

RANDOM

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COMMUNICATIONS WITH A PURPOSE

THOUGHTS

Hit the road, Jack, and take your computer.

Those of us who need Internet access when we're on the road, or at least think we do, are finding that access easier to obtain. A recent trip to Kansas City and back to Columbus took me through the Columbus airport (WiFi access claimed but I couldn't find it), the Minneapolis airport (wired), and the Milwaukee airport (really wired). Not only does General Mitchell Airport in Milwaukee have WiFi throughout the airport, but it also provided semi-private work areas with free access to wall outlets.

Weather caused me to spend more than 5 hours over a 2-day period in the Milwaukee airport and the access to AC power was surprising and delightful. Most airports make AC power virtually impossible to obtain. Few have outlets anywhere near waiting areas and those that are present are sometimes capped or placed so that captive passengers must use long extension cords if they don't want to sit on the floor.

I didn't use airport WiFi access because I didn't need it and the service providers' \$10 "day pass" is a bit pricey for a few hours worth of service. Those who travel routinely and spend a lot of time in airports can buy the service monthly for \$20 to \$30, reducing the price to less than \$5 per day.

I spent most of the week in Kansas City at a conference that was being held in a name brand "suite" hotel that offers "free" breakfast and "free" happy hour at \$130 per night. Internet access, however, wasn't free. Those who stayed at the conference hotel had two choices: slow dial-up at 80 cents for the first hour, then 10 cents per minute after that, or wireless access for \$10 per day in addition to the \$130. Signal strength varied from acceptable to poor according to those who stayed there.

Instead of staying at the conference hotel, I had booked a room at a Microtel about 2 miles away. I had a small room instead of a suite, the "free" breakfast consisted of cereal, bagels, and fruit instead of omelettes, and there was no "free" happy hour. But the Microtel included high-speed wireless Internet access at no additional charge. The daily rate averaged \$61 per night, including all taxes – less than half the price of the conference hotel.

Even with the cost of a rental car to get to the conference, I came out ahead. Even better, the WiFi signal strength and speed were excellent.

On the return trip, I unexpectedly spent Thursday night at a Clarion in Milwaukee. The room was much larger, the

furnishings were solid and well made, and WiFi access was included in the room rate. The signal strength and speed were only mediocre, but the wireless system had been retrofitted into an existing building. Even with the slower speed, it was still a welcome addition that allowed me to let people know that plans made for the following day would have to be changed because of the travel delay.

It appears to me that the truly forward-thinking hotel chains have realized that there is value in offering high-speed Internet access and including it in the daily rate. Hotels that cater to those whose travel expenses are paid by large corporations realize that they can make an additional \$10 per day per room (approximately 100% of the fee is profit once the hardware is paid for.) Either way, WiFi is a benefit that travelers appreciate and will come to expect. **B**

Take your computer without taking it.

Notebook computers continue to get lighter and heavier simultaneously. It's as easy today to find a powerful 3-pound computer as it is to find the device-laden 10-pound notebooks with huge screens. But if even 3 pounds is too much for you to bother with, consider the Migo from PowerHouse Technologies Group.

The company manufactures specialized USB flash drives that come with synchronization software. That means you can transport your computer's identity in addition to the usual files and folders. Plug a Migo into a friend's computer or into a public computer and your desktop will appear, your IE browser Favorites and History will be present. If you use Outlook, even your e-mail will be there. Instead of traveling with a computer, you could travel with a Migo that easily fits in a shirt pocket.

And if that's too much, you can have a Migo in a watch!

Some people avoid using public computers to collect e-mail because of what that leaves behind. Spend a few minutes examining a heavily used public computer and you'll find all kinds of information that previous users don't know they left behind. The Migo keeps everything that pertains to you on its

own flash drive and off the computer. When you unplug the Migo and walk away, you take all of your information with you.

Migo works with any Windows computer that supports USB, which means not Windows 95 or 98 prior to the second edition. Windows 98SE requires an update from Microsoft, but most business computers and publicly available computers run Windows 2000 or Windows XP. Your e-mail will travel along on the Migo only if you use Outlook and your Favorites will be present only if you use Internet Explorer. Those are deficiencies and I hope that PowerHouse Technologies will address.

As with most USB devices, the user just plugs it in and it works. The software gives some control over what to include: Files on the desktop are included by default and you can add other files and folders up to the capacity of the portable drive. For Outlook, you tell the Migo what you want to synchronize – just e-mail or other folders (calendar, tasks, and contacts).

Plug the Migo in to another computer and a menu appears at the top of the screen. Using it could hardly be easier. The Migo devices range in price from \$45 (64MB) to \$240 (2GB) and the watch (512MB only) sells for \$160. **B**

When Sober isn't good.

It's been 18 months since W32/Sober first hit computers and people are still blithely clicking infected Zip files from people they don't know. In a single recent week, I received more than 1000 Sober-infected messages. It's more than disturbing that computer users have been unable to learn, in a year and a half, not to click suspicious-looking files. Even worse, it's been five years since the first e-mail attack (the "I Love You" virus).

Companies should consider remedial training on how not to click suspicious attachments ("You hold your mouse like this and then you don't click!") for employees whose computers have been infected more than once. Stopping these attacks would be so easy if computer users would simply follow these guidelines:

When a message with an attachment arrives from known sender who frequently sends messages with attachments: Examine the text of the e-mail. If it "sounds" like something the sender would write, scan the attachment and open it if it passes the scan.

When a message with an attachment arrives from known sender who has never previously sent a message with an attachment: Examine the attachment carefully for known risks. Scan the attachment and save it to the disk. Carefully examine the e-mail message to see if it "sounds" like something the sender would write. Read the message carefully to determine whether it is plausible. If there are any doubts, contact the sender before opening the attachment.

When a message with an attachment arrives from an unknown sender: Delete it without question.

Additionally, if your antivirus program is set to "clean" or "quarantine" an infected file, change the option to "delete". If you receive an infected file, you do not want that file on your computer – period. If the file is something you need or want, have the sender provide you with a good copy.

During the week I was in Kansas City, yet another Sober variant began spewing neo-Nazi filth. In less than 8 hours, two of my addresses received more than 400 such messages and because one of those addresses had been forged as the sender in some of the outgoing messages, I received dozens of bounce reports.

Earlier, the Sober-N worm spread an infection that the Troj/Sober-Q variant used to send millions of spams with subjects such as "The whore lived like a German," "Verbrechen der deutschen Frau," "Armenian Genocide Plagues Ankara 90 Years On," "Volk wird nur zum zahlen gebraucht!" and "Dresden Bombing Is To Be Regretted Enormously."

Unless users become more cautious, this trash will kill a powerful communications tool. **B**

New twist on scams.

If you haven't yet received a Nigerian money scam, you will someday. This week I received an imaginative variant. It's really quite inventive. I presume this particular creep has sent his message to every site his spider can find that talks about digital photography. This one came to one of the addresses associated with Technology Corner.

Hello

It's very Nice to know this web-site and find what exactly thing I'm Looking for! I'm Bishop Scott James,i will like you to get in touch with me in regards to the availability on May 29 2005,And I would be glad if you can be the photographer for my wedding which will take place in (Hawaii),am presently in U.K For the preparation of my wedding and won't be back until one week before the date of the wedding for some necessary preparations.

Furthermore,I just want to know how you will prepare your self down for the wedding B'cos I am invited the Magazine Marketing Company from U.K that will come for the Essential Coverage for the event I will like to know if you will accept cashier cheque for payment b'cos my mode of payment will be through Cashier Cheque...So please let me know your availability and Price Per Hour as for five Hour's.Looking forward to read back from you. ! Thanks.

N.B...I will pay for the travel fees expenses to Hawaii.

What's the scam? Undoubtedly he'll suddenly need an advance of some money because his bank is closed for the day or he lost an eyelash, or his bride hopped a bus to Albuquerque, but for some reason he'll probably need money. He'll promise to repay, of course, and probably with interest, with his "cashier cheque". **B**

CORNER on the market by A.J. Stinnett

*"In business, planning is 80% thinking,
20% writing, 100% doing, and
200% follow-up."*