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From the President's PC

A spooky Halloween to all.

Remember the next meeting will not only feature Photoshop Elements 6 but we will endeavor to hold our AGM. The problem we may have is that we require a forum of fifteen paid up members and to date we have only nine, So Please come on down on Nov. 6.

Our last meeting was an informative on Blackberry by Christopher Summers from Best Buy and we also had some very interesting conversations with Dave, the manager from Best Buy.

Most of the executive are standing for "office" again but we do need more people to participate.

We do need help for the following:

1. Publicity - Sending notices to the media and to the membership
2. Photography and reports on meetings for the newsletter
3. The position of vice president
4. Executive members. This involves about 1 to 2 hrs of meeting time a month.
5. Setting up for meetings (come 15 minutes early) and putting away after meetings.

Steve's Tip

Ever wonder what you have on your clipboard, whether what you copied was actually copied . Here is the tool you need in your quick launch tool bar. Karen's clip board viewer.

<http://www.karenware.com/powertools/ptclpvue.asp>

See you at the meeting

Steve



Computer News

What, me worry (about mobile viruses)?



Kaspersky, via PC Magazine, has graciously told the public to worry about mobile phone worms. I'm not worried, and there are many reasons why you shouldn't be concerned...

yet.

It is commonly accepted that there have been very few pieces of mobile malware that have ever been spotted, and noted outbreaks are even less common. Why is there a disconnect then between marketing statements and the threat, and more importantly, will this threat ever exist?

AV companies have been predicting the emergence of mobile viruses for years. These warnings may be truly genuine. After all, cell phones are pocket sized computers that can execute third party applications and have a high bandwidth phone interface. They could also be purely the output of marketing departments, looking to expand their products into new segments. Rather than examining their motivations, let's look at the ecology in which mobile malware would have to exist:

Cell phones have a smaller pool of developers, and consequently malware authors, than desktop computers. Network-based delivery of applications is highly controlled by carriers and manufacturers and impractical for most handsets currently in the field. In many markets, people don't use their handsets for electronic financial transactions. Handsets are replaced frequently, which limits the lifetime of installed software. The handset population is incredibly diverse, limiting the number of devices that could be affected if a vulnerability is discovered. All this is occurring against a backdrop massive number of easily compromised PCs, making for a very unfriendly environment for mobile malware.

These are all the reasons why mobile malware epidemics on the scale of what we have seen in the PC world have not yet occurred. Tomorrow I

will completely contradict myself and write about all the reasons why mobile malware epidemics are just around the corner. Or will I?

Submitted by: Greg

44% of second hand mobile devices still contain sensitive data



According to a recent research conducted by BT, the Edith Cowan University, and the University of Glamorgan (Wales), 44% of the 160 second-hand devices that they tested, still contained sensitive data such as

bank accounts, board meetings, business plans, and financial data. Using the data obtained, their analysis indicated a greater risk of espionage for the organizations the owner works for, than for the individuals themselves, once again proving that users don't erase the data on their devices before selling them, thereby acting as the weakest link.

The potential for abuse in the form of corporate espionage, unethical competitive intelligence, business sabotage and blackmailing will naturally increase, following the high number of lost mobile devices with ever increasing capacity and the lack of basic security awareness on the user's end.

"New research finds 44 per cent of second-hand devices still contain sensitive data Over a third of BlackBerry devices are sold without being wiped of sensitive personal and corporate data, according to new research released today by BT. The study of over 160 second-hand handheld devices found they still contained details of bank accounts, board meetings and financial data. Nearly a quarter of phones contained information which could allow the previous owner and employer to be identified, while 43 per cent of BlackBerrys contained information which could pose a significant risk to organisations if exposed."

What type of data were the researchers able to

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access? Starting from salary details, financial company data, bank account details, sensitive business plans, and personal medical details, and going to bids and contracts under negotiations, uncomplimentary comments about employees, an extensive list of contacts and a complete log of phone calls and diary commitments, in between evidence of an ongoing affair between a man and a woman :

"According to Godfrey at Sims Lifecycle Services, a discarded, unwiped phone or PDA is "a perfect tool for social engineering, and it's only going to get worse" as the storage capacity of mobile devices increases. He says: "The point of this work is really to bring that across to people the risks that mobile phones present to their personal data." Of the devices in the survey, 7% had enough personal data on them for the individual concerned to have their identity stolen, and 7% would have allowed a corporate fraud to have taken place. Another 2% still had Sim cards in them, while 27% of the BlackBerrys in the survey had company data and 16% carried personal information."

In case you wouldn't feel that very comfortable being in the center of a corporate espionage scandal, or have your private life exposed to someone that could figure out a way to monetize your private life by blackmailing you - wipe your private data before selling your device.

Submitted by: Greg

I may be dumber than a 5th grader, but so is this guy..... A stranger was seated next to a little girl on the airplane when the stranger turned to her and said, 'Let's talk. I've heard that flights go quicker if you strike up a conversation with your fellow passenger.'

The little girl, who had just opened her book, closed it slowly and said to the stranger, 'What would you like to talk about?' 'Oh, I don't know,' said the stranger. 'How about nuclear power?' and he smiles. 'OK,' she said. 'That could be an interesting topic. But let me ask you a question first. A horse, a cow, and a deer all eat the same stuff - grass - . Yet a deer excretes little pellets, while a cow turns out a flat patty, and a

horse produces clumps of dried grass. Why do you suppose that is?'

The stranger, visibly surprised by the little girl's intelligence, thinks about it and says, 'Hmmm, I have no idea.'

To which the little girl replies, 'Do you really feel qualified to discuss nuclear power when you don't know \$hit?'

The 3rd through 6th floors have never been visited Pirates plunder Adobe Creative Suite 4



Little more than a week after its global launch, Adobe's Creative Suite 4 has shown up on popular BitTorrent tracking sites in large numbers.

The software represents updates to Adobe's flagship Photoshop, Illustrator, Flash, Acrobat and InDesign products, among others, with the full Master Collection edition, which includes the entire range, selling in the UK for around £1,969 (ex VAT).

However, several casual searches conducted by ZDNet.com.au revealed what appeared to be copies of CS4 and its various included products littered across most of the popular BitTorrent tracking sites--although the files were not downloaded to verify if they were genuine.

For example, on The Pirate Bay, hundreds of people were downloading the Mac OS X version of Photoshop (a 1GB file), while others were splashing out for the 7.2GB Master Collection edition, which appeared to be a leaked pre-release version of the software. A number of beta versions of the software were also popular, as were illicit serial numbers.

The downloading frenzy even spread to the training field, with videos from educational site Lynda.com (which charges for its content

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on a subscription model) explaining CS4's new features available for BitTorrent download.

It was a similar case at Mininova, where several dozen people were downloading Photoshop CS4, although Flash CS4 was also generating interest.

In a curious phenomenon, despite the availability of Photoshop CS4, the previous version, CS3, which was released in early 2007, was still much more popular than the latest version.

On the Pirate Bay, thousands of people were downloading or hosting downloads of Photoshop CS3 and the complete CS3 Master Collection. It was a similar situation on Mininova, but on a smaller scale. Lynda's CS3 training suites were also extremely popular, as were ebooks, or scanned copies of real books, that dealt with CS3 training.

Adobe Australia declined to comment on the pirating effort.

Creative Suite is Adobe's software aimed at content professionals; the company also sells an 'Elements' line at a substantially cheaper price that offers a reduced feature set to consumers.

Submitted by: Greg

The top five reasons why Windows Vista failed



On Friday, Microsoft gave computer makers a six-month extension for offering Windows XP on newly-shipped PCs. While this

doesn't impact enterprise IT — because volume licensing agreements will allow IT to keep installing Windows XP for many years to come — the move is another symbolic nail in Vista's coffin.

The public reputation of Windows Vista is in shambles, as Microsoft itself tacitly acknowledged in its Mojave ad campaign.

IT departments are largely ignoring Vista. In June (18 months after Vista's launch), Forrester Research reported that just 8.8% of enterprise

PCs worldwide were running Vista. Meanwhile, Microsoft appears to have put Windows 7 on an accelerated schedule that could see it released in 2010. That will provide IT departments with all the justification they need to simply skip Vista and wait to eventually standardize on Windows 7 as the next OS for business.

So how did Vista get left holding the bag? Let's look at the five most important reasons why Vista failed.

5. Apple successfully demonized Vista

Apple's clever I'm a Mac ads have successfully driven home the perception that Windows Vista is buggy, boring, and difficult to use. After taking two years of merciless pummeling from Apple, Microsoft recently responded with its I'm a PC campaign in order to defend the honor of Windows. This will likely restore some mojo to the PC and Windows brands overall, but it's too late to save Vista's perception as a dud.

4. Windows XP is too entrenched

In 2001, when Windows XP was released, there were about 600 million computers in use worldwide. Over 80% of them were running Windows but it was split between two code bases: Windows 95/98 (65%) and Windows NT/2000 (26%), according to IDC. One of the big goals of Windows XP was to unite the Windows 9x and Windows NT code bases, and it eventually accomplished that.

In 2008, there are now over 1.1 billion PCs in use worldwide and over 70% of them are running Windows XP. That means almost 800 million computers are running XP, which makes it the most widely installed operating system of all time. That's a lot of inertia to overcome, especially for IT departments that have consolidated their deployments and applications around Windows XP.

And, believe it or not, Windows XP could actually increase its market share over the next couple years. How? Low-cost netbooks and nettops are going to be flooding the market. While these inexpensive machines are powerful enough to provide a solid Internet experience for most users, they don't have enough resources to run Windows Vista, so they all run either Windows XP or Linux. Intel expects this market to explode

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in the years ahead. (For more on netbooks and nettops, see this fact sheet and this presentation — both are PDFs from Intel.)

3. Vista is too slow

For years Microsoft has been criticized by developers and IT professionals for “software bloat” — adding so many changes and features to its programs that the code gets huge and unwieldy. However, this never seemed to have enough of an effect to impact software sales. With Windows Vista, software bloat appears to have finally caught up with Microsoft.

Vista has over 50 million lines of code. XP had 35 million when it was released, and since then it has grown to about 40 million. This software bloat has had the effect of slowing down Windows Vista, especially when it’s running on anything but the latest and fastest hardware. Even then, the latest version of Windows XP soundly outperforms the latest version of Microsoft Vista. No one wants to use a new computer that is slower than their old one.

2. There wasn’t supposed to be a Vista

It’s easy to forget that when Microsoft launched Windows XP it was actually trying to change its OS business model to move away from shrink-wrapped software and convert customers to software subscribers. That’s why it abandoned the naming convention of Windows 95, Windows 98, and Windows 2000, and instead chose Windows XP.

The XP stood for “experience” and was part of Microsoft’s .NET Web services strategy at the time. The master plan was to get users and businesses to pay a yearly subscription fee for the Windows experience — XP would essentially be the on-going product name but would include all software upgrades and updates, as long as you paid for your subscription. Of course, it would disable Windows on your PC if you didn’t pay. That’s why product activation was coupled with Windows XP.

Microsoft released Windows XP and Office XP simultaneously in 2001 and both included product activation and the plan to eventually migrate to subscription products. However, by the end of 2001 Microsoft had already abandoned the subscription concept with Office, and quickly

returned to the shrink-wrapped business model and the old product development model with both products.

The idea of doing incremental releases and upgrades of its software — rather than a major shrink-wrapped release every 3-5 years — was a good concept. Microsoft just couldn’t figure out how to make the business model work, but instead of figuring out how to get it right, it took the easy route and went back to an old model that was simply not very well suited to the economic and technical realities of today’s IT world.

1. It broke too much stuff

One of the big reasons that Windows XP caught on was because it had the hardware, software, and driver compatibility of the Windows 9x line plus the stability and industrial strength of the Windows NT line. The compatibility issue was huge. Having a single, highly-compatible Windows platform simplified the computing experience for users, IT departments, and software and hardware vendors.

Microsoft either forgot or disregarded that fact when it released Windows Vista, because, despite a long beta period, a lot of existing software and hardware were not compatible with Vista when it was released in January 2007. Since many important programs and peripherals were unusable in Vista, that made it impossible for a lot of IT departments to adopt it. Many of the incompatibilities were the result of tighter security.

After Windows was targeted by a nasty string of viruses, worms, and malware in the early 2000s, Microsoft embarked on the Trustworthy Computing initiative to make its products more secure. One of the results was Windows XP Service Pack 2 (SP2), which won over IT and paved the way for XP to become the world’s mostly widely deployed OS.

The other big piece of Trustworthy Computing was the even-further-locked-down version of Windows that Microsoft released in Vista. This was definitely the most secure OS that Microsoft had ever released but the price was user-hostile features such as UAC, a far more complicated set of security prompts that accompanied many

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basic tasks, and a host of software incompatibility issues. In other words, Vista broke a lot of the things that users were used to doing in XP.

Submitted by: Greg

Blackberry Storm, 'Application Center' info leaked



Wow, a whole lot of Blackberry-related news surfaced this weekend.

First, the user's guide to the highly-anticipated Blackberry Storm was leaked by the ever-intrepid BoyGeniusReport, who posted exclusive images on their website.

Second, and more importantly, news of the Blackberry Application Center has emerged. Taking a page — hell, a chapter — from the iPhone App Store and T-Mobile G1 Android Market book, RIM has created a store "aimed to launch on the the BlackBerry Storm's version 4.7 operating system" that will allow the user to find, browse and install third-party BlackBerry apps hosted by carriers, reports Crackberry.

The App Center is reported to consist of a device-side application and a server backend hosted by RIM that the application will interact with to retrieve up to date application list of applications hosted by the carriers.

The ever-popular Crackberry has the details:

The Application Center will be available on 4.7 Storm devices and will be designed for the Storm touch screen UI.

Carriers will be responsible for hosting the application data and sending updates to the directory to RIM.

The main application screen will provide the user with a list of all applications that are available for install from the particular carrier for the specific device model and OS version. Incompatible applications will not be displayed.

The main screen will provide the user the ability to quickly browse the application list, then view the available information about each application in a detailed description screen which shows the logo and full description. Installation will occur with one click (launches the web browser).

The user will be able to access the Options > Applications screen from within the App Center (allowing the user to delete applications directly from within the App Center).

The user will be provided with various status info: date the app list was most recently updated; notification that updates are available; option to reapplication list was completed, etc.

Since the download and installation will be handled by the browser in this first release, the Application Center will not be capable of restarting the application / download intelligently.

The Application Center will automatically check for updates daily.

To compare, the iPhone App Store is the sole hub for developers to sell apps and consumers to purchase them, while RIM seems to offer the App Center as a centralized forum for carriers to more easily distribute their apps.

Either way, looks like they've still got stiff competition: Apple iPhone sales recently surpassed Q4 analyst estimates of 4 million and rung in its 2008 goal of 10 million (and counting).

Submitted by: Greg

How a Mac Mini can beat a quad-core Vista behemoth (or how Apple can't write good software for Windows)



Here's a tale of how a humble Mac Mini system outperformed my cutting-edge quad-core system. It's also a story of how Apple can't write good software for the

Windows platform.

The other day I was chatting to George Ou about professional grade digital SLR cameras that offer 1080p video capability. He then mentioned how his system (an Intel Core 2 Duo 2.4 GHz PC system with an NVIDIA 8800GT GPU) couldn't handle 1080p H.264 QuickTime movies.

Thinking that it might be an issue with his system, I downloaded some test clips and tried playing them with Apple QuickTime on my 3.0GHz quad-core QX9650 Vista 64-bit system - This

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rig is kitted out with Velociraptor drives, 8GB of fast RAM and a Crossfire quad-GPU setup. The results - Awful. The clip was jerky and juddery, and while not technically unwatchable, I really didn't want to spend too long looking at it.

Note: If you want some sample 1080p H.264 QuickTime movies to try out at home then check out this page and scroll to the bottom for the clips we are using.

Now let's get some perspective on this. My system is capable of flawless Blu-ray H.264 1080p video playback and so the system is operating normally. However, just to be sure that this wasn't some random issue I also tried the clip on a few other systems that are not as powerful as my rig, but still very capable (all get a top score of 5.9 on the Windows Experience Index scale). Same results. The video seem to stutter every second or so and this continues throughout the clip. I then tried some other clips. Same results. I swapped out the video card in my system for an NVIDIA 280GTX graphics card. Same results. I tried Vista 32-bit and Vista 64-bit. Same results. No matter how much hardware I threw at the problem, the stuttering video persisted.

George suggested that I try the clip out on my 1.66 GHz Mac Mini system that kitted out with 512 MB of RAM. Compared to the quad-core system the Mac Mini is very, very low-end. So how does the Mac Mini running QuickTime handle these test clips? It plays them back flawlessly.

So, is the Mac Mini's hardware superior to that of the quad-core rig? Of course not. OK then, it it down to the OS? Is the Mac OS superior to Windows? Is there no way to get 1080p H.264 QuickTime movies to play smoothly on Windows? Well, there a simple test we can do. Let's check out whether any of the third-party media players can give smooth, unstuttered playback.

There are a few alternatives to Apple's QuickTime software on the Windows platform. For example, there's QuickTime Alternative and VLC Media player. I have VLC installed on several systems so I tried the clips again. Result? Flawless playback.

So what's the deal? 1080p H.264 QuickTime

movies play fine on the Mac Mini through QuickTime, and they play fine on Windows when using third party media players. So the issue is here isn't which OS is best, or which platform is best, it's all down to Apple's QuickTime player for Windows not being up to the job.

Note: I'm going to ignore the fact that QuickTime virtually offers door into people's PCs for any hackers willing to use it.

Once again, it seems that Apple just can't write decent code for the Windows platform. That may be because Apple doesn't have the in-house skill to develop good software, or it may be down to some decision to make Mac OS seem better than the Windows platform. Either way, vendors who adopt Apple's QuickTime MOV format for their hardware (such as Canon with the EOS 5P Mark II) need to be aware of the fact that Windows users are getting a poor product experience thanks to the poor performance of QuickTime.

Submitted by: Greg

Google tries to stop you from sending mail you will regret



It appears that Google has added a new feature to Gmail Labs that tries to make sure you are in the right state of mind before sending messages — particularly helpful when you have maybe had a few too many drinks, and are about to send an email that would obviously be embarrassing if you had done it sober. It does this by asking you to solve mathematical problem before you are allowed to send messages during hours that you are likely to be "not quite right" (which in some cases would quickly get very annoying I'm sure).

You can enable the feature by clicking on the beaker at the top of your Gmail — then enable the "Mail Goggles". Once enabled, you can change the times it will intervene in your general settings.

By default, Mail Goggles is only active late night on the weekend as that is the time you're most

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likely to need it. Once enabled, you can adjust when it's active in the General settings. — Official Gmail Blog

This is an interesting feature that I'm sure some people could make use of, but when I first read the title on an article about this new Google feature on Blogoscoped, I was hoping it was something a bit different. Ideally I'd like Google to delay our sent email for about 15 to 30 seconds so that we have time to hit "undo" if you immediately recognize something bad has just happened. An option to turn this type of delay on would be a huge step forward in this regard.

It has also launched other "labs projects" — the most useful, in my opinion, is one that detects missing attachments (I'm sure we've all done that a time or two). What do you think of the new labs features?

Submitted by: Greg

PluggedIn: Web technology cuts mobile calling fees



The cost of talking on the go is coming down, thanks to an increasing number of options for using Internet calling services on cellphones as an alternative to

traditional cellular service plans.

Nokia is one of the biggest makers of cellphones with Wi-Fi chips. Some high-profile devices are equipped with the short-range wireless technology, including Apple Inc's iPhone and some BlackBerry models from Research in Motion Ltd.

The soon-to-be-released G1 Google phone from HTC Corp and T-Mobile also sports a Wi-Fi chip. For Mark Laris, a Dallas-based nuclear engineer who travels the world running his consulting business, the technology saves him thousands of dollars a year on international phone bills.

Wi-Fi chips and Voice over Internet Protocol, or VoIP, let him do most of his business and personal calls over cut-rate phone services that work over the Web. His only cell phone bill is a 1,400-minute-per-month family plan from AT&T that he shares with a business partner.

"I always make VoIP calls," he says, adding that

the call quality is as good as a traditional mobile phone service.

He accesses the VoIP services using a Nokia phone loaded with a Wi-Fi chip similar to ones that allow laptops to access the Web in smaller venues like coffee shops.

The new phones are capable of operating just on Wi-Fi -- they don't necessarily have to use a cellphone carrier at all -- and when you're not in a Wi-Fi "hot spot" they ring through to your Wi-Fi carrier's voice mail.

Still, mobile VoIP is a fledgling field.

In the United States, Deutsche Telekom AG's T-Mobile sells Wi-Fi phones and Internet calling plans for \$10 per month on top of regular fees. It is the only U.S. carrier with such a package.

Otherwise the market is filled with small, privately held companies hoping to make a name for themselves. They include DeFi Mobile (<http://www.defimobile.com>), Fring (<http://www.fring.com>), Gizmo5 (<http://www.gizmo5.com>), Sipgate (<http://www.sipgate.co.uk>) and Truphone (<http://www.truphone.com>).

TAKING ON SKYPE

One advantage that these new companies have in competing with established VoIP services such as eBay's Skype and Vonage is that old-style Internet calling required users to be sitting in front of a computer or hooked up to a laptop to make calls.

Mobile handsets with Wi-Fi chips free them from their PCs.

Ivan Domaniewicz, a commercial airline pilot with homes in Miami and Barcelona, recently switched to DeFi Mobile from eBay's Skype VoIP service. His \$40-per-month DeFi plan gives him unlimited Internet calls, voice mail and phone numbers in Argentina and Spain that ring through to his Nokia handset.

"It's really helped me keep in touch with my family and friends in Argentina and Spain," said Domaniewicz, who shuttles between the United States, Japan, Europe and the South Pacific.

"What's nice is that I don't have to take my computer out and start Skype-ing to talk to them. I just turn on my phone," he said.

Jeb Brilliant, an event planner from Long Beach, California, cut his monthly AT&T plan down to 700 minutes from a more expensive unlimited access plan after he got comfortable using mobile VoIP.

He uses Truphone, which charges 6 cents per minute to call landlines in most countries and 30

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cents a minute to call mobile numbers. It also sells bundles of minutes that are discounted over its a la carte rates.

Brilliant has tried other mobile VoIP services as well and says that the technology can sometimes prove more reliable than cell phone service. When a family friend recently went into labor, he found himself making phone calls via the hospital's WiFi network.

"You can get it (VoIP) in places where there is no cellphone reception," he said. (Editing by Brian Moss)

Submitted by: Greg

And Windows 7 is to be called ... Windows 7



And, as you probably know, since we began development of the next version of the Windows client operating system we have been referring to it by a codename,

"Windows 7." But now is a good time to announce that we've decided to officially call the next version of Windows, "Windows 7."

While I know there have been a few cases at Microsoft when the codename of a product was used for the final release, I am pretty sure that this is a first for Windows. You might wonder about the decision.

The decision to use the name Windows 7 is about simplicity. Over the years, we have taken different approaches to naming Windows. We've used version numbers like Windows 3.11, or dates like Windows 98, or "aspirational" monikers like Windows XP or Windows Vista. And since we do not ship new versions of Windows every year, using a date did not make sense. Likewise, coming up with an all-new "aspirational" name does not do justice to what we are trying to achieve, which is to stay firmly rooted in our aspirations for Windows Vista, while evolving and refining the substantial investments in platform technology in Windows Vista into the next generation of Windows.

Submitted by: Greg

Who's your best friend? If you don't believe it, just try this experiment. Put your dog and your wife in the trunk of the car for an hour. When you open the trunk, who is really happy to see you!

Doctors warn of rash from mobile phone use



LONDON (Reuters) - Doctors baffled by an unexplained rash on people's ears or cheeks should be on alert for a skin allergy caused by too much mobile phone

use, the British Association of Dermatologists said on Thursday.

Citing published studies, the group said a red or itchy rash, known as "mobile phone dermatitis," affects people who develop an allergic reaction to the nickel surface on mobile phones after spending long periods of time on the devices.

"It is worth doctors bearing this condition in mind if they see a patient with a rash on the cheek or ear that cannot otherwise be explained," it said.

The British group said many doctors were unaware mobile phones could cause the condition.

Safety concerns over mobile phones has grown as more people rely on them for everyday communication, although the evidence to date has given the technology a clean bill of health when it comes to serious conditions like brain cancer.

"In mobile phone dermatitis, the rash would typically occur on the cheek or ear, depending on where the metal part of the phone comes into contact with the skin," the group said in a statement.

"In theory it could even occur on the fingers if you spend a lot of time texting on metal menu buttons."

Nickel is a metal found in products, ranging from mobile phones to jewelry to belt buckles and

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is one of the most common causes of allergic contact dermatitis, according to the Mayo Clinic in the United States.

Earlier this year Lionel Bercovitch of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island and colleagues tested 22 popular handsets from eight different manufacturers and found nickel in 10 of the devices.

(Reporting by Michael Kahn; Editing by Opheera McDoom)

Submitted by: Greg

How long until Apple is bigger than Microsoft?



AppleInsider's Prince MacLean offers some interesting weekend food for thought:

While Microsoft executives like to talk about Apple as an insignificant company

with less than 5% of the worldwide market share of all PCs and servers sold, the Mac maker now has more cash than Microsoft and earns more than half of its profits and over three fourths its revenues.

The numbers are incredible: Microsoft

Revenue: \$15.1 billion | Net profits: \$4.3 billion
| Cash & cash equivalents: \$20.7 billion

Apple (non-GAAP)

Revenue: \$11.7 billion | Net profits: \$2.4 billion
| Cash: \$25.5 billion

All of which raises an interesting question - How long until Apple is bigger than Microsoft? And before you scoff at that idea that dismiss me as an Apple zealot (which I am not), it very much is a possibility given that Microsoft's quarterly revenues grew by only 9%, while Apple's (as measured non-GAAP) grew by a staggering 75%.

The difference? Well, I think that it's all down to the philosophies of the two companies, and

how Microsoft might have made a long-term misjudgment as to where the money is.

For example:

Do you really need a huge user-base to rake in huge profits? Microsoft believed you did, but Apple is hitting the high numbers on a low user base.

Is the real money in having your OS on a computer, or in selling that OS/hardware package as a single product? It's clear that Apple is gaining ground on Microsoft by selling a product that it controls very precisely. Apple also manages to score very highly when it comes to customer satisfaction.

Is there still huge profits to be made on the desktop, or does Microsoft need to follow Apple's model and go mobile.

Advertising. Advertising! ADVERTISING!!! Compared to Apple, Microsoft's advertising is awful. Rather than maintain that it's a bigger, better company than Apple, Microsoft (along with probably most of the cellphone industry) needs to take a closer look at how Apple has managed to grab the profits that it has with such a small market share.

Clue: Advertising, customer satisfaction, mega-hype!

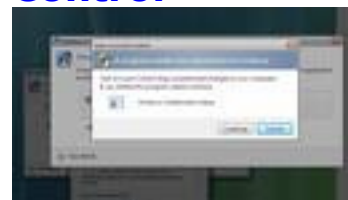
Let's be clear though, it's not all plain sailing for Apple. The economy is a bit choppy right now and Apple isn't totally recession-proof. But then again, neither is Microsoft.

Five years ago I don't think that there were many people who seriously believed that Apple could seriously compete with Microsoft. How times have changed. It'll be interesting to see how things stand a year from now

Submitted by: Steve

Computer Tips and Tricks

A Vista pet peeve -- User Account Control



Have you been faced with User Account Control alerts? If you're a Windows Vista user, chances are you have. In all likelihood, you've seen it numerous times.

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User Account Control is a security feature new to Windows Vista. It alerts you when an unauthorized program tries running on your PC. This lets you control which programs have access to your computer. With it, you can stop malicious programs before they do any harm.

Sounds great on paper, but in reality, it can be a pain. User Account Control pops up every time you install software. Even when you know the program is safe, you get the alert. It's annoying, and can really slow you down.

Get control back

There are a few ways to get around User Account Control. Picking one depends on your level of expertise.

You could turn UAC on and off as you need it. To do this, go to the Control Panel, and select User Accounts. Then click User Accounts again. Finally, use the "Turn User Account Controls on or off" button.

This is something less experienced users can do easily. But there is a big downside. You must reboot every time UAC is turned on or off. This takes a lot of time. In fact, it could be more annoying than the alerts themselves.

More advanced users could turn UAC off permanently. This is done in the same manner as before - Control Panel >> User Accounts >> User Accounts >> Turn on or off.

The risks

This strips away one of Vista's security features. You will not receive warnings of downloads, even secret, malicious ones. If you go this route, be sure your security programs are updated. I have numerous free security programs on my site. And keep Vista updated, too

From <http://www.komando.com/tips/index.aspx?id=4023>

Submitted by: Steve

Two newbies were sitting around talking one afternoon over a cold beer. After a while the first Newfie says to the second, 'If I was to sneak over to your house and make love to your wife while you was off huntin', and she got pregnant and had a baby, would that make us related?'

The second Newfie crooked his head sideways for a minute, scratched his head and squinted his eyes thinking real hard about the question.

Finally, he says, 'Well, I don't know about related, but it sure would make us even.'

There Must Be 50 Ways to Say...



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No, Nyet, Nein, Non, and Nope! All of the above are FALSE. Some of these rumors, urban legends and hoaxes may have a ring of truth, but they are all bogus.

In some cases, rumors are started by well-meaning people who just got the facts bass ackwards. Others are malicious -- created to intentionally mislead the public, damage the reputation of a company, or to attack an individual.

The Dying Child Hoax

One of the most famous cases of a well-intentioned email blitz that morphed into an urban legend involved Craig Shergold. In 1989, Craig was a 10 year old boy hospitalized with a brain tumor. A family friend began a campaign to get him into the Guinness Book of Records for receiving the most post cards, and before long it started spreading by email. Cards began to pour in by the MILLIONS, year after year. Even though Craig was cured in 1991 and his family made public appeals for the cards to stop, their pleas were no match for the power and longevity of the email chain letter.

The Craig Shergold chain letter morphed and spawned a wave of bogus "sick child" emails that have caused untold grief to other families who were the targets of pranksters, as well as financial harm to charities such as the Make A Wish Foundation.

A Knee "Jerk" Reaction?

I've devoted considerable time and effort over the last 15 years to educating people about hoaxes and urban legends. But it seems that a majority of people are willing to believe almost ANYTHING they read in an email, and blindly forward it en masse, without bothering to check out the validity of the claims being made.

In some cases the sheer lack of logic on the part of the knee-jerk reactionaries is stunning. A widely

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circulated rumor a few years ago claimed that 23 people had been attacked by the Klingsman Virus, transmitted in a blue envelope that arrives in your postal mailbox. If something like that was REALLY happening across the country, do you think you'd be learning about in an email? Wouldn't the news be trumpeted from every radio, television, and newspaper headline? But still, millions of people heeded the warning to "PLEASE PASS THIS ON TO EVERYONE YOU CARE ABOUT" without engaging a single brain cell.

So before you forward ANYTHING... think first, then verify. Visit a news website, use a search engine, or check it out at one of the urban legend verification websites. I always point people to Snopes because they are professional journalists and do an excellent job of researching each rumor.

Other good places to validate or debunk rumors and urban legends are the Urban Legends and Folklore pages at About.com and the Urban Legends and Hoaxes Resource Center from the folks at Scambusters.

Submitted by: Steve

A Few simple Tricks Can Make Your Digital Snapshots



Let's face it, looking at others' vacation photos is often a complete bore. Why? Because the photos just aren't very good. Blurry or poorly composed images can turn the most exotic adventure into a yawn fest. Follow these few tips to make sure your

trip gets the stunning record it deserves.

Forget megapixels. Most digital cameras have at least 6 megapixels—more than enough for the average user. So if you're in the market for a new camera, spend less on megapixels and more on a good-quality, faster lens with an f-stop of f/2.8. This will allow you to shoot in lower-light situations without always using the flash—which is generally only effective within 12 to 25 feet of the camera anyway.

Follow the sun. Make sure the sun or your primary light source is behind you (not behind the subject of your photo) to avoid washed-out colors and shadowy faces.

Background check. I've seen people meticulously line up family members for a group shot at the Grand Canyon—with nothing but the parking lot behind them. Put the camera down and survey the scene before you shoot. Moving a few feet can also help eliminate ugly elements like power lines, garbage trucks, and billboards. Also make sure there are no random passersby in your shots.

Kill the countdown. Every so often, break away from hollering "1, 2, 3, smile!" before you shoot—it's annoying for everyone around you and mortifying for the people you're photographing. More important, opting for a few candid photos of family and friends will help tell the story of your summer vacation in a much more compelling way.

Stop centering. It feels natural to put the subject of your photos in the center of the frame—and there's nothing really wrong with that. But a more interesting photo often results from applying the "rule of thirds," which states that an ideal location for the subject is one third of the way into the frame either horizontally or vertically (see the photos below).

Hold steady. Image stabilization isn't just a gimmick to get you to spend more on a camera. It really does help compensate for hand-shake so you can take sharper pictures even when you're shooting at slow shutter speeds (necessary in darker situations) or when you're extremely zoomed in. Try using a tripod or mini-tripod, or at least stabilize your hand on a rock, wall, or other stationary object.