

Rich's Ramblings for March 2009 ©

Ok Rich, enough of this watching TV commercials and reading about this "MagicJack" stuff. I went and gave them my credit card for a 1 year trial to see what it is all about. (they have a 30 day trial with no charge on your credit card) The device costs \$39.95 for one year and they charged \$6.95 shipping and handling. Of course they keep trying to get you to select the upgrade special of 5 years for \$59.95. Ordering the device initially for \$99.90 gives you 6 years and rush delivery. Now that I read all the docs better the \$6.95 is rush delivery.

I was pleasantly surprised that the device showed up in my mail about 2 days later (ordered on 19th and received on the 21st of Feb) and I did not jump at the overnight rate or any of the other options. Just go to magicjack.com and see for yourself all the options.

First: you must have a broadband connection, NO DIAL-UP or real slow DSL as it is really Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) which means all the voice data goes over your high speed internet connection.

The device they send you is pretty small and looks like it was designed by Apple as it is nice and shiny like an Iphone or Ipod. They even thought of including a short USB extension cable for those whose USB ports are hidden in side a cover or are hard to plug in. They do caution you that plugging into a USB hub that is not powered, probably won't allow it to work properly.

I plugged it into my Vista Laptop and it seemed to be pretty non intrusive and worked. The software you will need on your computer has to be downloaded from the MagicJack site but it is all automatic once you plug the MagicJack in and your computer recognizes that you have plugged in a device. Your Anti-Virus/firewall or Spyware program will have to be told that it is ok for the software to access the internet. I use Vipre from Sunbelt Software, which works well and is highly rated.

I don't like the pop up when a call is received but after all, you don't get nothing for nothing and having a phone number that is basically portable is pretty neat. (Most of you know me and my gadgets) <G> More later on another Gadget that I have been using..

One neat thing about the Magicjack system is that if your computer is not on-line AND you are not logged in, Magicjack will send the caller over to voicemail and then send you an email with a sound file attached which is a .WAV file, which can be listened to on most machines with speakers. You can check your voice mail from any telephone and it has the standard options to delete messages change your password from 1234 and your answering announcement.

You will need one of those cheap \$10 telephones and a RJ-11 telephone cable to plug into the MagicJack device.

On the road, I anticipate taking a cheap Radio Shack phone to use this from anyplace that I can get broad band access.

This is what the pop-up looks like when you have MagicJack installed and a call comes thru.

Right in the middle of the screen it will ask you whether you want to ignore or pickup the call but you can pick the call up from your handset and the pop-up goes away. It does keep a record of all of your incoming calls, which is nice.



Notice the advertisement for their 5 year option. I kinda shy away from that sort of option due to many times in the past, something that was too cheap ended up not staying around. I am hoping that MagicJack will be around for a while. I recommend the basic one year option and then down the road if it pans out ok, go for the longer term. This screen capture is from my Windows 2008 Server running MagicJack where I had called it from my home phone. Don't you just love Snagit?

MagicJack

<http://www.magicjack.com>

Works with Microsoft Windows XP or Vista and Intel Mac's

Snagit

<http://www.techsmith.com/>

Works with most any Microsoft Windows version.

Vipre Anti-Virus/Anti-Spyware

<http://sunbeltsoftware.com>

Now onto my favorite gadget..

For years I had Palm products, from the original Palm Pilot up thru the Palm T3. I loved them all but then I decided to get a cell phone and now I was carrying two bulky attachments to my belt. I used Verizon for my cellular plan and was satisfied with the coverage. When the Treo 700P came out and my two year obligation with my old Verizon phone ran out, I decided to see what the 700P would do to reduce my belt clutter. It was all that I expected and hoped for. All of my palm desktop contacts, memo's and calendar would now be available on my single cell phone.

Big mistake when I went to Verizon, I was told that there would be no problem getting the Treo 700P to replace my existing cell and my palm T3. But when the salesperson was starting to write up the order, he mentioned that my voice plan was transferable to the Treo but I would have to take the \$50 per month data plan. Whoa, I said, I don't want such an expensive plan so I cancelled the purchase.

I then went to Compusa where they sold the Treo and asked about the different plans available. With Sprint, there was no requirement to have a data plan so I jumped and bought the Treo 700p and received a new number which was fine. The less people that know my cell number, the better. <G>

After my two years was up with Sprint. where I was only paying for the voice plan which was \$39.95 plus tax. I thought It was time to get up to speed on the latest and the greatest. After all the Treo's screen is much to small for looking at web sites, reading emails and such. Especially if you have older eyes.. <G>

I went to the Apple store in Montgomery Mall after talking to several people who had the iPhone and were satisfied with its performance. I was pleasantly surprised with the sales people who apparently are trained well. All of this of course required me to change from Sprint to AT&T for cell service but my Treo phone number was moved to the iPhone in about 15 minutes. Really slick. I have had a regular video iPod for a couple of years and have been very pleased with it's performance.

After a bit of scrounging around the net, I was able to find a program to copy my calendar and contacts from the Palm desktop over to Microsoft Outlook 2007. (I hate outlook) but I had no choice.

The main hang-up was my memo's that I had depended on for passwords and general information in my Palm Treo were not transferable to the iPhone via the iTunes software.

There are notes in Outlook but the iPhone software does not have notes or memo's. I was lucky in looking around the iTunes store and found eWallet. Neat little program by Ilium Software, Inc. It was not expensive and they had a Windows version as well as a iPhone version. I was in business and all of my memo's from my Palm are now on my iPhone.

The iPhone is really nice as I can now have all my podcast's available on either my video iPod or my iPhone. I like to watch the "cranky geeks" and "Dignation" on video podcasts. I also listen to Steve Gibson and his Security Now weekly podcast. There are thousands of applications that you can download for free or really cheap for you iPhone but there is only so much room on the 8 gigabyte model. Plenty enough for me.

I am very pleased with the performance of my iPhone both the data and phone parts. It is what they call the 3G model and I can use my home wireless network to retrieve (faster than 3G) email and watch the news or movies.

I paid \$199 for the phone with a two year AT&T contract at \$69.95 +taxes for 450 prime time minutes and unlimited data.

iPhone available at Apple stores and AT&T outlets.

<http://apple.com>

eWallet Supports iPhone and Blackberry

<http://www.iliumsoft.com/>

Cost for the Windows version \$29.95

Cost for the iPhone version is \$9.95

Rich Schinnell is a hard core computer gadget guy who loves all the newest technology. Rich is an original founder of Capital PC User Group, serving as it's president as well as most other officers. He retired from the USN and Vitro Corporation a few years ago and now has several small business clients who depend on him to keep their office computer networks and workstations running smoothly. Rich has volunteered at Centers for the Handicapped in Silver Spring for over 10 years and enjoys it. <http://chicenters.org> is their site and well worth contributing. He brought their computer systems from a small Lantastic 3 station network to over 80 workstations on a internal LAN with Server 2003. The staff are more productive and enjoy the benefits of computers and the internet.

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