



Websites of Interest

- www.heifer.org
give a duck or a water buffalo
- www.earthcam.com
live views around the world
- www.thinkgeek.com
goofy stuff for techies



Watch for solid state hard drives to be offered in new computers. Using memory similar to USB flash drives, they are appearing in the mini-notebooks first. Their capacity is smaller than regular hard drives at the moment, but new flash memory technology will soon allow more storage.

Because there are no moving parts, power consumption is low and access speed is blazingly fast. The cost per gigabyte is high right now, but look for prices to drop and capacities to grow in 2009.



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Where Did My E-mail Go?

Did you notice a drop in spam in your inbox a few weeks ago? No? For end-users, spam isn't as much of a problem these days as it is for the Internet Service Providers, who filter a lot of it before it gets to you. Did you see a drop in regular e-mail one day? Some people did.

Most spam comes from *botnets*—networks of millions of infected PCs controlled remotely by spammers' servers. On November 11, two Internet providers pulled the plug on one hosting service in San Jose, Calif. Worldwide, spam immediately dropped by 75–80%. The host company for these servers clearly knew what was going on (they also hosted sites for fraudulent security software, credit card theft, child porn, and illegal pharmacy payments). A few days later, they activated a backup Internet access service they had previously contracted for, and started redirecting the botnet to servers in Russia. That access was again brought down in a few

hours, so the network hasn't been rebuilt. Spam is still at a low point that hasn't been seen in years—only about 60 billion e-mails per day. Yes, b-billion!

While you may not have noticed a drop in spam, you may have noticed some e-mail problems that day and the next. Verizon and Earthlink, among others, had major e-mail hiccups. Coincidence? Maybe, but there are still connectivity issues between some major carriers in the San Francisco hub two weeks later, and, yes, that can effect the east coast, since e-mail doesn't follow a direct route.

All of this serves as a reminder—there is no quality-of-service guarantee with e-mail. We depend on it, but if you send a critical e-mail, you might want to follow up. If an e-mail can't get through, it will sit on a server someplace and keep trying for up to 3 days. If it can't get through, the sender should get a notice.

Client Profile

Gone are the days when telephones were simple office appliances. Today's systems are dependable multitaskers that do far more than route calls. Features once only available in large installations are now common in small and medium size businesses.

Liberty Communications & Data Systems, in Mount Laurel, has been a local telephone vendor of choice for countless area businesses for the past 12 years. Founded in 1996 by seasoned telecom veteran, Gerry Gordon, the company specializes in custom designed telephone systems. When asked about his product line Gordon stated, "We offer an excellent selection of systems, whether you're simply replacing your current system and looking to streamline your call intake, or if you have a VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) need, we can help you

make the right choices."

Liberty also offers products beyond phone systems. Gordon had this to say about some of the other products his company offers, "We have a large demand from companies looking to integrate faxing, allowing faxes to be sent directly to your computer desktop. We also see a need for Presence Management; we can secure your site and regulate access, and we can make it easy to monitor your company's time and attendance." In addition to fax integration and presence management Liberty also offers Bluetooth integration with desktop office telephones, unified messaging, and dial tone services.

Their website has more information: www.libertycds.com or call 856-762-1222.

How Do I...

Do More With Your Computer

Many businesses still haven't made the switch to Office 2007. Office 2003 still meets their needs, and they are familiar with it. But because Office 2007 uses a new file format, exchanging documents can be problematic—earlier Office apps can't open them. But you have some options.

For Office 2000, XP, and 2003, you can download the Microsoft Office Compatibility Pack and you'll be able to open and save the new document formats. Search Google for "Office Compatibility Pack"; the MS link is too long to make sense in this newsletter. It's a big download—over 27MB—and you'll probably have to install all the service packs beforehand. You won't get all the new functionality of the Office 2007 applications, but you'll be able to use their basic features.

But how about just exchanging documents with other companies? Adobe Acrobat PDF is a great common platform for document exchange, with the added benefit that nobody can edit the document. Unfortunately, the Adobe Acrobat suite is pricey—\$449 for the full package (\$159 upgrade) and its features are overkill for most users.

Fortunately, there are many good alternative PDF generators available for download. One of the best is CutePDF Writer. The free version of their commercial product is probably all you need. It installs as a printer subsystem, so you simply click *Print* in the menu of the program you're working in and choose the CutePDF Writer instead of a physical printer. There are some options, just as with any printer, but when you press the *OK* button, you'll be prompted to save the file. It's very slick and the quality is excellent. The downloadable versions of this newsletter on


the Comp-U-Tech website were all generated by CutePDF Writer.

Speaking of PDFs...are you tired of waiting for the huge Adobe Acrobat reader to open when you need to view a PDF? Dump it. The very capable, speedy, and free Foxit PDF Reader has great features and is one tenth the size of Acrobat. Fifty million users can't be wrong.

There are a few other good programs that can help you do more with your computer. Do you keep a calculator on your desk because the one that comes with Windows is insufficient? Try the versatile Judy's Tenkey calculator, with paper tape emulation and customizable interface and data entry. Cut and paste your results just as you would between any Windows application. The program dates back to Windows 3.1, and it's been updated regularly since then; it's a survivor. It's not free, but at only 20 bucks, it's a bargain (and you can try it for free).

Finally, if you use photographs in your business, Google's free Picasa 3 (beta) can make quick work of putting the finishing touch on those pictures. The range of adjustments is broad; you can even edit video with it. And you can create a CD with photos and a slideshow viewer on it—just insert and watch. If you're nervous about using a beta version of software (pre-release), download version 2.7, but you won't get the video editor. The interface takes a little getting used to, but the results are top notch.

You can download all of the above programs (except the MS Office Compatibility Pack) from www.download.com, a dependable and malware-free site by publisher CNET, a division of CBS.

 Do you want to do more with your company's website?

Comp-U-Tech is offering a new Content Management System that allows you to update your site without the risk of messing up the page, without having to learn any HTML code, and without having to hire a web developer to keep the content fresh.

The system allows you to add content to your site, edit what's there, and upload files, all with an interface that's as intuitive as Word's. You don't even have to learn a new program, it's all done through your Internet Explorer browser.

If you'd like to try it out, visit our website and go to the Help page; click on the Content Management link at the bottom and read about it and experiment (click the link in the right column of the CMS page). Go ahead; you can't break it—that's the point. We have set up a portion of the page as a sandbox for you to play in. If it's messy when you get there, it's because someone else was using it.

If you like what you see, give us a call to find out more about adding this feature to your site.

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