MTM Computer Consulting, Inc.
2005 Newsletter

Message from the President

Thanks to our valued customers, 2004 has been our busiest year yet. We look forward to more growth in 2005 as we collaborate with our marketing consultants to accomplish our goals.

At the end of the year I always find it helpful to look back and at the same time look forward. Seeing where I've been and what I've done helps me figure out where I want to go and how to get there. Reflecting on the past year, it seems a shame to note that Spyware and Malware have become yet another nuisance in our daily use of the Internet. MTM Computer Consulting is here to provide you with the necessary help to ward off these harmful devices, but as with many of life's problems, you must also watch out for yourselves when you are online. On the brighter side, in the coming year, there are fascinating new computer products that can make doing business more efficient and add to your enjoyment of the Internet.

As we begin the new year, it's best to prepare for the problems we may encounter when using the Internet. Just as software that identifies spam e-mail is becoming more powerful, companies that send spam are becoming more sophisticated and inventive with their harmful devices. No matter how careful we are about using virus software, firewalls, spam software and Spyware software, it seems these inventive villains are always one step ahead of the newest anti-spam software products. The most recent influx of service calls we answer are complaints that computers are running slow, freezing, and displaying errors. Most of the time these problems are caused by Spyware and Malware systems implemented by culprits who use advertising on the Internet to disrupt computer systems with nasty, unscrupulous, and downright dirty programs. These malicious invasions of our computers force us to purchase Spyware detection software in addition to virus and spam software to keep our computers safe. As if this isn't enough, we must continue to exercise caution when opening e-mails and visiting web sites. Please be aware that if something undesirable gets a hold of your computer, I am available to clean up the mess that you may have inadvertently gotten yourself into. With that said, remember no one is completely immune to viruses regardless of the defensive measures you may have in place.

Looking on the positive side, there are new things to look for in the coming year such as the integration of home audio and video with computers. These innovations allow you to watch TV and listen to your stereo via your computer. Commercial-free Internet radio is also available. You can legally download movies from the Internet and watch them immediately, eliminating the need for a round trip to the video store. A DVR (Digital Video Recorder) program (similar to TiVo) is available that runs on a computer, saving the recorded TV programs on the computer's hard drive. This same program also records regular radio programs. This software retrieves TV and radio program schedules from the Internet and there is no monthly fee for this service. These TV and radio programs can be sent to any TV or stereo in the house and played back using a remote control that allows you to skip over commercials. Cell phones and PDA's can be consolidated into one unit. This combination of equipment is also an MP3 music player and a digital camera.

Remember your walkman that allowed you to take your music with you? Now you can also take video programs such as TV shows and movies with you on portable players and on your cell phone. In the upcoming year, we are going to see even more devices that communicate over the Internet using your home wireless network. I am already integrating TiVo and like devices with home wireless networks. I look forward to the continued growth of MTM Computer Consulting in the coming year while assisting our customers in keeping the Spyware and Malware gremlins at bay. We will also enjoy sharing with you all of the conveniences that computers and the Internet can provide us in our business and personal lives. This has been a great year and I look forward to helping implement (and provide service for) any new technology you wish.

Warm Regards,
Mike McClain

Computer Tips

Show Office Assistant at Start up

Applies to: Access, Outlook, PowerPoint, Word & Excel

1. Open a Microsoft Office program

2. If the Office Assistant is not displayed, **Click Show the Office Assistant** on the **Help** menu

3. Right-click the Office Assistant

4. Click **Options**

5. On the **Options** tab, select the **Show the Tip of the Day at startup** check box

**Q: My cursor is too small—how can I make it bigger?**

A: You can select a larger cursor scheme from your Mouse Properties. Here's how:

1. Hit the **Start button, Settings, Control Panel.**

2. Open your **Mouse** icon, then go to the **Pointers tab**.

3. From here, you should see a drop box labeled "**Scheme.**" You're looking for an item labeled either:
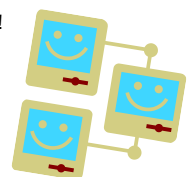
Windows Standard (extra large) (system scheme) OR

Windows Standard (large) (system scheme)
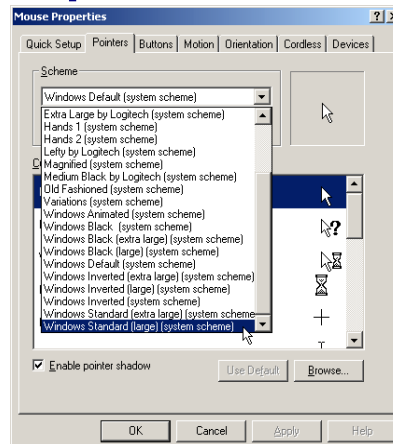
Either one of those will give you a larger than standard mouse cursor.

Depending on the computer and version of Windows, you may find you have a lot of other options, too. Check 'em out, you may find you like certain cursor schemes better than others.

Have fun!


Vice Presidents Message

To Our Clients:
Thank you for making 2004 a truly great year for MTM Computer Consulting. We look forward to providing you with our superior customer service and technical support in 2005.

Mike and I have been very busy working to enhance our services while we increase our knowledge of your business needs. To accomplish these goals, we are working with our marketing consultant to educate ourselves on the most pressing needs of businesses like yours. I am also learning how MTM can best serve you through my work as an ambassador for the Westlake/ Thousand Oaks and the Moorpark Chambers of Commerce. As an ambassador, I have an excellent opportunity to meet a great many business owners when I welcome them into the Chambers. I particularly enjoy being an ambassador because I can interact with business owners and learn what they need to keep their businesses humming. In this capacity, I also attend business seminars. I look forward to sharing what I am learning with you through MTM's new on-line and off-line newsletter.

Sharing and helping others is something I enjoy. So I recently began volunteering for a non-profit animal rescue group, New Leash on Life. This wonderful organization is dedicated to promoting public education on the care, behavior, and placement of animals through educational and therapeutic community outreach programs. NLOL programs are designed to benefit animals and their human counterparts. The group's future projects include, "Lend a Paw" a program that pairs troubled teens with abandoned pets and "Pet Therapy" programs that bring rescued animals to local hospitals and nursing homes to provide sensory and stress relief for patients. New Leash on Life provides a wonderful opportunity for me to volunteer with a group that believes in the mutual value of people and animals to bring joy, comfort, and protection to each other's lives. If you would like further information about New Leash on Life, their web site is www.nlol.org. I am looking forward to enhancing our services and continuing to learn more about your business needs so that Mike and I can provide you with top-notch service and state-of-the-art technical support. This is our challenge and why we do what we do. Have a wonderful and prosperous 2005. Working with you, I know I will.
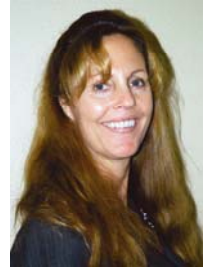
Warm Regards,
Sharon Conte

Doggie Fortune Cookies

- The reason a dog has so many friends is that he wags his tail instead of his tongue
- If there are no dogs in heaven then I want to go where they went
- There is no medicine in the world like a puppy licking your face
- The average dog is a nicer person then the average person
- We give dogs the time, space & love we can spare. In return, dogs give us their all. It's the best deal man has ever made
- Anyone who doesn't know what soap tastes like never washed a dog

- If your dog is fat you're not getting enough exercise
- If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you; that is the principle difference between a dog and a man
- If you think dogs can't count try putting three cookies in your pocket and then give Fido only two of them
- My goal in life is to be a person as good as my dog already thinks I am

Have a GREAT day!!

Wanted
Single Female seeks male companionship, I am good-looking, a girl who loves to play, I love long walks in the woods, riding in your pickup truck, hunting, camping and fishing trips, cozy winter nights lying by the fire, candlelight dinners will have me eating out of your hand. I will be at the front door when you get home from work. Call (404) 555-3333 and ask for Daisy, I will be waiting.
Over 15,000 men found themselves talking to the Atlanta Humane Society about an 8-week old Black Labrador Retriever.

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Security Alert!

Invasion of the Bots

December 2004 was the time of year where you started seeing statistics for various things that happened throughout the past 12 months. One that grabbed everyone's attention was the skyrocketing growth in Bots (PC's that are controlled by hackers using a worm or Trojan with a backdoor), and skyrocketing may be too subtle of a word.

According to Symantec, there has been a 450% increase in virus attacks on Windows machines this year, and the reason for this shocking rise in attacks is the product of hackers using automation to find vulnerable machines. The major component in these automated attacks is the increasingly popular backdoor element that is written into the viruses. This allows the hacker to take control of your PC and use it to his/her bidding, like trying to infect other machines or mass mailing.

Something that is gaining popularity among these ambitious hackers has been to manage all of their captive PC's like one big network. This gives the hacker not only limitless processing power but makes it almost impossible for authorities to track down the culprit. Not to mention malicious acts could be preformed from your PC without your knowledge and possibly even causing you to be accused of ill deeds. In addition to automation being directly responsible for the sharp increase in infected PC's it has also caused a 100% increase in the amount of phishing sites. Which, if you remember, is when a site will spoof a legitimate site in order to trick you into giving up sensitive information such as credit card numbers and account information. Hackers are even renting or selling these annexed networks to other criminals to carry out their illegal acts.

A test done by marketing communications firm Avant-Garde in which they put a number of different systems in a "Honey Pot" situation, with a number of different configurations from XP SP1 and SP2, with and without firewalls, and even other OS's like Mac OS X, and Linux. With a broadband connection the Windows XP SP1 configured machine with no firewall was taken over and controlled in 30 seconds. On average it took about 4 minutes for a hacker to take control of one of these PC's, but the systems with firewalls were for the most part left alone for easier prey.

In order to lower your chances of being infected make sure you have all your software up-to-date, antivirus software installed, and a firewall. One thing to keep in mind is that most firewalls have some sort of log that has the ip address of everything coming into or out of your PC. *No one is completely immune to viruses regardless of whatever defensive measures you may have in place, which means you have to watch your step and take responsibility for your own online safety.*

Stay safe out there

Important Tip

Keep a watch out for people standing near you in the checkout line at retail stores, restaurants, grocery stores, etc. who have a camera cell phone in hand. With the camera cell phones, they can take a picture of your credit card, which gives them your name, number and expiration date. CBS reported this type of identification theft is one of the fastest growing scams today. Be aware of your surroundings.

Let MTM take care of your computers so you can take care of business

What Information would you like to see in our newsletters?
Do you have any computer cartoons we can share?

Please e-mail us @ Sharon@mtmii.com

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The Ten Commandments of Computing

1. Backup.

2. Backup – Never backup over your most recent backup. Have several generations of backup disks or tapes and backup over the oldest of them.

3. Backup – Backup to removable media and remove that media from your place of business (have some type of offsite backup in case of theft, fire or other act of God). Should be done once per week.

4. Backup – Verify that you are in fact getting a good backup. Setup a test where you restore some data just to make sure that you can.

5. Protect your computer from Viruses – Update your Antivirus software every two years.

6. Protect your computer from Viruses – Make sure that your virus definition files (A.K.A. Signature files) are updated each week.

7. Protect your computer from Viruses – Make sure that your antivirus software is set to check your e-mail (check under program "Options").

8. Protect your computer from Hackers (or Whackers) – If you have an "always on" connection to the Internet, you should have a Firewall (software, hardware or both).

9. Protect your computer from Hackers – Download and install security updates monthly. Windows users use "Windows Update" and Microsoft Outlook users use "Office Update" as well.

10. Do NOT contribute to the problem of SPAM.

Bonus commandment (actually, just a request): Keep my business card handy (for Computer Questions (?), Computer repairs, Computer hardware and software enhancements, Computer networks solutions, On-going Computer maintenance and of course for REFERRALS!!)

Murphy's Law of Computer Disaster: Between two identical computers, the first one to fail is the one that does not have a recent backup.

Protect Your Computer Against Power Surges

A good Uninterrupted Power Supply, or UPS as they're commonly called, contains surge protection AND battery backup within one unit. These devices provide just what the name states and a bit more.

The surge protection portion of the unit assists in protecting your system by maintaining constant flow during voltage surges. The backup portion of the unit provides you with battery-supplied power when the AC power fails. Usually one side of the unit is surge protection only, which you plug your non-critical items into, such as printers, scanners, etc. The other side is surge protection and battery backup. You want to get your tower or desktop and monitor into these outlets to ensure your tools are available if you're on battery to close out and shut down properly.

Depending on your specific operations, the types and costs for UPS units can vary. For many users, the "5-minute UPS" will be sufficient. The battery charges itself while plugged into the AC outlet. Basically, when the power goes off, the UPS carries the computer operations for 5 minutes allowing you to save your information and shut down your system properly, instead of just a cold power out. If you're not around, provided hardware and software allows you to configure your system for a safe shutdown.

You can of course purchase UPS units which provide a longer battery life if you may have further to go to get to the system, or more time is needed to close applications, ext. For office environments, protecting the Server is especially critical, but don't forget about the networked workstations as they can also be zapped.

Remember though more expensive and advanced UPS units can protect your computer against more surges, realize that if your office or home is struck by lightning, many of your market place UPS systems will be unable to handle that voltage.

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