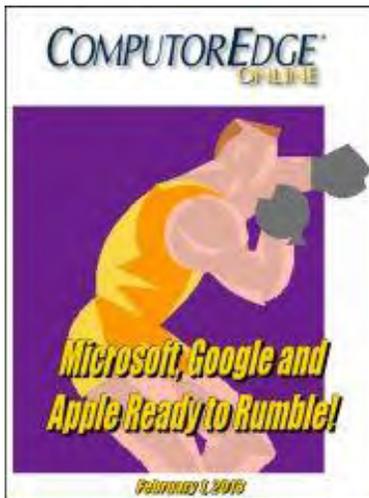


ComputerEdge™ Online — 02/01/13



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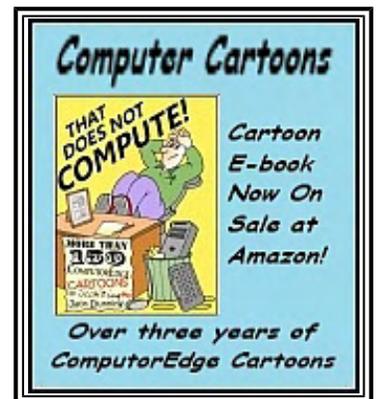
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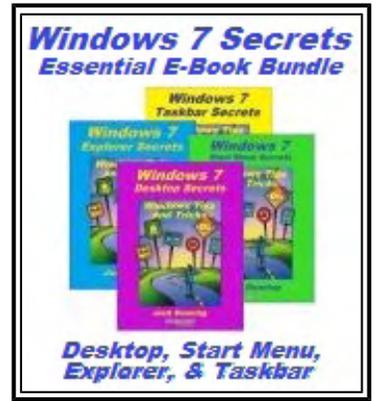
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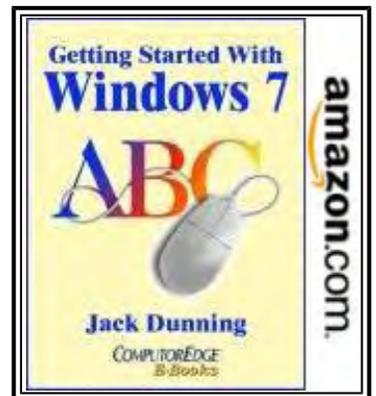
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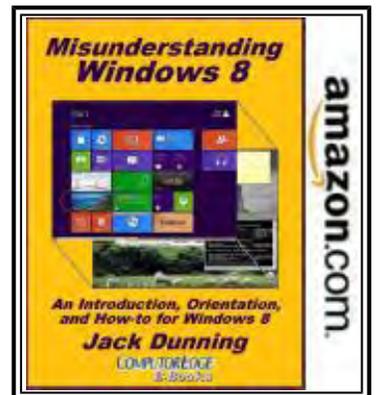
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Digital Dave

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

Browser Start Pages; Is Cloud Storage Safe?; Mapped Network Drives Not Accessible...Sometimes!; Waiting for AcroRd32.exe on Restart.

Dear Digital Dave,

I used to have Earthlink as an Internet provider and they offered a customizable start page which was really useful for my needs. I then changed to other providers, but was able to retain the Earthlink start page using a unique ID and password which I do not remember. Recently I lost access to this start page and could not retrieve it because I did not have the ID or password. Can you suggest a way to get that start page back? If not, can you coach me on how to create another start page in Firefox or some other browser in which I could create several different components like a stock portfolio, sports scores, weather in certain cities, etc?

Ernie Cummins
Fort Collins, CO

Dear Ernie,

If you want your old start page back, you might try going to Earthlink (my.earthlink.net) and using the "Forgot your password?" link. If it your account is still available, then this may help you recover it.

If not, then you will want another option. Personally, I like a minimalistic start page with little clutter, yet I understand the desire for a useful dashboard. I don't know much about the particular options, but there are many. I found a number of articles on the best personalized home pages: one from Mashable (mashable.com/2007/06/29/personalized-homepages/), another from PC Magazine (www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2276749,00.asp), and more recent Work Awesome (workawesome.com/productivity/best-start-page/). While a couple of these articles may be dated, most of the services are still available. A search of "best start pages" may yield more alternatives.

Maybe other readers will make suggestions.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

How secure is the Cloud? We don't know if our information would be exposed to all. We are thinking of putting all of our information into the Cloud" until we can re-do our computer, etc.

Paul

Dear Paul,

The Cloud (Internet Services for storage and apps) has certainly become popular in the last few years. It seems that almost everyone is offering some type Cloud storage capability whether it's Apple iCloud (www.apple.com/icloud/), Microsoft Skydrive (cloud.google.com/products/cloud-storage), Google Drive (drive.google.com/), Amazon's Cloud Drive (www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html/?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&docId=1000828861&linkCode=ur2&tag=comput0b9-20), Dropbox (db.tt/rRn27Ury), or many others. The battle is on and almost all the services offer some level of free Internet storage.

There are a few concerns with Cloud storage. Yours is security.

Since Cloud storage is over the Internet—which everyone accesses—security is a natural concern. There have been a few notable breakdowns that make many people wary of trusting Cloud services. However, those failures made all the players up their game and improve protection against hackers and nefarious or negligent employees. Most of the well-known services are reliable and safe—at least for the current known threats. Having said that, I would hesitate to trust my most confidential data to any Internet service. No Internet computer system is 100% protected or foolproof.

Another issue is the slowness of the Internet—even at high speeds. If you have a substantial amount of data on your computer, it could take an unreasonably long time to upload and download your data when changing computers.

Next is the cost of Cloud storage. Most services offer some free storage (five gigs is the average), after that you will encounter a monthly fee. Unless you're only using it for a short period of time, those fees will pile up. I don't know about you, but five gigs don't scratch the surface of the amount of data I have on my computers. Photos and videos add up quickly.

My recommendation for transferring data to a new computer is a USB Hard Drive (www.amazon.com/s/?_encoding=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&field-keywords=usb%20drive&linkCode=ur2&rh=n%3A595048%2Ck%3Ausb%20drive&tag=comput0b9-20&url=node%3D595048). For about \$90 you can pick up a one terabyte drive which will both backup your current computer system and act as a data transfer drive when using a program such as Windows Easy Transfer (windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows7/products/features/windows-easy-transfer). In the long run an external hard drive will save you money and protect your data from Cloud exposure.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

On My Windows 7 desktop, I utilize a Buffalo NAS for my backups and music storage for my wireless SONOS music system. The brilliant Backup program I use is called "Allway Sync (allwaysync.com)" and requires the drives to be accessible for it to work.

The issue is when the computer is initially turned on. The three mapped drives (for example: DESKTOP_BACKUP-NAS (\\NAS-MRM)(X:)) all have a red colored "X" over the icon of the drive on the far left of each of the networked drives. I can awake them by clicking directly on each "X", and the "X" disappears and the drive is then accessible.

An Internet search reveals many others with this same problem, and an inquiry to Buffalo tells me it's of course a "Microsoft Issue." The SONOS System is not affected as it looks at the NAS directly—not through the computer. At one time I actually found a small company in Sweden that had a shareware program that addressed this by installing a small batch program that manually clicked on the "X" to wake it up. It was a crude way to solve the issue, and did not always work, and they are no longer in business (wonder why?). Any thoughts on how to solve this will be appreciated!

*Marc
San Diego, CA*

Dear Marc,

This is a common problem and seems to be related to the drive mapping time-out at start up. There is one Microsoft reference to resetting the time-out (support.microsoft.com/kb/297684) in the Registry and another that offers a script for solving the problem (ptihosting.com/blog/it-blog/red-x-on-mapped-drive-in-windows-7-and-windows-vista-solved/).

If neither of those works, I found what looks like a simple way to reactivate the dropped mappings. Create a batch file (text file with a BAT extension). Add the following lines for each problem mapped drive:

```
net use m: /delete
net use m: \\[sharename]
```

These lines will first delete the mapped drive (m:), then remap the same drive with the path *sharename*. This should activate the drive. I tested it with the Command Prompt and it worked. Put the batch file in the Startup folder (Run, +R, *shell:startup* to open the Startup folder).

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

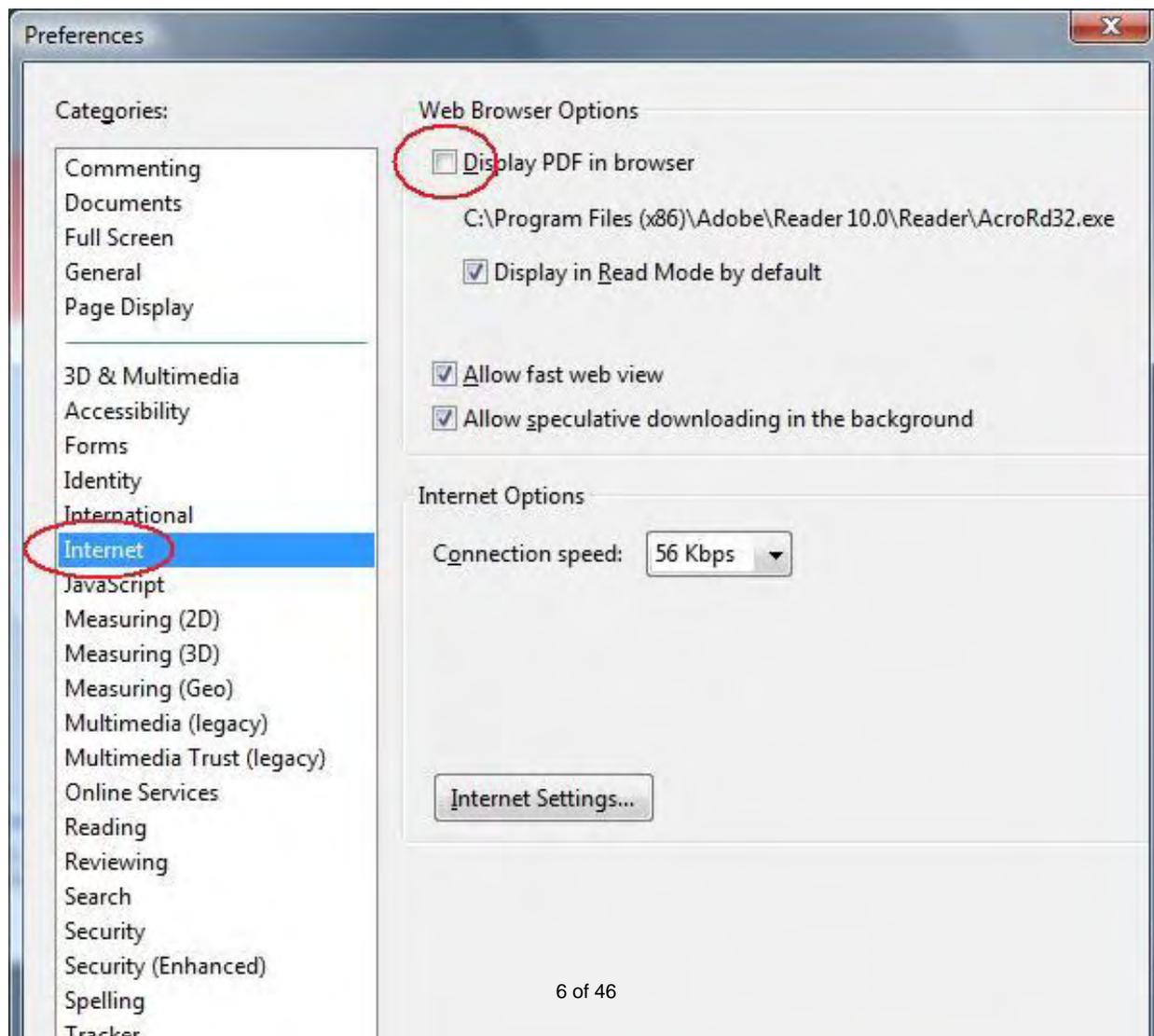
Every time I try to restart my Windows 7 computer, I get a message "Waiting for AcroRd32.exe" or something to that effect. I don't have any Adobe windows open. How can I get this to stop?

Larry McLaughlin

Dear Larry,

Whenever you read a PDF file through your Web browser, the file *AcroRd32.exe* loads. This is Adobe Reader. After you close the PDF windows and/or the browser the program stays in memory. I guess that this is to make future PDF file viewings load quicker. Later when you restart your computer *AcroRd32.exe* is one of the processes which needs to be closed.

Search for and load Adobe Reader X on your computer. Select Preferences from the Edit menu. Click on Internet in the list on the left, as shown in Figure 1. Remove the check mark from "Display PDF in browser" and OK.



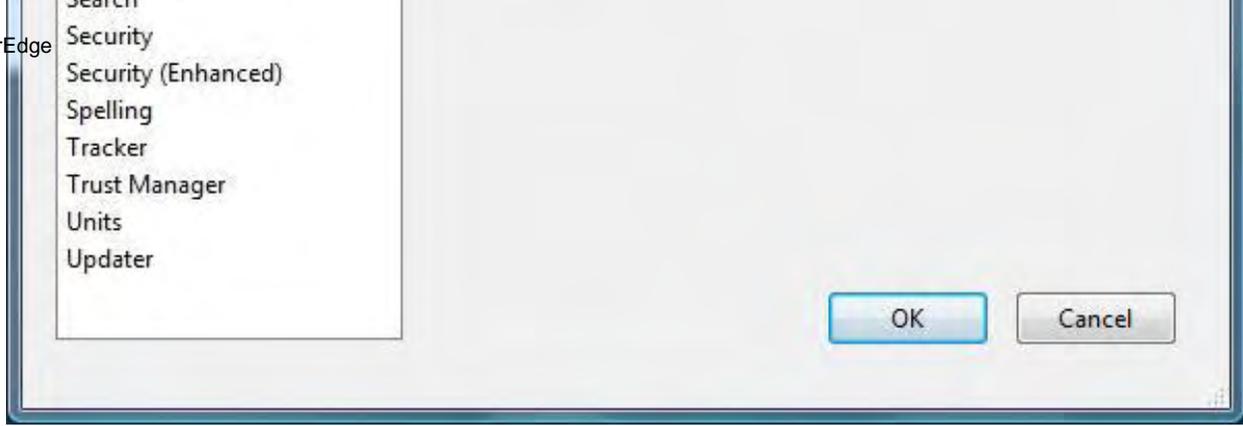


Figure 1. Setting Preferences in Adobe Reader.

The wording of the option seems a little strange since you can still view PDFs in your browser, but it seems to solve this Adobe Reader problem. When the page is closed, the Adobe Reader file should end as a process. (It worked for me.) You should no longer see the message at restart, plus it will recover some memory for other uses.

Digital Dave

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[Ready to Rumble and More Little Known High Tech Stories](#)

“Cup-Tech, Patent Wars, Cyber-Security, Silicon Prairie and Tattooed Librarians” by Marilyn K. Martin

Unfair Competition Charges to Phone Wars; Google and Amazon and Secret Servers; Cup-Tech; Patent Wars; Computer Security Flaws and Cyber-Crime; Banking and Security; PCs and Smartphones; Big Data and Privacy Concerns; Facebook Updates; Libraries in the Digital Age; Start-ups in Kansas City.

Microsoft, Google and Apple Ready to Rumble—Unfair Competition Charges to Phone Wars

These Top Tech companies' "friendly competition" is crumbling amid lawsuits and phone wars. The New Year had barely begun, when the *Seattle Times* reported that Microsoft was renewing their plea for government regulators to crack down on Google (seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2020041243_apusmicrosoftgoogleantitrustprobe.html). Microsoft's deputy counsel, Dave Heiner, launched a last-ditch appeal to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and European Commission as they finish up investigations into Google's business practices. Microsoft is charging that Google—their biggest competitor and nemesis—with unfair competition, and wants the result of the various antitrust probes to require Google to make significant changes.

Meanwhile, Google is making waves in political circles (www.newser.com/story/160298/google-honcho-schmidt-to-visit-north-korea.html) as well. An early January 2013 article in *Newser* revealed that Google CEO Eric Schmidt had joined former governor Bill Richardson on a recent trip to North Korea. Some say it was a humanitarian mission. Others charge that Schmidt was responding to Kim Jong Un's call for an "industrial revolution," and wants Google to get a toehold in North Korea.

Mediapost reported in January 2013 that Google and Apple have an uneasy but profitable semi-partnership (www.mediapost.com/publications/article/190618/npd-google-apps-tops-among-android-users.html), in that Google apps are top sellers for Apple's iPhone. When Google Maps finally showed up in the App Store—after the disastrous Apple Maps—it had an astonishing 10 million downloads in the first 48 hours. Apple execs are not thrilled that their own map-app was such a dud (that Apple exec is gone), and that they now have to run a competitor's map-app (www.businessinsider.com/apple-execs-are-seething-over-the-worlds-joyful-reaction-to-google-maps-for-iphone-writes-top-apple-blogger-2012-12) to keep iPhone customers happy.

Google and Amazon and Secret Servers

Wired ran a story at the end of November 2012 about how Amazon was following Google into the world of secret servers (www.wired.com/wiredenterprise/2012/11/amazon-google-secret-servers/). A decade ago, Chris Pinkham, who then oversaw Amazon's hardware and software, got to glance Google's stripped-down and hot-running servers. That's when Pinkham and Amazon decided to re-think their servers, and go for the same bare-bones and

inexpensive servers that could expand Amazon's operations more quickly.

Today, Amazon is building its own servers in tandem with inexpensive Asian manufacturers, like Quanta (www.quantatw.com/Quanta/english/product/qci_es.aspx) and Foxconn (www.foxconn.com/), although Amazon buys their server processors and memory directly from Intel. Foxconn not only builds Apple iPhones and iPads, but survived a high-profile server hack (www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2400029,00.asp) in February 2012. And in January 2013, the *Miami Herald* reported that Chinese police were probing allegations that Foxconn employees were soliciting kickbacks (www.cbsnews.com/8301-205_162-57563265/chinese-police-probe-kickbacks-by-foxconn-managers/) from suppliers.

Cup-Tech

Yahoo ran a Good Morning America story in December 2012, about a new material that changes color when it comes in contact with drug-spiked beverages (gma.yahoo.com/blogs/abc-blogs/smart-cups-detect-date-rape-drugs-110110490—abc-news-tech.html). Founder Mike Aramson plans to use the material to create a set of beverage products, from cups and glasses to stirrers and straws. They have a fund-raising appeal on Indiegogo (www.indiegogo.com/).

LiveScience ran in story in January 2011, that non-food factors can affect the taste (www.livescience.com/25970-hot-chocolate-better-in-orange-cups.html) of even beverages. Researchers found that an orange or cream-colored cup can make hot chocolate seem to taste better. Past research has shown that plate color, wine bottle price, and even a verbal description of food can affect people's enjoyment of food and drink alike.

Patent Wars

As I reported previously, the Top Tech companies are now secretly patenting ideas for similar products, like smart eyeglasses. And they all seem to subscribe to the idea of continually filing a blizzard of patents, from the mundane to the bizarre. A couple weeks into January 2013, Microsoft already had almost 230 patents (www.latestpatents.com/category/microsoft/) granted or published.



"I was going to start building computers with wings and football helmets. Who knew that Apple already owns the patent?"

The New York Times reported in January 2013 on the 2012 Patent App Rankings (bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/10/the-2012-patent-rankings-ibm-on-top-again-google-and-apple-surging/?ref=technology) for computer companies. IBM was granted more patents in 2012 than any other company for the 20th consecutive year, collecting 6,478 patents last year. (When things get tight, IBM is known for sharp cutbacks elsewhere in their company—but always continues to invest in its research engine.) Samsung Electronics came in second for 2012 with 5,081 patents. Google and Apple, rivals in the smartphone patent wars, were both granted over 1,000 patents apiece.

At the end of November 2012, *Wired* revealed that Apple has already got a patent for wireless charging (www.wired.com/gadgetlab/2012/11/apple-wireless-charging-patent/). Different than inductive wireless charging (that's been around since 2009), the Apple patent would be for devices to utilize near-field magnetic resonance power supply, to charge nearby devices which have a resonator circuit within.

Google's Motorola unit, meanwhile, routinely files patent-infringement lawsuits against Apple, to block them from importing the iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch and "various Apple computers." The latest was filed last August 2012, according to Techcrunch (techcrunch.com/2012/08/17/google-files-new-patent-lawsuit-against-apple-seeks-to-block-iphone-ipad-mac-imports-to-u-s/).

Computer Security Flaws and Cyber-Crime

An urgent appeal went out in mid-January 2013 for PC users to disable Oracle's Java (www.java.com/en/), citing a major security flaw (www.contracostatimes.com/business/ci_22349948/experts-urge-pc-users-disable-java-citing-security). The Department of Homeland Security joined a chorus of computer experts advising everyone to disable Oracle's Java software immediately. Hackers have learned how to exploit Java to install malicious software that enables them commit computer crimes.

Oracle Corporation quickly released a "security update" within days. But the Department of Homeland Security responded that Java software still poses risks to users, and continues to advise against reinstalling (www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/14/us-java-oracle-security-idUSBRE90D10P20130114) it.

An Associated Press story through the *Denver Post* in mid-January 2013, reported that the European Union's police coordination agency just opened a new cybercrime unit (www.denverpost.com/technology/ci_22354879/eu-police-agency-opens-unit-tackle-cybercrime) in The Hague, Netherlands. The European CyberCrime Centre (EC3) says that online payment and card fraud steals 1.5 Billion Euros a year, and more help is needed to find pedophiles trafficking child abuse images worldwide. EC3 is determined to find these criminals and more, especially the ones who conceal their activities on the Internet and online networks in what is called "deep net" or "darknet."

Also in January 2013, the *Denver Post* ran a story about how Alaskan customs inspectors recently discovered more than 12,000 counterfeit iPhone (www.denverpost.com/technology/ci_22318005/inspectors-seize-counterfeit-iphone-cables) connector cables and adapters. Officials discovered the counterfeit accessories while working in FedEx's Anchorage sorting facility. The counterfeit products were stamped with bogus Apple logos, and the package had been sent from China to an unnamed US wholesaler.

Banking and Security

The banking industry took a big hit last year, amid a wave of attacks that slowed or stopped their Web sites. Now the *New York Times* has reported that everyone is fairly certain that Iran was behind (www.nytimes.com/2013/01/09/technology/online-banking-attacks-were-work-of-iran-us-officials-say.html) the well coordinated attacks. Online banking sites continue to be attacked into the new year, and the attackers are now engineering whole networks of compromised computers in data centers. Computer security experts say the attacks show a level of sophistication far beyond an amateur hacker, and the attackers ignored the money to just pursue "disruption"—all hallmarks of a state-sponsored attack.

In line with the above, the *Washington Post* through the *Contra Costa Times* in mid-January 2013 revealed that banks are now seeking help (www.contracostatimes.com/business/ci_22353529/banks-seek-nsa-help-amid-attacks-their-computer) from the National Security Agency (NSA) to help protect their computer systems, amid on-going attacks on their Web sites. The banks want the NSA to provide technical assistance, so the banks can further assess their systems and better understand the attackers' tactics. This cooperation underscores the government's fears about the unprecedented assault against the U.S. financial sector, even while privacy advocates complain about the NSA peering into private bank accounts.

Some people are fed up with banks altogether, mostly due to all the fees charged, and the merry-go-round of trying to straighten things out with a customer service department that is all too frequently in another country. So Josh Reich and Shamir Karkal created their own bank (www.nytimes.com/2013/01/09/technology/a-financial-service-for-people-fed-up-with-banks.html?ref=technology) that is strictly online. Their start-up bank, Simple (www.simple.com/), is based in Portland, Oregon, and offers "clarity in your finances." It offers free checking accounts attached to a debit card (no paper checks), data-rich analysis of transactions and spending habits through slick apps, and no fees of any kind. Set up with venture capital funds, Simple already has 20,000 customers for its un-bank, and early customers—a bit hesitant to trust a bank with no physical infrastructure—are happy with the quick responses to their transactions and questions.

Latest in Personal Computers and Smartphones

Nobody cares about PCs anymore, right? Smartphones and tablets are getting all the buzz. And PC sales did fall (www.siliconvalley.com/ci_22350667/personal-computer-sales-over-holidays-fall-first-time) over Christmas 2012,

for the first time in 5 years. Buyers weren't excited about Microsoft's Windows 8, which usually stimulates a spurt of new PC sales. And the low sales capped an already bad year for PC makers like Hewlett-Packard. Their sales of printers—their main revenue source—continues to shrink (seattletimes.com/html/business/technology/2019912440_hpprinterdeclinexml.html) as people print less and send more data through tablets and smartphones.

But the *New York Times* in December 2012 reviewed three new high-end PCs (www.nytimes.com/2012/12/06/technology/personaltech/reviewing-all-in-one-luxury-pcs-from-vizio-hp-and-apple-state-of-the-art.html?ref=business&_r=0) (over \$1,000) that are definitely buzz-worthy. Apple's new iMac, Hewlett-Packard's SpectreOne and Vizio's All-in-one Touch, are all gleaming one-pieces with wireless mice. And they have no towers, their innards stored behind the screen or in the monitor's foot or stalk.

Are you still enjoying your iPhone5? Well, it may be about to be replaced. *Newser* reported in early January 2013 that app usage logs for some of Apple's biggest apps show they are being used in new hardware identified as iPhone6.1 (www.newser.com/story/160249/looks-like-apple-is-testing-new-iphone-ios.html). Although some Apple fans are losing their enthusiasm, mainly due to the barrage of new Apple products released at the end of 2012 that were just incremental upgrades.

Big Data and Privacy Concerns

More and more customer-oriented companies are leveraging technology for better consumer experiences. Disney Parks have long been a joke for long lines to rides. But the *New York Times* reported in January 2013 that this coming spring, Walt Disney World in Florida will begin using coded rubber bracelets (www.nytimes.com/2013/01/07/business/media/at-disney-parks-a-bracelet-meant-to-build-loyalty-and-sales.html). The bracelets will contain credit card information, so a tap of the wrist will pay for food and trinkets. And smartphone alerts will signal when it's time to go ride Space Mountain—without standing in any lines. The new crowd-management system, called My Magic+, will make the Park experience less tiring and frustrating, and Disney is betting happier visitors will come more often and spend more money. The bracelets will also offer a treasure trove of guest behavior data for Disney, which has already alerted privacy advocates, especially with children involved.

The New York Times in January 2013 also ran a story about how the European Parliament plans to overhaul the Continent's data protection laws (www.nytimes.com/2013/01/10/technology/parliament-to-consider-creating-data-protection-regulator.html). If passed, the new laws would give Internet users greater control of their online information. The law would replace an advisory panel with a regulatory agency, which could make decisions for the bloc's 27 members, and could levy fines up to 2% of a company's revenue. The stricter data protection measures would stop standard Web tracking and profiling of customers, without their explicit prior consent.

A mid-January 2013 article in the *New York Times*' Technology section ran through new California suggestions for mobile app designers to better protect their users' privacy (bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/10/california-suggests-mobile-app-privacy-guidelines/). The tips suggest app developers avoid collecting data that isn't needed for an app to function normally, make their privacy policy readable, and to alert users if third parties are detected collecting information on them, including advertisers.

Facebook Updates

In November 2012, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Facebook is ending their voting component (www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-facebook-voting-privacy-changes-20121121,0,4943715.story) of proposed policy changes on privacy, since getting a significant portion of 1 Billion users to vote has become impossible. Instead, Facebook will rely on feedback from users during 7-day "review and comment" periods. And a new feature will let users send privacy questions directly to their Chief Privacy Officer, who will then hold Webcasts to address questions and concerns over privacy issues.

Also in November 2012, Facebook started testing a mobile photo syncing ([/www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-facebook-photo-syncing-20121120,0,1217600.story](http://www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-facebook-photo-syncing-20121120,0,1217600.story)) feature. The new feature will allow Facebook users to download a new app, then upload their smartphone pictures the instant after taking them. Users can then immediately share the photos, or store them on Facebook to keep them private.

In December 2012, the *Denver Post* revealed that Facebook is determined to fight a German demand to allow

users to register with fake names (www.denverpost.com/technology/ci_22223854/facebook-rejects-german-demand-allow-fake-names). Facebook has long required all users to register with their real names. This is a policy that a data protection commissioner in Germany charges is a breach of both German law and European rules designed to protect free speech online.

Libraries Recasting Their Image in the Digital Age

At the end of December 2012, the *New York Times* reported that whenever three people request a hold on the same popular book at the library in Arlington Heights, Illinois, a savvy computer tracking system (www.nytimes.com/2012/12/28/us/libraries-try-to-update-the-bookstore-model.html) automatically orders an additional copy, to prevent the frustration of long waits to check out best sellers. The upshot is that this Illinois library now shelves 36 copies of the erotic *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

But when patrons' passion for the book cools, the extra copies will simply be sold at the Friends of the Library's used-book sales. And now the Arlington Heights library is renovating part of their first floor into a Marketplace, with comfy seating, vending machines, and an abundance of best sellers. The library views this as a way to fill the void from closing bookstores, and bring in more readers by better adapting to the demands of library patrons.

In December 2012, the *Washington Examiner* ran a story about how Maryland lawmakers were hoping to jump-start Prince George's struggling library system by introducing a bill to examine placing private businesses (washingtonexaminer.com/p.g.-considers-adding-private-cafes-to-public-libraries/article/2516322#.UNJJcaxiP4Y), like coffee shops and cafes, in the county's public libraries. Cafes in public libraries in other states haven't been all that profitable, and some insist that renting space in libraries to non-profits can provide better financial returns.

Library Tech and Teens

Getting enough people to come into a quiet universe of dusty books in the Digital Age is no easy task. In November 2012, the *Denver Post* ran a story on how the Denver Public Library is targeting teens (yourhub.denverpost.com/denver/denver-public-library-taps-into-teen-market-digital/JQoiRldJUA2lib3YjEAZoO-story) by emphasizing technology. The main branch will soon open IdeaLAB, a digital center with computers and even a recording studio, in spring 2013. The library has also redesigned their teen Web site, with everything from book lists to links to local events and programs. The main Denver Library also started a Teen Tech Club in September 2012, to teach teens how to create video games, comics, music and digital art. It meets for a few hours every Thursday at the Community Technology Center.

Also in November 2012, the *Boston Globe* ran a story on a new 2013 calendar featuring the beautiful tattoos (www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/2012/11/25/mass-youth-librarians-push-recast-image/CdOAIHSdg3AjLblvHg87cL/story.html) worn by Youth Librarians of Massachusetts. The calendar is a fundraiser, but also a chance to recast the stereotypes of stodgy librarians. Some of the tattoos even have a literary theme, like a character from Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, or a quote from E.E. Cummings.

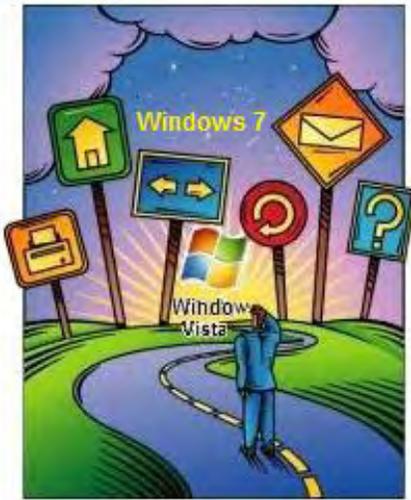
Ultra-Fast Internet Draws Start-ups to Kansas City

High-tech start-ups are sprouting in the Mid-west, dubbed Silicon Prairie (seattletimes.com/html/nationworld/2020124572_apusgooglesiliconprairie.html). Google Fiber (fiber.google.com/about/) is the catalyst, a super-fast, fiber-optic network being tested in Kansas City that advertises speeds of up to a gigabyte-per-second. A faster Internet can handle larger files, and eliminate buffering problems that affect online video and live conferencing. Although Silicon Prairie is challenging for start-ups trying to raise venture capital outside Silicon Valley, the super-fast Internet is enticing. And middle America—sandwiched between the tech-heavy Coasts—is ripe for technological investment and growth.

Marilyn is a freelance writer and humorist, with a special interest (besides computers and technology) in Science Fiction. She has had short stories appear in the following 2011-2012 publications: *Deadman's Tome* (www.demonictome.com/) online magazine; *Strange Valentines* anthology; *Cosmic Crime* anthology; *PerihelionSF* online magazine; and *The Fifth Dimension* online magazine. She has also sold a short story to appear in the March 2013 anthology, *Universe Horribilis*. She is also writing a Young Adult SF series, *Chronicles of Mathias* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1598249002/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1598249002&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20), and contributes weekly articles or humor columns to *ComputerEdge*. ComputerEdge E-Books has converted many of Marilyn's computer humor columns into four e-books. Now available in a four-book Kindle bundle from Amazon.com *The Best Computer and Internet Humor, Anecdotes, and Jokes Found on the Web* ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00ACVX2PC/ref=as_li_ss_tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00ACVX2PC/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00ACVX2PC&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00ACVX2PC&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20). Marilyn's collection of the funniest stories about our computing machines and how we use them at home, the office, and in cyber space. Save 25% off the individual book price!

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Windows Tips and Tricks

Windows 7 and Windows 8 Action Center

“Windows Uses Its Customer Experience Improvement Program to Solve Problems” by Jack Dunning

In Windows 7 the Action Center was introduced and it continues in Windows 8. The Action Center is the place to start troubleshooting your Windows 7 or Windows 8 computer.

Microsoft has a system they call Windows Customer Experience Improvement Program (CEIP) which collects information about various problems occurring in your Windows computer. It's voluntary and only data related to the operation of the computer is collected. Microsoft uses this data to find solutions to common Windows operating system problems. Then they include those fixes in updates. That's why a problem you discover early in your computer's operation may later disappear. I know that I've experienced this phenomenon in Windows 7 and was amazed when a problem just went away.

In Windows 7 the Action Center was introduced and it continues in Windows 8. It is the result of the Windows CEIP and the resolution of computer problems (see Figure 1). The options for resolving problems (usually found under Maintenance if related to specific Hardware or Software and under Security if related to Windows Update or other security settings) will vary depending upon when you view the Action Center. (The option to participate in Windows CEIP can be set by clicking "Change Action Center Settings" on the left side of the window, then selecting "Customer Experience Improvement Program Setting.")

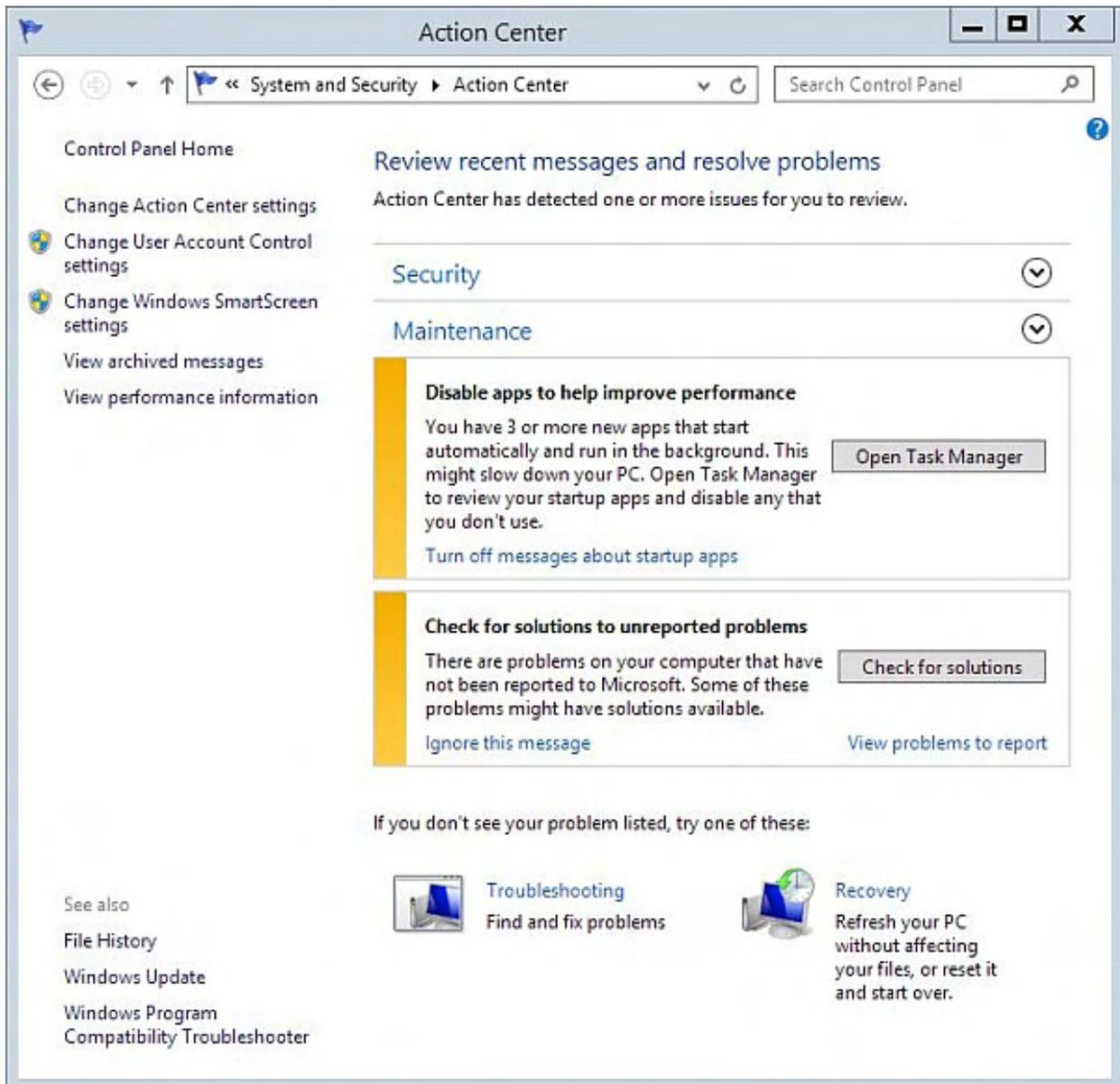


Figure 1. As Microsoft finds solutions through their Customer Experience Improvement Program, they appear in the Action Center for Windows 7 and Windows 8.

Problems only appear in the Action Center when they are detected on the computer. It is worthwhile to review the Action Center on a regular basis just in case a new issue has developed.

Of particular interest is the Troubleshooting link at the bottom of the window. Clicking this link opens a list of many of the available tools for diagnosing Windows problems (see Figure 2). This window is almost identical between Windows 7 and Windows 8, although there are slight differences. Notably "Check for performance issues" is missing from the Windows 8 Action Center.

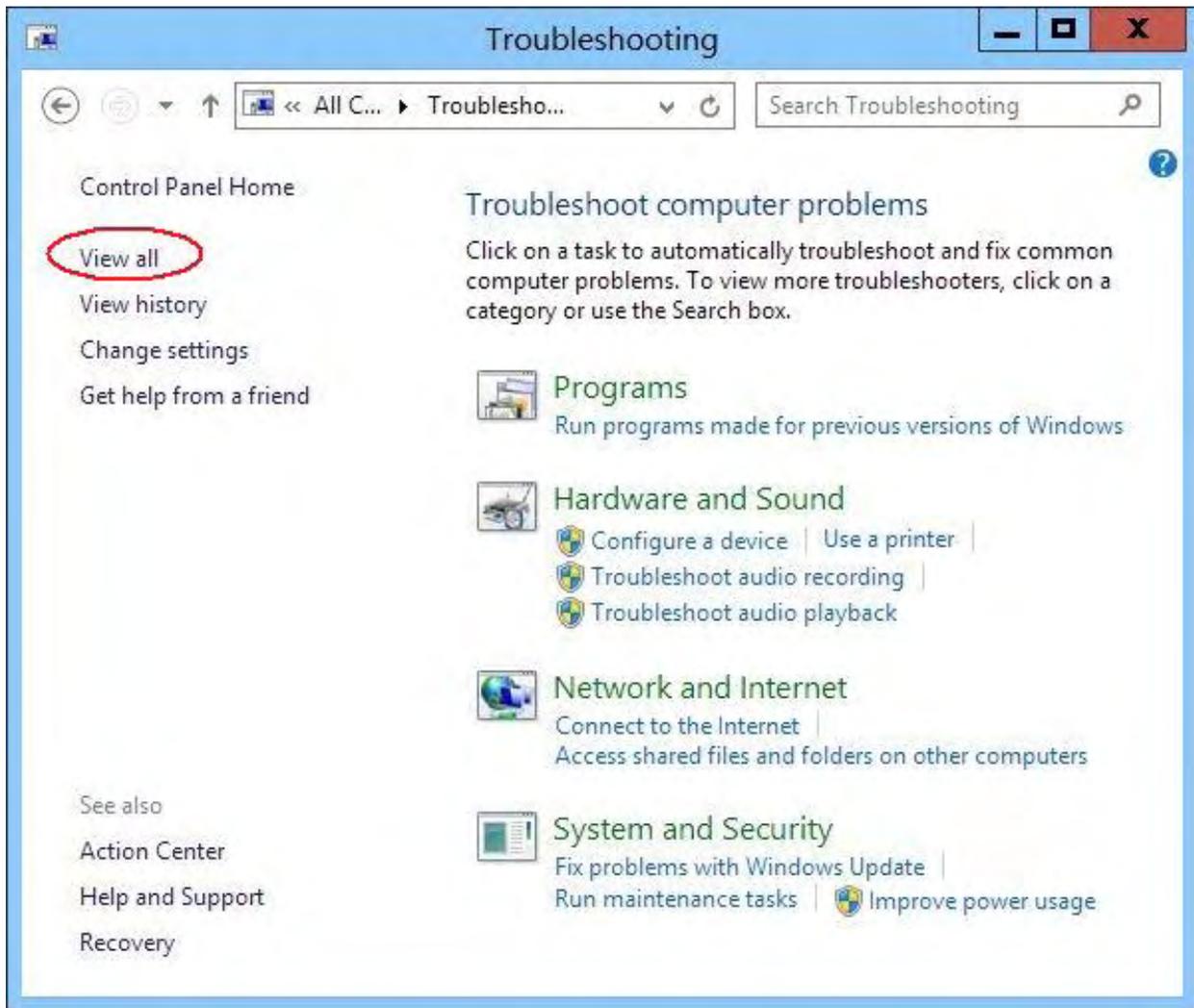


Figure 2. The Troubleshooting Center offers tools for solving Windows problems.

The Performance troubleshooting tool in Windows 7 checks for startup issues by reviewing items in System Configuration. Since the Startup items list in Windows 8 have been moved to the Task Manager, the Performance troubleshooting tool has been removed.

Click on "View all" to list all the available troubleshooting tools (see Figure 3). The Windows 8 list of tools differs from Windows 7 in that Performance (mentioned above), Windows Aero, and a couple of other tools are no longer available in Windows 8.

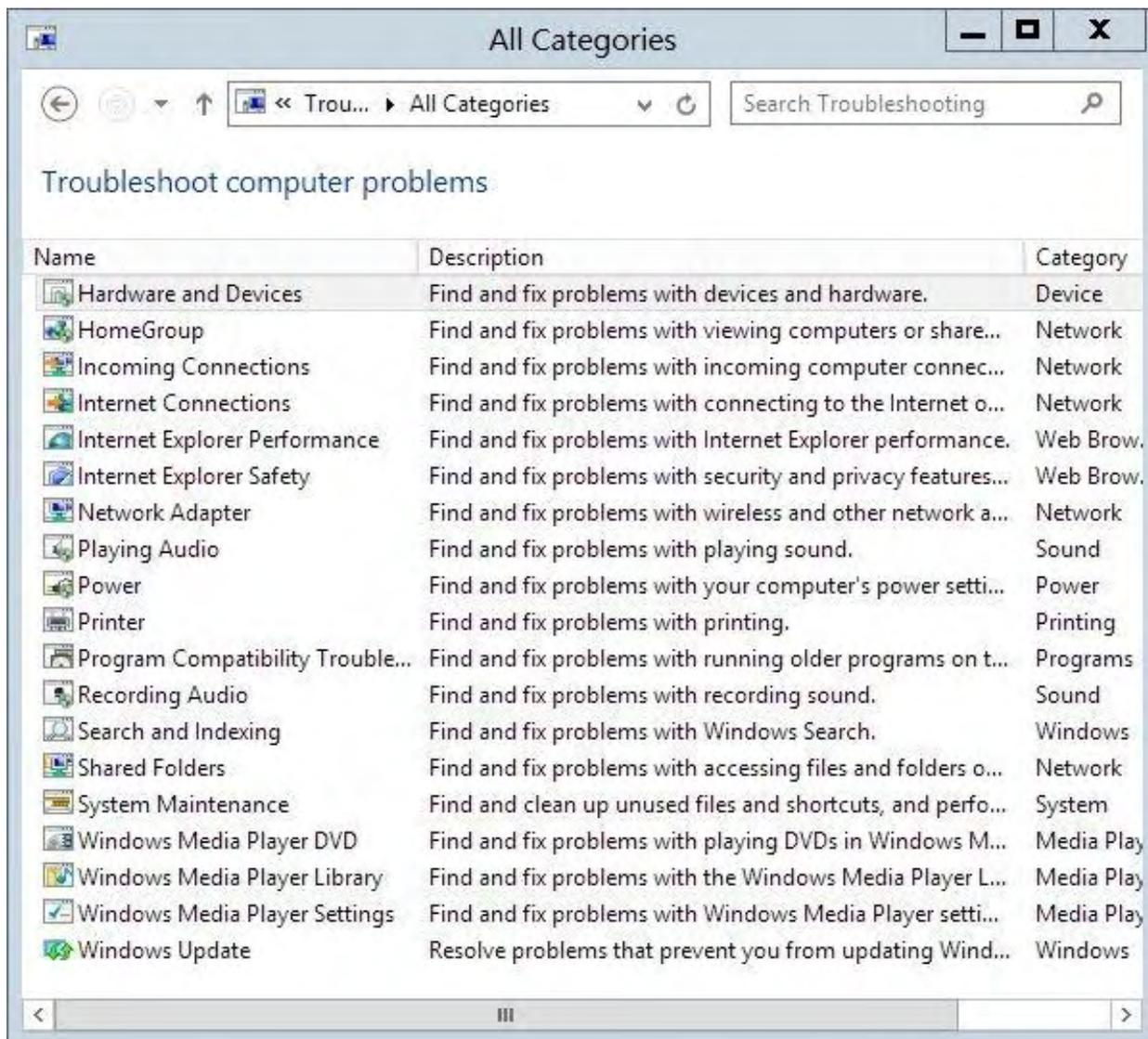


Figure 3. Click "View all" in Troubleshooting for a list of available troubleshooting tools.

These troubleshooting tools can be run directly from this list. If you're having computer problems, then it can be worth the time to run these tools.

One of the best ways to locate the appropriate hidden tool in Windows 7 and Windows 8 is with the extensive list of Control Panel suggestions from a search. Type a key word such as "change," "memory," "hard drive," or any relevant term into the search field in the upper right-hand corner of the Control Panel (or Action Center. See Figure 4. A list of suggestions will be returned in the main window.) In Windows 7 starting a search in the Start Menu will return a shortened list. Click on Control Panel heading to open the main listing. In Windows 8, the Settings search +W will also provide an extensive list of options.

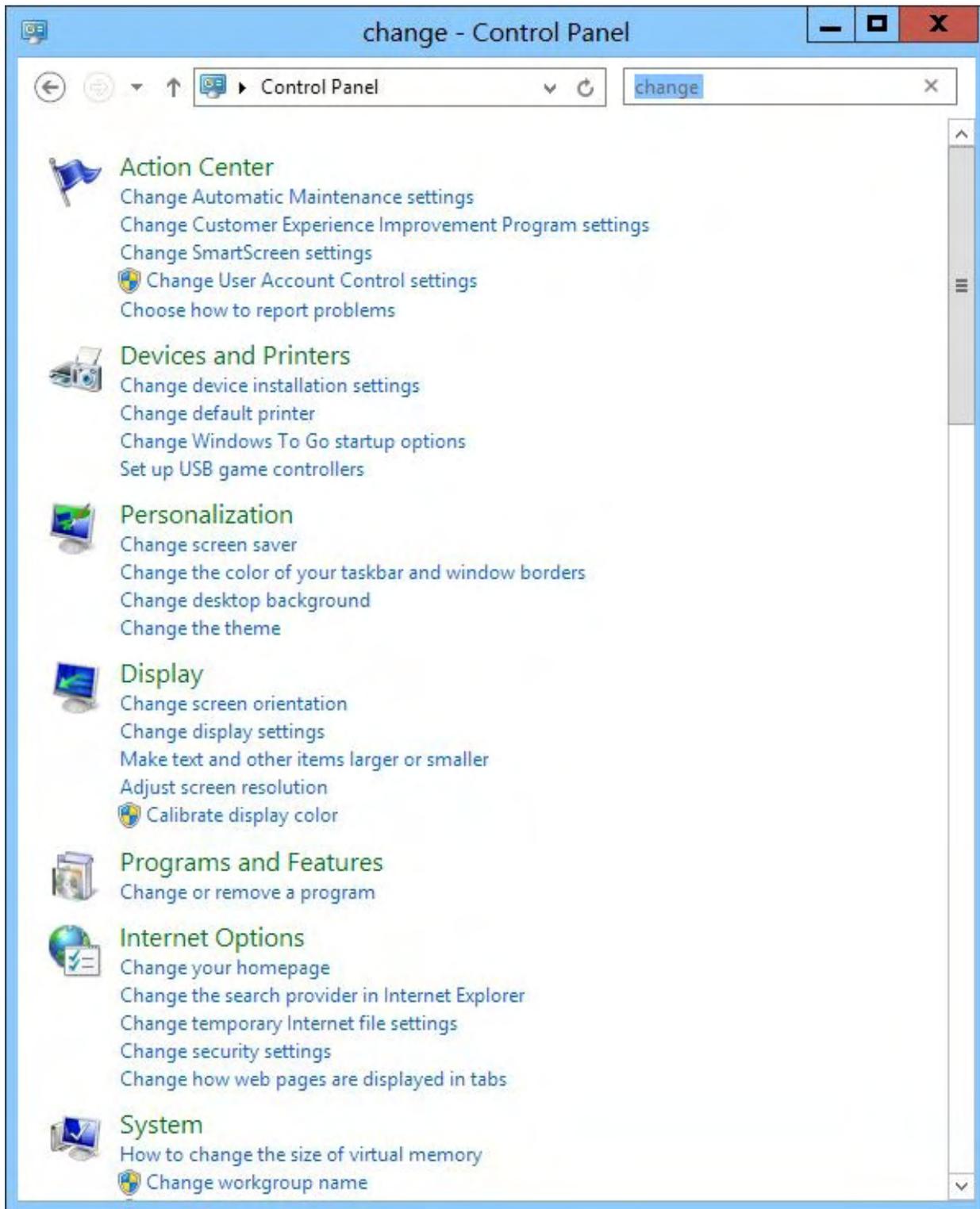


Figure 4. Typing a key word into the Control Panel (or Action Center) search field yields suggestions.

The Action Center (tied in with the Windows CEIP) is one of the best features introduced in Windows 7. It has helped Microsoft to solve an untold number of problems with both Windows 7 and 8 while it offers the fixes in updates to its users. The Action Center is the place to start your Windows 7 and 8 troubleshooting.

* * *

ComputerEdge E-Books has just published a new e-book on Amazon, *Hidden Windows Tools for Protecting, Problem Solving and Troubleshooting Windows 8, 7, Vista, and XP Computers* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00B8Z2ASG/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20). This

book is about the tools built into Windows for protecting your computer (and your data), solving computer problems, and troubleshooting issues that may come with new hardware or software. You won't use these utilities every day, but you sure want to know about them. The problem is that these Windows wrenches and hammers are not always easy to find.

Hidden Windows Tools is based upon years of Windows Tips and Tricks columns from *ComputerEdge*. In the course of updating each chapter with information for Windows 8, I also backdated them for Windows XP. (Most of these tools existed in some form in Windows XP.) As each new version of Windows was released new tools were added and/or updated. Each chapter explains how to find the tool in each version of Windows—if it exists. In some cases, tools have been moved to a new location. In others, they may no longer exist. I've done my best to make this book as inclusive as possible for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7, and Windows 8. (Sorry, no Windows 95 or earlier.) That means if you get this book because you're using Windows XP or Vista, it should just as useful if and when you upgrade to Windows 7 or 8.

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

Now at Amazon! Jack's *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20).

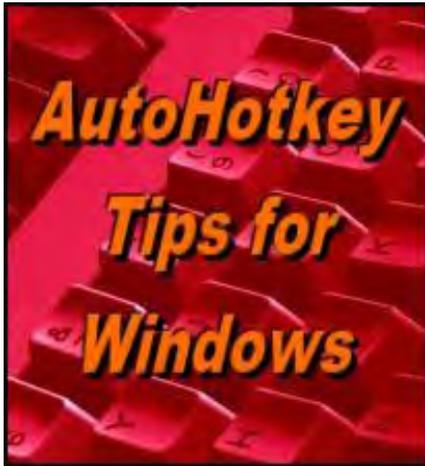
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Currently only at Amazon.com, *Jack's Favorite Free Windows Programs: What They Are, What They Do, and How to Get Started!* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B008BLUZRS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20).

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 ComputerEdge 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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Yet, One More Reason to Use AutoHotkey Free Software!

[Tweaking the Reminder and QuickLinks AutoHotkey Scripts](#)

“A Reader's Question Prompts a Look at Improving AutoHotkey Scripts” by Jack Dunning

Why not a reminder program which for more than the next 24 hours? Plus, what if your keyboard doesn't have a Windows key? There are some simple modification to the AutoHotkey scripts.

Ron Cerrato from San Diego writes in regards to the Reminder app and QuickLinks app both compiled from AutoHotkey scripts:

The summary says "After the script is loaded, CTRL++R opens the appointment setup window. This version allows you to set a reminder up to 24 hours later." I think it would be much more useful if you could just set an activation date/time for any future date/time. Also, my PC has no Windows key. Is there another key combination that substitutes for it? (I found your QuickLinks program useful in Windows 8 since it doesn't require a Windows key, however even there, I'd much prefer a right click option to show up in the desktop right-click list.)

Ron, you pose some interesting questions. Of course people would like to add a reminder more than 24 hours in advance, plus I hadn't considered the fact that many people don't have a Windows  key on their keyboard. My purpose in writing these apps is to use them as tools for learning how to write and use AutoHotkey app. Therefore, rather than merely making changes to the apps, I will show you how to make changes to the scripts which achieve the results you want.

Note: The discussions in this column assume a certain level of understanding of AutoHotkey scripts. While AutoHotkey is a powerful utility which can get complex, there many useful things that a novice can do. If you are new to AutoHotkey, then it may be best to start with simple tasks such as those outlined by the articles linked at the bottom of the ComputerEdge Web page "Installing AutoHotkey and Writing Your First Script (www.computeredge.com/misc/Installing_AutoHotkey_and_writing_your_first_script.html)."

Reminders More Than 24 Hours Later

There are a couple of reasons that I limited the reminder to the next 24 hours. The first is the fact that the reminder sits in memory without saving it to disk. That means if you log out, restart, or shut down the computer, the reminder is lost. It will need resetting when you log in or start up again. What would remind you to set up the reminder again? This can be resolved by saving the reminder data to a text file, however that technique is a little more advanced and I'll save that for another time. Using a data file would also make it easier to add multiple reminders.

The second reason for initially limiting the time interval was the complications I ran into calculating the time difference in the original script. I later discovered the method built into AutoHotkey for quickly making time difference calculations. In the most recent Reminder.ahk script, a small adjustment can be made to allow the reminder to be set to any time interval. Now extending the reminder beyond 24 hours is easy.

All that is required is a modification of the Gui, Add, DateTime (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/GuiControls.htm#DateTime) command to make the date as well as the time selectable:

```
Gui, Add, DateTime, vMyTime w350 l Range%A_Now%, ddddMMMMd, yyyy hh:mm tt
```

The "ddddMMMMd, yyyy" has been added to display the day of the week (dddd), the month (MMMM), the day of the month (d), and the year (yyyy)—all, except the day of the week, can be manually set (see Figure 1). Since the entire date and time is always saved, there are no other changes needed in this most recent *Reminder.ahk* script. (See the complete *Reminder.ahk* script at the end of the column. This version includes the NirCmd speak function referenced in last week's column.)

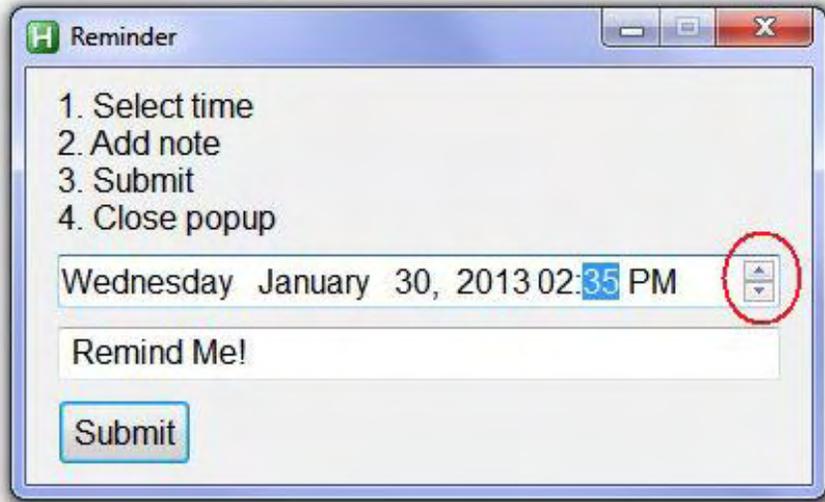


Figure 1. The Reminder app showing the date as well as the time.

The option "Range%A_Now%" has been added to limit the reminders to future dates and times only (anytime after now—A_Now). The width has been increased to 350 pixels (w350) to accommodate the longer data entry field.

If you would prefer a dropdown selection calendar, then all that's required is the removal of the option "1" located in the middle of the line of code. The "1" option adds the up-down control to the right of the date/time fields replacing the pop up calendar selection box.

```
Gui, Add, DateTime, vMyTime w350 Range%A_Now%, ddddMMMMd, yyyy hh:mm tt
```

Now the reminder displays a calendar when the icon is clicked on the right end of the field (see Figure 2).

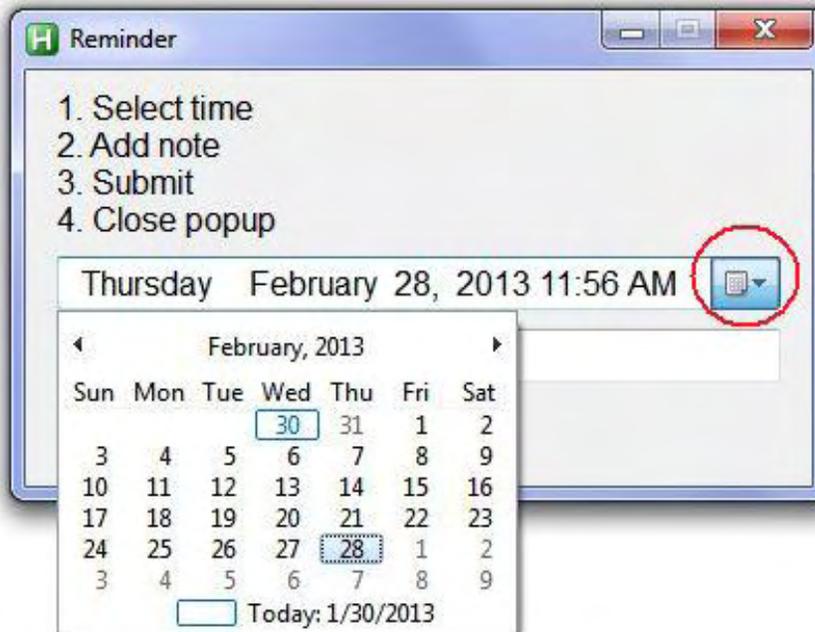


Figure 2. Removing the number 1 from the options in the Reminder app adds a calendar selection box.

Now that the reminder is limited to times after the current time, it is possible to remove the *If* conditional which checks the time, thereby further reducing the script length and complication. However, it is still possible to select a time which is a few seconds earlier than the current time. To prevent that we keep the *If* conditional in and change the *Else* to a message saying to pick a later time:

```
If (MyTime > A_Now)
{
    NewTime2 := MyTime - A_Now, s
    FormatTime, Schedule, %MyTime%
    MsgBox,4160,Your Reminder, "%MyNote%" is scheduled for`n%Schedule%
    #Persistent
    RemMessage := "Better get going!"
    SetTimer, ShowReminder, % newtime2*1000
}
Else
{
    MsgBox, The time must be later than right now!
    GuiControl,,MyTime, %A_Now%
}
```

In the *Else* portion of the *If* conditional, the `MsgBox` (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/MsgBox.htm) command is used to display the message and the `GuiControl` (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/GuiControl.htm) command is used to reset the pop-up time and date to the current time. (Refer to scripts in earlier columns for a complete explanation of this *If* conditional.)

Changing the Hotkey Combinations

If there is no Windows  key on your keyboard, then it's merely a matter of locating the key combination in the script, changing it to what is on your keyboard, and running the AHK file (if AutoHotkey is installed) or recompiling it to an EXE file (to run on any Windows computer). The activation hotkeys include a double colon after the hotkeys, in this case:

```
^#R:: ;CTRL+WIN+R for the Reminder script
```

found at the beginning of the *Reminder.ahk* script and

```
#z::Menu, QuickLinks, Show ;WIN+Z for the QuickLinks script
!,::Menu, QuickLinks, Show ;ALT+Comma for the QuickLinks script
```

found at the end of the *QuickLinks.ahk* script.

The Windows  key is represented by the # sign. Substitute an alternative symbol from the AutoHotkey list (www.autohotkey.com/docs/Hotkeys.htm). For example "^" represents the CNTL key, "!" is the ALT key, and "+" is the SHIFT key. Save and rerun the script (or recompile and reload the EXE file) for the changes to take effect.

Adding Right-click Capability to the QuickLinks App

While I don't see a way to add QuickLinks to the right-click menu on the Windows Desktop it can be added to either the AutoHotkey icon in the System Tray on the right-side of the Taskbar or as a separate right-click in conjunction with one other key—in this case the CTRL key. In the latter case, it is merely a matter of adding an additional hotkey combination at the bottom of the *QuickLinks.ahk* script:

```
^RButton::Menu, QuickLinks, Show
```

With line of code, CTRL+Right Mouse Button will pop up the QuickLinks menu.

To add the right-click capability to the icon in the System Tray, there is a MENU command (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/Menu.htm) for doing just that called Tray. It is simply a matter of replacing all occurrences of *QuickLinks* in the script with *Tray*. Then, when the QuickLinks icon in the Systems Tray is right-clicked the QuickLinks menu will pop up (see Figure 3). The other key combinations will continue to work as before.

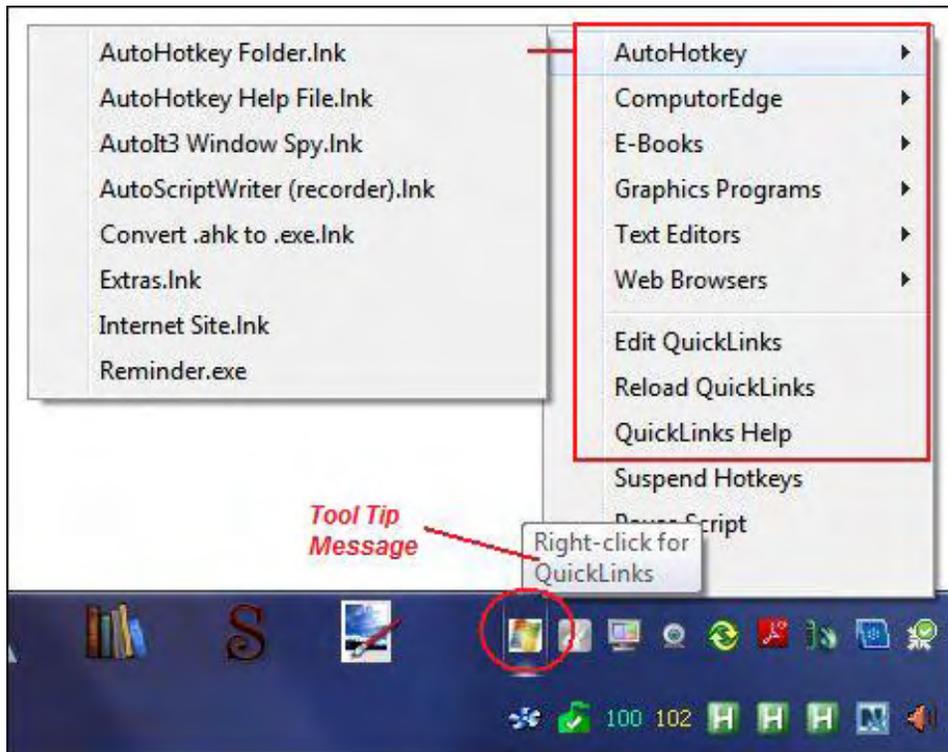


Figure 3. The QuickLinks app is attached to the AutoHotkey System Tray icon with the Tray parameter. Notice that the icon and tool tip message have been changed.

While the new QuickLinks script is very much like the original offered in the QuickLinks AutoHotkey column two weeks ago, there are few changes to note. First, two lines were added: one to change the icon, the second to change the tool tip message when hovering over System Tray icon.

```
Menu, Tray, Icon, %A_WinDir%\system32\SHELL32.dll,43
Menu, Tray, Tip, Right-click for`nQuickLinks
```

Notice that *Tray* is used in place of the menu name. *Tray* always refers to the System Tray icon for the current AutoHotkey script. The *Icon* parameter is used to change the icon displayed. In this case it is icon number 43 found in the the Windows System file *SHELL32.dll*. Later, when the file is compiled with the separate utility (discussed below), the icon is replaced with a replica of the Microsoft logo and this line of code is removed.

The second line of code noted merely changes the tool tip message to "Right-click for QuickLinks" as shown in Figure 3.

The other change of interest is the addition of the following lines:

```
Menu, Tray, NoStandard
Menu, Tray, Standard
```

Normally the standard AutoHotkey Tray menu items (Suspend Hotkeys, Pause Script, Exit) would appear at the top in the right-click menu. After the new menu items are added to Tray, the standard items can be relocated to the bottom by removing them with the *NoStandard* option in the Menu, Tray command. When the standard items are added back with the *Standard* option, they appear at the bottom of the list. (The complete *QuickLinksTray.ahk* script is found at the end of this column.)

Using the "Convert .ahk to .exe" Utility

While compiling is as simple as right-clicking on the AHK script file name and selecting Compile Script, if you use the "Convert .ahk to .exe" utility which comes with the AutoHotkey download, you get a little more flexibility and you can add a tailored icon for the System Tray (see Figure 4).

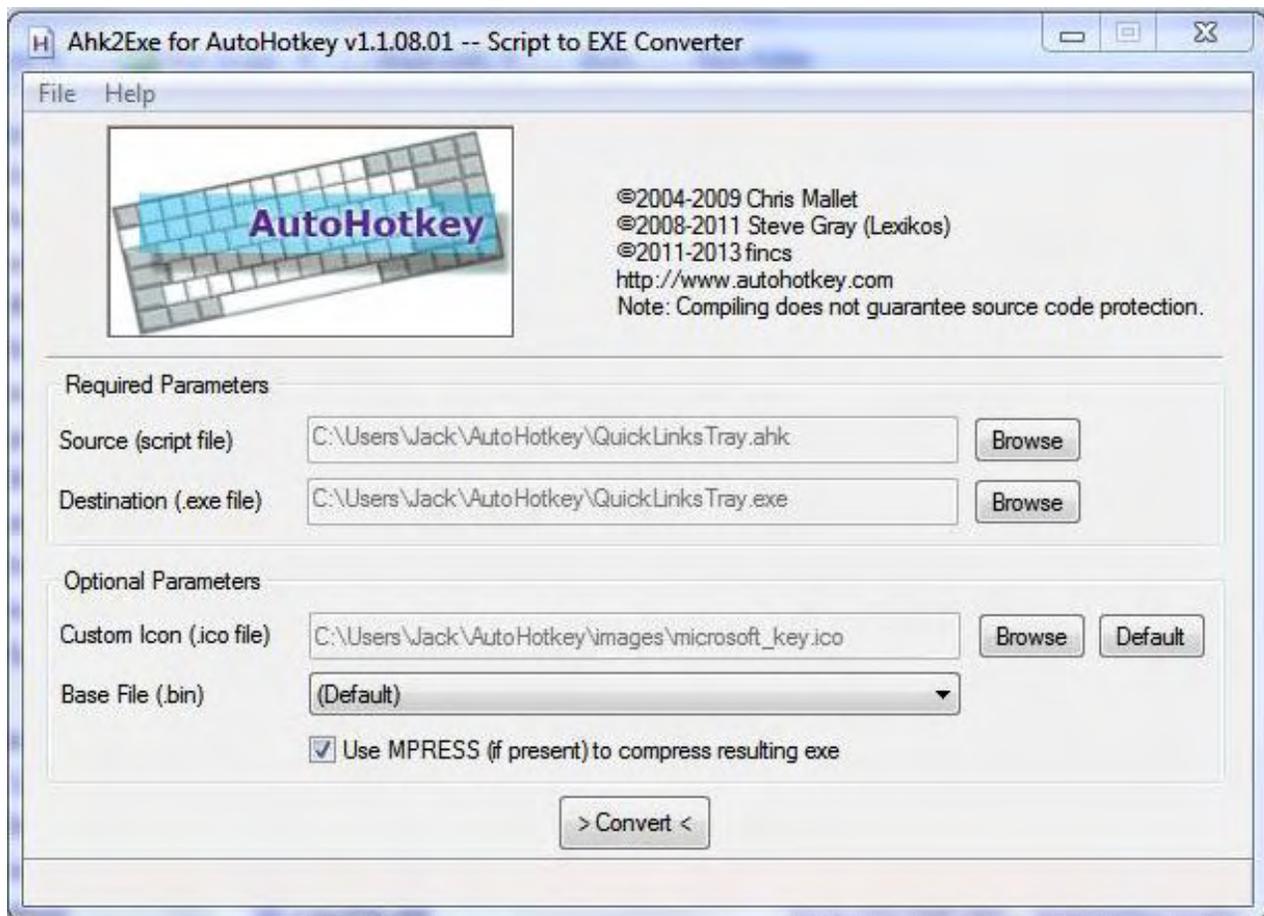


Figure 4. The "Convert .ahk to .exe"AutoHotkey compiling utility allows the selection of a custom icon for the System Tray.

If the Tray icon is also access to QuickLinks, I felt that it should look a little different. I could have used the Windows 7 Start logo, but I settled for making an ICO file with the Microsoft key logo (🗑️) used in *ComputerEdge* articles and columns. (The program IrfanView (www.irfanview.com/) is excellent for converting images to ICO files.)

Once compiled, when the *QuickLinks.exe* program is loaded, the icon will appear in the System Tray and operate with a right-click as shown above in Figure 4.

Reminder.ahk AutoHotkey Script

To run or compile this new Reminder.ahk app which allows future dates, copy-and-paste the following into a new or current AutoHotkey script. If you have not installed NirCmd for the speak function, then you may want to remove the line "SetTimer, TalkToMe, 15000" and the associated *TalkToMe* routine (label).

```
^#R::
Gui, Font, s12, Arial
```

```

Gui, Add, Text,, 1. Select time`n2. Add note`n3. Submit`n4. Close popup
Gui, Add, DateTime, vMyTime w350 Range%A_Now%,ddddMMMMd, yyyy hh:mm tt
Gui, Add, Edit, vMyNote w350, Remind Me!
Gui, Add, Button, Default, Submit
Gui, Show, , Reminder
Return
ButtonSubmit:
Gui, Submit, NoHide
If (MyTime > A_Now)
{
    NewTime2 := MyTime - A_Now, s
    FormatTime, Schedule, %MyTime%
    MsgBox,4160,Your Reminder, "%MyNote%" is scheduled for`n%Schedule%
    #Persistent
    RemMessage := "Better get going!"
    SetTimer, ShowReminder, % newtime2*1000
}
Else
{
    MsgBox, The time must be later than right now!
    GuiControl,,MyTime, %A_Now%
}
Return
GuiClose:
Gui, Destroy
Return
ShowReminder:
FormatTime, RightNow
#persistent
SetTimer, TalkToMe, 15000
MsgBox,4160,Your Reminder!, %MyNote% %RemMessage%`n%RightNow%
SetTimer, ShowReminder, Off

IfMsgBox, OK
    SetTimer, TalkToMe, Off
return
TalkToMe:
run, nircmd.exe speak text "%MyNote% %RemMessage%"
Return

```

QuickLinksTray.ahk AutoHotkey Script

For a new version of the QuickLinks app which adds CTRL+Right-click and right-click on the System Tray, copy-and-paste the following code into a new or current AutoHotkey script:

```

IfNotExist, C:\Users\%A_UserName%\QuickLinks\
    FileCreatedDir, C:\Users\%A_UserName%\QuickLinks\
Loop, C:\Users\%A_UserName%\QuickLinks\*.*, 2 , 0
{
    Menu, Tray, Add, %A_LoopFileName%, MenuHandler
    MainMenu := A_LoopFileName
    CountLoop := 0
    Loop, %A_LoopFileFullPath%\*.*, 1 , 0
    {
        if A_LoopFileAttrib contains H,R,S ;Skip any file that is

```

```

        continue ; H, R, or S (System).
        Menu, %MainMenu%, Add, %A_LoopFileName%, MenuHandler
        CountLoop := 1
    }
    If (CountLoop = 1)
    {
        Menu, Tray, Add, %MainMenu%, :%MainMenu%
    }
    Else
    {
        Menu, Tray, Add, %MainMenu%, FolderHandler
    }
}
Menu, Tray, Add ;Add a separator bar
Menu, Tray, Add, Edit QuickLinks, QuickLinksHandler
Menu, Tray, Add, Reload QuickLinks, ReloadHandler
Menu, Tray, Add, QuickLinks Help, HelpHandler
Menu, Tray, NoStandard
Menu, Tray, Standard
Menu, Tray, Icon, %A_WinDir%\system32\SHELL32.dll,43
Menu, Tray, Tip, Right-click for`nQuickLinks
Return
MenuHandler:
run, C:\Users\%A_UserName%\QuickLinks\%A_ThisMenu%\
%A_ThisMenuItem%
return
QuickLinksHandler:
run, C:\Users\%A_UserName%\QuickLinks\
Return
FolderHandler:
run, C:\Users\%A_UserName%\QuickLinks\%A_ThisMenuItem
%
Return
ReloadHandler:
Reload
Return
HelpHandler:
Run, http://webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?
issue=3103&article=vista&src=gcklnks
Return
#z::Menu, Tray, Show
!,::Menu, Tray, Show
^RButton::Menu, Tray, Show

```

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

Now at Amazon! Jack's *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20).

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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).

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 ComputerEdge 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

“The Illogical Stock Market” by Wally Wang

The Illogical Stock Market; Staples and Apple; Future Profits From Mobile Devices; Software Updates; HyperCard Clone, LiveCode, Goes Open Source; The 128GB iPad; Kill Your IT Department; Super Bowl Nostalgia; Increase/Decrease Volume Without Beeping Sound.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Apple recently announced \$54.5 billion in revenue that generated \$13.1 billion in profits. The company sold a record 47.8 million iPhones in the quarter, compared to 37 million a year ago. Apple also sold a record 22.9 million iPads during the quarter, compared to 15.4 million a year ago. The two product sales declines occurred in the iPod line and the Macintosh line. In the past quarter, Apple only sold 4.1 million Macs, compared to 5.2 million a year ago.

Despite reporting increased revenue (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_largest_corporate_profits_and_losses#Largest_Corporate_Quarterly_Earnings_of_All_Time), profits, and growth as part of the fourth highest corporate quarterly earnings of all time, Wall Street felt that Apple didn't meet their own lofty expectations, so the stock plummeted. Nearly every quarter, Wall Street analysts create unrealistic expectations and when Apple fails to meet those unachievable expectations, the stock price drops even further. If the fourth highest corporate quarterly earnings of all time can't satisfy Wall Street, then what will?

It's easy to see why iPod sales keep dropping. As more people get smartphones that can play music, there's little reason to buy a dedicated MP3 player any more. It's also easy to understand why Macintosh sales are starting to drop. Besides the fact that Apple didn't release new Macintosh models until late in the quarter, more people are simply relying on smartphones and tablets to do most of their computing.

At one time, the only computers around were mainframes. When minicomputers appeared, the mainframe computer people derided them as toys. Yet sales of minicomputers climbed since their lower cost and size allowed smaller companies to take advantage of computers.

When PCs arrived, minicomputer supporters derided them as toys. Yet sales of PCs skyrocketed by bringing the power of a computer to each person's desk. When portable and laptop computers arrived, they allowed people to take the power of computers with them. Now with smartphones and tablets (still being derided by PC supporters as toys), people can take and use their computers anywhere they go including places where laptop computers are too clumsy to use such as while waiting in line in a restaurant.

If you want to see which company is well-positioned for the mobile computing future, just look at how much each product contributes to Apple's revenue. The iPhone currently contributes 56 percent while the iPad contributes 20 percent. That means 76 percent of Apple's revenue comes from the two most popular mobile computing devices in the world.

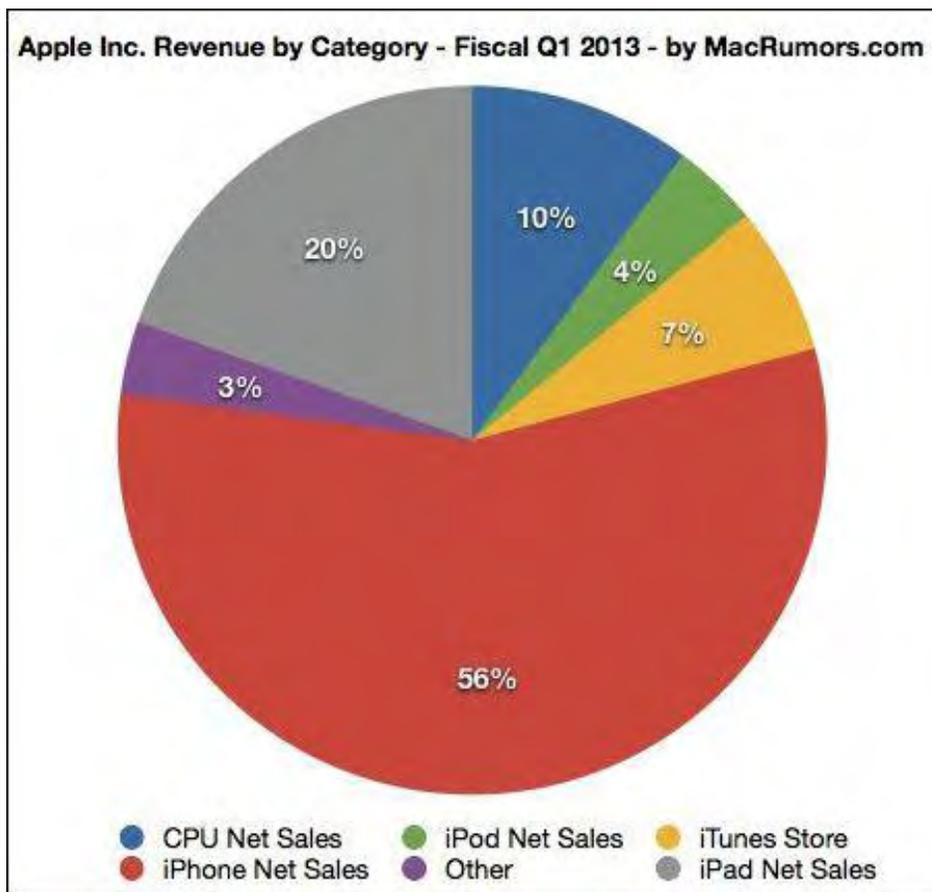


Figure 1. Apple revenue by category.

Not surprisingly, the Macintosh only contributes 10 percent to Apple's revenue with iTunes and other products and services make up the remainder. Apple not only makes the bulk of their money from mobile computing, but they're also leading the mobile computing movement with the iPhone and iPad.

Whether you get an iPhone or another smartphone, or an iPad or another tablet, you'll be using a product that was either designed by Apple or heavily influenced by Apple. While Wall Street punishes Apple for not releasing innovative new products every quarter like a cure for cancer or a perpetual motion machine, Apple's future seems assured as one of the strongest forces in the mobile computing market today.

Staples and Apple

For the longest time, Staples only sold PCs. As profit margins on PCs dropped and sales of PCs continue dipping as well, Staples needed to branch out and sell more profitable products. Selling pencils and staples isn't going to generate enough profits, but selling high-end products will.

Staples tried selling Research in Motion's Playbook tablet along with Motorola's Xoom tablet to target the tablet market, but both products flopped. Then Staples started selling Microsoft's Surface tablet. Now rumors claim that Staples will soon start selling Apple products.

Not only would Staples benefit by selling high profit margin Macintosh computers, but they'd also get to sell the more popular iPads instead of relying on Microsoft Surface tablets and other iPad rivals that aren't as much in demand. Apple would benefit by expanding their retail presence while also tapping into Staple's corporate clients at the same time.

Walk into any Staples ten years ago and you'd rarely find any software for the Macintosh. Walk into any Staples store today and you'll find a small section of Macintosh software. As more stores like Best Buy and Staples shift away from complete dependence on PCs to a mix of PCs and Apple products, the trend is obvious. The Macintosh and iPad aren't going away any time soon. If anything, they're going to continue playing a larger role in the computing market.

Smart people will just deal with this shift and take advantage of the new opportunities they'll create. Dumb people will simply fabricate fantasies for why the facts in front of their face aren't real so they can maintain their delusions that nobody needs anything but a Windows PC.

For those who still don't believe that sales of PCs are slowing down, you can examine the latest problem of semiconductor suppliers (www.zdnet.com/chip-inventory-at-semiconductor-suppliers-hits-alarmingly-high-levels-says-analyst-7000010421/), who are getting stuck with huge inventories of chips they can't sell since PCs that use these chips aren't selling. Most likely, mainframe and minicomputer manufacturers once believed that people would stop buying PCs and go back to the good old days of relying solely on mainframe and minicomputers, so you can see how long these folks have been waiting for the past to return once more.

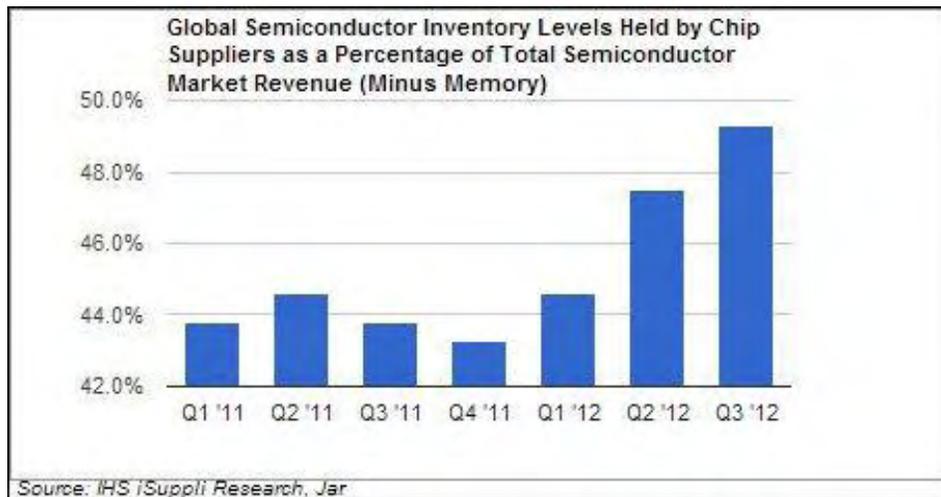


Figure 2. Inventory levels of PC chips keep rising.

Future Profits From Mobile Devices

Despite selling more smartphones than ever before, the stock of both Apple and Samsung dropped (www.forbes.com/sites/parmyolson/2013/01/25/brutal-2013-for-smartphones-bugs-samsung-and-apple/). One reason is that cheaper smartphones keep appearing, especially in Asia and other parts of the world, so profits on smartphone hardware keeps dropping.

For Samsung, they make their profits selling smartphones and very little on software. For Apple, they make money selling iPhones, but also make money through their App Store as well. If mobile phone prices keep dropping, the profits will soon evaporate from hardware and depend entirely on software.

That will hurt both Samsung and Apple, the two biggest smartphone manufacturers, but it will hurt Samsung even more. Android costs nothing to use, so neither Google nor Samsung makes money each time someone buys another Android smartphone. By relying completely on hardware profits, Samsung's profits can go nowhere but down.

Apple's iPhone profits will also drop, but the more iPhones they sell, the bigger the market for their App Store. Google can make money off advertisements displayed through Android, but Samsung and other hardware manufacturers won't make money that way.

This might explain why Samsung is also developing their own mobile phone operating system called Bada (gizmodo.com/5401326/why-did-samsung-just-announce-another-mobile-os) and working with Intel to distribute the open source Tizen operating system (www.forbes.com/sites/ewanspence/2013/01/05/tizen-is-the-fulcrum-samsung-can-use-to-protect-themselves-against-google/). By creating a Bada and Tizen app store and taking a cut of the profits like Apple does from their iOS App Store, Samsung could be preparing themselves for a future when hardware profits are nearly non-existent and software profits generate the most revenue.

Anyone remember the race to the bottom all those PC manufacturers engaged in as they sliced their profit margins to almost nothing to sell the cheapest PCs where a large percentage of the cost went to licensing the Windows

operating system? As Microsoft discovered long ago, software is far more profitable than hardware. Unfortunately, you need someone to build the hardware first, and if others don't find it profitable, then you'll have to do it yourself like Microsoft is doing with their Surface tablets.

Software Updates

If you have a relatively new iOS device like an iPhone or iPad, you can now update your version of iOS to 6.1. Besides fixing numerous annoying bugs, the latest version of iOS 6.1 also adds 4G LTE support for 36 additional iPhone carriers and 23 more for the iPad.

The other major features of iOS 6.1 is the ability to purchase movie tickets through Fandango using Apple's voice-assistant Siri and the ability for iTunes Match subscribers to download individual songs to iOS devices from iCloud. If you're developing OS X programs or iOS apps, you'll also want to download the latest Xcode 4.6, which offers additional support for iOS 6.1.

Apple's own press release (www.apple.com/pr/library/2013/01/28Apple-Updates-iOS-to-6-1.html) even boasts that iOS 6 runs on more than 300 million iOS devices in just five months since its initial release. Since many of the latest apps need the latest version of iOS to run, Apple has a vested interest in getting as many people as possible to upgrade to the latest version of iOS so they can continue getting a cut of all sales from their App Store.

On the other hand, Android smartphone manufacturers have little incentive to upgrade their products to the latest version of Android because that takes time to test and distribute. It's far easier just to sell someone an Android smartphone with whatever version of Android they feel like using, and then hoping the person won't come back to bother them until they want to buy another smartphone all over again.

When comparing the iPhone and iPad to Android smartphones and tablets, take this ability to update your operating system into consideration. You may not care which operating system your smartphone or tablet might be using, but it will suddenly seem important when you need the latest operating system version and you can't get it without buying another device.

HyperCard Clone, LiveCode, Goes Open Source

One of Apple's biggest blunders was dropping HyperCard. Despite its popularity, Apple executives at that time couldn't see how giving away free software could possibly help them, even if people were buying Macintosh computers just to run HyperCard. Fortunately, another company has created a HyperCard clone called LiveCode (www.runrev.com/products/Overview/).

The biggest problem with LiveCode in the past was its relatively high cost, but now the company behind LiveCode has released it as an open source project (www.kickstarter.com/projects/1755283828/open-source-edition-of-livecode) through KickStarter. That means if the project gets enough backers, anyone interested in developing cross-platform programs that can run on Windows, Linux, and Mac OS X, or developing cross-platform apps that can run on iOS and Android, can start programming for free.



Figure 3. Contribute to the open source version of LiveCode.

If you use the open source version of LiveCode, anything you create must also be distributed as open source (runrev.com/home/ks1/?preview) although you can still create in-house programs without sharing the source code with others. However, if you pay for a commercial license, you can distribute any of your LiveCode programs commercially without revealing any of your source code.

The huge advantage of offering an open source version of LiveCode is that more people can freely experiment with LiveCode to see the benefits of using a programming tool that's far easier to use and understand than traditional programming languages like Objective-C or C++.

Schools can teach the principles of programming without getting bogged down in the frustrating, technical details of a particular programming language's syntax. Show someone a typical C++ program and it looks like a jumble of random symbols and cryptic acronyms. Show someone LiveCode source code and it's far easier to read and understand.

For example, to take the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth word in a sentence and store it in a variable using LiveCode, the code might look like this:

```
put word 3 to 6 of "The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog." into theVariable
```

The equivalent Java code might look like this:

```
String [] theWords = "The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog".split(" ");
String theVariable = "";
for(int i = 2; i <= 5; i++) {
    theVariable += theWords[i] + " ";
}
```

Any wonder why programming frightens away many creative people who could create great software if they could only overcome the barrier of learning traditional programming languages?

Since LiveCode's programming language more closely resembles English, it's far easier to learn and understand. This makes LiveCode perfect for non-programmers to use for creating their own programs, just like HyperCard used to do in the early days of the Macintosh. The more people exposed to the open source version of LiveCode, the more likely a percentage of them will purchase a commercial license to create proprietary programs. That will just increase the popularity of LiveCode.

If you've been interested in writing programs but never wanted to wade through the complexity of C++ or Objective-C, donate to the LiveCode open source Kickstarter project so everyone will be able to use LiveCode absolutely free. Once you see how quickly you can create sophisticated programs, you may never want to use a traditional programming language again.

The 128GB iPad

For many people, the storage capability of the iPad is too low at 16GB, 32GB, and 64GB. Starting February 5, you will now be able to buy the latest Retina display iPad that offers 128GB for a suggested retail price of \$799 for the iPad with Wi-Fi model and \$929 for the iPad with Wi-Fi + Cellular model.

Many people wonder why the iPad doesn't let you plug in a SD (Secure Digital) card or a USB flash drive to expand an iPad's storage. Beyond aesthetic reasons to avoid marring the exterior of the iPad with different size ports along its edge, the other reason is to isolate users from dealing with a file management system such as the Finder or Windows Explorer.

For many people, managing files is the most confusing and clumsiest part about using a computer. When they create a file, they often don't know how to store it in a folder so they can find it again. That's why iPad apps keep track of their own files and don't mix them up with files from other apps. After all, when you want to open a Pages file, you don't need to wade through a folder filled with Keynote files as well.

Technically savvy users are used to file management systems so it's only natural that they'll want to use one on an iPad. However, the majority of people aren't technically savvy, so a file management system will simply provide one more way to get frustrated. By avoiding the need for a file management system, the iPad simplifies the user's experience.

The drawback is that if you need more storage, you'll need to buy another iPad or just store everything on iCloud to access it remotely. For those who don't like the idea of using iCloud, then the 128GB iPad model might finally provide enough storage for your needs.

Kill Your IT Department

InfoWorld reports that employees who use consumer-oriented technology like iPhones and Android phones are happier and more profitable (www.infoworld.com/t/byod/iphone-and-android-in-the-office-yield-higher-profits-happier-employees-211742). Of course, if you tell your IT department this, they'll likely gnash their teeth and demand standardization of equipment for everyone throughout the company because this makes the IT department's job easier and completely ignores whether it makes the rest of the company's job easier.

The goal of most IT departments is to make their own job as easy as possible, even if it makes everyone else's job more difficult. The real goal of an IT department should be to do what's necessary to make the rest of the company happy using technology that makes them more productive.

As more employees ignore their IT department altogether and just bring their own smartphones and tablets to work, companies should seriously look at the people running their IT departments. Is your IT department working to make others productive regardless of the amount of work they may face? Or is your IT department trying to simplify their own life while sacrificing the productivity of the rest of the company?

In most cases, the IT department tries to dictate how the rest of the company should work, even though the rest of

the company is making all the money that supports the IT department. For most companies, the smartest move they can make is to fire their IT department and replace them with people who understand that the real purpose of the IT department is to serve and support the rest of the company. By killing the IT department, most companies can eliminate the biggest liability they have.

Super Bowl Nostalgia

For those of you watching the Super Bowl, you may want to remember Apple's "1984" ad (www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhsWzJo2sN4) that introduced the world to the Macintosh. Strangely, Apple's board of directors hated the commercial and tried to kill it, which goes to show you how smart most board of directors really are. (Just ask the former board of directors of Borders Bookstore who decided that selling books over the Internet would never catch on, so they directed people to buy books online from Amazon instead.)

Since its original broadcast, that Apple commercial has gone on to win numerous awards for the best ad in Super Bowl history and even the greatest commercial of all time. As you watch this year's batch of Super Bowl ads, try to find one that might have as much impact as Apple's "1984" ad. With Research in Motion introducing their newest Blackberry 10 to the world through a Super Bowl ad, watch and see if that ad can spark interest in Blackberries once again.

* * *

On most Macintosh keyboards, there's a volume decrease and a volume increase key on the top row. Normally when you press these keys, you can hear a beeping sound to let you know when you've increased or decreased the audio volume. If you find this annoying, just hold down the Shift key while pressing these volume increase/decrease keys and your Macintosh won't play that beeping sound each time you increase or decrease the volume.

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

Wally is responsible for the following books:

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

My New iPad 2 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/159327386X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X)

Steal This Computer Book (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)

Microsoft Office 2010 For Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987)

Beginning Programming for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)

Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)

Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)

Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon and Gerald Fisher (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)

How to Live with a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DJYL70)

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

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

Republican 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)

Erotophobia (A novel) (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009POEAJO/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B009POEAJO&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20)

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method. (www.15minutemoviemethod.com/)" Wally can be reached at wally@computoredge.com.

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Worldwide & Product news reviews

Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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



Data Privacy Tips; The Future(mark) of DirectX 11 Gaming; Metered Bandwidth May Limit Innovation; Why I Luva Recuva (for PC).

Data Privacy Tips



In recognition of Data Privacy Day, Sara Khalatbari writes in this week from the National Crime Prevention Council re: the Department of Homeland Security's Stop.Think. Connect. Campaign:

January 28th marked Data Privacy Day in the United States and Canada, commemorating the 1981 signing of Convention 108—the first legally binding international treaty dealing with privacy and data protection...an effort that encourages people to take responsibility for protecting their own privacy and data online.

Cybersecurity is a shared responsibility, is a national public awareness campaign aimed at increasing the understanding of cyber threats and empowering the American public to be safer and more secure online. As a partner of the leading campaign, the National Crime Prevention Council provides the public with cyber security tips:

- Keep a Clean Machine

Keep security software current: Having the latest security software, Web browser, and operating system are the best defenses against viruses, malware, and other online threats.

Automate software updates: To continuously defend against known risks, turn on automatic updates if that's an available option.

Protect all devices that connect to the Internet: Along with computers, smartphones, gaming systems, and other Web-enabled devices also need protection from viruses and malware.

Plug and scan: USBs and other external devices can be infected by viruses and malware. Use your security software to scan them.

- Protect Your Personal Information

Secure your accounts: Ask for protection beyond passwords. Many account providers now offer additional ways for you to verify who you are before you conduct business on that site.

Make passwords long and strong: Combine capital and lowercase letters with numbers and symbols to create a more secure password.

Unique account, unique password: Separate passwords for every account helps to thwart cyber-criminals.

Write it down and keep it safe: Everyone can forget a password. Keep a list that's stored in a safe, secure place away from your computer.

Own your online presence: When available, set the privacy and security settings on Web sites to your comfort level for information sharing. It's OK to limit how and with whom you share information.

• Connect With Care

When in doubt, throw it out: Links in e-mail, tweets, posts, and online advertising are often the way cyber-criminals compromise your computer. If it looks suspicious, even if you know the source, it's best to delete or if appropriate, mark as junk e-mail.

Get savvy about Wi-Fi hotspots: Limit the type of business you conduct and adjust the security settings on your device to limit who can access your machine.

Protect your money: When banking and shopping, ensure the site is security enabled. Look for Web addresses with "https://" or "shttp://", which means the site takes extra measures to help secure your information.

• Be Web Wise

Stay current. Keep pace with new ways to stay safe online: Check NCPCC and Stop.Think.Connect Web sites for the latest information, and share with friends, family, and colleagues and encourage them to be Web wise.

Think before you act: Be wary of communications that implore you to act immediately, offers something that sounds too good to be true, or asks for personal information.

Back it up: Protect your valuable work, music, photos, and other digital information by making an electronic copy and storing it safely.

• Be a Good Online Citizen.

Safer for me, more secure for all: What you do online has the potential to affect everyone—at home, at work, and around the world. Practicing good online habits will benefit the global digital community.

Post only about others as you have them post about you: Post messages that do not include threats; insults; offensive, name-calling; teasing; or language that excludes individuals or groups.

Help the authorities fight cyber crime: Report stolen finances or identities and other cybercrime to the Internet Crime Complaint Center (www.ic3.gov) and to your local law enforcement or state attorney general as appropriate.



Stop, Think, and Connect.

If you find yourself a victim of a cybercrime, NCPCC recommends visiting the Stop.Think.Connect. Quick Tips page (www.dhs.gov/stopthinkconnect) for incident response and reporting tips.

The Future(mark) of DirectX 11 Gaming

Oliver Baltuch, president of Futuremark (www.futuremark.com/3dmark) comments of the newest version of his industry standard benchmarking program, 3DMark:

For more than 14 years, our 3DMark series has lead the way in advanced real-time rendering. The new 3DMark continues that tradition with a new test called Fire Strike, which uses techniques that are extremely demanding on today's hardware, but which are likely to become commonplace in PC games in two to three years time.



Fire Strike is our new showcase DirectX 11 benchmark designed for high-performance gaming PCs. It is our most ambitious and technical benchmark ever, featuring real-time graphics rendered with detail and complexity far beyond what you can find in other benchmarks and games today.

The 3DMark Fire Strike trailer shows a short segment taken from the Fire Strike demo using the Extreme preset and rendered natively at 2560x1440 resolution.

Some of the techniques used include tessellation, dynamic particle illumination and shadowing, smoke simulation using grid-based fluid dynamics, volume ray casting with shadows and a wide variety of post processing effects including depth of field, blooms, distortions and various lens effects.

Check out the 3DMark DirectX 11 2560x1440 resolution Fire Strike trailer (www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiFXAooGtgU&hd=1) (click the quality setting icon and select "original" resolution).

Metered Bandwidth May Limit Innovation

Thirty-year expert in the IT industry, Humberto Comellas, President and CEO of Ulltium Consulting sent us the following opinion piece outlining what he sees as the possible pitfalls of metering bandwidth:

The United States has always had a seemingly unquenchable thirst for more: from super-sized meals to monstrous sport utility vehicles, more has been as much our philosophy as democracy. It is that spirit that has driven the US's entrepreneurial efforts and afforded our nation unparalleled success. But while there are benefits to this mindset, the unchecked ambitions of "more" can also lead the way to financial disasters like the housing crisis struck in 2008, sending the country into a recession from which we are still recovering. As we learn from our collective mistakes, one of the hardest lessons is that more is not always the better.

Soon, US businesses will be faced with a similar situation. Internet Services Providers (ISP's) have invested billions of dollars developing infrastructure to feed the nations unquenchable thirst for bandwidth. As corporate America embraces new technologies like cloud computing, data consumption is skyrocketing. The demand will continue to grow exponentially as more and more companies take notice of the benefits of this technology.

Traditionally, IPS models gave businesses a cap on bandwidth usage. But no longer is a T1 (1.5MB) connection considered cost prohibited to most small business owners. Today, service providers are offering 10, 20, 50MB to not only large corporations, but also in Mom and Pop businesses nationwide.

The inevitable response from providers will be a multi-tiered, metered approach to providing broadband services. This "pay-as-you-go" model is similar to a utility bill, as you pay according to your consumption. This will allow ISP's to throttle bandwidth based on demand.

This type of payment structure will of course come with both pros and cons. On one hand you will not have to worry about slow bandwidth when working on mission critical data or reports. You'll be able to complete tasks with greater efficacy and speed and have access to all the data you can afford. The trick, however, is leveraging this

unlimited Internet access while staying on budget.

Obviously, if you are paying for use, certain luxuries that the limitless buffet model offers will need to be seriously reconsidered. Your employees will need to be mindful of their surfing. This will not be an easy tasking; just the act of making them debate whether or not an action is necessary represents a decrease in productivity. To further complicate things, many of the newer, more innovative services are dependent on bandwidth usage—which only drives further spending. It's a virtuous circle.

So unfortunately, by metering broadband connections and slowing down adoption of innovative and useful services, you essentially stunt online innovation.

In general, processing speed is everything in technology. An increase in speed directly correlates to a boost in innovation. With business owners having to budget their Internet usage, in-house innovation will suffer. While there exists a mindset in some circles that the Internet technology has plateaued, adhering to this belief and limiting the speed of information may prove to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Imagine if metered bandwidth was the norm when YouTube first arrived on the scene, because of video's high bandwidth consumption, people would have been far less likely to try it out. This holds true for any kind of non-text multimedia. Would podcasts be as popular? How about streaming radio? How much would a song from iTunes cost?

Historically, innovative services tend to move towards flat rate offerings as it encourages usage and subsequently, innovation. A good example of this is the mobile phone industry, where many of the top providers have been transitioning to a flat rate business model. It has opened up a much larger overall market, even if it means less per customer. So, why then would ISP's shift to model that has the opposite effect and stifles innovation?

The answer may still be unclear but if that is indeed the direction we are headed, stricter controls over usage will have to be implemented. Firewall policies and rules that block certain content will garner a much heavier eye.

Your IT department, vendor or consultant will need to proactively monitor usage in order to minimize unlimited bandwidth for employees to listen to Pandora, surf Facebook or watch YouTube videos. As a business owner, a strict adaption and enforcement of a new IT policy is imperative. While this will likely do little for company-morale initially, it will curb the new challenges associated with metered broadband usage.

Why I Luva Recuva (for PC)

Title: Recuva

Manufacturer: Piriform

Web site: www.piriform.com/recuva (*www.piriform.com/recuva*)

Price: Three pricing levels—Recuva Free (no support included, but a surprisingly strong feature set); Recuva Professional (\$24.95, priority technical support included); Recuva Business Edition (\$34.96, premium business support included)

Like a lot of you I'm pretty OCD when it comes to backing up my data. OK, I'm pretty OCD about plenty of stuff, but let's save that for my upcoming unauthorized biography, "Baby Has to Have His Way!"

To make sure I always have my way when it comes to the digital world, I have implemented a rigorous backup procedure in which I clone my primary machine's hard drive every four weeks, rotating five 1TB drives. I also stash key files in the cloud to an iDrive account, a Google Drive account, and ferret encrypted files on unsuspecting family members' computers.

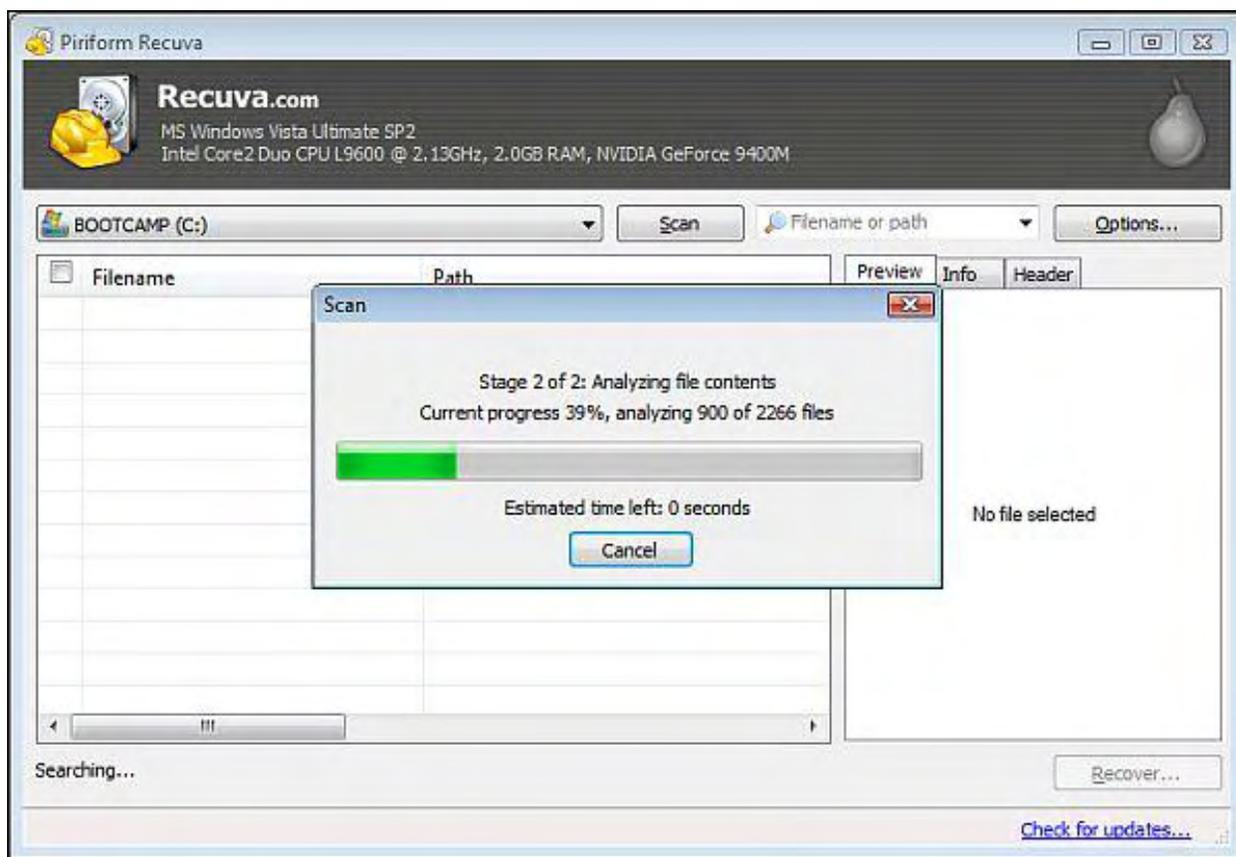
And yet, even with all that, I managed to find myself in a real pickle when my motherboard crashed last week wiping out the hard drive's master boot record in the process. Because I was just days away from my monthly backup, that meant I had to use the most recent clone, losing nearly a month's worth of newspaper and magazine assignments, play annotations, journal entries, game saves, music, Christmas photos and videos, and countless other documents. Not quite panicking yet, I went to the trusty cloud and discovered it to be silver lining-less. I had changed the names of several key directories and forgotten to tell my daily backup about it. That meant my cloud saves were even older than the ones on the damaged drive.

Now I'm panicking. Back to the damaged drive, which was reporting that it was completely empty, 958GB of *nothing*. I tried several data recovery programs but none worked. The best they could do was undelete files that had been put in the Recycle Bin. If I'd only had the presence of mind to put my entire hard drive in the Recycle Bin before it crashed!

Enter Recuva (best pronounced with a Bronx accent, I would assume), a file recovery utility that really knows its way around a hard drive. The Web site explains describes the heartache of a hard drive failure well:

"The dreaded hard drive crash...Windows (and other operating systems) uses a hidden index on hard drives, USB drives, and memory cards. Instead of having to search through the entire drive for a file you request, all it has to do is look it up in the index—a much faster process. Unfortunately, if the index is damaged, Windows can no longer find your files, even if the files themselves haven't been corrupted. That's where Recuva comes in.

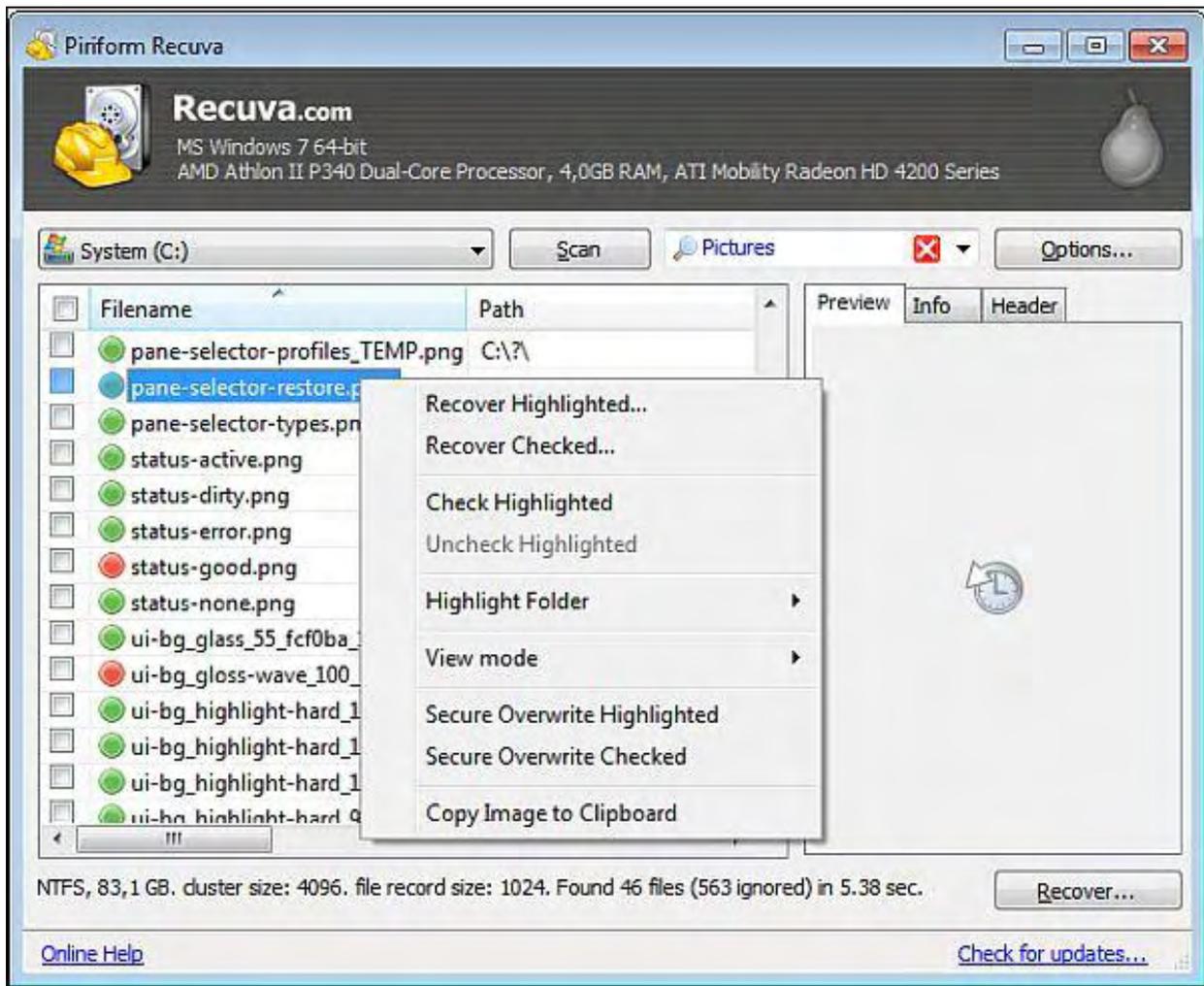
"Unlike Windows, Recuva scans all parts of a drive, looking for the bits that make up your files. If a drive's index has been damaged, chances are other parts of the drive may have been damaged too. Recuva will show you a list of files it has found on the drive, and give you an estimate of the likelihood of success of recovering them.



Scanning drive for deleted files showing the numbered of files found and the percentage completed.

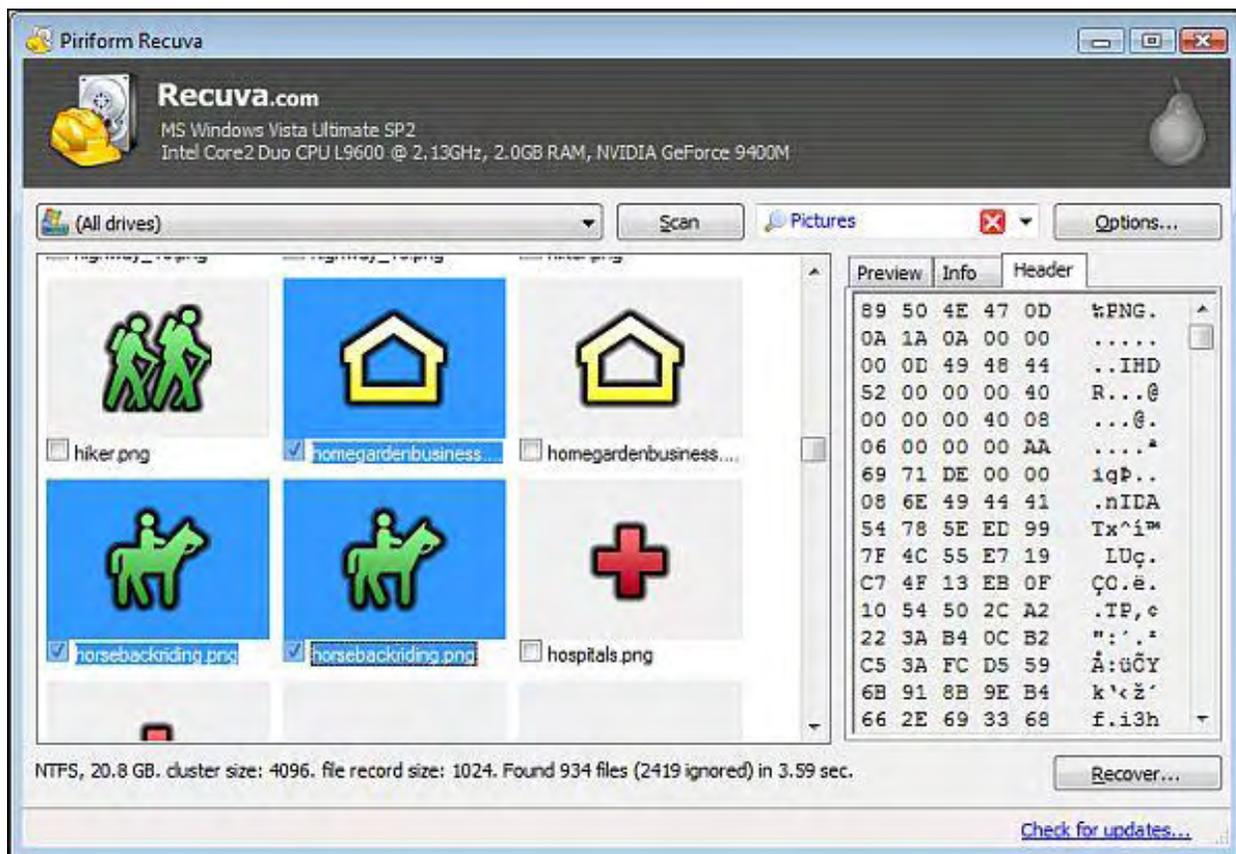
"Similarly, when you format a drive (especially if you use the Quick Format option), Windows erases the hidden index but does not overwrite the existing files until you start saving new data to it. Recuva can still scan the drive's contents to find your files."

Which is just what it did. All 4,335,022 of them.



Results of a scan in a list view sortable by column and searchable through a custom filter. There is also a preview of any images in the right panel.

The process was extremely simple. Just plug the evil drive into a SATA-to-USB adapter, select the drive, click the "Enable deep scan" box, and sit back. *Way* back. For a *long* time. On a drive as large as mine, the process took more than 24 hours and was extremely processor-intensive; so much so that little else could go on while Recuva was doing that voodoo it does so well. So, I set up a second machine to handle the job. When the files were fully ferreted, the program even allowed me to copy them over to a non-damaged 1TB hard drive plugged into one of my computer's other USB ports.



Thumbnail view allows you to visually browse deleted images for the specific file you need.

Recuva does a whole lot more than just find files that you would (temporarily) consider selling your children to get back. It can recover your digital camera's memory card; external hard drives; thumb drives; Microsoft Outlook Express, Mozilla Thunderbird, or Windows Live Mail, even files deleted from an iPod. And it can also rebuild Word documents from their temporary files. Want to delete files so permanently that not even Recuva can recover them? It'll do that.

I got my stuff back and couldn't be happier. And, get this: I was using the free version.

(Note: You may already be using one of Pinform's other excellent products, the Windows Registry and directory scrubber, CCleaner—now up to version 3.27. Upgrade! Now!)



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Learn more at www.charlescarr.com.

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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Beyond Scanning," "USB Cable Bulge," "Red Light Cameras," "Nothing Second Rate about a Nook"

Beyond Scanning

[Regarding the January 11 Beyond Personal Computing column:]

Great article. Don't forget the slide scanner. My dad had over a thousand 35mm slides from our early family life. He let them go too long and they faded, along with the memories. Anyone with slides—scan them before it's too late to save them! I saved about 35 of them after he lost interest.

-Mark, Albuquerque, NM

Thanks for the comment, Mark! I tried to limit my story to "image scanners," but nothing popped up about photo-slide-scanners. There is a plethora of photo-conversion software out there now, even for posting older paper-photos to Pinterest, etc. So I'm glad you could save some of your family's slides.

-Marilyn, Texas

USB Cable Bulge

[Regarding the January 11 Digital Dave column:]

Dave, have you found that Alcoa aluminum or Reynolds is better for the hats? :)

-Mike, Denver, CO

Red Light Cameras

[Regarding the January 11 Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column:]

If you run one at night you are temporary blinded by the flash!

-Walter, San Diego, CA

Nothing Second Rate about a Nook

[Regarding the January 11 Wally Wang's Apple Farm column:]

I had a Kindle Fire, returned it for a Nook Tablet, and am *very* happy with it. There is nothing second-rate about it. I like the size; it works great for movies, apps, books, and for syncing with my computer and keeping important files handy. Plus we can download a free book every week—mostly pretty good, with some real jewels among them.

-Pat Konold, La Mesa, CA

Quality-wise, the Nook is perfectly fine. The Nook just doesn't have the wide selection of e-books as Amazon and there's still the question of whether Barnes & Noble will go bankrupt soon or not. The chances of Apple or Amazon going bankrupt is far more remote, but the chance of Barnes & Noble going bankrupt is much more likely, and that means the supply of Nook e-books could disappear, leaving Nook users with no new e-books in the future.

-Wally Wang

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