Dan's Desktop

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Dear Clients,

I put out this newsletter periodically to pass on information that I hope is of value to you and your associates. This is the eighth newsletter I have published in my three years in this business.

Looking back at the old newsletters, the changes in technology are stunning. Please see the article Technology Ever Changing *for more information on this.*

During the past three years, the thrust of my business has remained much the same. I help individuals and small businesses understand and make better use of their computers. As technology has changed, many people are using their computers in different ways. Three years ago, most people were only vaguely aware of such concepts as online services, E-mail, World Wide Web, and the Internet. Now it would be hard to find someone who hadn't heard of these terms. Use of the Internet seems to be increasing daily. So, helping people use E-mail or navigate the Internet has become an important part of what I do.

Besides tutoring people, I also now develop databases and Web pages for clients. These are things that can be useful to many people, particularly for those in small business.

One thing that has not changed in the past few years is the rate I charge. I still charge just $25 per hour. Some clients have informed me of others who charge $40-$50 per hour and more. I will continue to charge $25 per hour through the summer. As of September 1, my rate will increase to $30 per hour. This will help me to better cover my personal and business expenses while still providing a good value to all my clients.

My work has been very enjoyable and rewarding over the past few years. It has been a pleasure working with each of you. I look forward to working with you again.

Sincerely,

Dan Henry

Technology Ever Changing

HISTORY

Just two years ago I was recommending that someone buying a new computer should make sure they have 8 meg of RAM, a 1 gigabyte hard drive, a Pentium 66 MHz or greater processor, a 14.4 kbs modem, and a 4X CD ROM.

THE PRESENT

Now, some of the lower priced models are equipped with:

- 150 MHz Pentium processor
- 2 gigabyte hard drive
- 24 meg RAM
- 33.6 kbs modem
- 12X CD ROM

Higher priced machines have 200 MHz Pentium MMX processors, 4.3 gigabyte hard drives, 24X CD ROMs, and possibly much more!

The lower end machines start around $1000. The MMX technology machines tend to be closer to $2000 and up. (Price of monitor not included.)

ANCIENT HISTORY

The PC I bought three years ago for $1800 had 4 meg of RAM, a 0.2 gig hard drive, a 25 MHz 486 processor, 2.4 kbs modem and a 2X CD ROM.

THE FUTURE

The power and capacity of computers has increased nearly 10 fold in the past three years. The prices are actually lower in most cases. Expect more of the same in the future.

I plan to wait until next year to buy a new computer. When I do, I expect it will have a Pentium II 266 MHz MMX processor, 6 gigabyte hard drive, 56 kbs modem, DVD ROM (instead of CD ROM), and 32 meg RAM. It will probably cost under $2000.

Within a year of purchase, the new computer will be outdated. I also believe, as a syndicated columnist in the *Hartford Courant* recently wrote, that the newer and more powerful computers, like their ancestors, will still not be

2X, 4X, 12X, . . . Refers to relative speed of CD ROM Drives; the fastest are now 24X. Faster CD ROMs allow quicker access to data stored on a CD.

DVD ROM **D**igital **V**ideo**D**iscs are a new type of CD that can store about seven times as much information as a normal CD. DVDs can store data of all types including feature length, high resolution movies. DVD players are able to playback old CDs as well.

MMX Newer Pentium processors incorporate MMX technology which supports better multimedia (audio and video) handling by the PC.

Online: Are You Overpaying?

Many people who are using online services like CompuServe, Prodigy, MSN, and America Online, may be paying for more hours than they are using.

Perhaps you are paying $19.95 a month for unlimited access. If you are logged onto the service for 15 hours per month or less, you may be paying more than you should. Online services usually have other plans for a set number of hours. These plans range in price from about $5.00 to $15.00 for anywhere from three to fifteen hours of service. I pay Prodigy Internet about $10 per month for ten hours of service. I rarely use more than 6 or 7 hours per month.

If you only use your online service for E-mail, you can get E-mail service free using a service like Juno — if you don't mind dealing with advertising.

If you are addicted to "web surfing", then I suggest you consider a two year contract to an Internet Service Provider (ISP) such as North American Internet, Erols, or SNET. You can get your costs down to almost $10 per month by paying for two years up front. Additionally, SNET has a deal where you can get seven hours free Internet service if you belong to their All Distance plan. Other long distance companies may have similar plans.

Many Types of Graphics Files

Graphics are useful in documents such as newsletters and Web Pages. Many people use graphics to create custom business cards, letterheads or address labels. Sometimes they are used just for fun. They are easy to insert if you use a publishing product like *Microsoft Publisher* like I do. Most word processors, like *Microsoft Word* or *Corel WordPerfect*, also allow you to incorporate graphics into documents.

Graphics may be stored in a number of file formats. File names ending in any of the bolded sets of characters below are probably graphics images. You may or may not be able to view them or use them depending on the software you are using.

JPG and **GIF** are the two image types generally used on the Internet. Microsoft clipart is stored as **WMF** files. Microsoft Paint and many other Windows graphics files are **BMP** files. *Corel Draw* is **CDR**, while *Corel Gallery, Mega Gallery* and *Print House* files are **CMX**. Some of the other file types are: **TIF**, **CGM**, **PCX**, **PIC**, and **TGA**. There are many more

Forget *Corel Print House*!

Two clients had been using *Corel Print House* (about $20) until they ran into some problems. *Print House* is very rigid in the types of projects you can do. In order to change from the standard *Print House* options or to export *Print House* graphics, it is necessary to take a number of steps that are poorly documented. Both clients gave up on *Print House* because it proved difficult to use beyond its basic functions.

In the end, one client purchased *Microsoft Publisher* ($67-$80) to more easily design documents. The other purchased *Corel Mega Gallery* ($40-$70) so its clipart could be used in Word documents.

I recommend both these products. *Microsoft Publisher* is the software I use for creating my newsletters, ads, brochures, business cards, and more. *Corel Mega Gallery* contains 50,000 clipart images plus some sounds, videos, photos, and fonts that can be used in almost any document or presentation. Graphics can easily be moved from the *Mega Gallery* into your documents. It is the primary source of my clipart.

Building Your Own Web Site

Ever thought about having your own Web Site? Such a site could have information and files you would like to share with friends and colleagues along with links to your favorite sites. The site would be available to anyone in the world. If not for yourself you might like one for your business.

Some online services provide two megabytes of Web Site space to you as part of your subscription. So if you are a member of AOL, Prodigy, Prodigy Internet, or some other services, you may already have Web space available to you. Otherwise, be prepared to pay anywhere from $15 to $200 per month or more to rent space on a file server.

If you use the space granted to you by your online service, your Web Site may have a name like:

http://members.aol.com/danhenry

or

http://pages.prodigy.net/danhenry.

If you prefer to have a site with a name like:

http://www.danhenry.com

you'll need to register the name (if it is available) and pay about $100 every other year.

Of course, you must also design and build your Web Site before you can load it onto a file server. Online services have utilities you can download to do this or you can use a product like Microsoft FrontPage. Microsoft Publisher 97 is probably the easiest product to use.

Once you have built your Web pages with all the text, graphics, and links you would like, you still need to upload the pages and graphics to the file server.

If you are interested in setting up your own Web Pages, or know someone who is, please call me. I can help.