

Doctors Orders

Welcome

Welcome to 2009, there were times when 2009 seemed a long way off. But here we are! Christmas and new year are over, we've eaten our way through enough food to keep the British army in Afghanistan for another 6 months, watched all the Christmas movies, accumulated enough wine bottles to build a house, (www.agilitynut.com/h/dochope.html) and sent all the relatives back to the four corners of the globe, whence they came.

And what have we got to show for it?

Well, in my case another half a stone and enough spots for me to win a national fat and spotty competition. But looking on the bright side... it's back to work on Monday!

We've kicked off the new year with a series of fixed price workshop repairs to beat the credit crunch. Plus a new "while you wait" service that is ideal for those quick jobs and perfect for those customers that can't stand to be parted from their PC for more than a few minutes. (See page 2 for full details).

Also we have a very special offer from a company that provide tickets for west end shows. So if your idea of a night out is a game of darts at the Laughing Duck while the wife discusses "I'm a Celebrity" with the rest of the darts widows, now's your chance to earn brownie points and take her to a West End show. (See page 3 for details).

Another thing to look forward to in 2009 is the end of the world! On February 1st according to YoGi-SenSej. Incidentally this is the date of our next newsletter - so don't miss it for the world!

Assuming that we all make it to February 2nd. Welcome to 2009.

A happy new year to all our customers.

Craig



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Fixed Price Workshop Repairs

We at the Computer Doctors have built our reputation on the on-site work that our engineers carry out at customers homes and offices. Right from day one, we have stuck to a system of timed appointments so that our customers don't have to wait in all day for the engineer.

We are still one of the few companies that can respond the same, or next day to domestic repairs as well as business repairs, and with no price hike to account paying business customers over our "payment on completion" customers.

And I'm glad to say that none of this is to change! Apart from the reduction in call out charge which is now just **£58.72**. (Timed appointment, 1st hour free)

Our workshop, however, has always played a supporting role to our on-site engineers. This is where we keep the stock of parts needed to repair 98% of all PC's. Well equipped workbenches with tools to strip down, diagnose and repair PC,s brought in by our engineers.

Lately, however, some canny customers have managed

to find our workshop, nestled as it is off Blackthorn road, Northampton in a tiny industrial estate.

Our workshop has always charged on a per hour basis and some customers have been reluctant to leave their PC with this open ended arrangement. So we have listened to our customers and now have a series of fixed price repairs that can match all pockets.



There are, of course, some repairs that are better fixed on-site, such as Internet and network problems and those involving large pieces of equipment such as laser printers etc. But if you are happy to unplug your PC and drop it into our workshop, we can now offer

you a repair facility second to none.

Full details of our on-site service, as well as our new fixed price workshop repairs, can be found at:

www.computerdoctors.uk.net/pages/rates.htm

and if you still haven't found our workshop yet, see the back page for all our contact details.

Unlock the hidden features in the Windows 7 beta

Net Meter

If you need to keep an eye on your Internet bandwidth, say so that you don't exceed your ISP's monthly limit. Then you need a tool such as Net meter. It graphs all network usage, including Internet usage in real time and reports on your daily, weekly, and monthly traffic, among other types of reports. Its not free but you can download a free trial for 30 days and if you like it can then be purchased for \$29.95 which converted to £14.26 the last time I tried it in PayPal. Although the way that the Pound and the Dollar are bouncing around, it may vary slightly over time.

www.hootech.com/NetMeter

If you've installed the Windows 7 beta, you might be interested to learn that there are hidden features in the program that are easy to unlock with "Blue Badge".

<http://www.withinwindows.com/2008/11/09/blue-badge-tool-now-available-unlocks-all-known-protected-features>

Microsoft blocked access to certain features by checking to see whether users are members of certain domains and whether they are temporary or contract employees. Those parameter checks were hard-coded into certain system files.

Blue Badge makes backup copies of the affected system files and then patches those files to bypass the checks Microsoft put in place, thereby opening access to the hidden features.

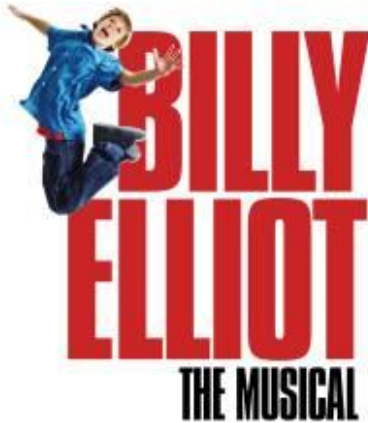
The cloaked goodies include the new Windows 7 taskbar, the new Desktop Slideshow, and gestures and panning on touch-screen systems.

If you're using the beta of Windows 7 and are interested in seeing the hidden features, get a copy of Blue Badge and take them out for a test drive.

Keep in mind, however, that Microsoft executives insist Windows 7's final interface may look nothing like the features unlocked by Blue Badge — for better or worse.

Special deals for West-End Shows

What's this to do with computers? I hear you say. Well we know our customers like a night out now and again to get away from their computers and when Westendtheatre.com said they had some special prices to tempt our customers off their couches, we jumped at the chance to let you see what you are missing.



Launched in January 2008, Westendtheatre.com is already one of the fastest growing theatre ticketing sites on the net. They provides bargain theatre tickets and special offers to a host of West End musicals and plays in London. Many of the best London shows are offered at bargain prices, including cheap tickets to Chicago, The Sound of Music, Hairspray, We

Will Rock You, Joseph, Billy Elliot and Grease.

They also provide large allocations of London theatre tickets for in-demand shows such as Oliver, The Phantom of the Opera and The Jersey Boys. Plus exclusive London theatre and dinner packages – many including free dinners at top West End restaurants.

So whatever your taste, there is a night out waiting for you. Just click the link below and have a look at what they have to offer. There's even a review blog on their site, where you can read what others think of the shows and even add your own review.

www.westendtheatre.com/theatreclub



10 top Tips for Outlook's calendar tools

1 - SHOW MULTIPLE TIME ZONES

To view a second time zone in the calendar, switch to day or work week view and select Tools > Options and click Calendar Options followed by Time Zone to set it up.

2 - WHO'S ON HOLIDAY?

Display public holidays for various countries around the world including your own: choose Tools > Options, click Calendar Options and click Add Holidays to set it up.

3 - START MENU CALENDAR ACCESS

For quick access to Calendar, add a link to your Start menu. Choose View > Folder List (Go > Folder List in Outlook 2003 and 2007), drag the Calendar item onto the Start button and then place it on the All Programs menu or directly on to the Start menu itself.

4 - SHOW CALENDAR AS A WEB PAGE

Just select File > Save as Web Page. Choose the period you wish to be displayed and tick Use background graphic to select a background if you so wish. Now all you need to do is upload it.

5 - LABEL IT!

Use labels to help you navigate your calendar entries. Assign them via the event or appointment dialog during the entry process, or select Edit > Label to assign or edit the descriptions of the available colours.

6 - ONE-TIME EVENTS

Double-click in the banner area of the calendar to set up an event. Just type in a name or description and you're done. Note that events will only last for the current day.

7 - FROM EVENT TO APPOINTMENT

To turn an event into an appointment, double-click it to open the Event form. Untick All day event and you can set start and end times for it.

8 - CHANGE DEFAULT REMINDERS

To change the default reminder and reminder time, choose Tools > Options > Preferences tab and pick a new time from the drop-down list.

9 - MULTIPLE VIEWS

You can open any part of Outlook – including the calendar – in its own window simply by right-clicking it and choosing Open in New Window. Open as many windows as you like and then close Outlook (File > Exit). When you next restart, all previously open windows will reappear.

10 - A NEW START-UP FOLDER

Change Outlook's default folder to your calendar by choosing Tools > Options > Other tab. Click Advanced Options - choose the new folder from the Startup in this folder drop-down list (Outlook 2003 and 2007 users should click Browse to select it).

Boost performance by killing unneeded processes

Some of the software running in the background on your PC does nothing but unnecessarily bog down your system.

There's a right way and a wrong way to prevent needless processes from tying up your machine's resources, so let me show you a method that won't bring you grief. A process of elimination for Windows processes

A customer voiced a problem almost every Windows user faces at one time or another:

"Where can I learn about processes that are running on my XP system and know which ones I can turn off to save system resources? Can you help me understand how to control what starts up every time I boot up? I know I always have 'junk' running that I almost never use."

We had just encountered the same thing with a brand new computer that arrived loaded with branded add-ins and so-called "extras" that we didn't want and had no use for.

The clutter and wasted disk space were bad enough, but some of these items were running at every startup. They consumed memory and CPU cycles as they sat there in the background, waiting for me to call on them, even though I never would. I stripped them out. But I didn't do it by killing their "processes," and I suggest you avoid axing processes as well.

Here's why: you can think of a process as a low-level mini-program that's launched by other software to handle a specific task or tasks. A single mainstream application or utility may launch many separate processes. The operating system launches many others.

Because the processes running on your PC are the result of other software running, the best way to eliminate unnecessary processes is to eliminate the unnecessary software. This way, the needless processes won't start in the first place, and that's much better than trying to kill processes after they're running.

I'll get to identifying individual processes later. Let's start by removing unnecessary software and preventing other apps from starting until you need them.

As always, before you make significant system alterations, create an image of your drive. This way, you can experiment more freely: if you don't like the way things turn out, simply restore the image to revert your system to its pre-altered state.

With your image in place, open Control Panel's Add or

Remove Programs applet. (In Vista's Control Panel, the applet is called Programs and Features.) Review the list of installed programs and select and uninstall any software that you don't want or don't use. Depending on what you choose, one or more reboots may be required to complete the un-installations.

Next, click Start, All Programs, Startup to open your Startup folder. The shortcuts in this folder represent the programs that auto-run when your system starts. If there are shortcuts in your Startup folder to software that you don't want to run at startup, right-click the unwanted item and select Delete from the context menu. (Note that this doesn't remove or uninstall the software; it simply removes the program from your PC's roster of auto-start apps.)

Your system also has a separate and more extensive "startup list" of programs and system services that automatically run when the system boots. This startup list operates at a lower level than the Startup folder mentioned above.

XP and Vista users have a very good, free startup manager at their disposal; believe it or not, it's Microsoft's Windows Defender, which is built into Vista and available as a free add-on for XP:

www.computerdoctors.uk.net/pages/links.htm

Windows Defender is thought of primarily as an anti-spyware tool, but the program also greatly simplifies management of your startup apps.

In XP, install Windows Defender and click Start, All Programs, Windows Defender. When the main Windows Defender window opens, click Tools, Software Explorer.

In Vista, open Windows Defender by clicking Start, Control Panel, Control Panel Home (if you're in Classic View). Under Programs, choose Change startup programs to open Windows Defender's Software Explorer tool with Startup Programs selected in the Categories drop-down menu. Alternatively, you can press the Windows key, type windows defender, press Enter, click Tools, and choose Software Explorer.

From there, the process is the same in both XP and Vista: choose Startup Programs in the Categories drop-down menu (it's probably selected already). You'll see a list of your startup items along with a ton of additional information about each entry, including who published the software, where the program lives on your hard drive, and whether it's digitally signed for security purposes. This saves you the manual digging that other startup editors require to find this information.

If you have more than one user account on your system, click the Show for all users button at the bottom of the window. Note that some firewall programs will immediately report activity by the "COM surrogate," but that's normal and should be allowed.

Select a program that you want to prevent from running and click Disable and then Yes to confirm. Repeat this step for every program you want to stop from running at startup. That's all there is to it!

Note that disabling startup applications is mainly a temporary fix designed to let you troubleshoot startup problems; the apps you disable are still fully installed. Although you can leave startup apps disabled forever, Windows will nag you about disabled startup items by popping a warning out of the system tray each time you boot up.

Once you've identified the program or programs that are the bogging down your system, the permanent solution is to uninstall the offending apps and replace them with better-behaved ones.

OK, now you've uninstalled the software you never use and have disabled the automatic startup of software that doesn't need to be running all the time. There's an excellent chance your PC will run better than before, especially if you take a little extra time to do some disk cleanup, using Ccleaner.

www.computerdoctors.uk.net/pages/links.htm

Then, run a defrag to clean up after your changes.

If your start-ups are still too slow, press Ctrl-Alt-Delete to open Task Manager (in Vista, you must also click Start Task Manager). Select the Applications tab to see what's running on your system. If there's unnecessary software active, use the techniques described above to uninstall the programs or prevent them from starting until you specifically invoke them.

If things still aren't the way you want, then — and only then — should you look at the individual items in Task Manager's Processes tab.

Processes don't exist independently: they're launched by programs. Therefore, the best way to control what processes run on your system is by managing the software you run, not by tinkering with the actual processes they launch.

If you don't recognize a specific process on this list — the names are often cryptic or uninformative — you can use sites such as www.ProcessLibrary.com or www.WhatProcess.com to help identify the purpose of each process. Advanced users may wish to ID obscure processes by downloading and using the free Process Explorer utility:

<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb896653.aspx>

which was developed by Sysinternals and is now owned by Microsoft.

Once you've tracked a specific process back to the software that launched it, you can decide whether you need it. If you feel the process isn't required to run, uninstall or disable the software that spawned it, using the techniques I described above.

Note that simply killing an individual process is a last resort. If you don't disable or stop the software that launched the process, the process will simply return at the next boot. In some cases, killing a process without dealing with the software that generated it may hang the program or make your system unstable.

Out with the Old, In with the New!

Christmas is over, our shiny new PC's and laptops are taking pride of place and our old PC's are now redundant.

So what do we do with the old one? We could pass it on to a younger member of the family, but if they want to play games on it, it will almost certainly disappoint. And what about the confidential data stored on the hard drive?

If you are scrapping your old PC then the cheapest way of destroying your personal information is to physically destroy the hard drive. There are programs that will overwrite your hard drive, several times, with gobbledegook, to completely erase any previous data, but you can't beat a good whacking with a large hammer!

If there's data on the hard drive that you may need in the future, then remove the hard drive and keep it in a drawer until you're sure that the data is not needed. Or place it in a USB caddy so that you can plug it into your new PC and when you're sure you have all the data, format the drive and use it to backup your documents or photos.

Disposing of the rest of the PC is not that easy either. Under the recent W.E.E.E. regulations all electronic equipment is classed as hazardous waste and must be disposed of correctly.

www.computerdoctors.uk.net/pages/recycle.htm

If you want to sell or pass your PC on, then it gets a bit more complicated. A clean wipe and reinstall, if you have the driver CD and a Windows product key, costs **£48.94** or **£63.44** if we have to download the various drivers.

If its going to a family member and you don't have any dark secrets lurking on your hard drive, then deleting the contents of "My Documents" and "My Pictures" etc then running Ccleaner should suffice.

www.filehippo.com/download_ccleaner/

Tip

Lots of our customers have the excellent program Ccleaner installed on their PC's. Its used as a file clean-up utility and registry cleaner. However it doesn't do much on its own. Having it on your PC does no good at all unless you run it!

Several of our customers have asked us how to use it and after explaining it several times, we thought we had better find some plain speaking instructions on how to use this useful utility to either place on our website or to direct our customer to.

After Googling it for several minutes and coming up with nothing, some bright spark suggested clicking the link in the program that says "Online Help". "It can't be this easy", we thought, but it was. It even has a "Quick Tour" icon that takes you through how to use the program in easy stages. So after a couple of minutes use, you're an expert. So don't forget, if all else fails, R.T.F.H.F.

(Read the flipping help files)

www.ccleaner.com/help/tour/1-after-installation

WordPad Transports Virus!

Microsoft security advisory 960906:

www.microsoft.com/technet/security/advisory/960906.mspx

reveals that attackers are using WordPad, the word processor built into Windows to sneak viruses into your PC.

You can lessen the potential for this attack by not opening any suspicious .wri documents or attachments.

Note that the problem doesn't affect Windows XP SP3, Vista, or Server 2008. That doesn't leave many potential victims, fortunately. (users of Win 98, M.E. and XP users not yet upgraded to SP3, are however, still vulnerable)

Microsoft's alert indicates that the exploit has been seen only in limited attacks. WordPad is such a core component of Windows that it's easy to take the program for granted. Perhaps none of our applications are safe.

All at "CompDoc's Towers" will be in serious trouble if "Solitaire" ever befalls the same fate!

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If this has been passed to you from a friend and you would like your own regular copy, just go to:

www.computerdoctors.uk.net/pages/newsletter.htm



Map to our Northampton Workshop
www.computerdoctors.uk.net/pages/map.htm

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General information & to book a call out

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