My name is Bill and I am occasionally a calamity

Installing Vista a second time was supposed to be easy. The Titanic was supposed to sail into New York Harbor. The Hindenberg was expected to land at Lakehurst Naval Air Station. Apollo 13 should have delivered astronauts Lovell, Swigert, and Haise to lunar orbit. And I should have been finished with the installation well before noon on Saturday. On June 24th's TechByter Worldwide, I said "Last week's podcast (recorded on the previous Thursday) predicted that everything would probably be running well by Sunday morning. That wasn't quite what happened. Sometimes I'm few clowns short of a circus."

A new Vista installation on a clean drive takes less than half an hour, so when I noticed that I'd neglected to tell the installer to format the drive, I decided to do it again and do it right. I carefully selected the option to format the drive, glanced at the warning, and clicked OK.

I keep all of my data files on drive D, so formatting C wasn't a big deal. And I had made a full backup of drive C on drive D so that I could recover configuration files after reinstalling Vista. When the computer started, the boot manager gave me the option to start Vista or to start Vista. Two Vista installations? I selected Vista.
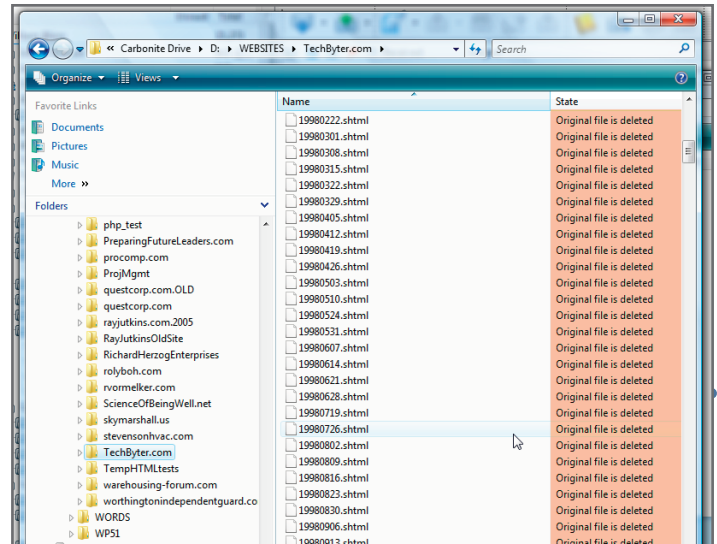
The Windows Explorer showed a boot device (drive D) and a non-boot device (drive C) that had the label "Boot". This is known as PEBKAC, an acronym for *problem exists between keyboard and chair*. User error. My files (including websites, graphics, publications, Powerpoint presentation, time billing, e-mail, and written correspondence were gone. All gone. There was nothing I could do about it.

When I formatted drive C and installed Vista once again, I paid close attention to the screens, which is what I should have done previously. The installer shows all drives on the machine and selects the C drive by default. Apparently a random misplaced click selected D and because I just glanced at the warning message, I didn't see that the installer would be using the wrong drive.
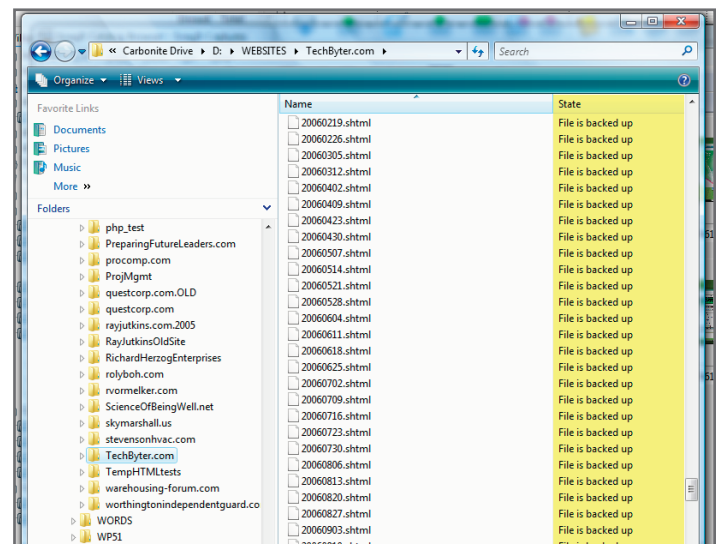
Mitigating a catastrophe

After formatting drive C and installing Vista for a third time, I installed AVG Antivirus and the Carbonite backup service. Carbonite located my backup files on the off-site server and started downloading them.

Within 2 hours, I had some of the most critical files back on the computer. A few days later (Carbonite is an on-line service,

When Carbonite started, everything looked bleak. I had deleted every file in every directory by formatting the wrong drive.

Within minutes, the situation began to improve. When Carbonite says the file is backed up, it means that the copy of the file on my computer is now the same as the copy on their server.

so restoration is governed by download speed) all of my files were back. Websites, e-mail, correspondence, publications. Everything.

As much as I'd like to find a way to blame Microsoft for the near calamity, the error was entirely mine. A moment's

inattention is all that's needed. This kind of inattention is responsible for plane crashes, automobile collisions, and data loss. People are fallible and that's why having a reliable backup is so important. Backup has saved me great distress more than once.

Carbonite's backup service costs $50 per computer per year. Is your data worth $50 per year? ß

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2003: $1000; 2007: $20

Woot.com sells a lot of outdated stuff at cheap prices. Most days they have just one item and they sell that item until they run out. Then they close down for the day. Woot has some clever writers and I check the site daily as much for the writing as for the stuff they sell. A recent offer reminded me of just how fast technology moves: Something that's a market standout in 2003 is little more than scrap in 2007.

Compact Flash In The Pan is what they called the item. "In 2003 Hitachi announced their new 4GB Microdrive to great fanfare, throwing around terms like 'breakthrough' and 'significantly lower cost-per-megabyte'. Four whole gigs of portable storage on a tiny little hard drive that fits pretty much any Type II card slot. It seemed like a miracle, even at the suggested retail price of $499. The 4GB Microdrive was even used in the original iPod Mini (the aluminum skinned multicolored ones). Certainly, the future was unlimited for the Hitachi 4GB Microdrive."

Except, as Woot went on, "Quicker than you could say 'solid-state memory revolution', smaller, cheaper, better alternatives came along. Plus, later generations of Microdrives offered even more storage space, microdriving the 4GB Microdrive toward obsolescence. Now, just four short years later, they're a figurative dime a dozen (two for twenty bucks in literal currency), a miracle of a different kind. Sure, your

device needs the right kind of slot to use it, and the Microdrive uses a lot of power. Still, you'll get 8GB of portable storage for just $2.50 per GB before shipping—'significantly lower cost-per-megabyte' indeed. 2003 may not have seemed so great at the time, but at 2007 prices, it looks like a very good year."

Reading that caused me to recall the first $1000 CD-ROM drives. They seemed a real bargain at $600! Now even DVD burners are available for $40. And memory. I carry a couple of 2GB USB drives with me. That's 4GB of storage in my pocket.

Is that 4GB in your pocket, or ....

What would it have cost, in dollars and inches, to carry around 4GB of data on floppies? Those old 5¼ floppy disks were about 1/16th of an inch thick and came in two capacities: 360KB and 1.2MB. To store 4GB of data on *high-density* floppies, I would need about 3333 disks. Even at 50 cents each, that would be more than $1500 and a stack of 3333 floppy disks would be 208.3 inches (17 feet 4 inches) tall. That's more than 5740 cubic inches.

Try it with 360KB floppies and you'll need about 11,112 disks. That stack would be 694.5 inches (57 feet 10 inches) tall, or more than 21,000 square inches. It sure wouldn't fit in my pocket! My 2 USB devices combined are less than ¾ of an inch thick. They're about ¾ of an inch wide and the longer of the two is less than 3 inches long. That's about 1.5 cubic inches.

Oh—and the two combined cost no more than $40. ß

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Spam is up, but we cope

A survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project says we're getting more spam than ever, but we're less concerned about it because we're getting smarter about controlling the spew. The survey reports that 71% of e-mail users use filters offered by their e-mail provider or employer to block spam. More ominously, 55% of e-mail users say they have lost trust in e-mail because of spam. That's sad because spam is easily recognized and need not be a source of confusion or lost trust.

More than one third (37%) of e-mail users said spam had increased in their personal e-mail accounts and 29% said they had seen an increase in work accounts.

Attitudes have changed. Three years ago, 25% of users said spam was a big problem for them. Now only 18% of users feel that way and 28% (up from 16%) say spam is not a problem for them. About half of all e-mail users consider spam an annoyance, but not a big problem. ß

CORNER on the market by A.J. Stinnett

"Knowledgeable managers provide the training employees need to do their work, coach and counsel employees, and ensure that employees know about changes that affect them."