

Newsletter September 2009

Welcome to the N-Tech Solutions Customer Newsletter for September 2009!

by Nathan Woodcock

As part of our commitment to providing an IT service that is professional, straight-talking and enjoyable we publish this newsletter every one or two months to keep in touch, have some fun and maybe even point out a few handy computer related things you didn't know. If you'd prefer not to receive this email simply click the unsubscribe link at the bottom of this newsletter. Having lots of young kiddie winkles really does disrupt your routine. In the PT Era (Pre-Twin) we could happily work after 5.30pm, doing invoicing, bookwork, research etc. But now in the Age of Chaos (post-twin) its all hands on deck when I "stop" work at 5.30pm and I can't get back to it until at least 9.30pm. At which time we're all dog tired and useless and I don't get any work done anyway, so our productivity has dropped dramatically. I really understand all the talk about work-life-family balance now, you really do need a plan once you have more than one child. I'm still working on mine - any tips? Windows 7 is Coming...

Windows 7 will be released on October 22nd this year, and is expected to have a much greater uptake than Vista ever did. This is partly because Microsoft has worked hard on some of the problems that plagued Vista, such as device and software compatibility. Most devices, when plugged into Windows 7, will just work. Software compatibility has also been greatly improved with the XP compatibility option, which runs programs that will only work on XP in a seamless virtual machine session running XP right on your Windows 7 desktop. Speed is also meant to be addressed with Windows 7 starting up much quicker than Vista, without needing faster hardware to run on.

Put it this way - since Vista was release 2.5 years ago I have sold a lot of computers. Of all those computers, only two of them had Vista installed. Come October, I'll be encouraging everyone buying a new PC to have Windows 7 on it.

Here are ten cool things about Windows 7.

1. BitLocker to Go. Bitlocker encrypts all the data on your USB memory stick or external hard drive. All you do is right click the drive and choose a password. If you lose your stick there is effectively no way anyone can see or access any of the data on it (Ultimate version only).
2. Drag and Snap windows. Widescreen displays are great for comparing documents side by side, but resizing two Windows to fit on the same screen in XP or Vista is a pain. Windows 7 makes it easy: drag one window to the far left, the other to the right, and the two line up neatly.
3. Location aware printing. Do you carry your laptop between home and work, and always forget to change the default printer each time? Windows 7 knows when you move and changes the default printer accordingly.
4. HomeGroup. This allows homes with multiple Windows 7 PCs to simply and automatically share printers, music, documents etc between each PC without any faffing about with sharing permissions. Files on other Windows 7 PCs can also be searched as if they were stored locally.
5. iTunes Support in Windows media player. WMP can now play iTunes .aac music format.
6. Desktop gadgets. Vista's sidebar disappears in Windows 7, and now "gadgets" are allowed to be placed anywhere on the desktop.
7. System requirements. Windows 7 will not require huge hardware improvements to install and run. This means you can install Windows 7 on your existing PC without having to shell out for new bits. Good stuff!
8. Jump lists. Jump lists are a handy way to quickly reach the files you've been working with. To see the files you've used recently, just right click on the icon on your taskbar. So right-clicking on the Word icon will show your most recent Word documents. Plus, if there are other files you want to keep handy, you can just pin them to the Jump List so they'll always appear.
9. Another thing you may want to do is quickly see your gadgets or grab a file from your desktop. To see your desktop just move your mouse to the lower right corner of your desktop. That'll make all the open Windows transparent—so your desktop is immediately visible. Want to get all but one window out of your way? Grab the top of that window, shake it and all the other open windows will minimize to the taskbar. Shake the window again, and they'll all come back.
10. Play to. Here's another way to enjoy the music on your PC—send it to another device. Let's say you're sitting on your couch, using your laptop to read e-mail or surf the web. You'd like to listen to some music, but you don't want to hear it coming out of your laptop's speakers—and you don't want to get up and go find your portable media device. With Windows 7, you don't have to. Just open Windows Media Player, right-click on what you'd like to hear, select Play To, and you'll see a list of devices and PCs on which you can play your music, like your network-connected stereo or Xbox 360. In most cases, if your media receiver doesn't support the file format for your media, Windows 7 automatically converts that content into a format that your media receiver can play. Windows Media Player even offers controls to manage that device, such as play, stop, and skip tracks so your PC becomes your remote control. Network your Home Without Running Cable or Using Temperamental Wireless!

Many of us live in homes we didn't build ourselves, or we're renting so we can't easily network our home, running ethernet cable in the walls to your living room, office, kids room etc for easy broadband use. Wireless is one option but can be a bit flaky, and runs into issues with signal strength in certain homes and the speed really dies off when a few people are using it. There is a fantastic alternative I've just installed in my house, called Ethernet Over Power. Basically it uses the power cabling in your house to piggy back a data connection, meaning you can connect up any room to your network that has a power point. You simply plug an Ethernet Over Power device into a powerpoint in the rooms you want to connect, plug one of them into your modem/router, then the rest into whatever computer or Xbox or laptop you want to. I use the Netcomm Homeplug brand, and they come in two speeds (and prices). The standard gives speeds

up to 88Mbps (faster than normal wireless but a bit slower than ethernet cable) and the Turbo model gives speeds up to 200 Mbps (much faster than wireless and ethernet). But the best thing? They are dead simple to set up. You literally do nothing else but plug them in and connect your devices. A perfect way to share your music, photos and videos from a main PC to other PCs or Xboxes or Playstations in the house. Remote Access to your PC

I bring this up from time to time and its worth mentioning again. I'm writing this months newsletter sitting in Pandas Playland while our two year old runs amok. I'm connected wirelessly to my PC at the office using Remote Desktop, which means i am effectively sitting at my office PC, so I don't need to worry about installing everything I use at home on my laptop or copying data back and forth every time I need to work away from the office. Remote Desktop is completely free and comes with XP Professional and Vista Business and higher. It's the perfect remote office solution and just requires a half decent broadband connection. The other service which makes remote working very efficient is software called Dropbox. Dropbox is free secure online storage that synchronises new and modified data to as many PCs as you install the software on, and also makes it accessible through as web browser. So no matter the situation, whether I have my laptop or not, I can access the most up to date version of my data on every PC I have Dropbox installed on. Free, simple and very useful. <http://www.getdropbox.com/> Government Small Business Tax Incentive 50% and valid until December 2009:

The 50% deduction on capital purchases over \$1000 for eligible businesses is still in place. Of course you have missed claiming on last financial years return but you can claim on this years.

Local Business Focus...

In this new side column each month we mention local businesses that we have had personal experience with and can recommend as good quality, good value, and ethical Looking for computer training? Aimed at the beginners both these people offer high quality, friendly training. Sue, Eumundi Photo Hut 5442-7710 - one on one and beginners group training.

Bruce Hamilton 0418 256916 - one on one training in your home.

Media Sharing Did you know you can share all the music, movies and pictures on your home PC with an xbox360 or Playstation3 anywhere in your home? Its a great and simple way to have access to everything, including DVD playing or Bluray playing, without the complication of media centre PCs or other devices. Education Tax Refund Don't forget if you have school age children you can claim 50% back on eligible expenses for the kids. Click here for more info.

Discounts on Microsoft Help Books <http://www.mspress.com.au> is Microsoft online book store with books at all levels and for all Microsoft products. Order through us and get 10% discount. Some titles that might be of interest include "Step By Step Windows 7" and "Windows XP Plain and Simple"

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