

President's Corner

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Whatever happened to looking forward to an operating system upgrade? Hearing the marketing blitz and truly believing in it? A new operating system version that you just can't wait to see, all those new outstanding features. Instead we fear doing such upgrades. We just put them off as long as possible and just stay on the sidelines listening to the horror stories. Well I am not referring to OS/400 as the operating system to fear, although some of you who may have performed those early installs of V5R1 may disagree. What I am referring to is Windows XP. Yes, Bill's answer to a weekend long headache of advanced functionality. If you were lucky enough to find a new personal computer under the tree this Christmas, chances are it came with Windows XP, Microsoft's latest and greatest, therefore, you do not need to go down this road. Me, I'm still in Windows 98 and it's time to move on.

For those of us in the Baby Boomer generation who didn't grow up playing on computers before we could write our own names, the computer can still be a tool we all often avoid exploring for the fear of the unknown. Asking the kids doesn't help; they speak the language and we don't.

There's a new, cooler operating system in town I'm told. It's got a slicker desktop, and is much more stable than past versions. There's a good chance you already have a love-hate relationship with it. If you're used to previous versions of Windows, you may be frustrated that some features are missing, or just impossible to find. Worse yet have gone missing altogether!!

My daughter encourages me that we really should upgrade. She just loves it and all her friend's Dads have already gone down that round. Being a true father and not to be outdone by other Dads, I finally decide to upgrade to Windows XP. Its Saturday morning and I pour myself an extra large coffee (Black) and get ready to proceed. I cross my fingers and hope this upgrade will not turn into a total nightmare. But I'm determined to take the first step anyway, which is to run the Upgrade Advisor. It's an online diagnostic program that scans your computer and reports which software and hardware isn't compatible with XP, and advises what to do about it. The report lists a few incompatible programs which I don't need anymore, so I uninstall them and others I can update with free fixes from Web sites. I slip the installation CD into the drive, choose Quick Update, and answer questions

that periodically pop up on the screen. Ninety minutes later, it's finished. Not bad after all....

Here's where the trouble begins. I'm going to attempt to access the Internet through my Rogers@home network. I press the Internet Explorer icon and start to sweat. My Rogers will not connect... I call the support desk... and get the annoying message that the wait time is up to 2 hours due to excessive call volume. Ok I decide to scrap my Rogers, re-install and reconfigure the whole thing... 60 more minutes go by... Internet works...

Email is still down. I discover that I need some patches for my browser. I download them... 45 more minutes. There it is — I've got e-mail. Should have left it down as the messages come piling in. By the way I'm still on hold in priority sequence with the Rogers Help desk. I hang up...

Then I try to print. Nothing happens. XP doesn't recognize my printer. Oh, boy. Last time it took three technicians to get Windows to find the printer that's connected through my home router. This time I haul out my notes from that last encounter with the network monster. I actually kept the notes !!! Add a new printer port, enter the IP address, tell XP to locate the printer. It fails. I print a new printer configuration page and note its IP address is slightly different, so I plug in the new numbers and tell it to print. It prints. Finally 60 more minutes....

WHERE'S MY COMPUTER? For some bizarre reason, Microsoft thinks the best desktop for PC users is one almost

bare of icons. The default installation puts only one item on the screen — the Recycle Bin. C'mon... Do you know anyone who sets up their computer that way? Thankfully it's a simple matter to restore those useful icons.

It's been a few weeks now and I'm happy with XP — not a single frozen screen or system crash. Plus, there are many other improvements that actually work. Just when I say I like (notice I said like not love) they announce on the news a huge security issue with XP. Before the Internet, the biggest concerns were viruses your neighbor brought over on bootlegged game floppy, and whether your 3-year-old would accidentally nuke your Word documents. You didn't have to fret about hackers who might gain complete control of your computer from thousands of miles away. You didn't have to think about whether the e-mail sitting in your inbox could wipe your hard drive clean after sending random, private documents to all your friends.

You can, however, take smart steps to protect yourself. If you've got Windows XP, hopefully you've already patched that operating system for the problem that could let a hacker take over your PC.

I HATE CHANGE! If you just can't cope with Windows XP's new look and feel, which sure looks cartoonish, you can revert back to the "classic" Windows look. Right-click on the desktop, choose Properties, then Appearance. Click on the drop-down box under "Windows and buttons" and choose "Windows Classic style." Click Apply. But before you nuke the new look, try this: In that same dialog box, click on the "Color scheme" drop-down box and choose the Silver theme. It's still Windows XP, just not as gaudy. Some things should remain classic... I'm glad Coke did. T G