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NEWS AND VIEWS

By Chuck Hajdú

Happy Holidays. I love that greeting, even though it has come to reflect the political correctness that seems to rule everyone's life today. The fall and early winter of each year are full of wonderful holidays that all deserve celebrating.

I love October (lots of family birthdays and Halloween), November (the Marine Corps Birthday, Veteran's Day and Thanksgiving) and December (Chanukah, Christmas and many other winter solstice celebrations). They are all holidays to me and I love to celebrate them.

Many of the holidays we celebrate have one thing in common. OK, two things in common: lots of good food and giving presents. I'm sure that most of our readers are tormented right now about what to give for the techno-geek on their list. We have a great piece on Netbook accessories that should give guidance to everyone looking for cool presents.

Speaking of Netbooks, it looks like they'll be an exploding product line this year.

I attended a Win7 launch event recently and found one comment from the presenter to be especially interesting. He warned the SysAdmins in the audience to be ready for the first week of January when all of the senior executives come in and want their personal Netbooks configured for the company network.

He was right, I feel that Netbooks are the wave of the immediate future. Recent research, the DisplaySearch Q3'09 *Quarterly Advanced Notebook PC Shipment and Forecast Report*, seems to validate my opinion.

In the past year (a BAD year for sales and the economy in general) sales of desktop PCs, notebooks and UMPCs all dropped significantly. If you sell PCs you are well aware of this. However, sales of Mini-note/Netbooks **GREW** 264%. Anyone in business should see what the pattern is: people are buying Netbooks by the ton!

So, let's say it one more time:
Happy Holidays!!

MCC

GOD BLESS OUR TROOPS, AND GOD BLESS AMERICA.



TECHNOLOGY SPOTLIGHT

iCYTE

By Bayle Emlein

iCyte (sounds like “eye sight”) is a utility for marking, archiving, sharing info about, and re-finding information on web pages. This web utility allows the user to bookmark, aggregate, and tag saved web pages for organizational purposes.

How is it better than the Bookmarks utility included with your browser? Four advantages pop up: iCytes are based on text selected from the site. That means you can include as much text as you’d like from the site—no more going back to hunt through the site to find the quotation or price that turns out to have answered your prayers.

It’s easy to aggregate and share iCyte projects with colleagues. It’s also easy to organize saved sites by project name. By making a project Public, you and colleagues can share in the identification of relevant websites. Thirdly, you can get into your iCyte account from anyplace that has internet access. That means that when I want to show co-workers research that I did at home since, all I need to do is log in. Fourth, iCyte archives your citations, along with the web address, if the address becomes temporarily or permanently unavailable, you still have access to your research. At least as long as iCyte keeps its servers powered up.

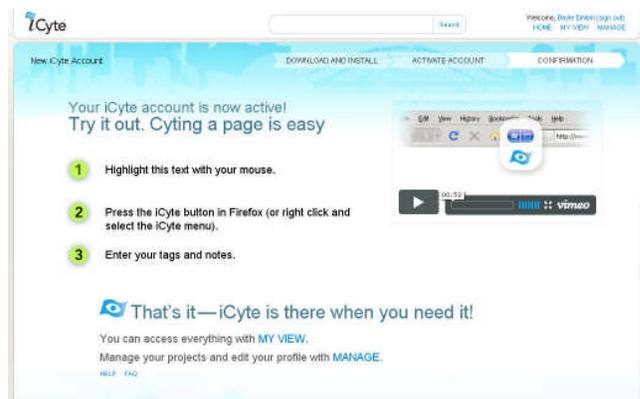
One starts by going to www.icyte.com. Locate the Download button. Click. Follow the installation instructions: download the plugin, set up an account. An iCyte flag is added to your address bar. Or at

least that’s what’s supposed to happen. Somehow the download/install didn’t quite work on my computer, but it worked well enough that I couldn’t repeat the installation routine.

The online intro video just about drove me wild with its repetitions of how easy and wonderful and useful iCyte is, but no clues about how to make the X@#\$\$ thing work. Disappointingly like many others—more of an ad for the product than an explanation. Hey, look! folks, I’m already at the site/cyte. I have an idea what I might want to do with the product. How about walking me through one of those many projects you refer to accomplishing with ease instead of just telling me how wonderful your iCyte experience was in creating and using them?

Normally, I would have just dropped the project right there, but since I was supposed to be reviewing the application, it seemed like I should make an effort to get in. So I emailed Support without identifying myself as anything more than an end user. Had a response by the next time I read email, each time we had an exchange. It took several rounds of email to clarify and the problem. Then resolution was a no-brainer. The original download hadn’t worked, though I had successfully set up an account. I was amazed at the amount of tech support available for a free utility.

Once installed and set up, I was ready to record my research. Just for the sake of the exercise in using iCyte, I developed an internet shopping project. Let’s see if I can use this thing to help support economic recovery.



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SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF MULTIMEDIA

PLUSTEK D28, FRANKLIN BRAIN POWER, LG XENON

By George Harding

Plustek D28 Mobile Office Scanner

This scanner is designed to be used in a mobile environment and it would work well for that purpose. It requires a power supply and a computer to function. A salesman in a home doing a presentation would find this quite useful and easy to carry, since it is quite small and light.

The scanner comes with several pieces of software in addition to the software for the scanner itself. The installation process is uneventful, consisting of successive installation of the scanner driver and the several software programs. Only one of these programs is really necessary for the scanner to work, DigiDoc.

The scanner has three buttons on the right hand side, one to toggle through up to 9 LED positions, a simplex button and a duplex one. The LEDs represent scanning parameters defined in the DigiDoc program. The parameters include resolution (up to 600 dpi), paper size, business card, plastic card, color, grayscale or black and white, output type (txt, image, OCR or PDF) and location of the output.

You can use DigiDoc to program each of the 9 LED positions with variations of these parameters, so that you don't have to make changes each time you scan something different.

My first test was with a single sheet of text, to result in a file that is an editable text document. The result was as defined; the output was an RTF file with editable contents. The OCR work was perfect.



George Harding

Next, I tried to scan a part of a newspaper page, defining the input as File/color/letter size with jpg output. I tore off a strip about 11" long and 6" wide from a newspaper as the input. It scanned OK and created the jpg file, but only the first five inches or so was captured.

For the third trial, I used a monthly calendar page, which has a picture, colored areas,

blocks for days, handwritten notes and headings for the month and days of the week as input and defined the output as OCR/color/letter size/text. The scan led to the OCR process and produced a document that has the picture, days of the week, the month and all the day numbers; no blocks, no colored areas, no notes. I had to install Word to get this result; Wordpad did not display the result correctly.



The scanner can scan business cards and plastic cards, so I tried these next. This test was defined as File/color/business card/jpg. The scan worked perfectly with a black and white card. I also tried three cards with color, which also scanned perfectly, including the colored design.

For the plastic card test, I used a credit card, which has raised text, colored areas, the coded number and a hologram. The scan was perfect, including the hologram!

The scanner has resolution capability from 100 to 600 dpi. I tried a text scan at 600 resolution and had it saved as in TIF format. It came out very clear; no pixelation was evident until magnification of about 14 times. The file size for a single sheet of letter-size paper was about 4 MB, compared to the 120 KB for the text file of the same page.

Lastly, I tried the PDF option. I used the cover page from the Best Buy flyer and fed it through twice, front and back. The back side scanned perfectly, but the front side only included about 60% of that page.

The scanner works best with plain text pages; these scan flawlessly. The business card test and the plastic card test were perfect, also. Scanning pages with pictures worked less than perfectly; although some were flawless, others were poor.

The documentation is quite extensive and is sup-

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SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF MULTIMEDIA

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plied in eight languages, along with limited pictorial guidance. There is one sheet for installation and another for scanning. These are quite large and must be folded severely to be useful.

There are four software applications included in the package: ABBYY Fine Reader (OCR); Presto! Image Folio; DigiDoc (programming for the LED buttons); and Presto! Page Manager. Documentation for each of these is in a separate PDF document (in the Help file, in the case of Page Manager). The printed documentation is amplified in the DigiDoc PDF. There is not printed documentation for the others.

This is a very nice, compact portable scanner. It would work best with plain text documents.

Requires WIN 2000 Pro, XP or Vista, 550 MB hard disk space, 256 MB RAM

Price about \$275
www.plustek.com

Franklin New York Times Brain Partner

This is a set of brain games that range from very easy to very challenging. It will keep your mind busy for a long time!

There are four categories of games: Memory, Words, Logic and Numbers. Each category has from seven to nine games, giving you a total of over 32 games to exercise your brain.

The unit is about the size of a PDA, a little bigger than your typical cell phone. It requires 3 AAA batteries, one set of which is included. The screen takes up about 2/3rds of the unit's front. There is an On/Off button, although the Off button isn't really needed; the screen powers down after about 30 seconds on no activity. The unit comes with a stylus for selecting things on the screen.

When you first start up, you are asked what language you prefer; there are seven available, and you can change to another at any time. The screen contrast, beep tone and backlight are changed

with special buttons on the bottom of the screen.

When you choose the Logic category, you get a choice of seven games: Tracker, Blocks, Sixteen, Pegs, Switch, SuDoku and Wordoku. Most people have tried out SuDoku. Wordoku is similar, using letters instead of numbers. Sixteen involves rearranging columns and rows in order to put the array of letters in the proper order. Pegs involves jumping pegs until only one is left.

The Numbers category includes Word Sums, Sums, Swimming, Totals, Calculate and Number. Calculate and Number are hard, at least for me, but the others are fairly easy. Calculate involves using arithmetic operations and single digit numbers to come up with a defined number. Numbers requires entering 8 of the 9 single digits numbers in three sum equations to arrive at the defined sum for each.

The Words category has Hangman, Anagram, Target, Word, Word Find, X-Word, and MatchPoint. Hangman and Anagram are games most of us are familiar with. Target gives you 9 letters in a 3 X 3 grid; you must select letters in the proper order to form a 9 letter word. Word Square is similar. X-Word gives you a 9 X 9 grid of letters and a list of words below; you indicate where each bottom word occurs in the grid. MatchPoint is hard; you are given a 9 X 9 grid with some empty squares and letters below. You indicate words made from the letters and insert them in the blanks.

Memory offers these challenges: New Item, Shuffle, Sequence, Matching, Faces, Digits, Simon, Dots and Pairs. New Item shows you several symbols, changes one and asks you to identify the one changed. Shuffle is similar except that the symbols are moved around after the change. Sequence asks you to identify which of several symbols shown one after another was which one (1st or 2nd or whatever). Matching is very easy – you simply identify the two symbols of a group are the same. Faces asks you to check which of four faces is the one you are shown first. Digits is similar, but with 3- or 4-digit numbers. Simon blinks one symbol after another; you click on the symbols in the same order as they blinked.



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SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF MULTIMEDIA

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Dots shows you a number of moving dots; you must correctly count how many dots there are. Pairs shows you many question marks; you click on two to find the matching pairs. It may take some time to get them all!

This is a great tool to exercise your brain. Some of the game are very easy, some challenging, some too hard for me!

Price about \$60 direct
www.franklin.com

AT&T LG Xenon Cellphone

You can do all the usual things with this cell phone: call, take a picture, store contact information, record and play music and videos. It accepts a memory card to expand the memory in the phone.

It has a touch screen to simplify accessing features and has a slide-out QWERTY keyboard. Most functions can be accessed with the touch screen, but some are done more easily with the keyboard.

Calls can be interrupted to take another and 3-way calling is supported. Call forwarding is also available.

It has Bluetooth capability, as do most phones today. This feature allows sharing data and files between Bluetooth devices within a limited range.

The camera is 2 megapixels and can be set to take the picture full screen or full image. Once taken, it can be used as wallpaper, or saved for transmission or later viewing. The image can even be edited.



The Xenon also takes video. The amount depends on how much storage is available. If you use an SHDC card to expand memory, you can take longer video. Image size is adjustable from 1600 X 1200 to 320 X 240 pixels. The file size is commensurate. Other adjustments include image size, brightness, color effects, night mode.

Media capabilities include music, which can be downloaded or uploaded. The phone supports formats AAC, AAC+, MP3 and WMA. It can also be used for streaming radio.

Media mall is accessible with this phone. Applications include games, ring tones, puzzles, action, racing and more.

The GPS Navigator feature can be used to give you driving directions to any address in the continental US. There is also a search feature to find businesses or points of interest near your locations. The tool provides an indicator showing you direction of travel, location and speed.

Another useful tool provides is YellowPages.com. This allows you to find businesses, call them, view ratings and get directions to the business.

There are four games supplied and more may be downloaded.

There are some applications available for download. The list is not very long, compared to what is offered by Apple and Research In Motion.

News on the web is easily available, with some offered in video form. More generally, the phone supports mobile video, which includes news, sports and celebrities. The video is quite good; there is some deterioration of the picture every so often, but the picture is generally excellent.

I've used several "smart" phones and each has its strengths and weaknesses. This phone is sleek, well designed and efficiently operational. I had few problems with it, other than the usual one of taking the time to learn how to use all the features.

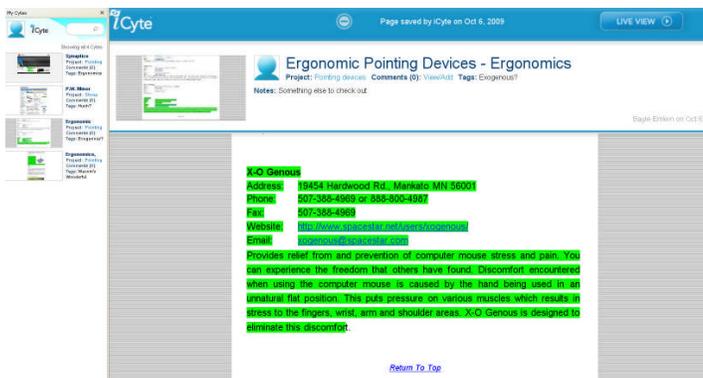
Price about \$300 without commitment, \$150 with 2-year commitment, less \$50 rebate.
www.wireless.att.com

iCYTE

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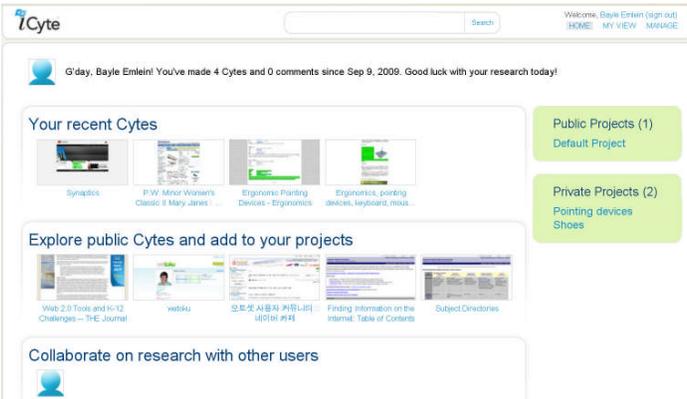
Now that it is all set up, it is easy to use. At the iCyte login page, I create my Projects and decide if they're Private or Public. When I realized that I was using the gathered data differently than first planned, after-the-fact changing a Project from Private to Shared was straightforward and painless.

Then, on to the Web. Whenever I see something I think I might like to see again, I highlight just that information, click the Create iCyte flag to the left of the tool bar, and add my comments.



Not interested in reading through the page right now? A click on the iCyte flag adds the entire page to my library for perusal at a calmer time. Once created, I can move the Cyte to another Project or email it to a colleague with a comment.

I appreciate the fact that the date that I made the Cyte is included; that matches how I think. This will be particularly helpful when I'm organizing a work-based research project.



I can't add to my Projects from work, as the security system won't allow me to add the iCyte application. (Yes, how dumb they are has already been discussed.) But I can get in and see the Projects I've created and have access to my organized information.

Stop! Hold the presses!! Found: the How To videos. They're in the PressPack section at the bottom of the iCyte top page, which I found wandering around looking for the Contact Us link again. Both are in a thin blue font on my vaguely blue-gray screen. And who'd think that the directions are in the PressPack? Well, clearly someone thought that's where everyone goes looking, first thing.

Does iCyte replace sliced bread or indoor plumbing as the greatest invention of the post-industrial world? Not quite, but it does make slicing the Internet so much easier. I'll leave you to imagine improved plumbing.

The price is certainly right. Not sure what about the revenue model, which concerns me because I'd like it to be good enough to keep the iCyte going. This is definitely a useful tool in the toolbox for managing the information overload. For students and other people who have to organize the results of research, it has the potential to save eons of time and avoid tons of frustration. Shh! Don't let them know at iCyte, or they might try to figure out how much their service is worth and start charging. The only downside that I can see is the assumption that I'll always have access to the internet whenever I try. Oh, and please put the directions up front, on top, and labeled as Start Here.

iCyte
205 Lexington Ave, 17th Floor
New York, NY 10016
Download
Price: Free

Phone: (212) 710-5164
Fax: (646) 808-0849

Support: support@icyte.com
Professional & Enterprise Inquiries: professional@icyte.com

NETBOOK ACCESSORIES

MUST-HAVE PRODUCTS FOR NETBOOK OWNERS

By Chuck Hajdú

It's been a long time since we've seen a product category capture the interest of consumer electronics users the way mini-notes/netbooks have. Sure, there have been very compact PCs around for many years but netbooks finally seem to have gotten everything right.

When MSFT first introduced WinCE I fell in love with the concept of a computer that can be carried with you like a Franklin Planner. I tried the Gen 1 models and they were terrible. The tiny monochrome screens were virtually useless and WinCE made me, you guessed it, wince!! The **NEC MobilePro 750C** was the first model that was close to good, It had a bigger color touch screen and better ergonomics but was still crippled by WinCE and the limited apps. I still have mine and remember it fondly.



NEC MobilePro 750C and ASUS Eee PC 900

If you're not familiar with the rapid growth of the netbook category in the past year or so, here are some facts. In the past year sales of netbooks have skyrocketed (up 264%) while price for the category have plummeted (down 29%). Netbooks only cost around \$300 for a computer that will do 90% of anything most users need. No wonder sales are off the charts!

My personal netbook is an **ASUS Eee PC 900** pre-loaded with WinXp. It isn't a review unit so I won't be commenting on it as I would an eval unit. It is typical of most netbooks and will provide a good platform to test the different products I'm reviewing in this article.

I believe all netbooks come with one of two operating systems, either WinXp or some flavor of Linux. WinV wasn't capable of being run on a netbook and I don't believe any vendors are preloading Win7 on their products yet.

Since my netbook came with WinXp I figured I should see if I could try Linux on it. I checked the internet and found that Ubuntu has a netbook version! I went to wiki.ubuntu.com/UNR and found all of the information I needed to download the software and install it on a USB flash drive. I didn't want to overwrite WinXp so this was perfect!

I downloaded the **Ubuntu Netbook Remix 9.04** (hereafter called UNR) .IMG file and also the Win32 Disk Imager, the software needed to load the software on a bootable USB drive. The instructions are very clear and make the process simple.

The system requirements for UNR are 512MB of RAM and 4GB of disk space on a flash/USB drive. Every netbook I have seen meets these requirements.

In order to load the software on a fast flash drive we contacted the Verbatim PR rep who sent us two of their drives to try. We received the **16GB Verbatim Stor 'n' Go USB Drive** and the **8GB Verbatim Tuff-Clip USB Drive**. Both are compatible with Windows, Linux and MacOS as USB drives. Both also have Password Security for Windows but not the other systems. Both are also very compact and solidly built. We chose the Tuff-Clip for our evaluation for no particular reason.



I followed the installation instructions and had no problems with the installation on to the USB drive. I inserted the drive into one of the USB ports (every netbook has several) and booted up to UNR effortlessly. There was a beautiful Ubuntu screen on my previously WinXp computer.



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NETBOOK ACCESSORIES

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Because it was a netbook, UNR knew that it had a smaller screen and set the resolution appropriately. Since I'm an old guy I normally use 1024x768 on all of my computers (tired eyes) but had no trouble using the 1024x600 used by netbooks.

All of my favorite software was there, including Firefox, the best browser ever. I was a happy camper and I must admit that I prefer the look and feel of Ubuntu on the smallish screen of a netbook. At this point I'm not prepared to overwrite my WinXp software or try dual-boot so I'm just leaving the Ubuntu flash drive in place and just putting the netbook to sleep so I can keep all of my preferences.

So much for software. What are the hardware accessories netbook users need?

Targus always has an excellent selection of accessories for every consumer electronics product. We checked their web site and netbooks are no exception.

We were sent two accessory kits for our review, the **Targus Netbook Essentials Kit** (BUS0192US) and the **Netbook Accessory Kit** (BUS0187). They provide similar tools for netbook users and you should choose the one that meets your needs the best.

The Essentials kit is perfect for people who actually use a computer on their lap. If you've ever felt the heat from a laptop/netbook sitting on your knees then you'll understand why this kit is needed. It contains a very effective Chill Mat that connects to one of the netbooks USB ports and fits netbooks up to 10.2". It works well and is highly recommended.



The kit also includes an Ultra-Portable Mouse and an Ultra-Mini USB 2.0 4-port Hub. Both of these items are vital for netbook users since USB ports are the only connectivity available. Netbook users find out very quickly that they need more USB ports if they intend to use their netbook seriously. Targus solves this problem nicely.

The Accessory kit is aimed at a slightly different user. Instead of the Chill Mat the kit includes a Slipskin Peel Mini-Notebook case. The case fits netbooks up



to 10.2" and is very sleek and minimalist. It provides protection in a tiny package. And, it feels really good! The kit also includes an Ultra-Mini Mouse and an Ultra-Mini USB 2.0 4-Port Hub.

Speaking of cases, **Brenthaven** makes an unbelievable line of cases for virtually any computer product made. Their netbook cases include the **Edge Netbook** case in black and silver that we were sent. The Edge case is designed for units larger than our Eee PC 900 but work fine for all netbooks.



The Brenthaven Edge case is very well padded and provides excellent protection for road warriors. There is a front pouch that is just large enough to hold a power cord. It's an ideal way to safely transport your netbook.

Several vendors make GPS programs that will work on netbooks. **MSFT Street & Trips 2010 with GPS Locator** is one of the few that sells their software with instructions for downloading and installing their product without an optical drive right on the box. Remember, netbooks don't have internal DVD drives! Netbooks are ideal as GPS units because you can use whatever software you want. The latest version of Streets & Trips has new maps and an intuitive interface. It's not my favorite GPS software but they've done a good job of making it netbook friendly.

The one problem you will run into using any netbook as a GPS is battery life. Most road trips are many hours long and you'll run out of battery power long before you get where you're going. What do you do?

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NETBOOK ACCESSORIES

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That's where Belkin comes in! Belkin has one of the most extensive lines of accessories for every possible CE product you can imagine. To solve our on-the-road power problem we tested the **Belkin AC Anywhere Plus AC300** power inverter. The AC300 plugs



into the cigarette lighter/power socket in your vehicle and provides two AC outlets. The AC300 provides plenty of power for a netbook to keep running for

many hours.

The AC300 has an internal fan to help keep it cool and has warning lights to alert you to potential problems with the unit overheating or draining too much juice from your car battery. It also has a 3 foot long cord which gives it great flexibility. My cars both have an outlet in the back of the car and that leaves the front outlet available for other devices. Even if you don't have a netbook you should have an AC300 for your travels.

There are two primary problems with netbook computers, the small keyboard (they're terrible for touch typists) and the small LCD screens. I guess touch-typers could add on a USB or wireless keyboard but how do you add additional screen space?

The solution is the **DoubleSight DS-90U Smart USB Monitor**. I've used dual-monitor computers for years and love them. When I first heard about the DoubleSight USB monitors I thought they might be perfect for netbooks and couldn't wait to test one.

The DS-90U is a 9" LCD monitor that connects to your computer using a dual USB cable for power and connectivity. The box contains the LCD with front cover, a compact stand, instruction sheet and software CD. The instruction sheet is short and sweet. Insert the CD in your PC and follow the directions. If your OS isn't supported then you can't complete the installation.

Since our netbook doesn't have a CD drive we went to their web site and downloaded the software. This process is explained on the instruction sheet. We first tried running it using UNR and hit the unsupported OS wall. No problem, we rebooted to WinXp and ran the installation again. This time everything worked flawlessly and in about 5 minutes all of the drivers were properly loaded.

Next we plugged the two USB plugs into the netbook and were rewarded with a beautiful second display. It worked perfectly and gave us more than double the screen capacity we had before. Instead of having to deal with everything crammed on one tiny screen we now had lots of real estate! The DoubleSight DS-90U is very highly recommended.



Find further information on all of these products at:

Ubuntu

Ubuntu Netbook Remix 9.04, MSRP: free
Win32 Disk Imager ,MSRP: also free
wiki.ubuntu.com/UNR

Verbatim

8GB Tuff-Clip USB Drive, Street price: \$30
16GB Store 'n' Go USB Drive, Street price: \$50
www.verbatim.com

Targus

Netbook Essentials Kit, MSRP: \$49.99
Netbook Accessory Kit, MSRP: \$39.99
www.targus.com

Brenthaven

Edge Netbook Case, MSRP: \$29.95
www.brenthaven.com

Microsoft Streets & Trips 2010 with GPS Locator,
MSRP: \$39.95
www.microsoft.com

Belkin

AC Anywhere Plus AC 300, MSRP: \$74.99
www.belkin.com

DoubleSight

DS-90U, MSRP: \$149.00
www.doublesight.com

TECHNOLOGY TODAY

By Robert Sanborn

Windows 7

Yes it is here and as you read this, you will be able to go to nearly any store and get a copy or have it bundled with your new computer. It is different, it works really well, and I like it. If you are buying a brand new computer, and will be getting all new software to go with it, then Windows 7 will be just fine.

The problem we run into is trying to make things work with old hardware and software. That is where you will run into the problems and frustrations and the bottom line here is that it probably shouldn't be done.

I have used Windows 7 for several months now having nuked my old (three years old) work horse computer and installed first the beta copy and then the release candidate on it. The good news with older hardware is that Windows 7 has many more native drivers built into it than did Vista and actually, Vista did a pretty good job of getting you up and going without really needing to install very many hardware specific drivers. Good news because finding Windows 7 drivers for something that is three years old just doesn't work and fortunately, it will take most Vista drivers for the hardware you have and use it just fine. My only real quibble with the hardware I had was that I couldn't use a USB phone I had been using with Skype because there were no Windows 7 drivers and the Vista drivers just wouldn't work with it. Had an older card scanner that I had the same problem with.

Same might be true with some software. I use Symantec's Norton Internet Security again after all the problems they have had with performance and bloat in the software but that is another matter as well. The 2009 version was simply wonderful by comparisons and runs like a speed demon on my Vista machines and is finally the product it was meant to be. But when I try to install it on my Windows 7 machine, it promptly quit the install process saying the operating system was not recognized. The funny part was their website said to wait till Windows 7 was released to get the update to work but the update expects you to already have the program installed on the machine. Seems they need to figure that one out as well.

What their solution ended up being was to install the 2010 version and use my existing 2009 product key.

Another program I had a problem with was Nero 9. New version does not like my copy of Windows 7. I had started the software installation and after 20 minutes was only 50% completed when the crashes started. Had to use the Task Manager to finally kill the installation. But kill it, it did, and they do a good job of looking for solutions to the problems.



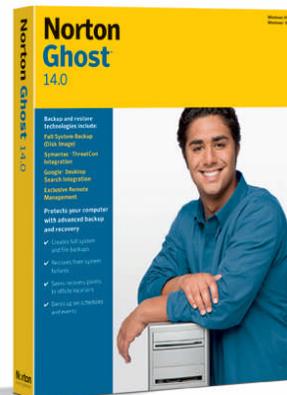
We have been really pounding this machine quite a bit, I have several user accounts setup for family members who have been using it a lot and we have been using different account level controls to manage them to allow only certain programs to run for particular users and it has been working well. In the past six months, I have had only one time where I have had to hit the power button to shut down the computer because we could not log into one of the users and even then, I am not

convinced it was a Windows problem as I had been having some problems with a KVM (Keyboard, Video, Mouse) switch I had been using. So, for a new computer, I highly recommend it which is strange coming from someone who normally recommends installing Windows XP.

Symantec Norton Ghost

I am a very long time proponent of keeping the computer backed up, and have had a chance to try out a number of different solutions over the years. My current backup plan

is to use **Symantec Norton Ghost 14.0** to back up my main Vista system over the network to a network attached storage unit that is configured in a RAID 5 format. I backup my system to the net-



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TECHNOLOGY TODAY

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work, and the network backs itself up using the RAID technology. A double layer of protection.

But, it had been a while since I made sure it was working so it was time to dig into it and see that all was right. First checked the storage system, an older Intel SS4000E box that has 4 hard drives configured in the Raid 5 format and that was working just fine. I have to say that when I bought the box, it came with a backup software package that I discovered would not work very well with Vista and so had to give up on it and go with the Norton Ghost.

I check the Ghost and it is backing up everything just fine on the network so that looks good. So the next thing to test was to see if I could get to the backup in the case that the computer dies and I need to replace the hard drive. To do that, you boot from a recovery CD that you create, and then are supposed to be able to restore the backups. My CD boots just fine but I discovered that it doesn't see the network. In fact, you have to go through hoops and several trial and error CDs in order to finally make it see the network.

When you boot the CD, it refuses to find the network adapter so what is needed is the .inf file for the network adapter. Under Vista, Intel will allow me to download the program from the website with the latest Lan driver but you can't extract out the .inf file from the package, you can only install the entire thing. The next thing to do is to figure out what .inf file I really need. I think I finally figured out after looking through the properties and drivers of the network card, and to be sure, did a google search on what the Device Manager says the Network Card name is.

So then, I do a search on the computer (and Vista search function really stinks), I think I have found the file, and copy it to a work directory so I can add the network adapter to the Ghost recovery CD build but of course that doesn't work probably because it needs something else besides the .inf file.

So far, I have burned and thrown away three Ghost recovery CDs. Back to the Intel website, and through Google, I find an obscure Intel document that tells me how to extract the files out of the downloaded drivers without installing them. Dump it all to a work folder, rebuild the Norton Ghost recovery CD one more time, and oh by the way, it takes about two hours time to

build that recovery CD, and finally, I can see the network. You still have to start the network services manually from the CD but it finally works. Now that it works, I think I will go find a simpler solution and take a look at Acronis.

Seagate Backup Systems

Another option for backing up your system is to look at the drives with the built in backup software already connected and one of the best options here is the Seagate Replica hard drives. They way they work is to connect the USB External drive to your computer (via a USB 2.0 Port which nearly every computer built in the past two years has) and then when it finds itself via either Vista or XP, it launches the Replica software. And in theory, it looks great. Launch the software, and it will start to back up your system automatically. If you have a severe crash, the boot CD that comes with it will be your lifeline into the unit to restore your hard drive.



What happens is slightly different and you need to watch out for a couple of things. First of all, Seagate tells you that you must plug it into a USB port that is directly connected to the mainboard. Not on the front panel USB port of most computers. What we found was that sometimes the unit would be recognized and sometimes not and it would give us flaky error messages so we ended up having to call Seagate to find that out. And calling them is a royal pain. You have to start via the web and register the product before you can even get to the phone numbers to call them and phone support is only free for installation issues in the first 30 days. After that you can use the paid phone support or via the web. Want the shortcut, call them at 800-732-4283 between 8:am to 6:pm weekdays. But be sure you have the product serial number handy and you will have to register it over the phone. Still, a recommended product for a very simple backup solution.

THE OFFICE ONLINE

MAKING THE TRANSITION TO A SOCIAL BUSINESS

By Andy Marken



“Look, I’m all about loyalty. In fact, I feel like part of what I’m being paid for here is my loyalty. But if there were somewhere else that valued loyalty more highly, I’m going wherever they value loyalty the most.” – Dwight Schrute – The Office, ABC-TV

Seriously... Tim Berners-Lee had no idea how huge his concoction was going to be when he first unleashed the Web on the world.

Like the Internet itself, all he wanted to do was make it possible for researchers to share/update information with other researchers.

Somewhere along the way, it got “a little” outta’ hand! Well, not really. There’s just a little chasm between boomers, Gen Xers, Gen Yers.

There’s also a little chasm between C-level execs, marketing/communications, workers.

There’s little to no chasm between work and home. In “the company”:

- 93% own a cellphone, compared to 78% of industrial country adults
- 85% have a desktop computer, compared to 65% of all adults
- 61% own a laptop, compared to 39% of all adults
- 27% own a Blackberry, iPhone or similar device, compared to 13% of all adults

For the most part, all generations, work levels agree that these and other technologies have had a positive effect on their productivity.

Workers Who Believe Technologies Have Had a Positive Effect on Productivity



Source: Kelly Services

Figure 2 - Technology Helps – Regardless of the generation, company personnel feel that today’s advanced technology has helped them become more productive in their jobs. **Source – Kelly Services**

They use their computers, use email and most even use an Internet browser. The majority (90%) believes the new technology; new software helps them perform better, faster.

C-level executives see the social networking tools as a means of achieving marketing/sales success, but don’t think it’s for use by everyone.

Market Mining

In their minds, the social networking tools are useful for:

- acquiring new customers
- increasing customer retention
- increasing customer lifetime value
- launching new products/services
- increasing brand awareness
- expanding in new market areas

While PC/CE companies are more heavily involved than all businesses, C-level executives and firms aren’t exactly flooding the social networks.

Fortune 100 Companies with a Twitter, Facebook or Blog Presence



Source: Burson-Marsteller

Figure 3 - Socially Behind – While social network firms and users love to extol how much people are using the P2P services, they are only gaining modest traction with companies across the board. However, firms in the tech areas are gaining confidence in the use of services. **Source – Burson-Marsteller**

(Continued on page 13)

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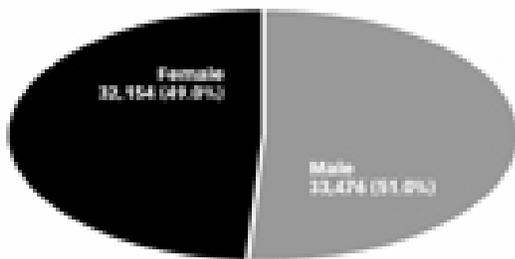
(Continued from page 12)

According to a study by Deloitte:

- 31% of CEOs are on Facebook (69% aren't!)
- 30% use social networking as part of their business, operations strategy
- 23% use social networking as internal communications tool
- 18% have employee-created Facebook group
- 14% of CEOs have Twitter profile
- 13% post corporate videos on YouTube
- 11% have company-sponsored Facebook group

As you might expect, most of those who use the Internet at work are male, but the difference is almost a rounding error.

US At-Work Internet Users



Source: comScore Media Metrix

Figure 4 - Equally Connected – The percentage of men and women who use the Internet at work is almost 50/50. Analysts note that the slight weighting to men is probably not significant. **Source – comScore Media Metrix**

The same is true of social sites.

Social netophiles claim that all of the new tools are the wave of the future, the way business will be run going forward.

According to these forward-looking, click-savvy folks; social nets are the way organizations and customers will communicate, interact, collaborate, create, inform themselves, prioritize, organize, buy, sell.

They assert it is the way it is happening *now!*

The problem is that over half of the executives surveyed by Deloitte said they have no official policy regarding social networks.

Even more don't have a clue what it is.

Behind the Curve

Deloitte research found:

- two of Fortune 100 CEOs have Twitter accounts (one has 7,000 followers, neither follows anyone)
- None have personal blogs
- 18 have LinkedIn profiles – all were PC/CE bosses, two listed their old titles, most had fewer than 50 connections
- 19 have personal Facebook pages- 80+% don't have personal Facebook pages, few have many "friends," majority have little/no information on their pages
- Majority are listed on Wikipedia even though info is old or lacking

Nearly all are spending 90+% of their time just trying to keep their business running "smoothly," keeping the board/stockholders off their backs, juggling the "gotta' haves" of the new generation of employees, getting customers to pay for what was delivered!!!!

So chat sites are a really a low priority for them.

It's probably a good thing then that most employees use the basic Internet tool – email – to get things done.

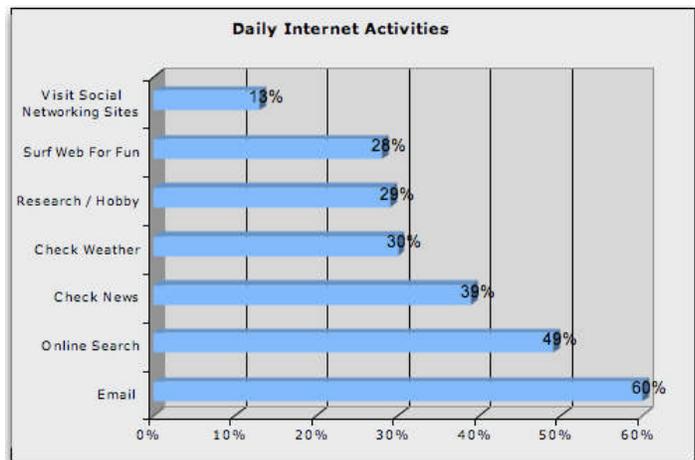


Figure 5 - Work Tool – While some firms feel Internet and social network access will reduce the productivity of employees, email – the workhorse of Internet connectivity – continues to be the most valued tool followed by information search and research. Even when people use social media, they often blur the lines of business/ personal life. **Source -- comScore**

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Email today...it's the way business gets done...get over how important your Twits are.

A LexisNexis survey showed:

- 2/3 of boomers feels smartphones contribute to a breakdown in workplace etiquette and using a laptop in a meeting is distracting (only half of Gen Yers agree)
- 17% of boomers believe using laptops, smartphones in personal meetings is efficient (1/3 of Gen Yers agree)
- 28% of boomers think blogging about work is OK (40% of Gen Yers agree)

That may be why some firms actually block users from using the social net.

Honest! We've sent links to people and they've said they can't access sites from their office systems.

According to a study by the AMA (American Management Association), half of the firms ban visits to social net sites.

Seems kinda' dumb with so many people having a smartphone.



Figure 6 - Yeah...So – With the growing use of smartphones in people's lives, being blocked by the company's IT department isn't much of a barrier for people who can tap into the Internet with their phone and use the Web.

Guess the boss doesn't know they are able to do a "work around," but hey it makes HR feel a little more comfortable...

Reminds us of Michael Scott's pep talk in *The Office*...*"This is an environment of welcoming, and you should just get the hell outta here."*

Numbers Growing

But since Gen Yers won't disappear from the business scene (boomers are fading ya' know!), it may be time to understand it, deal with it, use it.

After all, you probably hired him/her based on her Facebook profile right?

Admit it, ... you did!!!

As Mary Madden (Pew Internet & American Life Project) said, the tools will be incorporated into the work environment but it will be an "awkward hug."

In some way, shape, form, adding the tools has to take place because our new fantastic tech tools – notebooks, netbooks, smartphones – do improve work productivity.

Effective of Technologies on Work Productivity



Source: Kelly Services

Figure 7 - Muddied Waters – There was a time when people had a pretty clear division between their office and personal lives. The Internet/Web have blurred those lines – many feel for the better – and you're able to stay in touch almost anywhere. **Source – Kelly Services**

It would probably be more honest to say that these fantastic work tools have allowed work to slop over into your personal life.

You know you check your smartphone just before you go to bed and the minute you get up.

You handle "just a few" emails over the weekend and when you're on holiday.

That's probably why the boss gave you a notebook and a smartphone (o.k., an iPhone or Blackberry).

You're hooked on 'em...and **the man** owns you – 24x7 !!!!

O.K., he/she wasn't that diabolical, that evil, ...

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THE OFFICE ONLINE

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right!!!

But the tools do help people with their work. They also add stress and new demands on their lives.

The funny thing is, marketing and communications people look at all these rich new social networking tools as things they should “own,” “manage.”

Sure, it may take them three days to answer an email, but give ‘em a break.

They’re busy doing what **really** counts, **really** matters...they’re Tweetin!!!!

Email is so yesterday after all, and social networking stuff is...with it!!!

Despite the fact that management is concerned about security and employee productivity; most C-level executives feel social media will be a key strategy going forward.

It’s the way for the company to build a stronger relationship with the customer, build brand reputation, launch new products/services, develop new markets.

Bad with the Good

The challenge is that social networking is a consumer technology that is taking the business world by storm.

Cyberbadguys love the new stalking grounds.

Malware is available from almost every site/every service.

A well-meaning or disgruntled employee can tarnish a company’s/products image in 140 characters (or less).

But for the dedicated folks and social netophiles who venture into the social net world you have to remember one cardinal rule when answering a question...you respond, you own the question until the problem is solved or an adequate answer is provided.

Passing the individual on, passing the buck isn’t part of the equation. Sometimes, you have to take the good with the bad...



Figure 8 - What Me Worry

– Many executive boomers are amazed what newcomers to the business environment will put on their Facebook, LinkedIn and other profile sites. IT personnel are also concerned that the Web locations can make the systems/network vulnerable to security breaches and data corruption. But some folks just aren’t that worried. **Source – Mad Magazine**

When you get started with the social net, remember Dwight Schrute’s now prophetic observation...“Your pencils are creating a health hazard. I could fall and pierce an organ.”

MCC

Jeffersonian wisdom - Delay is preferable to error.

THE DEALS GUY

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click,
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group.

People I've seen since releasing the November column commented on my vacation, but missed that some pictures of Port Huron, Michigan's Boat night would be on my Web site. You can check <http://www.dealsguy.com/Boatnight_Images.html> for the pictures and descriptions.

I was surprised to hear from as many readers as I did about the GM bankruptcy thing. I was unaware that so many of my readers were also affected. Good luck to us all. I wonder why most of the people that ran GM into the ground are still running it, with our money. I hear people complaining about the unions, but their pay cuts didn't make the news. Many GM workers took pay cuts, some as much as 50%. That must have hurt, although some people feel that even workers at a 7/11 make too much money. Salaried workers involuntarily took health care cuts long before the union people had to. Where I worked in Michigan is pretty much a ghost town now where former GM plants are now fields of weeds. When I hired into my GM plant, I was overwhelmed by the size of the plant (eight blocks long and four blocks wide) where over 7,000 people worked in 1950. Buick City was much larger, but it's also gone.

*Recreation Time

My wife and I took a bargain cruise in September with two other couples and found that corporate cutbacks have also invaded the cruise industry. At least that's what we were told when we asked crewmembers, or customer service, questions. Customer service urged us to e-mail our concerns to the corporate Web site. Our ship was the Freedom of the Seas, a Royal Caribbean beauty. It can carry about 4,300 passengers and has 1,400 crewmembers. Last December (2008), we cruised on the Mariner of the Seas (also Royal Caribbean) and it's slightly

smaller than this one, but they are both large. There are no more free gifts for "Crown & Anchor" members (people with multiple cruises on RC). We did get coupon books, but discounts in them don't amount to much.



Bob Click
The Deals Guy

We weren't the only ones who noticed that portions at dinner

are now smaller, although I have no problem with that. The buffet was only complete in the morning. For the luncheon buffet, half of the area was cordoned off, but the selection was still good. We never went to the evening buffet so we don't know about that one. Servers told us that with part of the area cordoned off, there was less food that had to be thrown away. Everybody did get whatever food they wanted. We noticed a few other cuts, but we still enjoyed the cruise. Of course, some of these policies could actually be "that ship's" policy. The cruise in December on the Mariner of the Seas was better, but it's been moved to Las Angeles and the Freedom is taking its place out of Port Canaveral. Corporate cuts probably took place since we took the cruise on the Mariner.

The Freedom of the Seas is about 1,100 ft. long and 126.64 ft. wide; and is much too large for the Panama Canal. As I said, we had a fun cruise, but it is often crowded in certain places. The evening shows were great and one person in our group managed to get us tickets to a show at the ice rink, and that was also a spectacular show.

We think our next cruise will be on a smaller ship. There seems to be some great cruise bargains available these days. How about \$399 for a 7-day cruise on a Holland America ship! Also, Norwegian Cruise Lines, which I have never tried, called to offer us a five day cruise at \$129, but we weren't quite ready for their fast approaching open dates. We did sign up for the Florida Association of PC Users Groups spring conference, which will be held on a three day cruise next spring. Registration for it has been great and it seems to be well received.

Enough about our fun (which is destroying our savings); here's a few things that might be of interest to you.

*Just the Ticket For Dark Restaurants

If you haven't seen (or heard) them, you'd be impressed with "Talking Menus." I saw them at a food show some time ago, but haven't been to a restaurant that uses them. I've been to a few restaurants with a dark ambience and tried everything to see what was on the menu. These talking menus would be the answer, and according to the brochure, they can also tell you the nutritional facts if you are interested. Look them over at <<http://>>

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THE DEALS GUY

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www.talkingmenus.com>.

I could have asked them for a discount, but I doubt your budget would have tolerated a \$399 menu for your dinner table at home (from the prices in the booklet they gave me), and I doubt the cook offers multiple selections to choose from. Ask your favorite restaurant if they'll be getting them soon. We don't frequent the dark places much and our favorites, the fast-food places, don't need them. However, my wife has to read the menus behind the counter to me because the print is too small. Have you noticed that on their dollar menus?

*Tool For Repairing Access Files

I ran this product back in March, but if you missed it at that time, DataNumen is now offering a 20% discount by using the coupon code DATA-E2OI-TWEN when ordering at <http://www.datanumen.com/aar/order.htm>>.

This is a better deal than the discount last March which was only 10%. The discount code may also work for ordering their products for repairing Excel and Word; and for the Outlook and Outlook Express files. Check their Web site for descriptions of the products. The version for Access is 2.1, updated from the one in March.

*How's Your Battery Doing?

Hewie Poplock of Central Florida Computer Society <http://www.cfcs.org>> mentioned this product to the members of his SIG (Special Interest Group) and it sounded to me like something that my readers might be interested in, considering the proliferation of laptop use these days. According to their product page, "BatteryCare is a free utility that gives you much more information about your battery than how much charge you have left for the current session: The app changes power profiles for you when you connect your laptop to a power source, lets you know how many recharge cycles your battery has left, and more, all for free." I know my laptop is not accurate about its remaining time, but I have not used it very much while depending entirely on its battery.

It sounds like a handy product, and how could you go wrong if it's free. However, the developer does appreciate any donations to help keep his work going. Makes sense to me. <http://batterycarespot.com/en/index.html>>

*Having problems reading the screen?

A while back, I read a review of DeskTopZoom written by Bonnie Snyder in Bits of Bytes, newsletter of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society of Colorado Springs <http://ppcompas.apcug.org/bb0903.pdf#page=5>>. This product does a good job of giving you options for enlarging parts of your screen for easier reading, or to study something you can't see very well on a page. It does have a few shortcomings, but all in all, she speaks highly of it, and the price is "nada." If you would like to find out more, read her article in the above link, or go to <http://www.softpedia.com/get/Desktop-Enhancements/Other-Desktop-Enhancements/DesktopZoom.shtml>>. There may be improvements since her review was written.

*Magnifier You May Already Have!

Let's say that you sometimes need simple magnification for something. Like me, you may not have known about the screen magnifier in XP. It's nothing exciting, but simply click "All Programs, then Accessories, then click Accessibility" and you'll find Magnifier. I tried it and it's pretty basic, but I'm told that more information about it is on the Microsoft Web site. The article I read said there's a link for that, but I didn't see it. On my screen, large text appeared at the top with a large cursor, and while there wasn't much magnified screen area, I was able to make use of it. Try it; it may be all you need. Clicking "exit" stops it. I was unaware of this gem until I read it in a newsletter.

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [bobclick at bellsouth dot net](mailto:bobclick@bellsouth.net)>. Visit my Web site at <http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

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I call that bold talk from a four-eyed fat man.

LS/MFT

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