

2009 Winter Update from Aventure Technology

Season's Greetings!

I put out a letter once in a while to offer you an update on a variety of issues. The format is designed to highlight some key issues and avoid bogging you down with technical matters. Some of the free software mentioned here can be found at www.techsupportusa.net, under Downloads. Feel free to forward this letter to anyone who could use the information.

Netbooks vs. Notebooks—What's the difference? Netbooks are very inexpensive (\$300-\$400), lightweight and convenient for travel, but have slower processor speeds than a regular laptop, a much smaller keyboard and no CD/DVD drive. Determine if 2 GB of RAM is an option, and consider a 10" screen versus the standard 9" screen; it can be tough on the eyes to stare at them too long. If you run only low-level applications (email, web browsers, Microsoft Office, etc.) a Netbook may be fine.

Remote Access—Would you like to get computer support without the usual cost of an on-site fee? It takes about 5 minutes to setup remote support. I offer fractional billing; if an issue takes only 15 minutes to address, you get a 15-minute bill. Remote Access software can be set upon any system (PCs & Macs) and also will allow you to access your computer when you travel away from home.

Antivirus & Anti-Spyware Software—Check with me at least once a year so you do not unnecessarily pay money for Norton, McAfee, and the other paid programs that tend to slow down your computer. Just uninstall any expiring software, reboot your computer, then go to www.techsupportusa.net for a free copy of AVG 9.0, MalwareBytes & Ccleaner. Consider running manual scans at least once a

month. Virus and spyware attacks can be expensive, and your periodic attention to this will save you money and time.

Image Resizing—Many of you have mastered the art of downsizing your images. There are free products to do this in Windows XP, Vista & Windows 7. One free application that handles this well is VSO Resizer (under Downloads). Don't be among those who unknowingly try to send a 10 to 50-megabyte image over email; it is a skill that takes only a few minutes to learn.

Surge Suppression—Purchasing a UPS (uninterruptible power supply) for \$35-50 is excellent insurance against power surges and blackouts. These are more robust than a simple surge arrest power strip and come with a battery backup. Most office stores carry them, and you don't need to install the software that comes with it – just plug in your computer, monitor, modem and/or router, and you are done. Do not plug in printers or other non-essential devices as they can drain the battery quickly.

Buying a new computer?—As of this time, the minimum specs to shop for include 4 GB (gigabytes) of RAM (but get 6 if the budget allows), a 320 GB hard drive, a 2.4GHz Core2Duo processor with a 512 MB video card. Get the best processor you can afford to lengthen the life of your system, but don't feel compelled to pay a premium for the latest and greatest. The best values usually are a notch or two down from the top. Plan on spending between \$900 and \$1,200 for a new system with these specifications.

Two Monitors—True multitaskers should consider getting two monitors, 20" or greater. Most computers now have video cards with dual DVI ports (ask for that) which let you plug in two monitors. Your Windows desktop will span across the two side-by-side monitors. Multitasking becomes easier as you do not have to keep minimizing and maximizing your various windows. This is highly recommended if you are seeking optimum working efficiency.

Email Backup—Many of you have a backup process but might be overlooking some data. It's painful to lose your emails or address book. I recommend using flash drives, and an online service such as www.mozy.com when you need strong data protection. Call or email me if you need instructions for backing up email.

Transfer Big Files—An excellent free service for those times when you need to send someone a file greater than 5 megabytes in size is located at www.transferbigfiles.com – it is very easy to use and helps overcome email restrictions for large attachments. Take a minute to try the service and let the recipient know to expect an email from TransferBigFiles.

MagicJack – This is a pretty amazing little hardware device that can give you a working phone number for only \$30 a year with free long-distance calls to the U.S. and Canada. The MagicJack is slightly larger than a small box of matches, plugs into a USB port, and has a phone jack on the other end so that you can plug in any standard phone. You get a local phone number with it and can make all the long-distance calls you want, even calling the U.S. for free while traveling outside the country. It's an excellent way to replace a second phone line, add a fax line or just have a portable number to use. It requires a running computer and broadband internet connection. Visit the website www.magicjack.com for ordering information.

Gift Ideas—For a cool gadget, check out the flip cams by Pure Digital at www.theflip.com. They are easy to use, and both video and image quality are superb, all for a small price compared to traditional video cams.

Finally, do not click on any pop-up offers that want to scan your system for infections unless they come from legitimate sources. Email a message to me if you are not sure, and save yourself from the deceptive intrusion and eventual problems it causes.

On a personal note - Life remains very exciting with the changes we are facing individually and collectively. Change is at hand indeed, and it seems that we are being directed, quite strongly, to assess the way we are living, to make new choices, and to leave behind patterns that do not work. It is an excellent time to look at the various aspects our lives and to take the time to feel gratitude for the gifts we have and continue to receive.

May your holidays be warm & joyful, and may you invoke harmony & inner richness to blend into your daily world!

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