

NOVEMBER 2007

Hi everyone!

Wow, it's been a very busy season and summer... and that's been the main reason why I haven't sent out an e-newsletter all year. I'll try to be more regular with them during this season. Thanks go out to all my loyal repeat customers and all the new customers I've met. Remember, as always, if you don't want to be sent these e-newsletters, then check at the bottom of this e-mail to find out how to easily be taken off the list for future e-newsletters.

## WINDOWS VISTA REVISITED

Vista is plodding along, selling mostly in new computers. It's a fresh look and has many interesting visual features, but it has many quirks which keeps me on the conservative side of recommending it to you. Microsoft still has not released a stabilizing Service Pack for Vista, which is what most businesses and computing professionals, myself included, are waiting for. I don't consider it stable enough or compatible enough to trust my business computers on it, and I don't recommend it for anyone else, (unless you are buying a computer for the first time and every software you need to run comes pre-installed on the new one). Since Microsoft is still supporting Windows XP for at least two more years, my recommendation at this time is to stick with XP, but to purchase any new computers with Vista-compatible hardware specifications so that you can upgrade to Vista in the near future.

The bottom line: if you decide to buy a new computer from a local store you will have no choice... it will come with Windows Vista on it. Your only option at this point for a new computer with Windows XP is to order one from DELL or HP with XP pre-installed on it. I can assist you, at no charge, with ordering a new XP computer like this; I've done it many times for my customers in the last year.

## MOUSE TRAP

Sometimes it's difficult to find the mouse pointer arrow on certain desktop backgrounds, especially if you have vision problems. You can make it easier to keep up with the pesky pointer by following these steps:

Click Start, then Control Panel.

In the Classic View, click the "Mouse" icon. (In the Category view, click "Printers and Other Hardware", then click "Mouse")

Click the Pointer Options tab.

Check the box that says "Show location of pointer when I press the CTRL key."

Click OK.

Now when you tap the Control key, an animated circle will target the location of your pointer arrow!

## REMOTE ASSISTANCE CALLING

As a service to our customers, Vontronics now offers remote assistance via internet when practical. As long as your computer is able to boot up and get connected to high-speed internet, we can assist with whatever problem you may be having by connecting to your computer and controlling it remotely as if we were sitting there with you. During the remainder of 2007 we will offer this service at no charge. Our Service Contract customers will continue to receive this service at no charge until their contract expires. Call us to setup a remote assistance session!

## BACKUP, BACKUP, BACKUP...

Backing up your computer's data has always been an important task usually learned too late. Once your hard drive crashes... and it will, it's just a matter of time... it's too late to back up your precious files and pictures. Fortunately, there are now several less-expensive and more reliable options than tape and CD/DVD backup like in the past.

Flash drives, those little thumb-sized memory sticks that fit on your key rings, have increased in storage capacity and reduced in price. You can now get a 1GB flash drive for as little as \$9, with 8GB being about the top capacity. Depending on how much data you need to backup, a flash drive may be the best, and certainly most portable, backup solution.

External hard drives, which plug into a USB port, have much larger capacities... from 100GB to over 750GB. These are ideal for backup up lots of files or entire hard drives. And like flash drives, they are still portable and can be grabbed in an emergency. You can expect to pay \$150 or more, depending on capacity.

Microsoft has just announced the release of the Windows Home Server software which can be purchased as a ready-to-use hardware device that plugs into your home network, or as software which you install into your own hardware device. The non-portable Server then does its job of storing shared file and backing up your data. It can even be scheduled to backup several computer's entire hard drives every night so that, in the worst case that your computer crashed hard, you'd need to replace or repair your computer, then boot up with a special CD from the Home Server and it would restore your new hard drive including all your software and data.

And finally, consider the truly worst case... a fire, a flood, or a theft, where all of your computer equipment including your backups is destroyed. What can you do in a case like this? The easiest way would be to have setup an online backup service that, for a monthly fee, allows you to send all your important files securely over the internet to their backup servers which are far away in another area, safe from whatever disaster destroyed your computers. Once you replace your computer, you reconnect to the online backup service and download your missing files. For a free 2GB online backup account visit <http://mozy.com/>

## SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Don't forget to keep your anti-virus, anti-spyware, and Windows updates current, so you have less exposure to the latest viruses, trojans and adware vulnerabilities. There are many free, yet excellent programs available so there is no excuse not to stay protected. Most of these free programs are for individual home use, not commercial/business use, but I've noted those restrictions, plus the Windows versions each is compatible with. Here's the latest list of excellent, but free, security programs that I recommend:

### ANTI-VIRUS:

AVG 7.5 Free: (home only, Win98-Vista)

<http://tinyurl.com/2neexk>

AVast! 4 Home Edition: (home only, Win95-Vista, annual free renewal)

[http://www.avast.com/eng/avast\\_4\\_home.html](http://www.avast.com/eng/avast_4_home.html)

Comodo 2: (home or business, XP/2000 only)

<http://antivirus.comodo.com/>

Clam-Win .91: (home or business, Win98-XP, manual scanner only)

<http://www.clamwin.com/>

### ANTI-SPYWARE:

SpyBot 1.5: (home or business, Win95-Vista, manual scanner only)

<http://www.safer-networking.org/en/mirrors/index.html>

Threatfire 3: (home or business, WinXP-Vista, manual scanner only)

<http://www.threatfire.com/download/>

Microsoft Windows Defender: (home or business, WinXP-2003, requires validation)

<http://tinyurl.com/c9p2f>

Webroot SpySweeper: (home only, Win2000-Vista, 30-day free trial)

<http://tinyurl.com/2bp9xa>

### FIREWALL:

Your router: almost all routers have a hardware firewall built-in, the best type!

ZoneAlarm Free: (home only, Win2000-Vista)

<http://tinyurl.com/3yhkyk>

Comodo Firewall Pro: (home or business, Win2000-XP)

<http://tinyurl.com/2o2p6d>

If you have any questions, please feel free to reply. I try to answer all e-mails within 24 hours.

Thanks for reading. Now you're one of the family!  
Eric

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