

Dan's Desktop

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Technobabble

LASER PRINTERS ACTUALLY LESS EXPENSIVE THAN INKJETS

*Buying a new printer? Don't be fooled by the lower up front cost of an inkjet. Laser toner cartridges last five to ten times longer than inkjet cartridges. Additionally, inkjet cartridges have a tendency to dry out if not used regularly. Manufacturers often recommend replacing inkjet cartridges after six months even if they are not spent. Laser printers generally hold more paper than inkjets. The lesson here seems to be that, **unless you absolutely need color, buy a laser printer.** If you are doing high volumes of color printing you might want to look into a color laser printer. Prices for color laser printers start at around \$2000.*

AT&T WORLD NET RATED AS TOP ISP

PC World magazine recently rated AT&T Worldnet as the best Internet Service Provider overall. In fact, it was rated as a PC World Best Buy.

INTERNET EXPLORER 5.0 NOW AVAILABLE

Internet Explorer 5.0 has been getting great reviews in the press. This latest release seems to give it the edge, for now, over Netscape. I've downloaded it and have been impressed by its new features and functions. IE5 can be downloaded from Microsoft's web site.

ATTENTION FREE CELL FREAKS!

Free Cell is a particularly addicting solitaire card game played on the PC. Every hand can lead to a win if you play the cards correctly. Well, make that almost every hand. Apparently, game number 11,982 has no known solution. There is actually a web site that is devoted to Free Cell at members.aol.com/wgreview/freecell.html.

250 MB EXTERNAL ZIP DRIVES

Iomega has started selling external 250 MB Zip drives for about \$200. The drives can use Zip 100 MB cartridges as well as new 250 MB disks. (The 250 MB disks will not work in the 100 MB drives.) If you are interested in this development, I recommend waiting to see how they do in the marketplace. Internal versions of these drives will be significantly faster and probably cost less.

Web Site Redirection

Quite a few people have their own web sites using space provided by their Internet Service Providers. For example, my web site is stored at *pages.prodigy.net/danhenry*. Prodigy Internet provides me with up to 6 MB of storage there. AOL gives its members storage at *members.aol.com*. That is a lot to remember. I fixed this for myself after reading an article in *PC World* magazine.

I went to *www.mydomain.com*. MyDomain has a service that will help you register a domain name and then automatically redirect anyone who accesses it to the real site where you store your pages. There is a one-time fee of \$49 charged by MyDomain. InterNIC, the domain registration company, charges \$70 biannually for each domain you register.

I found the process to be reasonably simple. I chose *www.danhenry.net* as my domain name since there was a Dan Henry in Florida who had already registered with a dot-com. MyDomain e-mailed me confirmation almost immediately and directed me to the InterNIC site in case I wanted to pay InterNIC right away rather than wait for a bill. Paying right away speeds up the process, so that is what I did.

The next day I was able to tell MyDomain to direct *www.danhenry.net* to my Prodigy Internet pages. It took another day or two before InterNIC made my domain available and I was totally up and running.

There are a number of benefits of using a redirection service. Primary among them is that it costs much less than paying a company to host a domain. Obviously, having your own domain name also makes it easier for people to remember how to get to your web site. With a registered domain site you will also have a decent shot of getting your site registered with search engines. All in all it seems like a pretty good investment.

How To Get Your Pages Published On The Web

There are many programs that can help you create your own web site including some you can download from your ISP. Microsoft Publisher may be one of the easiest to use. After creating and testing your site on your PC, you can then upload it using Microsoft's Web Publishing Wizard or other software. You will need to get information from your ISP as to where to upload your web pages.

The Ultimate Upgrade

Some of you may remember the ongoing saga of the Packard Bell 486 computer I bought five years ago. Over that time I had upgraded it about as much as I could. When I bought my new Gateway Pentium II last year, I turned the old 486 over to my family.

Here's what they inherited:

- 100 MHz Evergreen processor
- 36 MB RAM memory
- 1.6 GB hard drive
- 24X CD ROM
- 33.6 KBPS modem
- Network Adapter card
- Windows 98 and lots of other software

They were pretty happy with this setup except that some applications ran painfully slow and many newer programs in the marketplace were not compatible with the processor. One solution would have been to buy a new computer. Frankly, I was troubled by this prospect due to the amount that I had invested into new components for this system. Additionally, it takes three to five hours to reinstall software, customize settings, and move data onto a new PC.

What made the most sense here was to buy what some call a "bare bones" system consisting of a mini-tower case, power supply, motherboard with AMD 350 MHz processor, and 64 MB of memory. (Older style memory is not compatible with newer PC memory.) Add on a 4 MB video card and we have a package costing about \$450. Compare this to a fully equipped new PC costing around \$1000.

Once I got the "bare bones" system home, I moved the hard drive, CD-ROM, 3 1/2" disk drive, modem card, and network adapter card into it. I was unable to move the sound card into the new system, as there were not enough of the older type ISA slots in the new machine. I put off the sound card issue until after completing the rest of the work. Then I bought a new sound card for \$30 at Staples and put it into an available PCI slot.

The new motherboard and its BIOS had a lot of capabilities that the old PC did not have. It therefore was important to go to the Windows Control Panel to run the Add New Hardware wizard. This allowed Windows to add all those components that the old

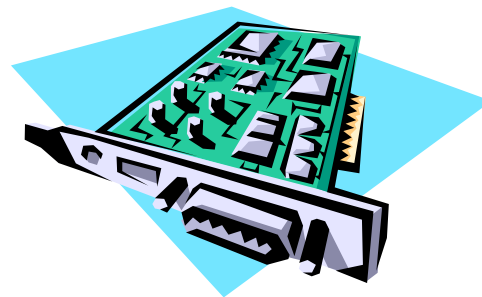
PC did not have on its motherboard. It then took some crafty work with Device Manager to smooth out the differences between the old and new PCs.

The transplant operation was a success! The machine works terrifically. Everything works much better and faster — even the Internet. My family's computer now has the following specifications:

- 350 MHz AMD processor
- 64 MB RAM memory
- 1.6 GB hard drive
- 24X CD ROM
- 33.6 KBPS modem
- Network Adapter card
- Windows 98 and lots of other software

This computer is also networked with an IBM 486 PC that has over 5 GB of storage that can be shared.

If you have upgraded your components over time as I did, you may be a candidate for this type of motherboard upgrade. If you have never upgraded any components, then a new PC may be a better answer.



Don't Gamble on Cards and Slots: Check Before You Buy

An expansion card or board is a device that plugs into one of the expansion slots within your PC. Examples of expansion cards include modems, sound cards, and network interface cards. Older PCs, like a 486, used ISA expansion slots. New PCs generally have just a couple of ISA slots plus several of the newer PCI slots.

Should you decide to buy an expansion card for your PC, you need to be sure there is a slot available for it. Additionally, you need to be sure that the card matches the type of slot available: ISA or PCI.

Managing Your Money

Here are a few tips related to using Microsoft Money or Intuit Quicken.

DOWNLOAD AMERICAN EXPRESS TRANSACTIONS

If you have Microsoft Money 98 or 99, you can download your American Express transactions on a regular basis. Transactions can be downloaded any day except for a few days around the time American Express is generating your account statement. This allows you to keep track of your transactions as the month goes on instead waiting for your monthly statement. This also saves you the manual entry of detailed transactions.

If you do not have Money 98 or 99, American Express still allows you to check balance and statement information at their web site. Information can also be downloaded from there into Money or Quicken.

For more information about these options, check the American Express, Intuit, and Microsoft Money web sites.

PRINT YOUR OWN CHECKS WITH VERSACHECK

You are probably aware that *Microsoft Money* and Intuit's *Quicken* both have the capability to print checks. Like me you have probably been put off by the high price of the checks you need to order to take advantage of this. Well I found a way to create inexpensive checks that can be used with *Money* or *Quicken*.

I print my own blank checks rather than buying them preprinted! *VersaCheck* software allows me to do this. *VersaCheck Personal* costs about \$20. It includes the check printing software plus 150 blank checks grouped three on a page. Refills of 750 blank checks cost \$20.

VersaCheck steps you through the check printing process. As requested, enter information as it appears on existing checks. Then spend some time making sure all the information will properly align when printed. When every thing is set, go ahead and print blank checks that can then be used with *Money* or *Quicken*

Money or *Quicken* will need check printing options

set up to accommodate the checks. The three-check sheets are fed manually into the printer when checks are printed. Partial sheets can be used. They are fed into the printer sideways.

KEEPING TRACK OF STOCK OPTIONS

You may be aware that Money and Quicken can keep track of your stocks. Many companies are now granting stock options to employees at all levels. Keeping track of these options and their values can be tricky.

Money and Quicken can do this for you but there is a little trick to it. You will need to list each grant of stock options as a separate investment. The stocks are listed as though you currently own them. Within the same investment account, you will also list a cash payment equal to the total cost of purchasing these options. This effectively zeroes out the investment as of the date of issue. As the value of the stock rises or falls, the balance of the investment account will be



Some Tips for Happy Scanning

- Do **not** buy a parallel port (printer port) scanner This setup frequently causes problems.
 - Buy a scanner that includes a USB connection (if you have USB ports and Windows 98) or one that comes with its own interface card. Also take note of what software is included with the scanner.
 - Keep in mind high-resolution graphics can take up many megabytes of space.
 - As a courtesy to e-mail recipients, use lower resolutions (50dpi) for graphics to be e-mailed.
 - If your OCR software is not recognizing characters very well, try scanning the text at a higher resolution.
-



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Dear Clients,

Many of you received an e-mail from me that announced an update to my web site along with a new way to get to it. My web site can now be found at **www.danhenry.net**. My article on web site redirection explains how I set this up. Let me know if I can help you to do the same for a web site you have set up.

By the way, if you are interested in a professionally developed web site, please give me a call and I will refer you to a colleague whose company has helped out many of my business clients.

My web site is a pretty straightforward one so I did it myself. Now with my easy to remember www address, I plan to update it each month with new information and updates to past articles from *Dan's Desktop*. The site also has links to the support sites of many hardware and software vendors.

Once again I need to thank all of you who have referred business to me over the past few months. It's really been terrific.

Hope the information in the newsletter and at **www.danhenry.net** is useful to you.

Take care,

Dan
