

## Rich's Ramblings for January 2007

DELL sells computers! Sure they do and several of my friends have ordered desktop systems from DELL. I agree that if they are configured correctly, they work great for a non-techi. But, they also come with much too much baggage.

As the local computer support person for my neighborhood and special friends, I have the following recommendations.

Many users don't need the latest Pentium IV or the greatest from AMD. As these same people only access the Internet for Web browsing and E-Mail. My neighbors who use AOL for their email and web access are really satisfied with Dell's cheapest desktop. Celeron processor, 512 Megabytes of Memory, Video, Ethernet and Sound on the Mother Board and Windows XP Home edition. The system came with a DVD/CD Read Write CD-ROM drive and no floppy disk. The built in Modem works fine. They did not need a monitor or a printer so that kept the price down. They presently only have a 14" CRT monitor but the local CompUSA had 19" LCD monitors for less than \$160 so I expect that will be a holiday present for them to themselves. They don't have High Speed Internet account so they are limited to AOL Dial-Up until I convince them to get a DSL line.

They ordered from the 800 number for DELL and it was delivered in less than 5 days by Dave, the UPS guy. I took the desktop home with me and proceeded to set-it up. I connected it to my Verizon FIOS High speed home network and turned it on. First Symantec's Network Internet suite is so invasive that In order to remove the trial version, you had to allow it to start up and proceed to install. I said no to the screen where it wanted me to agree to their User agreement. Then I immediately installed the Startup Inspector free program. (URL is available thru my web site)

I turned off at least 10 startup items in the computer startup folder and rebooted. I spent almost 30 minutes in the control panel add/remove programs getting rid of the Symantec trial versions. As well as Microsoft Office 2003, MS Works, Symantec's Ghost and several other trial software that wanted to install. (and pay for when the trial period ended, usually 30 days). I removed all the Trial and garbage software like Yahoo toolbar and Yahoo desktop. Now I know some will say that I am pretty hard on Yahoo but that's just the way I feel and the more junk you have installed, the more likely something will screw up your computer.

Then I went to Microsoft update for Windows XP Home edition. Almost 60 Megabytes of updates to the OS were required. Can you just imagine someone with a dial up trying to keep their system updated? That's what good friends with High Speed Internet access can help their

friends who only have dial-up. Do your friends a favor and let them update their system via your High speed line.

After the 60 Megabytes of updates, I then installed the free version of Grisoft's AVG anti-virus software. I highly recommend AVG. (URL to get to the free version is on my website)

Evidently Dell installs over 40,000 files on their systems which includes too many trial software programs. The one good thing is that AOL's install files were available and after all the updating and removal of the junk, I installed their AOL and got it connected via the built in Modem. I then installed the free office suite from Open office which is a great alternative to the expensive Office suites on the market. And it is FREE

The bottom line: Unless you really want to, Don't let all the trial software install itself. I assume that Dell can sell their machines so cheap because they have financial dealings with quite a few vendors to install their trial software.

I would be willing to bet that Symantec makes a lot of money off of Dell's install of their Norton Internet suite. One problem is that many unskilled users will not pay the money for the renewal after the 90 day trial is up and will think that they are still protected from Trojans and Virus's. Not true. I have been to people's home and seen their computers with copies of Norton Anti-Virus or McAfee as well as other AV products at least 2-3 years out of date. But they thought that they were protected.

Another Friend of mine wanted to buy a laptop for his granddaughter and we found one at Office Depot that fit the bill, Price and power. It was a Toshiba portable and came with almost as much baggage as the Dell. I had a lot of trouble trying to remove the very invasive McAfee internet control program. Thanks to the Startup Inspector, I was able to shut down the processes that McAfee installed. Otherwise the add/remove programs in the Control Panel will not remove it. It kept saying that you had to shut down the McAfee process's first. Which I was able to do with the Startup Inspector. And Toshiba also installs a lot of "Trial" software as does Dell. I did the same on the Toshiba as I did on the Dell, AVG and Open Office was installed and all is well. Both computers seem to run faster without all the baggage.

Rich Schinnell has been writing his Ramblings for almost too many years but he still is challenged to keep it up. Rich can be reached at schinnel (at) cpcug.org and his web site is <http://schinnell.org> or as a last resort (301) 949-9292 for computer challenged people.