

Dan's Desktop

Issue 14

November 1999

Technobabble

WEB SITE REDIRECTION IS NOW FREE

In May, I wrote about the MyDomain web site redirection service. At the time it charged \$49 to redirect a domain such as www.danhenry.net to a site where pages are stored. As of July 21, MyDomain is now free. Go to www.myinternet.com for details.

CALL WAITING MODEMS

Some new modems on the market are designed for people who have call waiting service. These modems reportedly allow you to briefly pick up a call while putting your Internet connection on hold. You may be able to talk for up to 30 seconds without losing the Internet connection.

Y2K REMINDER

Y2K will be here soon. It all sounds like science fiction. If you haven't already done so, you should check with your PC manufacturer to see if your PC is Y2K compliant. Also check with Microsoft to see what you may need to do to ensure that your operating system is ready. Check with vendors of your other programs to see if they have any patches for Y2K. My web site has links to the technical support sites of many hardware and software vendors.

MEMORY PRICES SOAR

Due to the earthquake in Taiwan and other factors, the price of computer memory chips has doubled and tripled over the past couple of months. The cost of memory is about 7% of the cost of a PC. Between the increased memory costs and the large demand for PCs, PC prices may not be falling as quickly.

40% CONNECTED

I read recently that over 40% of households in the Hartford/New Haven market have access to the Internet. This is especially remarkable since a few years ago, only 40% had PCs. Internet access is now the number one reason people buy PCs. Many metropolitan areas have even higher Internet access rates.

SNET TO OFFER DSL SERVICE

SNET has announced ambitious plans to offer Digital Subscriber Line Service to many parts of the state over the next few years. DSL service provides Internet connection speeds 5-10 times faster than conventional phone lines more reliably than cable modems. The Internet connection is continuous and phone calls can be made over the same line.

AOL SPAMs and Scams

E-MAIL BECOMES PORN-MAIL

A lot of my clients who have AOL have been plagued by junk mail, commonly referred to as SPAM. Particularly troubling is that much of this SPAM is advertising with links to pornographic web sites. Other clients have also gotten the equivalent of obscene calls via Instant Messaging.

In all these cases, the question becomes "How did they get my screen name?" The answer is that you inadvertently gave it to them. If you filled out an AOL member profile or allowed your screen name to be in the AOL member directory, your screen name is there for the taking. This is easily remedied by changing your AOL preferences to exclude this information.

There is a less obvious way that unscrupulous SPAMers get your e-mail address. They will go to chat rooms and run programs that gather the screen names of everyone in that room. They will then e-mail SPAM to everyone whose name they have harvested.

SOME REMEDIES

1. Remove your personal information from the AOL profile and ask not be listed in the member directory.
2. AOL allows you to define up to five screen names. Use one for chat rooms and don't accept any e-mail for that ID. Try to use aliases in chat rooms or avoid chat rooms altogether.
3. For children, consider changing e-mail settings so that mail is only accepted from specified people. You can also filter out e-mail coming from particular addresses. Similar controls are available for instant messaging.
4. Forward unwanted mail to AOL at TOSSPAM so that they have a chance to address the problem.

TROJAN HORSES

Many AOL users have been victimized by a "Trojan horse" program or by Trojan horse messages. These programs and messages come from scam artists. Official looking messages appear that request your screen name, a password, and sometimes a charge card number purportedly to clear up a billing problem. (AOL would never request this information once someone is a member.) The message might become persistent and may even block your access to AOL — the Trojan horse is really a virus-like creature.

Frequently the stolen ID is used and may even be abused to the point of AOL cancelling the account. Obviously, the stolen credit card number could be used to make illegal purchases.

Free Software and Updates

AOL VERSION 5.0

AOL users can download this or use a CD that AOL has sent out. This version has some nice features. Especially good is that it will automatically log you on whenever you need an Internet connection. Check www.aol.com for more details. Note that AOL has a habit of not deleting prior versions of itself. You can free up a lot of space by deleting your older versions of AOL once you are satisfied with the new one.

INTERNET EXPLORER 5.0

Microsoft's web browser can be downloaded from the Microsoft web site. It includes the Outlook Express e-mail program. This new browser gives Microsoft a slight, temporary edge in its browser war with Netscape. New versions of the other programs such as *NetMeeting* can also be downloaded. Go to www.microsoft.com for more information.

PATCHES AND DRIVERS

Most hardware and software vendors have program bug fixes and new drivers available for download from their web sites. It's a good idea to be sure to update your programs. For example, there are two major fixes to Microsoft Office 97. If you experience ongoing problems with any of your hardware, a new driver from the vendor may help. Many technical support sites are listed on my web site, www.danhenry.net.

INSTANT MESSENGER

AOL's Instant Message software is available for downloading at its web site. This program can be used even if you are not a member of AOL. It lets you exchange instant messages with AOL users and anyone else who has Instant Message installed. Other companies including Microsoft have similar Instant Message software, but until there is a communication standard for such messages you might want to use the AOL program. Check www.aol.com for more details.

NORTON ZIP RESCUE

Symantec offers a Zip Rescue program that may be helpful to anyone who has a Zip drive. The program copies essential system files to a Zip disk and creates a floppy disk that can start up your computer. The floppy and Zip disks can be used to start up your computer when some problem prevents it from starting normally. Windows will actually run off the Zip disk until you resolve the problem. For details, go to www.iomega.com.

ULTIMATE CRIBBAGE

There is an excellent program for Cribbage enthusiasts. It has all the features a cribbage player would want including letting you count your cards. Go to www.download.com to find this and many other programs. This is "freeware" so it costs nothing as opposed to "shareware" which requires payment should you decide to keep using a program.

Just For Fun

Hasbro has an entire line of CD games based on classic *Milton Bradley* and *Parker Brothers* games. The games are faithful to the originals and have lots of interesting variations and special affects. Compete against computer generated characters or against real opponents or both. The games can be played against others in a number of ways:

- on one PC with players looking away when it is someone else's turn
- over a local network
- over a direct phone line connection to another PC
- over the Internet

Games available include *Monopoly*, *Clue*, *Battleship*, *Risk*, *Stratego*, *Scrabble* and other board games.

One of my favorites is *Parker Brothers Classic Card Games*. This single CD includes *Parker Brothers* games such as *Mille Bournes*, *Racko*, *Rook*, and *Free Parking* along with playing card games such as Hearts, Gin Rummy, and Solitaire.

Each CD title generally retails for around \$20. Some come in sets of four for \$35 to \$40. Warehouse clubs tend to have better buys on these when you can find them. At the end of October, I saw many of these titles at BJ's Wholesale for \$7.99 a each.

Please keep in mind that when playing this game against people on other PCs, each PC will need to have a copy

WINDOWS 98 UPDATES

Current Windows 98 users can download all the latest fixes as well as Internet Explorer 5.0 and other free programs by clicking on Start, Windows Update. (Note: You must have an Internet Service Provider in order to do this. AOL users must sign on to AOL first unless they have AOL 5.0.)

At the Microsoft Update site, click on "Product Updates". Microsoft will check your PC to develop a list of critical and recommended updates that may benefit your PC. You then check off the items you wish to download and click on the "Download" button. You will be presented with a list of your choices to verify. Click on "Download" again and the appropriate files will be downloaded and installed onto your PC. Download times vary depending on the components you select. Your PC will then be restarted to make the changes take affect. Although many of the components are bug fixes, Microsoft also offers a number of free additional programs.

In lieu of downloading all this, you might consider ordering a special upgrade CD from Microsoft that is specifically for current Windows 98 users. It costs \$20 plus about \$6 shipping. It updates your Windows 98 to Windows 98 Second Edition The CD also includes the new Internet Connection Sharing feature (see below) which cannot be downloaded .

In any case, it is a good idea to run Windows Update every month or two to make sure you get all the fixes your system needs. Many of the fixes relate to security problems that are discovered

MICROSOFT OFFICE 97 UPDATES

Microsoft Office 97 came complete with a number of software bugs. You do not need to buy Office 2000 to get rid of the bugs. Only buy Office 2000 if you need its features.

Whether you have an entire Office 97 suite installed on your PC or just have one or more of its components (such as Word 97, Excel 97, or Access 97), the Office 97 Service Release updates can be applied to your PC.

Before doing anything, you will need to see what Service Release you currently have. To do, this start any of your office programs, click on Help, and then on the About option. A dialog box will appear that displays information about that particular program. Your current Service Release for this product will appear to the right of the product name on this screen. You should see either SR-1 or SR-2. If you see neither of these, then you have an early release of the product and will need to apply SR-1 before applying SR-2. (If this is the case, be sure to restart your PC between the two installations.)

To get the SRs that you need, go to the Office Update area of Microsoft's web site. You can download either or both SRs. Please note that SR-1 is about 8.5 MB and SR-2 is about 25 MB. Download the SR you need onto your desktop. To install the SR, simply double-click its icon. Once the installation is complete, be sure to restart your computer before proceeding.

Note: I have copies of both SRs and can install them for you in very little time.

Windows 98 Second Edition: Internet Connection Sharing

Internet Connection Sharing (ICS) is a great feature for a home or small business where one of the PCs has a faster modem or where there is the need for several PCs to access the same Internet connection. ICS is installed on the PC that will be connected to the Internet.

My computer is networked with my family's computer. My PC has a 56K modem while my family's modem is 33.6K. I upgraded my PC with the 2nd Edition upgrade CD and added the ICS program to it. The ICS program created a diskette with a simple program I then ran on my family's PC that enabled it to use my Internet connection.

My experience with ICS has been very good. When my family's PC needs an Internet connection, it causes my PC to dial my ISP (unless I'm already connected). They have faster access then when they connected directly to the Internet using their slower modem. Both PCs can use the Internet connection at the same time. For example, I can check my e-mail and browse web sites while my son is using Instant Message or visiting a chat room. Performance will slow down for both of us if we are both trying to download large amounts of data at the same time. However, a lot of time on the Internet is spent reading what you've downloaded so performance with two of us sharing the connection is generally better than you might think.

Internet Connection Sharing would be especially useful on networks that have access to high speed connections from

Dear Clients—

My business has been booming, thanks to all the referrals you have made to your friends and colleagues this year. This has saved me a great deal in advertising costs and will enable me to maintain my \$35 per hour rate well into the new year.

Getting out this newsletter has taken longer than usual since I have been so busy. I hope you find the information in the newsletter worth the wait. My web site has also been updated to reflect this newsletter. Past articles on the web site have been updated there also. I have added links to more technical support sites. I hope to add more features when I get some free time. I welcome any suggestions you might have for the newsletter or the web site.

You can do more than ever with your PC. An incredible number of people are shopping and paying their bills with their PCs. If you have questions about how to make this happen, or if you have questions about anything else, don't hesitate to call or e-mail me.



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Have you:

- ρ Backed up your files?
- ρ Updated your virus protection?
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