steadily when new models are announced, but in the case of the iPhone 4, the price actually rose on the day of the announcement," said Yung Trang, editor-in-chief and president of TechBargains.com. "We believe this occurred because vendors like Gazelle were trying to capture a greater share of iPhone 4 trade-ins."

According to data tracked by TechBargains.com, consumers can receive between $140 to $280 for an iPhone 4 depending upon the time of the trade in relation to Apple's announcement and the condition of the device.

Handwriting Recognition in the Tablet Age

Katia Shabanova, director of public relations at Paragon Software Group, writes in this week about the challenges of creating viable handwriting recognition software:

Engineers and programmers have been trying for decades to teach computers and other electronics to recognize handwritten text. Only in the last few years have the world's largest software companies made significant progress teaching smartphones and tablets to adequately recognize handwriting and translate it into typed text on the screen.

This August, Samsung launched its Galaxy Note 10.1 tablet. As one of the key competitive advantages of the device, the manufacturer cited the S Pen recognition system, created in partnership with Wacom. A similar feature exists in the Galaxy Note II device, which Samsung recently presented at the Berlin Consumer Electronics Show IFA. The handwriting recognition function included in the device makes it just as comfortable to work on with your fingers as with the electronic S Pen. In the latest devices, the S Pen allows the transmission of up to 1,024 degrees of clicking on the screen—achieving essentially the same precise screen recognition as if writing with an actual pen and paper. The Galaxy Note also supports the Shape Match and Formula Match features, allowing graphs, figures, charts and mathematical formulas to be drawn or recorded using either the S Pen's recognition and subsequent conversion to text, or the graphical format.

But why, in 20 years of mobile, is this groundbreaking handwriting recognition feature just now being introduced? The answer is, it isn't.

The first attempts to teach computers to understand handwritten text began in the Soviet Union in the 1960s, when the emergence of personal computers and smartphones was, it seemed, in an uncertain distant future. At the time, the space industry was driving the development of handwriting recognition, explains the head of Paragon Software's mobile development division, Alexander Zudin, as a way to avoid sending pencils and paper into space to cut down on costs. Each extra gram sent into space amounted to huge additional costs. Commercial use of handwriting recognition had not been identified at the time, but by the mid-1990s, with the appearance of the first handheld computers known as PDAs, keen interest was shown by various device manufacturers.

Some form of handwriting recognition was installed on all the early devices from Palm, Apple (which entered the market with one of the first prototypes of the modern smartphone, Newton) and PDA manufacturers working under the first version of Windows Mobile. Interestingly, handwriting applications did not become the "killer apps" programmers thought they would be, simply because their development didn't meet consumer expectations. They just didn't work well.

"'Teaching' PDAs every letter and number written by hand was too complicated," says Zudin, "and the recognition accuracy was very low."

The qualitative leap in the handwriting recognition market didn't happen until about 20 years later, due to the massive

proliferation of tablets and smartphones. Entering information by hand was a natural development in the new mobile world, with increased opportunities for handwriting recognition on the sensitive touch screens that could be found in nearly every purse, pocket or briefcase.

With increased precision in the technology, handwriting recognition has gained traction. The most popular devices and platforms all have handwriting recognition services available, especially as mobile applications. In the App Store, a number of programs can be found that allow graphical information to be drawn on the screen and saved as pictures—and some programs even have the ability to recognize handwriting, including the popular note-taking app Evernote, which not only supports handwritten text notes, but also audio, speech-to-text and the ability to scan documents with cloud archiving capabilities. The iPad tablet, because of its size and shape, naturally lends itself to being scribbled on by hand, but a special stylus for this task costs about $80.

Handwriting apps aren't just for iOS. In Google Play there are a number of applications based on handwriting recognition technology. Handwriting Dato and Handwrite Note Free, for example, are designed to store and catalog handwritten notes. More "advanced" applications, such as MyScript Calculator, are designed for writing complex mathematical calculations by hand.

A new handwriting recognition feature is also expected to be supported in the latest Microsoft Windows 8. The handwriting recognition function was already available to Windows 7 users, but only enabled by expensive electronic pens and limited to just a few Windows 7 tablets. Microsoft has made a significant step forward with Windows 8, according to one of the beta testers of the system, making writing on the screen almost as easy as writing with a pen on paper.

It is not only gadget manufacturers and their software developers that have shown interest in handwriting recognition, but also other industry players. The German automotive manufacturer Audi equipped their 2011 A8 and A6 models with on-board computers that support handwriting functions capable of entering information into the Multi Media Interface, which includes the car's media player and navigation system. Audi's rationale was that some users find it easier to manually enter information rather than pressing buttons.

Google, also recognizing the attraction of alternate input methods, launched its Google Handwrite feature in July to facilitate handwritten Google Web searches on touchscreen smartphones and tablets. Available in 27 languages for iOS5 and higher, and Android smartphones running 2.3 and higher (4.0 and higher on tablets), Google Handwrite looks to be a natural enemy of anti-keyboard pecking input apps like Swype, Swiftkey or PenReader, and even the company's own Google Voice Search speech recognition input method.

[Paragon Software itself has recently released an API for its own flagship title,] PenReader, as part of a software development kit aimed specifically at device manufacturers. Zudin says that success of its consumer version has drawn interest from a spectrum of electronics makers for a range of end uses that the company never envisioned when it began tinkering with handwriting recognition 15 years ago.

Not so fast. Literally.

Writing English characters by hand is still viewed as more cumbersome than typing, many believe. The path of adaptation seems to be to satisfy the ability to input information quickly—whether by typing with your fingers or through voice recognition. There has been significant progress in these areas, with pre-integrated alternate input methods in high demand. But, for whatever reason, handwriting recognition still remains a niche.

Borderlands 2 (Xbox 360)

Borderlands 2 (*www.borderlands2.com/*) (2K Games, about $60, also available on PC and PS3) is a lot like the first game, but just about everything you could hope for has been amplified and improved.

First off, the guns in the first Borderlands game were very unique and had some very cool characteristics that were quite refreshing. With Borderlands 2, the folks at Gearbox, who developed the game, spent some quality time making them even more inventive. For example, when you reload certain guns, you throw the weapon in your hand and it explodes like a grenade (which can cause some surprising damage!). The gun then re-spawns in your hand with a full clip. And the guns look awesome, even cooler than those in Borderlands. One gun even talks to you!

Next, the enemies. Borderlands 2 has some great new bad guys to battle. A lot of them were brand new creations I've never seen anything like in any video game before. I've played this game for dozens of hours and I'm still encountering new enemies each with their own strengths and weaknesses.

One of the coolest differences from Borderlands 1 and 2 is the size. The second is much bigger both in number of levels and the physical size of individual levels in the world of Pandora. In fact, I have to admit some maps might even be too big, in the sense that they're a little too large to walk through comfortably but not quite large enough that they provided a station to spawn cars.

Graphics are fantastic. The game still has that unique dark-outlined look that we first saw in the first Borderlands, which continues to really set it apart from the look of other titles. Lots of great locations and great-looking locations.

Load times on consoles can really be a pain, but Borderlands 2 loads fast and smooth—not like a PC with a 10K RPM SATA drive, of course, but no problem at all.

Borderlands 2 has more quests and more characters than the first title (some familiar old faces from Borderlands return, too). The quests seemed well-balanced and not too repetitive. Best of all, Gearbox has managed to create a game that changes the things that needed improving but doesn't take away the ones we loved from the first outing. I laughed out loud quite a bit as I played. Just lots of fun, whacky, over-the-top moments.

Haven't dug too far into multiplayer yet, but I know that you can play as one in a co-op group of four. I look forward to replaying it all the way through with a group of buddies.

Plain and simple: if you liked the first Borderlands game, you're going to *love* this one.

Review contributed by Alexander Caratti

Half-Life Reborn as Black Mesa

First, a little gaming history: The advent of so-called First Person Shooters (FPS) occurred in 1993 with the iD game, Doom. In 1996, Doom begat Quake (another iD game) and from there all hell broke loose (literally, in the case of some games) with hundreds, if not thousands, of titles released by dozens of developers.

Without a doubt, one of the earliest and best of the Doom/Quake progeny is Valve's 1998 game, Half-Life. In a quantum leap forward, the action in Half-Life revolved around the story of a research facility in which things go terribly awry (OK, no one said it was a particularly original story). Up to that point, most FPS' basically amounted to little more than running around shooting monsters. Now you had a reason to dispense with those baddies. On top of the story you got state-of-the-art graphics and sound (for 1998) and rock-solid level design (for any year). And you still got to shoot tons of baddies.

Fast forward to 2004 when Valve topped itself in spades with Half-Life 2, the title many still believe to be the best FPS ever made. Half-Life 2 included a stunning new graphics engine, called Source, which Valve made freely available to designers who proceeded to spawn countless Half-Life 2 lookalikes, or mods. Over the ensuing years countless mods have been created including the near Valve-quality Minerva: Metastasis and The Stanley Parable.

Of course, by this time, the original Half-Life was starting to look painfully dated. But there was still that pretty good story and excellent level construction. Which is why, about eight years ago, a large group of dedicated armchair coders took up the herculean task of completely recreating the first Half-Life game using the high-quality Source engine used to create Half-Life 2.

And that brings us right up to last week when the group—which calls itself The Black Mesa Modification Team (*release.blackmesasource.com/*)—released a 3+GB file representing the stunning culmination of nearly a decade's work.

Black Mesa, as it's called, is a near-perfect re-imagining of Half-Life with some notable improvements. First off, it looks fantastic—nearly as good as modern FPS titles. Yes, the Source engine Valve created for Half-Life 2 in 2004 does look a tad worn around the edges compared to brand new titles like Dishonored or the above-reviewed Borderlands 2, but it still looks very, very good. Also, certain locations have been expanded or modified to make them feel more realistic. Puzzles have been reworked or added. Music has been included and, when it works—which is often—it really sets the mood. Voice-overs are not perfect, but more than do the job.

On a personal note, I got a faintly creepy sense of déjà vu playing Black Mesa and you might as well. You *know* you've been in many of these places before, but you don't remember them looking like this. Very spooky and in-and-of-itself a fun reason to play the game.

Also, even though I've played the original version of Half-Life several times in the past, Black Mesa still felt like a completely new game for the most part and kept me interested.

It must be noted that simply getting Black Mesa to run can be a challenge on some systems. We had constant crashes and often could not get it even loaded on our test machine that routinely runs everything we throw at it with nary a hiccup. Then the game would run like a champ for no apparent reason other than, I don't know, the humidity in the room reached 67%.

But, still: Wow. Just *wow*. Like a lot of you, I don't have much time to play games anymore, but I was actually disappointed when the game wouldn't run. It's a fantastic gift the Black Mesa folk have given all of us, making it possible for us to re-experience the original Half-Life again without wincing from the graphical shortcomings. *And it's free*. I'm going to hold back half a globe for the difficulty we had getting it to run, but if it runs on your system, clear 10-15 hours on your calendar.

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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Mapvertising, Colonel Sanders in Nevada

[Regarding Marilyn K. Martin's September 28 article, "Solar Incentives, Map-vertising, Personalized Malware, Electronic Dance Music":]

FYI, it didn't show in my Google earth.

For those trying to enter the coordinates, they should use these numbers:

37.646163, -115.750819

Note the minus sign for west and no extra characters either.

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

Rich-

Thanks for the correction on the huge, Google Earth Col. Sanders.

-Marilyn, TX

Older Scanner with Windows 7

[Regarding the September 28 Digital Dave column:]

I had the same issue and found that I could use GIMP (*www.gimp.org/*) to access the scanner and capture images.

-S. Eldridge, Dulzura, CA

School and Student PC Security

Dear Editor,

I acquired a used Sony desktop PC from a local used belongings outlet. Within a few minutes I had it running by just plugging in the basic cables. The hard drive was still intact with the previous owner's information, but additionally I discovered that it was used by a school teacher, including more than their personal information, but lesson plans with student's names and phone numbers! I contacted the previous owner to return the hard drive. She didn't see that it

was necessary, come on now! I went to my garage with the hard drive and drilled a 1/2 inch hole through the case and internal disk, preventing any access to the drive.

The other user I dealt with suggested placing an antivirus utility on every flash drive I use to transfer data to and from computers. This was after I transferred a program with an attached malicious virus to my system.

Thank you for all the information your magazine has provided over these many years.

-Roy, El Cajon, CA

Thanks to ComputorEdge

I don't remember reading "Zlob-A MySpace Nasty."

I've been reading *ComputorEdge* since the 90s, when it was in print. One could find it all over San Diego. I liked it then. I like it now.

You have moved on with the times i.e. phone apps. I don't even own a cell phone. Don't need one. Don't want one. But I like to know what's going on. Beer choosers, Tooth Fairy money calc, and all the other insanely useful/useless. I love it. What's next from the users that go beyond using. Keep me posted.

Me: Old coder/hardware guy from the CPM/DOS days. Burnt out on electronics until the digital camera showed up. Now doing photography and graphics. I'm doing mostly raster graphics, but I love the mathematical precision of victor graphics. I use two computers. A Microsoft machine for media work And a fairly locked down Linux machine for the Internet—a pain in the ass, but it's too spooky now-a-days to run Microsoft.

ComputorEdge seems a bit "dumbed down." The world seems more than a bit "dumbed down." In some issues I find nothing, others leave me thinking or laughing. About 60/40. Keep on Trucking. I'll keep on reading.

Thanks,

P.S. As I read so much I should contribute. I will do a Photoshop quicky, "The One Minute Better Picture Fix—Guaranteed" or something like that.

-Douglas Moldt, San Diego, CA

How Would Google Via Maps Affect Apple?

[Regarding the September 28 Wally Wangs Apple Farm column:]

I've seen lots of articles that say Apple dumped(?) Google Maps for their own so they wouldn't be strangled or affected by it.

I don't understand how running an app from Google on an iPhone would affect them. Can you enlighten me?

Thanks,

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

Google supplies the mapping data and the actual app that used to run on the iPhone so Apple had absolutely no control over the data accuracy or the way that data was presented. Google

simply held back turn-by-turn instructions on the iPhone while implementing that feature on Android and there was nothing Apple could do since Google controlled everything. That's why Apple had to get rid of Google's Maps app or else the Maps app would never improve or link in with the rest of the apps on the iPhone.

-Wally Wang

Pinnacle Studio for iPhone?

[Regarding the September 28 Wally Wangs Apple Farm column:]

Will Pinnacle Studio for the iPad work on an iPhone 4S?

Do you know if it'll rotate a video?

Thanks,

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

Unfortunately, Pinnacle Studio only runs on the iPad and not the iPhone. It doesn't seem to be able to rotate video either, but is mostly designed to trim video and add text or audio easily. iMovie does run on the iPhone and iPad and is also cheaper ($4.99).

-Wally Wang

ComputorEdge 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 ComputorEdge.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 "ComputorQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at *ceeditor@computoredge.com*. If you would like to review our recent e-books, please visit ComputorEdge E-Books (*www.computoredgebooks.com/*).

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