

PC Post



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30 YEARS OF USER HELPING USER

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Smart Computing Tips
www.smartcomputing.com

Word: Change Save Format

By default, Word 2010 saves to the DOCX format. If you regularly save documents to a different format (such as DOC, the format used by older versions of Word), you can make that format the default. Click the File tab and then click Options. Click the Save tab and then click the drop-down menu next to Save Files In This Format. Finally, click the OK button.

Personalized Screen Saver

You don't have to use the boring Windows screen saver. Instead, use your own folder of photos to personalize your PC. Copy the photos you want to use to a folder on your hard drive. Right-click a blank area on your Windows desktop, click Properties, and then click the Screen Saver tab. From the Screen Saver drop-down box, click My Pictures Slideshow, and click Browse to designate the appropriate folder of photos.

Mouse Pointer Personalized

If you're tired of the looking at the same old, white-arrow mouse pointer, Windows XP will let you change it to something different. From the Start menu, point to Control Panel, point to Settings, and then click Control Panel. Double-click the Mouse icon and then click the Pointers tab. Below the Customize box, click Browse, and you'll see dozens of different icons you can use for your pointer. To customize in Vista or Windows 7, click the Windows button, Control Panel, Mouse (under Hardware And Sound), and the Pointers tab.

The group meets at 6:30 p.m. at Denny's Restaurant, 1525 McHenry Ave., for its Random Access Special Interest Group featuring questions and problems members are facing. At 7:30, following dinner, the presentation will start.

BOD Meeting - January 4, 7pm at Ridgeway's

It's CES time again!

By Lou Torraca, President, The TUG MOAA Computer User Group, Hawaii
January 2012 issue, The TUG
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For those who are not familiar with CES, the International CES is the world's largest trade show for consumer technology and America's largest annual trade show of any kind. With more than four decades of success, the International CES reaches across global markets, connects the "who's who" of the industry and enables consumer electronics (CE) innovations to grow and thrive. CES is produced by the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA), the preeminent trade association promoting growth in the CE industry. All profits from CES are reinvested into industry services, including technical training and education, industry promotion, engineering standards development, market research and legislative advocacy. The Mission of CES is to grow the consumer electronics industry. CES covers every aspect of the consumer technology industry. More than 2,500 exhibitors travel to Vegas to show off their latest innovations in 30 product categories and the content that supports them.



CES Innovations Awards

Since 1976, the prestigious Innovations Design and Engineering Awards has given consumer technology manufacturers and developers an opportunity to have their newest products judged by a preeminent panel of independent industrial designers, independent engineers and members of the trade press. It's the place to see, touch, feel and understand the future of consumer technology. Products chosen as the most impressive in each category are selected as honorees and can be seen at CES. Here are some of the Best of Innovations winners:

BASIS

The world's first connected health and heart rate monitor wearable on the wrist. A multi-sensor band collects data like heart rate, calories burned, physical activity and sleep patterns and links to a personal online dashboard.

Only Basis gives you a complete overview of your day, and puts the tools to boost your health and wellness right at hand. Track your caloric burn, activity levels and sleep habits to make every day your best day. Watch Your Wellness, Everyday Lightweight, beautiful and comfortable, Basis fits your wrist like a watch so you can wear it all day, every day. Basis collects information through a small sensor window, eliminating the need for uncomfortable



The Picture of Health

chest straps, finger sensors, electrodes or other cumbersome apparatus. Basis was designed with wearability in mind, because the more you wear it, the more you know. On Your Wavelength Basis automatically identifies important behaviors like exercise and sleep. It tracks your body's response and provides the tools to help you improve sleep quality and get more out of your workouts.

It Only Looks Simple



It Only Looks Simple

Don't let its good looks fool you. Beneath the sleek exterior is a hard-core machine that's all business when it comes to gathering, tracking and delivering everything about your body's day. Basis packs astonishing capabilities in its streamlined silhouette, opening up an amazing world of possibilities that will help you take your health to a whole new level.

Libratone Live

Just one? Or one in each room? Libratone Live is designed to soundtrack your life. While FullRoom technology puts sound in every corner of the room, the AirPlay technology allows you to wander free, play list in hand. All without dragging audio cables through your living room. Big sound, minimalistic design Sound and design are not mutually exclusive, as many will have you believe. With Libratone Live we pay homage to our Scandinavian roots with minimalistic lines, craftsmanship, and high quality raw materials - all cashmere, chrome and wood, no blinking eyesore-displays or grotesque cabinets. The Libratone App As a new feature, you can improve your Libratone Live speaker through a specially designed app. The app allows you to enhance and customize the FullRoom experience. By feeding the app information on the placement of your sound system, it automatically adjusts the sound to fit your room.

The Calisto 835

A speakerphone that unites computer telephony, mobile and landline calls. A 2.4" color display and a touch sensitive dial pad offers access to caller ID, dialing, answering, switching, and muting across connected devices.

Communication across devices has never been more simple with the Calisto 800 Series multi-device speakerphone system Superior Call Management Connects and seamlessly switches between calls from PC, mobile and home* phone A 2.4" color display and a touch sensitive dial pad for easy caller ID viewing, dialing, answering, switching, and muting across devices For privacy, use with Bluetooth or corded headsets/headphones (3.5mm) Uncompromising Audio Quality Premium, rich-sounding full duplex speakerphone Wideband audio coupled with advanced noise cancellation technology Freedom of Movement Wireless microphone offers unparalleled voice transmission and freedom of movement Remote answer/end/mute control Enables 360-degree small group



conferencing when placed flat on a table *Home phone (analog) connectivity is available only with the Calisto 830 and 835 ** Wireless mic comes standard with Calisto 825 and 835.

eers Custom-Fitted Earphones

The world's only custom-fitted earphones that fit to your ears in only 4 minutes. 14 years in development, 13+ patents, Sonomax expansion technology delivers incomparable sound isolation, fidelity and comfort. eers custom earphones use groundbreaking Sonomax expansion technology paired with the ease and convenience of a simple self-fitting process, SonoFit, and inserted earphone electronics that one can fit at home. Custom molded to the unique shape of an individual's ear canal in just four minutes, sculpted eers provide maximum comfort, exceptional sound, and a secure fit even during vigorous activity.



Additionally, the acoustic seal provided by the custom-fit earphones ensures the wearer's choice of listening does not need to compete with ambient sound, irrespective of the environment. This immersive audio experience helps consumers listen at a fraction of the volume required by generic headphones (on average 30% less), providing the added benefit of reducing the dangers of hearing loss through over exposure.

SafePlug

SafePlug receptacles can help reduce energy consumption by up to 30%. SafePlug electrical duplex receptacles solve the toughest problem in home automation, accurate control and energy monitoring even when appliances move to a different receptacle. SafePlug Smart Energy outlets will measure the energy consumption for each appliance and turn them off when not needed.



Belkin Kitychen Cabinet Mount



Bring your tablet into the kitchen without cluttering the counter. The Kitchen Cabinet Mount keeps your tablet in view and securely suspended on any cabinet or shelf without tools or permanent installation. In View & Out of the Way Save Space in the Kitchen Bring your tablet into the kitchen without cluttering the counter. The Kitchen Cabinet Mount helps keep your tablet in view and securely suspended on any cabinet or shelf. No Tools Needed No tools or hardware are needed and no permanent installation is required. Simply attach the mount using the secure adjustable clamp. It can be easily repositioned to fit different cabinet and shelving units, or removed for storage.

Hopefully I'll get to see some of these and of course, MORE...since there will be several thousand exhibitors...auwe, my legs are already tired just thinking about all the miles they will walk during the CES week!

Stay tuned for more from my Las Vegas experience. Be safe and enjoy your www explorations.

Aloha, Lou

Old "Windows Tech Support" Scam Hits Locally

By Ira Wilsker, Member, Golden Triangle PC Club, TX; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio Show Host, Mondays, 6-7pm CT, KLVI.com
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WEBSITES:

<http://www.microsoft.com/security/online-privacy/avoid-phone-scams.aspx>

http://answers.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/forum/windows_vista-security/scam-phone-call-claiming-to-be-from-windows/193f0a33-4ad9-4a07-96eb-9a7e3debb269

http://answers.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/forum/windows_xp-security/phone-call-scam-received-call-from-a-technician/6ed2b99c-20ff-468b-a69b-aec78b93f287

http://www.theregister.co.uk/2011/06/16/tech_support_scam_calls/

<http://windowssecrets.com/top-story/watch-out-for-microsoft-tech-support-scams/>

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/phonefraud/report.shtml>

<https://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov>

Yesterday I received an email from a member of the local computer club about a phone call that she had just received. "I received a call on my home phone today from someone named "Janet" who claimed to be from the "Tech Department at Windows". She said they detected a virus on my computer and that if I would get on the computer now she could tell me how to correct it. She told me that the virus was slowly eating away at my computer. I told her I was busy and would have to call her back. I asked for her phone number, which she gave me - 347-489-xxxx. She had a very thick accent - probably Indian. I assume this is a scam?" Yes, it is a well documented scam that has resulted in big losses for a lot of people who do as the caller says.

What often happens with this scam, is the callers ask you to turn on the remote access feature built into Windows that allows remote servicing. Once the caller has access to your computer, they may steal usernames, passwords, address books, personal information, and other valuable data. They may also plant keyloggers to capture any banking information, logins, and other sensitive information, all for the purpose of identity theft. They also often plant other types of malware as well, and often try to sell additional services to the user. Most of these calls are VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol, phone calls placed over the internet) and often come from Russia, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Ukraine, Nigeria, China, and other unfriendly places. In the example above "Janet" gave a Manhattan phone number which either was false, or it was a portal on to a VoIP system that could be picked up anywhere in the world.

In an article published in The Register (UK) last summer, citing a recent Microsoft security survey, this fake tech support scam is very widespread. Microsoft surveyed 7,000 computer users in the UK, Ireland, US, and Canada and found an average of 16 per cent of people had received such calls. According to Microsoft, these scammers allege that they are calling from Microsoft or a recognized security software company, and inform the victim that his computer is infected, and that the caller will perform a free security check, or otherwise clean the malware off of the computer. According to a posting by Microsoft, the callers most often claim to be calling from Windows Helpdesk, Windows Service Center, Microsoft Tech Support, Microsoft Support, Windows Technical Department Support Group, or the Microsoft Research and Development Team (Microsoft R & D Team). Of those receiving one of these scam phone calls, about one person in five followed the scammers' instructions, and gave the criminal remote access to their computers. Once that access has been granted, the crooks typically load malware onto the computer, opening the computer to future attack.

A common type of felony crime committed by these crooks is identity theft, where either by accessing files or by installing keyloggers (malware that records keystrokes and sends them to a remote location), the criminal can steal banking information, credit card information, user names, passwords, security questions, and other valuable personal information. In some cases the crooks, in an action reminiscent to the infamous "rogue antivirus" scams, asks for the victims' credit card information in order to pay for the service or for the sale of security software. While nothing is really purchased, a charge does show up on the victims' credit account, and the credit card information is also likely to be posted for sale on illicit websites where credit card information is bought and sold for the purpose of fraudulent transactions.

According to the Microsoft survey findings, 79 percent of those who allowed the illicit remote access to their computers suffered identified financial losses, ranging from a low of \$82 to a high of \$1560, with an average financial loss of \$875. In addition to financial losses, the malware that may be loaded onto the computer may be used to provide a continuing revenue stream to the crooks by using the compromised computer as a part of a "botnet" (remotely controlled collection of hijacked computers) to send out spam email by the thousands, for which the crook charges his clients a fee. Of course the spam, and any related scams or pornography sent in the spam emails, cannot be tracked back to the creator of the spam or the crook who hijacked the computer, but instead would track back directly to the victim's computer.

While not likely, it is possible that Microsoft or one of its authorized partners may contact a computer user about a security related issue. On the Microsoft website (www.microsoft.com/security/online-privacy/avoid-phone-scams.aspx), they explain the explicit times and circumstances in which Microsoft may contact a user directly. " There are some cases where Microsoft will work with your Internet service provider and call you to fix a malware-infected

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Safety & Security Center website. The main heading is "Avoid tech support phone scams". The page is divided into sections: "Online Privacy & Safety", "Passwords", "Fraud", and "Social networking". The "Fraud" section is highlighted with a blue button that says "Protect your information". Below this, there is a "How to..." section with a green background, listing "Get a security update, tool, or scan" and "Protect my kids from online risks". The main article text explains that cybercriminals often use publicly available phone directories to contact users and offers advice on how to avoid such scams, including not providing personal information and not allowing remote access to the computer.

computer—such as during the recent cleanup effort begun in our botnet takedown actions. These calls will be made by someone with whom you can verify you already are a customer. You will never receive a legitimate call from Microsoft or our partners to charge you for computer fixes." Microsoft warns that if you receive a phone call claiming to be from Microsoft, do not purchase any software or services offered by the caller, or if there is some type of subscription fee attached to the support offer. Microsoft also warns not to allow remote access to your computer unless you can confirm that the other party, " ... is a legitimate representative of a computer support team with whom you are already a customer." It is imperative that you should never give any personal, financial, or credit card information to any caller who says that he is from Microsoft Technical Support, because a legitimate Microsoft representative would never ask for such information. Even if the caller provides a phone number that you can use to return the call, that does not mean that the phone number is an authentic Microsoft location, because who ever answers the phone can falsely answer with "Microsoft", and with VoIP, the call can be routed anywhere in the world, even if the phone number looks realistic.

If by some chance you have fallen for this scam, look at the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) website "Reporting Phone Fraud" at www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/phonefraud/report.shtml and follow the contact instructions provided. It would also be prudent to perform a security scan with one or more of the free malware scanners such as MalwareBytes (malwarebytes.org) or SuperAntiSpyware (superantispyware.com). Since much of the contemporary crop of malware is engineered to protect itself, if these malware scanners will not load and run, it is then very likely that the computer is badly infected, and may require a more sophisticated malware removal process. If the security report scan indicates that the computer is clean, it would be wise to change all of your passwords (email, banking, eBay, PayPal, etc.), and to contact your financial institutions and credit card companies to inform them that you may have been the victim of fraud. Since it is possible that the phone crook deactivated or neutralized your security software, it may also be a good idea to reinstall and update your security software.

It is a sad state of affairs that any of us may fall victim to criminal activity at any time, but in this case the crook does not use a weapon, but instead a caring, often female, voice offering to help us clean our "infected" computers. With an average loss, as reported by Microsoft, of \$875, and the ability of the crooks to make thousands of such calls a day, the aggregate losses will be very substantial. Still, as an individual, not many of us can readily absorb an \$875 loss. If you get a call from some permutation of "Microsoft Technical Support" informing you that your computer is infected, and either for free or for a fee they offer to clean it for you, simply hang up. Although in a different context, and over 25 years ago, Nancy Reagan gave the best advice when she said, "Just say NO!"

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Backup - Image, What's the difference?

By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

December 2011 issue, Sarasota Monitor

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This topic can be very confusing because of the similarities and the differences between backups and images. Backups and Images are similar in that they are both copies of something. The difference is in the "what" and the "how". Normally, a backup is thought of as a copy of a file or a folder or a collection of files and folders (that is the "what"). The backup copy is just a copy, an exact duplicate and is not processed in any way (the "how"). The backup files can be used by any programs that could use the original files. The reason for having a backup file is to restore a file if it is accidentally destroyed or deleted.

An Image, on the other hand, is a copy of the Operating System and all of its components (referred to as the Operating Environment), as they exist in the memory of your operating computer (that's the "what"). The Image can only be created by an imaging program (the how), and the image created can only be used by that same imaging program. The reason for having an image is to be able to re-install your "Operating Environment" if, or rather when, a virus or hardware problem makes your system unusable.

The topic can also be confusing because people, and even the literature, often use the terms backup and image in confusing ways. Often you will see or hear the term "backup image" which is meant to refer to a copy of an image. Well, an image is already a copy of something, so is this an image or is it a copy of an image? In order to keep things straight, I have tried to use the term "backup" to mean an exact copy of a file that needs to be saved. (I know that sometimes backup copies are "zipped" or compressed to save space, but those files are no longer exact copies of the originals and are not directly usable, so I would not call them backups, I would have to call them "zipped backups" or "compressed backups", to be accurate.) And I use the term "image" to refer to the resultant file (or file collection) that is

produced by an imaging program such as Ghost, or Acronis True Image, or Macrium Reflect, or even Windows 7.

To be completely protected against potential problems (viruses and/or hardware problems) you have to address both issues, backup and image. You have to backup all of your important files, those that you really do not want to lose, and you have to have an image of your Operating Environment for re-installation when needed. (Just as a point of interest, Windows 7 includes the ability to do both, via the Backup & Restore Control Panel.)

The files to backup are those that you have created or collected, such as your pictures, music, videos, Word documents, and spreadsheets. Any file that you would really be hard pressed to reproduce, if it was lost, is a good candidate for backup. How often to backup is dependent on the file in question. Files that are changing daily should probably be backed up daily, but files that don't change need only be backed up on some weekly or monthly schedule. For backups, in general, follow "Chicago Politics" advice and backup early and often.

Also, be aware that there are many ways of backing up your files since it is only a Copy operation. However, there are many programs that make the job quick and easy. If you have a folder of pictures and you only add a few pictures to the collection weekly, then there is no need to copy all of the pictures each week, you only need to backup the new pictures. Backup programs such as Microsoft Synctoy, and Synchromagic, check the collection of files to be backed up against the last backup and only copy the new files or those that have changed since the last backup. These programs make the backup process quick, efficient and so easy that you will probably do it often enough. By now you are probably feeling that you have got the idea of backup, but where do put these backup files? The best place for backup files is on an external hard drive that is normally not connected to the computer. Right before you are ready to backup your file collection, connect the external hard drive and fire-up the backup program and run the backup task. After the backup is finished disconnect the external drive and put it away in a safe place.

Creating an image is a little more difficult than creating backup files because imaging is not just a simple Copy operation. Because an image is a copy of your operating computer memory, the program must know a lot about the architecture of the memory. This is very specialized knowledge and is the essence of an imaging program. The imaging program must be installed on your computer for use in creating an image. And, it must create a bootable disk to be used when your system is not operating correctly. The image it creates can usually be put on a system drive (other than the C: drive), or an external hard drive, or a number of DVDs. The image created is usually a very large collection of files that may total from 20 to 60 GB. The imaging process can take many hours depending on the size of the image and the amount of compression that is selected. Imaging is a very lengthy process, and it creates such large files, so you probably only want to do it when absolutely necessary. A new image is only necessary when the Operating Environment changes, when you add or delete programs, or when you update your operating system. You may not add or delete programs very often, but the operating system is updated, at least monthly, so you might want to create a new image every 3 or 4 month or whenever a big change is made to the Operating Environment.

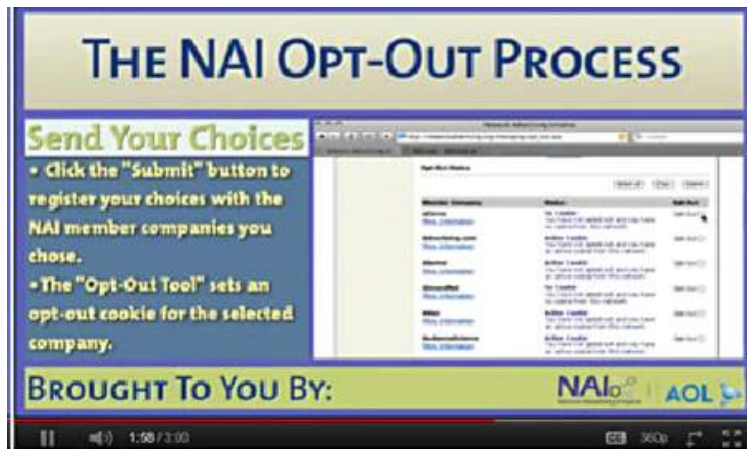
So you can see there is a great difference between Backup and Image. But, both are necessary if you hope to completely recover from a future hardware failure or malware infection.

Are you being followed?
 By Linda Gonse, Editor/Webmaster, Orange County PCUG, California
 December 2011, issue nibbles & bits
www.orcopug.org / editor (at) orcopug.org

You may not even suspect you are being followed. But, as many as 60 ad networks may be tracking you on the web right now! What's more, they may be selling personally identifiable details about you.

If this disturbs you, you can put a stop to it. You can quickly opt out from advertising networks —each has multiple clients! — with just a few mouse clicks.

The National Advertising Initiative (NAI) is a cooperative of dozens of online ad networks that track you. An NAI statement says it developed an Opt-out Tool “in conjunction with our members for the express purpose of allowing consumers to ‘opt out’ of the behavioral advertising delivered by our member companies.” To this end, NAI offers a YouTube video on their home page showing you how the Opt-out Tool works. (You can also see the enlarged video before you go to their site at <http://bit.ly/ruQt9S>)



Criteo More Information	Opt-Out Cookie You have opted out of this network.	Opt-Out <input type="checkbox"/>
Cross Pixel Media More Information	No Cookie You have not opted out and you have no cookie from this network.	Opt-Out <input type="checkbox"/>
DataLogix More Information	Active Cookie You have not opted out and you have an active cookie from this network.	Opt-Out <input type="checkbox"/>
DataXu More Information	Opt-Out Cookie You have opted out of this network.	Opt-Out <input type="checkbox"/>
Datonics More Information	Active Cookie You have not opted out and you have an active cookie from this network.	Opt-Out <input type="checkbox"/>
Dedicated Networks (AppNexus) More Information	Active Cookie You have not opted out and you have an active cookie from this network.	Opt-Out <input type="checkbox"/>
Dedicated Networks (DoubleClick) More Information	Opt-Out Cookie You have opted out of this network.	Opt-Out <input type="checkbox"/>

A few of the networks that may have placed one or more cookies on your computer.

Basically, the Opt-out Tool, which will not be installed on your computer, examines cookies (small text files) on your computer and identifies those member companies that have placed an advertising cookie on it.

When a member company's cookie is identified by the Opt-out Tool, you simply check the box next to the company name. If you are strongly motivated (or highly frustrated), check the “Select All” box! Then, click the “Submit” button, and you're done.

The cookies will be removed for the selected companies and your opt-out status will be automatically verified.

Go to the NAI website at <http://bit.ly/sNMlj0> to get the opt-out process started.

There are two caveats. 1. Opting out of a network does not mean you will no longer see online advertising. But, the network from which you opted out will no longer be tracking you personally and displaying ads that are “tailored to your web preferences and usage patterns.” Isn’t that the idea? 2. Networks voluntarily allow opting out. It isn’t a legal mandate. Also, technical glitches may occur. Cookies from any of these networks may reappear. So, use the Opt-out Tool regularly.

Quantcast Measurement and Advertising does not participate in the National Advertising initiative, but also offers you the ability to opt-out of their ads based on your interests.

Quantcast claims it doesn’t store your IP address or any other personally identifiable information. “But, if you prefer not to receive interest-based content and advertisements enabled by Quantcast and not to have Quantcast measure your pattern of website visits or other online media consumption, you can opt-out by using our opt-out tool” at <http://bit.ly/vNAXOB>.

Opting out is the only way you can avoid being tagged, tracked and tempted by advertisers who know your purchasing history. By opting out you can end hunting season by advertisers who are determined to bag your money.

PC Computer Evolution

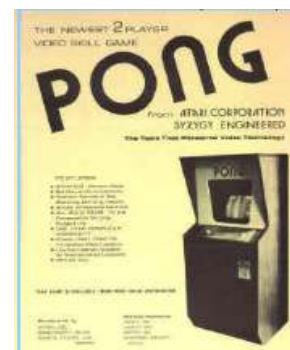
By Wil Wakely, President, Seniors Computer Group, California

November 2011 issue, Bits and Bytes

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With the sad death in October 2011 of Steve Jobs of Apple fame, it seems appropriate to review the history of the personal computer in which he was so instrumental in its evolution. In 1970 he was only 15 years old when the micro-computer, as it was then called, stirred to life. Prior to that time, mainframes and mini-computers dominated the scene, requiring large installations and huge capital expense. IBM 360's required a special air-conditioned room and cost up to \$5.5 million each. Our smart cell phones now have more computing power than they did.

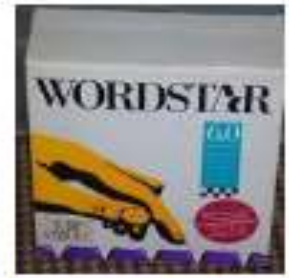
The invention of the transistor at Bell Labs in 1947 and the Integrated Circuit invented in 1958, concurrently by Texas Instruments and Intel allowed miniaturization and cost savings that revolutionized future computer designs. One of the first affordable micro-computers was the Atari, essentially an arcade game machine that played PONG, a tennis simulation. It had no programming language and used a joy-stick for control and a TV for a display. The Commodore 64,



VIC-20 and PET were the largest selling small computers in 1976. It did have a programming language and a multitude of applications. Other computer models appeared briefly on the scene: the Osborne, a "luggable" portable computer; RadioShack TRS-80, (Trash80); Heath H-89, a kit; Sinclair ZX80, a miniature inexpensive powerhouse from England; KayPro, by Andy Kay, owner of a local Solana Beach company; IMSAI, a computer that actually looked like one with 22 front panel switches and 40 blinking red lights.

Steve Jobs and his friend, Steve Wozniak, were computer club buddies and got together in 1976 to design the Apple I. During a visit to PARC (Palo Alto Research Center, a Xerox company) Jobs saw their development of the GUI (Graphical User Interface that we now call Windows) and the mouse that controlled the cursor. He immediately realized that it was a great idea. No keyboard required! He borrowed (?!) the idea and implemented it in the Apple II. Later, Microsoft borrowed (copied?) the Apple GUI for their Windows and, not surprisingly, legal actions became rampant among the three.

In 1979 a killer application called VisiCalc came on the scene. It was a rudimentary spreadsheet that was first incorporated in the Apple II. Now a personal computer could actually do some work as opposed to just playing games. VisiCalc went on to inspire Lotus 1-2-3 and Excel which are much more powerful spreadsheet programs. WordStar, a word processing (WP) program, also appeared in 1979.



Several WP programs already existed, but WordStar quickly dominated the field. Typewriters became instantly obsolete.

Also about that time, an IBM manager in the Boca Raton, FL, facility developed the prototype IBM PC. It was a tough sell to upper management because of the fear of it cannibalizing the mainframe business, but he persevered and the IBM-PC was born. However, it had no operating system (OS).

Rather than create a new one, they sought out Gary Kildall, the owner of Digital Research Inc. (DRI) in Pacific Grove, CA. He had developed CP/M which at that time was a widely used operating system for small computers. When IBM personnel flew to the West Coast for their appointment with Kildall, they were told he was off flying his airplane. He was obviously not impressed with IBM. Justifiably miffed, IBM approached Bill Gates at Microsoft for an OS.

Gates and his partner, Paul Allen, had been together since 1975 writing the BASIC programming language. Bill quickly agreed to provide an OS to IBM. He called a local friend, also a programmer, who had developed QDOS (Quick & Dirty Operating System) based upon DRI's CP/M OS. After they agreed to minimal financial terms, Gates modified it slightly for IBM and named it MS-DOS (Microsoft Disk Operating System). IBM further cleaned out 300 bugs and called it PC-DOS, with Gates retaining all the rights. Brilliant negotiation! At the time, computers were sold without the OS, which had to be purchased separately. So in 1981 IBM launched the IBM-PC followed by 11 upgrade models. The XT model had the first internal hard drive.



Apple and Microsoft continue to fight for market share with supporters who are strongly opinionated lined up on each side. Apple has kept both the hardware and software proprietary, whereas PC is "Open Source," so third party suppliers can participate, increasing competition which ultimately reduces cost and increases availability of components. Also, because of Open Source, many more software applications are available for the IBM-PC than the Apple.

A second battle over the CPU (Central Processing Unit), the brains of the computer, pits Intel against AMD and Motorola. Again, competition favors the customer with perhaps Intel having a slim lead in performance, but not price.

Video displays have evolved from TVs to CRTs (cathode ray tubes), offered in either white, green or orange characters, to high resolution LCDs (Liquid Crystal Displays aka Flat Screens). OLED displays (Organic Light Emitting Diodes) are on the horizon with the promise of lower cost and better features.



Internal memory in early computers cost \$125 for 8KB. Now, 4GB, which is 500,000 times larger, only costs a fraction of that. Storage memory has evolved from punched paper tape to magnetic tape to floppy disks in sizes of 8", 5" and 3.5". Now hard disk drives, flash drives, CD/DVD/BlueRay burners, and Internet Cloud sites offer huge storage capability at minimal cost.

So what is next? Probably a major breakthrough will occur that we can neither predict nor even envision. There will be many exciting PC developments ahead, so stay tuned.



Cloud Computing - A Blessing or a Curse?

By Mark Tiongco, Geeks.com

www.geeks.com

There's no doubt that cloud computing has made a huge splash in our technologically ubiquitous society. Its benefits help businesses with productivity and give consumers more convenience about back-ups and data storage. Still, there are a few issues that should be addressed for anyone, whether a business owner or average Joe computer user, before making the jump to any cloud computing solution.

Reduced Control

The popular concept of cloud computing involves offloading and archiving pertinent files and data to an off-site 3rd party company which guarantees virtually 100% uptime and secure access anytime anywhere. The problem is that you're basically having another entity hang on to your confidential information which reduces the amount of control you have over that information. In addition, you have no idea where your information is being stored.



What if, for example, your data is managed by a 3rd party cloud service company whose computer servers are located in Niger and due to an anti-government uprising, the cloud company's infrastructure is compromised? You would have no idea whether your data was saved and moved to another location or if the data itself was possibly compromised by unauthorized parties. Granted, the chance of this happening is probably low but the big picture is that you're virtually powerless in safeguarding your own information against issues from the external environment. Regarding Murphy's Law, many cloud service companies pitch a near-100% uptime guarantee but there is still a chance the service could be unavailable (due to system malfunctions or maintenance) during the time when you need it the most.

Legal Issues



Using cloud services also presents a potential legal headache for both you and the hosting company. For example, cloud service provider Dropbox experienced a security breach in which all accounts were accessible by entering ANY password for approximately four hours. While Dropbox was able to rectify the issue promptly, one of their users is now filing a lawsuit for the security issue.

What if you had personal (or company) information that was compromised? What legal recourse would you have? Basically it means there would be extra work for you (and your legal team) having to deal with straightening things out, (such as breach of contract and/or having to find another cloud service provider). For cloud service users looking to store music into their respective digital lockers, external parties such as music label companies have raised a legal uproar about Amazon's cloud music service which could make it difficult, in the long-run, about what type of data can be stored on a cloud.



Proactive Measures

While there is zero way to completely prevent any type of cloud service issue, there are a few steps you can take to minimize the chance of having one of these issues compromise your confidential personal or business information.

First, it would be logical to adopt a "Don't keep all your eggs in one basket" approach which means only uploading the pertinent data that needs to be accessible to the necessary company personnel.

For example, if you have sales personnel traveling to Europe for a trade show and they need cloud access, it would be wise to not leave your Finance, Competitive Strategy and Company Financial Statements available on the cloud.

You can also specify exactly, which employee(s) are allowed access to your cloud servers and make them aware of the heightened security involved with such access. (Increased accountability with updated IT security access/policies)

Next, you can also use a 3rd party encryption program such as True Crypt and encrypt all information before uploading it to your cloud service. This provides redundant security on two counts.

1. First, your data would be useless if intercepted (in any way) by unauthorized parties. (unless they can break through True Crypt's ridiculously-tough encryption)
2. Second, if the cloud service's infrastructure is compromised, your information is still useless to anyone except you or your employees. You can also save a copy of all your confidential information on your own secure personal or company network which provides an alternative access point in case the cloud service goes down for any reason.

picture is that with all this technology that's continuously revolutionizing our personal and company lives, you should always approach new technological solutions with a balanced perspective, weighing both the pros and cons while considering what steps can be taken to keep your digital life secure.



"Fear not, the cloud is a good thing."

From Ray Nichols

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