Dan's Desktop

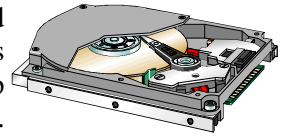## Technobabble

8 *IBM has announced a prototype of a 1000 MHz processor. This new chip does not take advantage of IBM's new copper technology which should lead to even faster speeds. The speed may not lead to computers that are that much faster because the speed of other components, such as hard drives, is so much slower.*

8 *PCs are now available for under $500. These 166 or 180 MHz machines tend to have lower end features than machines that are just a few hundred dollars more. They generally cannot be upgraded. Buy a more expensive computer that can be upgraded instead. If funds are limited, buy a used or reconditioned computer.*

8 *PCs are coming down in price because component prices are coming down. Processors and hard drives have come down a lot. PC manufacturers are pressuring hard drive suppliers to lower prices further.*

8 *Some recent prices for upgrade components: 5.2 gigabyte hard drive — $230, 24 X CD ROM drive — $80, sound card $100, 33.6 KBPS modem — $50, 56K X2 modem — $130, external Zip drive — $125, processor upgrades — $130 (486) and $270 (Pentium), 32 meg RAM —$80.*

8 *There have been two types of 56K modems: K-flex and X2. A new standard has been adapted which is a cross between the two. Existing owners of these modems, along with service providers, will need to update software and, in some cases, adjust hardware to meet the new standard. Keep in mind that the modem may not work at its fastest speed if you do not have a clear phone line to the modem.*

8 *Windows 98 will likely be released some time this year. The upgrade version can upgrade either Windows 3.1 or Windows 95. If you are thinking of upgrading to Windows 95, wait for Windows 98. If you currently use Windows 95, you will probably want to think before upgrading. There may not be enough new features in 98 to justify upgrading from Windows 95. However, Windows 98 apparently boots up more quickly and has features that should speed up the loading of programs when you run them.*

8 *If you use Word 95 but need to use documents created by Word 97, Microsoft's web site has a file converter you can download. The converter automatically converts Word 97 documents when they are opened in Word 95.*

Buying and Installing a New Hard Drive

I knew that a new hard drive would not only add storage to my family's 486 PC, but would also speed it up since today's hard drives are faster. My PC is networked with my family's, so I could also take advantage of the increased space. I set out to find a 3.2 gig hard drive. CompUSA was sold out of the one they had on sale. I didn' t like the price at Computer City, but I was able to purchase DriveCopy there for $25. I hoped to use DriveCopy to copy files from the old hard drive to the new one.

I continued looking for the elusive 3.2 gigabyte drive. OfficeMax (two different locations), Staples, Sam' s Club, and B J Wholesale didn' t have anything less than a 5.2! I finally went back to Staples and bought a Maxtor 5.2. It was $230. (If you buy one, also check for any rebates.)

Installing and formatting the new hard drive was a breeze. It only took a few minutes! My problem was with DriveCopy. It wanted to wipe out partitions on the new drive and then just generally made a mess of things. Some how or other the old drive ended up with a bunch of bogus directories and files with sizes in the billions of bytes and dates ranging from 1900 to 1999. So, I reformatted the new drive and installed Windows 95 on it. I then restored all my files from a backup I had made.

Based on my experience, I would not assume that DriveCopy will do the job for you. If you replace a hard drive, be prepared to either reinstall all your software and data or to use a recent backup.

Why Upgrade Rather Than Buy a New PC?

Some new programs do require Pentium processors to operate. Certainly a Pentium 200 MHz costing under $1000 would outclass any 486. I determined, however, that the programs we use do not require a Pentium. They are all working fine on our upgraded 486's. There are a couple of games our children would like that require a Pentium. This alone did not justify buying a new computer at this time.

Many upgrade components could be moved to a new machine. Some computer stores will incorporate them into a new system.

A new computer could also be networked with existing ones. This is being done increasingly by families and small businesses. Networking allows computers to share printers, files, and drives.

Internet Tips and Information

Note: Many of these tips are applicable only to Windows 95.

CHOOSE A HOME/START PAGE

There is no need to always go to your Internet Service Provider's home page. You can change the home page in Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer options to be whatever you want.

SIGN ON DIRECTLY TO A FAVORITE SITE

In IE, if you have added the site to your FAVORITES folder, open the FAVORITES folder and double click on the shortcut to the site. Internet Explorer will start up, log onto your ISP, and open that site.

In Netscape Communicatior/Navigator, start the Bookmark manager, then pick the site to which you would like to go. This will log you onto your ISP and go directly to the chosen site.

You might consider putting shortcuts to frequently used sites on your desktop, start menu, or Office shortcut bar.

RUN AWAY TO A URL YOU TYPE

If you know the URL (name) of the site, you can enter it in the dialog box that comes up when you click RUN on the Start Menu. Clicking Okay will start up your browser and bring up the site.

BROWSE A SITE OFFLINE

Web pages you browse online are kept in files on your hard drive. You may view them offline at any time. This can be facilitated by setting your browser so it does not automatically get the page when you request it. Instead it will go to the copy on your hard drive. When you start your browser, indicate you wish to work offline. If you should click on a link for which there is no copy on the hard drive, the browser will log you onto the ISP to retrieve it. Remember to refresh pages when you want to view any updates that may have been made to them.

E-MAIL TIPS

You do not have to go through your browser to check your e-mail. E-mail can be sent or retrieved without connecting to your ISP's homepage. This generally saves a lot of time. Mail programs such as Internet Mail, Outlook Express, Netscape Messenger, and Eudora, sign onto your ISP, send or retrieve mail, then sign off.

DON'T JUST SIT THERE AND WAIT

Some links and buttons on a web page are often active even before the page has finished loading. You do not need to wait for the page and its graphics to load entirely before clicking on a link to another page or site.

Some web sites are graphics intensive. You may wish to change your browser's image options to not display images until you reach a page having graphics you really need or want to view.

BEST AND WORST PERFORMANCES

According to the January 1998 issue of PC World, America Online had the worst performance of 12 services that provide Internet connections. IBM Internet Connection and Prodigy Internet were rated as the best.

Given this information and my own experience with Prodigy Internet, I have set several people up with Prodigy Internet. Although I am a fan of PI, I not recommend it for someone who has Windows 3.1.

ATTENTION AOL USERS

The Internet tips related to ISPs descrbed here generally do not apply to you. AOL is not an ISP but an online service that also provides access to the Internet.

AOL supplies a lot of its own content. This is seen by some as justification for their recent $2 per month rate increase.

Here are a couple AOL tips:

⇒ Turn off most of those pop up ads by going to *My AOL.* Find your way through a series of menus until you get to the marketing preferences regarding pop ups. Follow instructions to deactivate pop ups.

⇒ If you have Windows 95, check to be sure that you are actually using the Windows 95 version of AOL by clicking on *HELP, About AOL* on the sign on screen. The resulting message should expressly indicate Windows 95. Many people have downloaded AOL 3.0 for Windows 95 but have failed to install it by running the SETUP95 program. Others may have run SETUP95 but click on icons pointing to older versions of AOL. (Unfortunately AOL leaves its old versions behind for you to clean up.)

In the Briefcase

To assist my clients, I carry installation copies of:

- Prodigy Internet with IE 4.0
- MSN with IE 4.0
- AOL for Windows 95
- Juno (free e-mail)

I also carry various updates and fixes for Windows 95.

Tune Up Your PC

I recently "tuned up" my office PC by removing unneeded files and defragmenting the hard drive. I was amazed by how much better it performed after doing this. I had resisted defragmenting my hard drive until now because Windows 95 kept telling me it wasn't necessary. After an article I read recently about Windows 98, I became convinced that I should do it anyway.

As I said, the results were remarkable. The improvement was especially dramatic for Internet Explorer 4.0 which had been one of the most recently installed programs .

WHAT IS DISK FRAGMENTATION?

As you delete files from your hard drive, you create available space on it that is of different sizes. As new files are added, they may need to be spread out across several chunks of this available space. This spreading out of files is called fragmentation.

Defragmentation effectively puts the pieces back together. It also moves files closer to the "beginning" of the hard drive. This causes an improvement in the performance of your PC.

HARD DRIVE TUNE UP CHECKLIST

ρ   Uninstall any programs you never use

ρ   Archive old documents to diskette or Zip disk and delete from hard drive

ρ   Delete backup files on hard disk (if appropriate)

ρ   Delete "README" files

ρ   Delete TMP and other temporary files

ρ   Compact your e-mail boxes

ρ   Clear your Internet browser cache

ρ   Perform SCANDISK utility

ρ   Perform disk defragmentation utility

If you are using any sort of disk compression utility, such as Stacker or DriveSpace, consider ways you might get rid of it. Besides slowing down your sysem, these utilites may become a problem if your hard drive is tight on

---

REMEMBER*: If one of your applications stops responding in Windows 95, you may press* **CTRL + ALT + DEL** *to bring up the list of all programs running. Click on the task that is not responding and then click* **END TASK***. This usually enables you to stop the offending program without shutting down your PC.*

Did You Know?

♦ In many applications, pressing CTRL + A will select an entire document. In Word, triple clicking on the selection bar to the left of the document will also select the entire document.

♦ CTRL + X will cut, CTRL + C will copy, and CTRL + V will paste items virtually anyplace in Windows that allows input.

♦ To "paint" existing character formating onto several text location: Select text with the desired format; double click on the FORMAT PAINTER button (in Word, Publisher, etc.); Drag the paintbrush across each text area you which to affect: Single click on the Format Painter button when you are done painting formats.

♦ Many people have trouble selecting text by the click and drag technique. They have trouble getting exactly the right selection. Try this: click at the beginning of the desired selection, then hold down the SHIFT key while clicking on the end of the desired selection.

♦ The standard installation of Microsoft Office does not include many of the document templates and other features available. The standard installation of Windows 95 may also leave out some games and accessories that might interest you.

---

32 Meg RAM and Still Out of Memory

Even with 32 meg of RAM memory Windows still uses virtual memory on your hard drive to swap things in and out of RAM memory. If your hard drive is very low on space, you may not have sufficient room for virtual memory to function properly.

Try to always keep 50 meg or more free on your hard drive, especially if you are using Windows 95. If you are a bit of a pack rat, consider using a Zip drive to offload those old data files that you think you might need again some day but probably don't.

Some other possible causes of low or out of memory conditions:

• DOS programs that need a lot of the first 640K of memory

• Applications that didn't free up memory they used upon closing (try restarting Windows to fix this)

• Many applications are left open

Bad memory chips probably would **not** lead to this type of problem. If memory is bad, the computer would probably not start or would freeze up.

Starting My Fifth Year

After four years in this business, a lot has changed in technology as well as in what I am able to do for my clients. Four years ago, Pentiums were just coming out. I was not involved with creating databases, writing newsletters, networking PCs, or upgrading computer hardware as I am now. Few people had much of an awareness about the Internet back then.

Despite changes in technology, the core of what I do and how I do it has not changed. I meet people in their homes or places of business where I answer their questions and help them to accomplish their objectives. My clients also feel comfortable calling me or e-mailing me when they have questions or problems.

1997 was a year of tremendous growth in my business with many new clients coming on board. 1998 has continued with even more growth. Although I continue to advertise, much of my business growth comes as a result of referrals from my existing clients. I greatly appreciate your passing my name onto others.

I am fortunate to really enjoy what I do. I get to meet a lot of nice people of all ages in all kinds of professions. And, I'm always learning new things — not just from reading but from my clients!

Hope to hear from you soon.

Thanks,

Dan

140 Fisk Drive
Newington, CT 06111-2307

Have you backed up your data files recently?