
❖ Dan's Desktop ❖

Issue 6

Tutoring and consulting for your specific needs

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You Better Watch Out! *I'm Telling You Why . . .*

In the past month, two of my clients had hard drive failures. In addition, a former colleague recently had his hard drive corrupted. Granted, having a hard drive totally fail is rather rare. As these cases show, it can happen. Fortunately, all three of these people had backed up their critical data.

At a minimum, everyone should back up all important data files. Various system configuration files should be backed up as well. Besides guarding against the possibility of hard drive problems, backing up these files provides a fallback position in case any of these files is damaged or a mistake is made editing them.

You do not need a tape drive to back up your files. They can either simply be copied to diskettes or you can use the Microsoft Backup utility. If you plan to back up you entire hard drive to diskette, be prepared to use 50 or more diskettes.

Here is a checklist to help safeguard yourself in the event that you should have problems with files on your hard drive:

- ρ Be sure you have a boot diskette (sometimes this is called an “emergency disk”) that you can use in case your hard drive becomes inaccessible. If you have one of the newer hard drives with more than 600 meg, you may need to include software on the boot disk that will enable you to access files on the hard drive.
- ρ Be sure to back up system files on a regular basis. These include CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT. If you have Windows 95, please also be sure to back up USER.DAT and SYSTEM.DAT. These are in the WINDOWS directory.
- ρ Be sure you have diskettes or CDs that contain all the originally installed system software, as well as those for any software you have added. If you do not have these, you should probably do a full system backup.
- ρ Some of you have neglected to make the WINDOWS or WINDOWS 95 backup disks that your system keeps prompting you to do. Do it now!
- ρ Store all your data in a directory apart from the application programs. This will facilitate easier backup of the data. Individual applications can then be pointed to this directory. Many applications point to the directory that contains the program.
- ρ Back up all data files on a regular basis. Especially back up any files that would cause pain and suffering to you should they disappear. Remember: in the worst case, you could always go out and repurchase all the software, at some expense. You cannot replace your documents, databases, and other data unless you have copies somewhere.
- ρ Use anti-virus software to protect your PC. A virus could be passed onto you by mistake, even from a reliable source such as a friend. One could even be on a diskette coming from a well know company. If you download files from an online service or the Internet, then you are even more at risk. I use Norton Anti-Virus.
- ρ If you have a high capacity hard drive, then apply the fixes to Windows 95 available on the World Wide Web from Microsoft. A bug in Windows 95 can sometimes corrupt certain hard drives.

Remember: Beware of repackaged software!

In a previous newsletter, I mentioned two experiences when I purchased software and discovered that the internal packaging was opened and had been used or had items missing. This happened to one of my clients who purchased an upgrade to Word for Windows 95 at a different store. Having read the newsletter, she returned the product to the store for an unused one. Please be alert to this problem when you purchase software.

Memory Prices Drastically Lower! Upgrade Now to At Least 16 Meg

In March, I paid \$370 for 16 meg of memory that I could add to my main computer. I felt lucky I happened upon a sale. I had expected to pay \$500 to \$700.

A couple of weeks ago, I saw 16 meg at Sam's Club for \$200. The new ComputerCity store in Manchester sold 16 meg for \$100 as part of their grand opening sale. Their ad claimed that this included installation!

Memory prices obviously are way down. If you have less than 16 meg on your PC, I strongly recommend that you upgrade now. There is a good likelihood that prices are at or near their low points.

Adding memory can speed up your PC, allow you to operate more programs at the same time, and enable programs to run that cannot run with less memory. If you are planning to upgrade or have upgraded to Windows 95, you will find it will function much better if you have 16 meg of memory versus just 8 meg.

Adding memory to your PC is usually one of the easiest internal installations. You may be able to do it yourself if you carefully follow instructions.

Be Careful When You Purchase

Prices for hardware and software vary a great deal. No one store is consistently the low priced place to shop. So, shop around before buying. Be very careful if you use mail order, especially for purchasing PCs. If repairs are necessary, you may need to ship your PC back to the company. Also, it is often easier to deal with someone face to face. One of my clients had ongoing difficulties since she purchased her PC. She got little satisfactory help from the manufacturer. She sat down with the store manager where she bought the PC and was able to obtain a new one — even though she had purchased the original one close to a year earlier.

Also read your service contract carefully. One client has “on-site service” listed on her bill of sale. The agreement specifies that on-site service is “solely at our discretion.”

Attention Windows 95 Users: Updates and Fixes Now Available

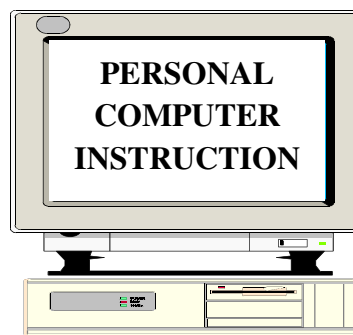
Windows 95 has a few minor and some potentially major bugs in it. Recognizing this, Microsoft has placed various updates and special programs on its World Wide Web Site (www.microsoft.com). The first is called “Windows 95 Service Pack 1”. Although this Service Pack resolved some issues, other problems existed. In fact Service Pack 1 had some bugs in it. So, Microsoft has issued some other individual updates to take care of those additional problems. Microsoft also has a set of what it calls “Power Toys” which add some additional features to Windows 95. Included in these “toys” is a task bar feature that allows the contents of the desktop to be displayed, even when it's covered up by applications.

One of the fixes is for a rather disturbing possibility. Under some instances, Windows 95 can cause corruption of hard drives. Other fixes are more mundane. These include fixes to speed up certain functions and to better keep certain applications from causing problems.

I have installed these updates on my PCs and urge all Windows 95 users to do the same. I will be installing the updates and fixes on my clients machines when I next visit them. Please call and set up an appointment if you would like me to update your Windows 95, if you do not already have an appointment scheduled.

Wanted: New Clients

I still want my existing clients, too! I greatly appreciate your passing my name, brochures, and business cards onto others. Please keep me in mind as you talk to other PC owners.



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