Bits of Blue

July in Tampa

Meeting

Trend Micro Security Software
by
Kevan Sheridan

Wednesday, July 9, 2008
6:30 PM
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th St
Tampa, Florida

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview: Member Kevan Sheridan will demonstrate Trend Micro software. Bob LaFave will conduct the Windows SIG at the beginning of the meeting as usual.

Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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Members Merle Nicholson and Jim Purcell managed to fill the newsletter for us this month. Next month it would be nice if several other members contributed articles. You have almost a whole month to write something. Please get started.

Elevate Tampa Bay, Inc. will be starting new eSenior classes on Monday, July 7 and Tuesday, July 15. These are two-week classes designed to provide proficiency in email and web surfing. They will be held at University Village, 12401 N 22nd Street, Tampa. Contact member Ed White at cwhite1@mail.usf.edu.

Bill Gates Retires No matter what you think of him, he has certainly affect our lives—and I think for the good. There are then and now photos of him on page 5. A piece of trivia: The company was originally called Micro-soft. ◆

August Meeting: Digital Photography and Mapping combined with Programming

Bits of Blue is published by the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc., a State of Florida registered non-profit corporation, to provide educational information about personal computer systems to its members. Our mailing address is P. O. Box 3492, Tampa, FL 33601-3492.

However, for business concerning this newsletter, Bits of Blue, please contact the Editor, William LaMartin, at 821 S. Boulevard, Tampa, FL 33606-2904; 813-251-3817; lamartin@tampabay.rr.com.

Technical information found in this publication is not necessarily compatible with your hardware and software, plus other errors or misprints could occur from time to time. Therefore, the use of programs, commands, functions or anything of a technical nature appearing in this publication will be at your own risk.

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Minutes of the June Meeting

By Jim Purcell, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group
Edward_J_P@MSN.com

The windows SIG began at approximately 6:30 pm. Bob LaFave discussed the various options available when you run more than one monitor from your graphics card. He also discussed the options available in Windows XP versus Vista.

There was a question concerning the management of updates. One member reported that Microsoft attempted to download an update that was already installed on his computer each time he booted the computer. Bob said that he should first look for the update in "Add or Remove Programs" in the Control Panel and, if this is not successful, check the knowledge base to see what other people are doing under the same or similar circumstances. Bob mentioned that he liked to remove the updates from his hard drive once they were installed. This reduces unnecessary files on your hard drive but also removes the records that would easily identify which updates were installed. Bob detailed his reasons for deleting these files and any others on his hard drive as soon as he finds that they are not needed. He felt that the benefits were worth the risk but some members were not eager to take the risk. William LaMartin indicated that he was having trouble with a browser window opened as a link and resized. When he closed and later reopened the link, the window it appeared in was its original size rather the size that he had created. Bob detailed the process necessary to have the window reopen in the newly created size.

John Witmer opened the business portion of the meeting at 7:40 pm. He introduced the visitors and mentioned that Steve Singer, a yearly presenter to our group each fall, was present.

John asked Ed White to provide an update on his program. Ed advised that they had met with members of Mayor Iorio's staff and that it appears the City of Tampa is going to actively support the program. They are scheduled to have future meetings at the Barksdale Senior Citi-

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Vista – I don't hate it

By Merle Nicholson, Tampa PC Users Group
merle@merlenicholson.com

I have some observations on the usability of Vista, and a few recommendations. You may find this useful if you've found yourself in the position of needing a new PC and are hesitating because of all the bad press – and Apple commercials. I think the dust has settled; the drivers we need are there now; SP1 is out and we're ready to go.

First – the bad press about Vista. We have to keep in mind that readership is kept higher on bad news instead of good. Some of the bad news was based on pre-release copies of Vista; also on pre-version SP1. The Vista SP1 release, I think has changed Vista substantially. Also, remember that many, many newspaper and magazine writers use Macs and really spend a lot of time just repeating other writers' bad news. As for Apple, remember that they have about 4% of the embedded market of one billion PCs. Apple's PC sales have gone way up since the iPod and iPhone, but that's relative to where they were, and it's still insignificant compared to the numbers of PCs.

Apple makes a high quality, high profit PC with a variation of Unix for an operating system. But it's not faultless at all. Yes, there are fewer viruses and malware, but the OS is constantly being patched with security updates. Apple does, however, bundle fixes together in single releases less often, making it hard to make comparisons.

For the manufacturers of PCs and peripherals, and for the entire software industry and for Microsoft, the real problem is that there are tens of thousands of PC components that can be used and there's no way to predict what combinations will be used in any given PC. Every piece of hardware must have a driver, and, in the case of the motherboard, six or so drivers. The "standards" that every component must comply with are decided by groups of people who are also competitors – with each other. It's a total wonder that anything at all gets decided. Hence the Blu-Ray/HD fight; and the Wireless-N standards debacle. Wireless pre-N devices have been available about two years, and the standard itself is still a year away from ratification. Man, what a mess.

With Vista, MS decided that they would make some major changes to the OS fundamentals to address security, in addition to adding features. That decision necessitated a new driver programming model. It obviously was a huge problem for Microsoft. After all, they had to track 12,000 new drivers and incorporate them into the DVD distributions. The documentation alone must have been a nightmare. But they have done this before; more than once.

One of the "bad" things that the press is repeating over and over again is that Vista will not work with older machines. And that's certainly sometimes true, but completely irrelevant. After all, my old machines (and I have four of those) already have a perfectly good operating systems in XP SP3. Why would I want to change operating systems now? XP will certainly outlast the hardware.

The next common complaint is that you need a very good graphics subsystem to run Windows Aero. Also irrelevant, in my opinion. Aero is one thing I tired of quickly, and, for the sake of performance, I have turned Aero off, along with the taskbar thumbnails, Sidebar and transparent windows. I want to maximize my efficiency and get rid of unnecessary distractions. I rarely have more than a couple of links on my desktop, and no wallpaper. It certainly was not a hard decision to do this on my notebook, because my notebook, like most, has a tendency to have weak graphics systems.

So far, I've purchased one PC – an HP/Compaq Presario notebook, and then I configured my personal/business computer with Vista three times. The final configuration that I'm now using exclusively is Vista Business 64.

I'll lead you through a few details on my progression through installing Vista. I certainly learned a few things along the way.

My PC now has the most powerful two-core CPU that AMD makes. It's also inexpensive. It has a decent but inexpensive ATI x1650 graphics card. It has a SAS hard drive controller and two disk systems; one is the fastest on the planet. And after installing the 64-bit OS, I increased memory to 6GB. I built the PC case myself so that most of the components are readily accessible without de-cabling or even moving it.

I started with a working Windows XP Professional OS on the fast drives, completely configured, that I used for my essential office PC. I then cabled up one or two of three 80G hard drives I have to build my new Vista OS. I used the BIOS Boot menu to select the drive to boot from, so that I could continue my business on XP, and, when I had time to work on Vista, all it took was a reboot. All my data and documents, including My Documents and the

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Outlook data, are on a larger, second set of hard drives and then backed up daily across my network.

The 32-bit Vista I have is Business Upgrade. On Vista Upgrade DVD's, it must be run from an existing qualifying WORKING system. Remember that on earlier systems you could insert a qualifying CD to continue and install the update on a blank hard drive. You can no longer do this. On one of my 80G hard drives I had a backup copy of my main XP system, so I duplicated it to another drive, booted that and then ran the Vista DVD. But first I uninstalled a lot of software and drivers from XP.

The install went very easily and quickly without any issues, taking less than an hour. You do not have an option to reformat the drive, obviously. And you have plenty of time to activate the copy before it goes into a "reduced functionality" mode. It's important in case you have network adapter problems and can't get to the Internet to register.

I had no real driver issues, much to my surprise. I did this before SP1, so I had better than ninety updates to do. The big surprise was that Vista recognized my LSI Logic SAS hard drive card, identified it perfectly, and both sets of hard drives were accessible. I kind of slowly installed software and experimented with it over about a month, migrating the installation toward using it as my primary system. Then I started finding discouraging not-good things. There was just too much junk left in the way of XP programs and drivers that just did not work. Some were impossible to get rid of, like my old scanner software. I was not happy with it, so I needed a better approach.

The second time around, I used another unused XP CD and license and wiped out the previous attempt. Then I validated and registered the XP software with Microsoft. I did no driver updates, and even deleted some drivers like the video, then rebooted back in, canceled out any attempts to install drivers, put the Vista Business (32) DVD in and started the Vista installation again. This time the results were very much cleaner. I had no driver issues, although I did not install all my printers or my old Canon USB scanner. I did discover newer versions on manufacturers' websites, like the ATI video card. All in all it was very satisfactory. I did some tuning on the system for performance. Over some time, I slowly installed software from scratch, with the idea that I would switch over permanently sooner or later. I would go back to booting my XP system whenever I wanted to do my real

work until Vista SP1 was released.

To me, SP1 changed everything. It installed in about twenty minutes and with no problems. For some reason, the computer seemed to run a bit more quickly. They added about 2,000 drivers to the update. So that encouraged me to try out Vista Business 64, as did the positive experience with Vista 32.

The main reason I wanted to try Business 64 was because of a Vista feature called SuperFetch. SuperFetch loads – and keeps – portions of your most commonly used programs in memory for re-use. It collects your program usage frequency to decide what to keep. With Windows 32 of any kind, there is an upper limit on how much memory is recognized; about 3.5 GB. With 64 bit, usually the limit is what your motherboard will allow. In my case that is 8GB. I increased the memory to 6GB, and I'll probably eventually go to 8. So, with more memory, there's more SuperFetch, and it seems to make a difference.

My copy of Vista Business 64 is a full version, so I didn't have to install over a copy of XP this time. I did install to one of the 80 GB extra drives though, so I could continue to boot into XP. After installing SP1 for Vista 64, I updated just a few drivers, ones for the ATI video card and the motherboard chipset. Three of my four networked printers installed from the Vista disk. For the third, a Canon i850 I bought in 2003, I obtained a 64-bit driver from Canon. I did have problems getting a PDF printer installed. When you're looking for software, very often the OS support includes Vista. But that doesn't mean it will work under Vista 64. I installed three of these before I settled on CutePDF. The installation failed, and I went to the website FAQ and got a manual installation instruction which worked well.

The next hurdle was for a DVD package. I've tried to stay away from the later copies of CD Creator and Nero because the installations have gotten so big with attempts to supply everything, including search and cataloging databases, video editing and even browser toolbars. I was pretty discouraged trying to find a Vista 64 package, until I finally decided to install the latest copy of Nero. They offer a trial-period free version, so I downloaded and installed it, being very careful to un-check as much crap as I could. And – drum roll – it wouldn't even start. Just an error message. Bob LaFave had suggested a free program called StarBurn. I had downloaded it a month before and then forgot it. Once found and installed, it's perfect. It has a simple one-window interface for all CD & DVD

creation.

About three weeks ago I had enough software installed that I could function pretty well in Vista 64, so I backed up the XP SP3 on my main boot drive and cloned the 80G Vista drive to it. I've been very slowly installing more software as I need it. The performance is excellent. My most used software just pops up to the desktop instantly. Internet Explorer, any Office product and my various data/text editors all are at least as fast as my XP, if not faster.

All of my other hardware is working well; the only exception is the Canon USB scanner that I have no hope for. I've simply moved it to another computer. I have a multifunction HP FAX/Scan/Print/Copy device that just installed transparently, as did the networked Brother Laser printer. My old (2005) Dell PDA x50V was recognized instantly and the driver installed automatically. I had sporadic problems with the Vista Sync Center's understanding that the PDA needed to be automatically sync'd until I found a later version of "Windows Mobile Device Center" to download and install. Sync'ing to devices is very much improved over XP.

I think I can attribute the very good performance of the system to having plenty of memory. I bumped my Vista 32 notebook memory to 2.5 GB from 1 GB and the program loads were very noticeably faster.

Now the two things I don't like. I dislike Windows Explorer (File Manager), and I LOATHE the Start Menu. I've used Windows Explorer enough that I can use it when necessary, but I don't like to. I think the Windows XP Windows Explorer had the right idea; it just needed better file search and filtering. I've installed a copy of FreeComander and use that whenever I get serious about finding, copying and moving files.

Internet Picture of the Month

Bill Gates Retires

The top photo is about 1982 and from http://www.linkinn.com/_Bill_Gates_The_Early_Years_Pics.

The second photo is current and from http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/popup?id=5235689&contentIndex=1&start=false&page=10

July's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
Local Gas Prices	http://autos.msn.com/everyday/gasstations.aspx
Snopes.com—Rumor control	http://www.snopes.com/
Florida Wildflowers & Butterflies	http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/wildflower/
Bill Gates: The Early Years	http://www.linkinn.com/_Bill_Gates_The_Early_Years_Pics

Some of these links will join the many already on the Links page at our web site, where you need only click on the name.

(Vista..........Continued from page 5)

The Start Menu just sucks and there just doesn't seem to be anything I can do about it. The problem is that the organization of the menu utilizes a tree structure, and the menu has no tree structure. There is a "Classic" menu that I could switch to, but why does the "Classic" version have to look like Windows 3.1? To counter the Start Menu, I've created a pop-out Toolbar on the left screen edge with all my installed program icons on it. This, along with the Quick Launch toolbar, meets my needs very well. I only rarely use the Start Menu.

Overall, my transition to Vista has been worth the effort. I do not have any problem with it that I'd consider a handicap. The response is excellent when tuned for performance and memory is installed to the maximum. I would not recommend buying any computer with less than 2GB installed or upgraded. Fortunately, even inexpensive notebooks commonly have 2 and 3 GB memory. I do not recommend upgrading any PC from XP to Vista.

For very good reading on Vista see Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Technical_features_new_to_Windows_Vista and look to the right side where you'll see other subjects in the series on Windows Vista. ◆

(Minutes..........Continued from page 2)

zen Center. This is the place that the city parks department wants to use for training Tampa students.

John mentioned an exchange of emails with Parker Monroe from the Greater Tampa Bay PC User Group in Brandon. Doug Mullis initiated the exchange, hoping to work out some program to share or exchange speakers between our organizations in view of the increasing difficulty in getting significant or meaningful vendors to provide speakers to PC user groups of our size. John asked for members who are willing to make presentations to our group and speak at Brandon to contact him so that we can accumulate a list of volunteers. He said that the Brandon group normally had about the same number of attendees as we have but will sometimes have as many as 70 members show up for high interest presentations. This will probably be pursued after the end of the year since we seem to have our presentations lined up through the end of this year. The July presentation will be on Trend Micro.

John began his presentation on PowerPoint with an over-

view of the types of things that he would cover and a discussion of the information presented in some of the available training programs. He also provided a training outline that lists commands and the instructions on how to access them, as well as operational and navigational shortcuts.

He had numerous examples of presentations, some provided by the presentation experts from Anheuser-Busch and some smaller presentations prepared for a single subject. He demonstrated the different ways to review or examine the content and organization of the presentations. The lesson learned is that PowerPoint is an extremely versatile program. It provides a simple way for the amateur, without an unreasonable amount of effort, to put together a professional presentation which clearly portrays the points that he wants to convey. John played a presentation prepared on PowerPoint by his 11-year-old grandson which clearly emphasized this point. On the other end of the spectrum, he illustrated how the issues, data and graphic information already produced (in Access, Excel and Word) can be easily reformatted and molded into an elaborate presentation and accentuated in many different ways to best present and emphasize the details that you are trying to convey. The data in these Microsoft documents can be linked to the PowerPoint presentation so that, when the data is updated in the documents, the PowerPoint presentation will be automatically updated. John also showed an example of PowerPoint being used to document personal belongings to assist in preparing an insurance claim in the event of a catastrophic loss.

PowerPoint is a very versatile program that meets the needs of the most casual or the most demanding user.

The meeting ended at approximately 8:40 pm. ◆

Are CD's and DVD's A Reliable Place To Store Your Data? – Revisited

By Jim Purcell, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group
Edward_J_P@MSN.com

About a year ago, I wrote an article on the reliability of CD's and DVD's for medium or long term storage of data. There seemed to be no real way of predicting whether the discs would store data that could be accurately retrieved a

Special Interest Groups

Microsoft Access SIG

This SIG meets the **first Tuesday** of the month at 6:30 PM. The meeting location varies. For information, contact William LaMartin at *lamartin@tampabay.rr.com,* or Merle Nicholson at *merle@merlenicholson.com.*

Digital Imaging SIG—Cancelled until further notice

Visual Basic for Applications SIG

This SIG meets the **third Wednesday** of the month at 6:30 PM. The meeting location varies. For information, contact William LaMartin at *lamartin@tampabay.rr.com.*

Windows SIG

This SIG occupies the first 30 minutes of our monthly, regular meeting and is devoted to a general Windows and computing discussion. Bob LaFave moderates the discussion.

LinkSys Wireless-G Game adapter WGA54G

By Merle Nicholson, TPCUG
merle@merlenicholson.com

This wireless game adapter proves to be useful as a PC wireless device. It's really intended to connect Playstation 2, Xbox and GameCube game consoles to a wireless network, or alternately using two units between two game consoles. Its main claim to fame is that it requires no additional network drivers.

I used it to connect my spouse's PC to the household wireless network. That PC has been connected satisfactorily for many years, but something has been going amiss; probably dropping in and out, causing her web browser to fail to produce web pages. I was never able to nail down the real problem. It was using a NetGear USB wireless unit on a three-foot USB extension. This is just a small "dongle" that I have used many times before. I had some evidence that the problem may go away if I moved the dongle to another location about three feet away. But I really needed to solve the problem conclusively.

This unit, as you can see, is small; less than seven inches in length. It has two ports, power and Ethernet. The power cube is very small, and it comes with a generous Ethernet cable. So all you do is power it up and connect the adapter's Ethernet port to the Ethernet port on the computer.

To configure this adapter, you run a program from the included CD. This does not install anything on the PC. It does allow you to set a few things necessary to connect to your secured network. You set the SSID and security code

of the router you're connecting to using the CD's software. I also set the unit to utilize DHCP instead of having a fixed IP address so that it obtains an address from the router. All this takes about three minutes. After that – it just works.

This is a very good alternative to the usual solutions to connect a PC to a network. It assumes that your PC has a working network connection, of course. But you don't need to install a card in the PC, and it doesn't need a USB port that may be in short supply on a notebook, and it doesn't need a driver. At $70 it's the most expensive. But on the other hand, it's the least technical solution. It works, and works well, and is easy to set up. ◆

(CDs..........Continued from page 6)

few months or years in the future. I focused on the MAM-A Corporation for several reasons. I attended a digital photography seminar conducted by staff members of the National Geographic Traveler magazine and they indicated that MAM-A Inc. produced high quality CD's. Next, a Photoshop instructor, who is a professional photographer in St. Petersburg, stated that he tried to retrieve some photos that he had recorded on a CD only five years earlier and he was unable to recover a single photo. He emphasized the importance of getting quality CD's and also recommended MAM-A Inc.

I'm doing this follow-up article because of information that I received when I attended a presentation by Bill Baillie, the representative for Verbatim, at the recent FACUG meeting. Bill stated that the life expectancy of Verbatim CD's and DVD's is in the 200 to 300-year range. I visited their web site to get the details of the warranty and was surprised that I found no mention of the 200 to 300 years that Bill reported. I had Bill's phone number so I called him. He stated that they do not put

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☐ *Member: Your membership is up for renewal*
☐ *Vendor: Your product was reviewed on page* ___

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those numbers in writing because there is obviously no way to prove them. Bill said that the figure is the result of their testing and a projection of the results and is their best estimate. While on the phone, I discovered that Bill makes presentations to PC user groups so I passed his name to Doug Mullis. Doug then made arrangements for Bill to make a presentation to our group. Bill has had to postpone several times but we hope that he will be able to visit late this year. Although CD's and DVD's are only a part of the many Verbatim products that Bill will discuss, I thought that a review of the information might bring to mind some questions to which Bill can give us educated answers. Their informative web site is at: www.**verbatim**.com/

The previous article, *Are CD's and DVD's A Reliable Place To Store Your Data?,* is at: http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/nl_2007/July2007/cd-dvd.htm.

Three paragraphs that you might want to review are:
- Precautions Before Recording
- General Handling Precautions After Writing
- Quick List for Archiving ◆

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