

Dan's Desktop

Issue 19

April 2002

Technobabble

WINDOWS XP PROBLEMS

The Universal Plug and Play feature of Windows XP has a major security problem. Apparently it leaves a gaping hole that hackers can use to get into your PC. Microsoft has a fix that should be downloaded to repair this. Unfortunately, a problem in mid-January prevented people temporarily from downloading the fix. The FBI at one point recommended that Universal Plug and Play be disabled.

Meanwhile, Windows XP users are discovering other difficulties. There are a number of versions of software that will not work with it. Some types of hardware either are not readily compatible with XP or won't work at all with it.

Before buying a new PC, be sure that your software and hardware peripherals will work with Windows XP.

80 GB 7200 RPM HARD DRIVE: \$180

You might be thinking, why would I need that big of a hard drive? Well all those audio, video and graphics files you've been downloading take a lot of space. If you want to edit videos on your PC, it could take as much as 16 GB for one hour of video. If you have the capability to record TV programs on your PC for later viewing, you need a large drive to store them all. Not enough for you? A 160 GB drive goes for about \$300. A 40 GB drive can be had for around \$120. External drives are available at higher prices but are often too slow for some purposes

Note: I paid \$320 for a 1.6 GB drive in 1995.

Upgrade Fever

\$25 FOR 128 MB OF RAM MEMORY

In late December, one of my clients called to tell me how cheap RAM memory had become. I couldn't believe it until I checked prices. I bought 256 MB additional memory for my family's PC and brought my PC up from 128 MB to its 384 MB limit. The improvement in performance was phenomenal! The machines seem to be somewhat more stable as well.

Both PCs used standard PC-100 memory. Some older PCs may need to have BIOS upgrades in order to use this memory. I had upgraded mine previously. BIOS upgrades are scary since if they fail, that may be the end of your PC.

Note: Since January memory prices have nearly doubled. Adding memory can still be a worthwhile upgrade.

NEW VIDEO CARD MEANS TV WITH RECORDER

Video cards have also fallen tremendously in price. I replaced my AGP video card with a new one that has 32 MB of video RAM. My new card is an All-In-Wonder 128 Pro that includes a TV tuner and software that enables the PC to act almost like a TIVO.

I moved my old AGP video card to my family's PC, replacing a cheap PCI video card. Now they can install and use games that require 3D graphics capabilities.

PROCESSOR UPGRADE

I discovered that Evergreen Technologies has an upgrade processor that would allow me to change my Pentium II 266 into something like a Celeron 533. The cost was less about \$70. The upgrade was completed in a matter of minutes with very little trouble.

Bugs and Viruses and Hoaxes, Oh My!

In my line of work, I see lots of nasty things happen to PCs. Some are caused by bugs in programs from Microsoft or other software vendors. Some are caused by viruses that sneak in on e-mails. Others we often do to ourselves.

Here are some of the nasty ones I've seen over the past year:

- Illegal operation messages displayed every time Internet Explorer was opened. Windows and all programs had to be reinstalled to fix this. Research failed to find a cause.
- Norton Antivirus 2000 and 2001 interfered with operation of Word 2000. (Norton AV 2002 is okay.)
- Norton AV 2002 by default scans outgoing e-mail for viruses. It puts messages in the Sent folder after scanning them, even if the e-mail program was unable to send them.
- Never send on messages that have information about pur-

ported viruses. Nearly all are hoaxes. One particularly nasty one instructs you to remove a certain file that turns out to be a legitimate Windows file. This caused lots of grief for lots of people.

- Microsoft Access 2000 might change all your margins back to the default settings if you have a name spellcheck feature turned on.
- AudioGalaxy is a Napster like utility for listening to music. It also installs software to spy on what web sites you visit. In one case, this feature interfered with some Windows operations including opening the Control Panel after clicking Start, Settings.
- Various viruses can make it impossible to run any program once they are removed. In many cases, a program fix must be downloaded from Norton or McAfee.

Data Audit/Maintenance Service for Small Business

Most small businesses neglect to perform the routine tasks necessary to protect their business data. My DATA AUDIT/ MAINTENANCE SERVICE starts with an initial audit that documents the strengths and shortcomings of your current data backup, anti-virus, and disaster recovery plans. Availability of software bug fixes is also determined. Performance issues may be discussed. A plan is then developed to address issues in an ongoing manner.

After the initial audit, monthly visits are scheduled to ensure that maintenance is taking place as planned. Each month, an audit is made of each PC to ensure that processes are taking place as planned.

This service costs \$75 per month for up to six PCs. In some cases, businesses may need to purchase software or hardware to carry out the plan that is developed. Examples of such items include anti-virus software, data back up software, Zip drives or CD burners.

During each monthly visit, I will check each PC to ensure that:

- ρ Virus protection has been kept up to date
- ρ Latest Windows updates have been applied (requires Internet access)
- ρ Critical data has been backed up
- ρ Hard drives have been maintained properly
- ρ Application program fixes have been applied as needed
- ρ PC performance issues have been addressed
- ρ Business owner or manager has been made aware of any issues

Businesses that subscribe to the DATA AUDIT/MAINTENANCE SERVICE can also purchase additional consulting time at my current rates of \$40 per hour for standard consulting and \$50 per hour for programming services. Subscribers will not be subject to future increases in these rates while their plans are in effect.

Get with the plan! Call now to schedule your initial audit.

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