

Technology Tips, Tricks & Web Sites

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Desktop Tips and Strategies

1. You Get What you Pay For

Free tools, applications, and services on the web are cool, but be forewarned – you get what you pay for. Some free services, like the Google Desktop Search, can be configured to create privacy concerns. Others may be in “beta” and will become fee-based in time. Others lose funding and disappear. Do not keep any information in a free application or website without a.) backing it up or b.) be sure you won’t cry if you lose anything.

2. Adobe Acrobat 7.0 saves email folders to PDF

The latest version of Adobe Acrobat, 7.0, allows users to save entire MS Outlook email folders to a single PDF document. The individual emails are accessible by date, subject, or sender in the PDF document and all attachments from the original emails remain in their original format. This is a great way to archive email messages and save to a document repository without having to worry about dealing with the .pst extension.

3. MS OneNote (<http://office.microsoft.com/onenote>)

MS OneNote is a nifty application that was originally designed as a tool for Tablet PCs. However, while it works quite nicely with tablets, anyone can make use of this virtual notebook. The program allows you to organize a notebook with sections and subsections. You can import audio clips, handwriting, video clips, screen shots, copy and paste from anywhere on the desktop, or just type. The “page” is unlined, so you can add notes in the “columns” or “margins”. The notebook is searchable and integrates with other MS Office applications. An interesting feature, all the information in the notebook is saved automatically when you enter it and there is no need to name sections or pages. This application allows for collaboration over a network. A single license costs \$100US retail, or download the trial version.

4. Email Interpretation

A survey published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (reported in *Wired*, the *Independent*, and elsewhere) shows that people correctly interpret the tone of an e-mail only 50% of the time. However, people *think* they've interpreted tone correctly 80% of the time, and senders believe they have conveyed their intended tone 90% of the time. The sender can hear his intended tone in his head, while the receiver interprets the message according to myriad factors, such as mood or previous experience. So be careful when you're composing your messages -- sarcasm and humor often are not interpreted correctly. And don't rush to judgment on the receiving end -- you may be reading too much into that message!

Security Issues and Strategies

5. McAfee Site Advisor (<http://www.siteadvisor.com/>)

You know that you can pick up drive-by malware from simply visiting an infected website. Rootkits and other forms of malware are becoming almost undetectable. McAfee has come out with a free tool for Internet Explorer or Firefox that shows the safety ratings of websites, displaying red, yellow, or green indicators in the browser toolbar to warn of known malicious sites or potential danger. Additionally it applies the same alerts to Google, Yahoo, and MSN search results, so you are forewarned before you even click on a link. The application is free, and unlike some others doesn't seem to slow the browser down perceptibly. Of course, always turn off ActiveX and use a good firewall to keep out drive-by downloads.

6. Safely Surfing the Web (<http://www.browzar.com/> | <http://www.anonymizer.com/> | <http://anonymouse.org>)

Looking for a way to surf the Web anonymously or use a public terminal without leaving a trace? A few tools can help with these endeavors. Browzar is a browser that does not keep cookies, history, or cache web pages. It doesn't auto-complete passwords or searches. It is a piece of free software that requires a download, but doesn't require installation. You can run it from a thumb drive, or from a public PC (as long as you can download programs). The software is available for Windows, Mac, and Linux and is still in BETA. Anonymizer's Anonymous Surfing is another interesting product, retailing at \$30US. This service routes all your Internet surfing through their secure servers, blocking your IP address and keeping you safe from phishing, pharming, and look-alike wifi networks. A simple solution to hiding IP address and other information is to start your web surfing from Anonymouse, which is a free website that allows you to surf from behind their CGI proxy, keeping your location and host name hidden. They also have AnonEmail and AnonNews to send anonymous email or post to newsgroups anonymously..

7. Lojack for Laptops (<http://www.lojackforlaptops.com/>)

According to the FBI a laptop is stolen every 53 seconds, and 97% are never recovered. Absolute Software Corp. makes a piece of software that phones home if your laptop is ever stolen, allowing law enforcement a fighting chance at helping recovery your property. LoJack for Laptops is "software installed on your laptop [that] works behind the scenes to silently and securely contact [the] Monitoring Center, and if stolen, report its location using any Internet connection". Priced at \$50US per license, this software is available for PC and Mac. Companies requiring more than 10 licenses will need to check on corporate products available from Absolute.

8. Password Protect Your Handheld Device

A simple way to protect information and access to your multi-fuction handheld device is to password protect it. Whether cell phone, Treo, or Blackberry, it is likely that you wouldn't want anyone to pick up the device and have unfettered access to your contacts and email, not to mention using the phone to call a country outside of your calling plan for a few hours. Other measures are available, such as automatic deletion after X number of failed attempts to gain access to the device, and remote location of the device, but simply adding a first level password protection will stop most casual thieves in their tracks.

Web Sites

9. MeetwithApproval (<http://www.meetwithapproval.com/>)

Ever need to meet with a group of people, but have a hard time coming up with a date? 'Meet With Approval' is a nifty, free Web 2.0 service that helps you coordinate with friends or colleagues to easily find a date that works for everyone without going through a million email messages back and forth. You do not have to download anything, or even register to use MeetwithApproval. Simply fill out the form to create a meeting page and invite your colleagues. They visit the meeting page and help decide a good date. When you are all happy, 'Meet With Approval' confirms the arrangement and you all meet up.

10. Mapquest Multi-Stop Route Builder

(<http://www.mapquest.com/maps-directions/>)

Google Maps may have clouded your eyes to the ole trusty Mapquest. But, for driving directions the site still can't be beat (with the appropriate reality check notwithstanding) for features like "avoid tolls" and "avoid highways". Mapquest has added some new features to their driving directions, one of which is the ability to "Build Your Route" in BETA. You can add up to 10 locations and then get a step by step driving plan emailed to you or printed. For instance, you can get driving directions from the car rental place at the airport to your hotel to the convention center to a restaurant, then back to the hotel and back to the rental car dropoff. You can show, hide, or reorder the stops, plus all of the other options available from Mapquest.

11. Rollyo (<http://rollyo.com/>)

Rollyo stands for "roll your own ...search engine". Using the Yahoo! search engine index this free site allows you to create your own custom search roll. Simply name your search roll, select up to 25 websites that you would like to be able to search simultaneously, and choose from a few more optional options such as sharing or tagging the roll. Then whenever you want to search all of the websites you've selected – say you've created patent law roll – simply go to Rollyo and search your roll. The site offers a browser toolbar button for on the fly additions to your search rolls, searching your searchrolls, and creation of new searchrolls.

Gadgets and Tools

12. Wifi Finder (<http://www.canarywireless.com/>)

A tiny device that not only let's you know that a wireless signal is available without having to boot up your laptop, it also tells you whether the network is encrypted, the signal strength, channel, and network ID. Retail runs about \$60US.

13. Roboform (<http://www.roboform.com/>)

Roboform is an automated web form filler and a password manager. It also generates random, secure passwords and works with IE-based browsers, Mozilla's Firefox, and Netscape. The form filler allows the user to have multiple identities, so that you can fill forms using your work, home, or other information. The password manager keeps your passwords in an encrypted file and fills in username and password. The newest version also includes a search box in the toolbar and bookmark storage. Roboform is a standard download, but is also available as Roboform2Go for USB discs or as Roboform for PocketPC, Palm, or WindowsCE so that you can take your Roboform with you everywhere. Roboform is free for limited passwords and identities, and costs only \$30US for an unlimited use license.

Research Tips and Strategies

14. NetSnippets (<http://www.netsnippets.com/>)

One of the dangers of the Internet is finding great information – and losing it. Bookmarks and favorites are great for noting that you found the perfect site, article, or download but the Internet tends to be transient and many of us have experienced the horror of link rot – a link that no longer works. The information contained in that link has been moved, deleted, or is now only accessible for a fee. Enter NetSnippets. NetSnippets allows you to capture a website, webpage or just a portion of a page, organized it, annotate it and share it. NetSnippets comes in several flavors: Free, Standard, Professional, and Enterprise. Each level builds on those basic capabilities so you can go as far as building reports, creating MLA, Chicago Style or APA bibliographies, and populating Intranets.

15. WatchthatPage (<http://www.watchthatpage.com/>)

Ever find a webpage you'd like to keep an eye on, but it has no email updates, no RSS feeds, and you don't want to set a reminder to visit it?. For instance, you want to watch the press release pages of a number of your client's competitors. How can you do that automatically? WatchThatPage allows you to select pages you want to watch for changes, and monitors them for you. WTP compiles the information for you and gives it to you either in an email or online. Register to use WTP, and tell it what pages you want to watch. You have the option of having one email with content from all your watched pages, or separate emails for each page. You can also customize the days on which you receive your emails.