



ACORNUCOPIA

AN ABUNDANCE OF IDEAS

CEO Corner

Inside this issue:

- CEO Corner
- Expanding Our Services
- Understanding Processors
- Save by Shopping Online
- Tech Tip: Restarting your computer
- Very Important Customer
- Going Green
- Upgrading to Vista?

Given the events of 9/11, Katrina, the San Diego fires, etc., there has been a renewed focus on disaster preparedness from a personal and business point of view. However, these are extreme events that require extreme measures to assure the survival of a business and generally require the commitment of resources that few small businesses can afford.

On the other hand, there are events of much lesser impact that present just as much risk to business survival, that are more likely to occur and require much less in the amount of resources to give a business a fighting chance of survival.

If IT is not critical in the operation of your business, threats to your IT will not jeopardize your operations. Yet it is hard to find a business that is not dependent in important ways on IT. From an IT point of view a disaster is fairly easy to define: (1) loss or corruption of data; (2) loss of servers, computers, connectivity or other critical IT infrastructure; (3) loss of use of premises; and/or (4) loss of the services of a key IT employee/support person.

Failure to anticipate these events and take steps to avoid their impact will elevate an otherwise normal business occurrence to a disaster.

Acorn's primary objective is to help our customers identify and prepare for all IT eventualities that may pose a risk to the survival of the business.

In this regard, Acorn not only:

- (1) maintains the efficient operation of a customer's IT systems;
- (2) Provides remote automatic off-site backup of key data; and
- (3) establishes security procedures to prevent external and internal damage to the IT system and data, whether by accident or on purpose;

Acorn now offers:

- (4) complete redundancy of hardware and software;
- (5) "cold," "warm," and "hot" sites for customers to continue business should they lose the use of their premises or IT systems; and
- (6) An IT SWAT TEAM that will get a business up and operational in 4 hours or less.

All of this can be included in our Managed IT Services (MITS) at a predictable low monthly fee.

Written By: Donald H. Dye
President & CEO

Expanding our Services

By: Keith Fosgett

Acorn Technology Corporation is proud to announce its services are expanding to San Diego County. My name is Keith Fosgett and my responsibilities, as the newest member of the sales team here at Acorn, are to facilitate our organization in growing and expanding the customer base in the San Diego Region.

My professional experience includes project management, marketing, sales and customer



service for a variety of different organizations. I earned a degree in Marketing and Business Administration from Cal State San Bernardino. I am currently living in Carlsbad (North San Diego County) with my wife Robyn and two boys Jake (age 10) and Luke (age 8). Although, I enjoy spending time with my family and watching my boys play basketball, baseball, and soccer, my majority of my time, thus far, has been spent in Riverside learning the ropes of Information Technology. I have gone on numerous sales calls with Mickey McGuire, the Director of Sales and Marketing, and with Christine Dela Cruz, a Sales and Customer Service Representative, gaining experience on the Acorn way of doing business and interacting with customers. I am very pleased to say I have had the delight in meeting some of our customers already and am looking forward to meeting the rest of you in the future.

Understanding Processors

By: Daniel Balkoski

Currently there are two major manufacturers of computer processors that run most of the desktop and laptop computers. Intel, which was the creator of the Pentium line of processors (and now the Intel Core 2 chips) that in recent years has used the Blue Man Group in their advertisements, is probably the most well known. The other is Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) who has stayed in tight competition closely behind Intel and even in some areas



exceeding Intel. Both of these companies have been at the forefront

of the computer industry in the last 10 years. AMD's main line of processors (currently referred to as Athlons) have generally been cheaper in cost than the equivalent Intel processors; however, Intel's Pentiums usually perform better at business tasks (however this gap has become much closer between the two in recent times). Athlon chips at one point were very popular for gaming due to some of the performance increases, but Intel has (and in general they have advertised to this effect) pushed for the business users.(again, the gap between the difference has closed in recent years.)

Trying to find which of the processors can be a daunting task as they have changed how they label them. They used to refer to the speed (like a Pentium 4 2Ghz) however AMD in an effort to compete based on numbers (An

To Be Continued on Page 4...

Save by Shopping Online

By: Rachel Helwich

Some may say technology has handicapped our lives, but can we call it incapacitating when it is making our lives convenient and dare I say better? If you don't already know, one of today's technological advantages is that you can purchase items from many other places online other than eBay. For instance, you can have the feasibility of buying all your groceries from the convenience of your home from many grocers; Albertson's, Vons, even Costco and Sam's Club all offer online ordering. The prices might be slightly higher than what you're used to in-store, but you save money—both in obvious and hidden ways.

First, you save gas. With prices skyrocketing, the savings are huge. But you also save wear and tear on your car because you're not racking up the miles. Fewer trips to the mechanic are great. If you make a big enough dent in your yearly mileage, it can also lower auto insurance rates.

Another big money-saver is that you'll only purchase what you really need—no more impulse buys! If you go to the store once a week and you diverge from your shopping list to purchase just \$1.99 worth of the stuff lining the checkout stand—candy bars or gum or lip balm or nail clipper, you waste over \$100 a year.



Digital image. <<http://www.nymag.com>>.



Digital image. <<http://www.bigbinder.wordpress.com>>.

Plus, if you have kids that you'd normally drag along when you shop, you don't have to worry about them filling your cart with sweets and treats, or throwing tantrums at the checkout, or pleading to ride coin-operated carousels strategically placed outside the doors.

But the real savings come from your time. Time is money, and shaving precious minutes off your errands saves precious dollars off your pocketbook. Using the online shopping tools, you can conveniently create point-and-click lists for items you frequently buy. You'll instantly know if a store is out of an item, so no more wasted trips for mascarpone cheese and best of all, most sites will let you store your payment information so you only have to take the time to enter it once.

Using a home delivery service is simple: just go to your grocer's website, sign up, and begin shopping. The few minutes it takes to do this, is well worth the savings!

Understanding Processors Continued from Page 2...

Athlon 1.6Ghz chip ran faster than a Pentium 1.6 so AMD started labeling their chips based on the equivalent speed compared to Intel) started changing their labels to match, so then Intel changed their labeling (for example Intel Core 2



Duo e8600) which now makes it harder to compare apples to apples, to see which one is better.

If looking for a new processor, I would recommend looking at reviews of what people like of the processors and how they

handle different tasks. Most sites that offer this will have comparisons to other processors so you can compare directly with other speeds and brands. <http://www.anandtech.com/> is one good website that has reviews and information for processors among other computer hardware. <http://www.hardocp.com> is another site that is more geared towards people who build their own computers (specifically for gaming) and try to seek out as much performance that they can get. Of course, you can always ask Acorn to assist you with this.

Restarting Your Computer Every Night.

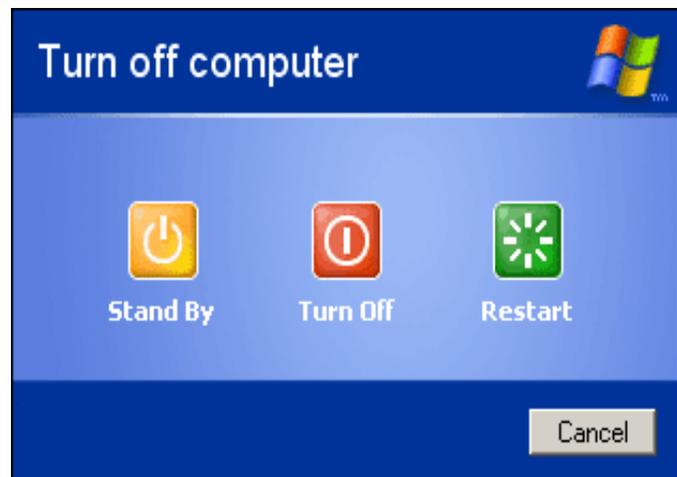
By: John Vo

It's 5 PM on Friday and you're ready to leave the office and enjoy your well deserved weekend of rest and relaxation. You grab your mouse, click on the Windows start button and choose to log off, shut down, restart or maybe lock your computer. We've all been told different things when it comes to what to do when you're going to be away from your computer for an extended period of time. If you're taking a 10 minute

break or an hour lunch, it doesn't make sense to shutdown or restart your computer, so locking your workstation is usually the best option.

When you're done for the day or weekend, however, restarting or shutting down your computer makes more sense. Some will argue the power saving benefits of shutting down your computer while you're not actively using it, while others will argue that the shutdown and startup sequence causes the most wear and tear in hardware, similar to starting a car up for the first time in the morning.

There are a few benefits of restarting your



computer instead of logging off or shutting down. Restarting your computer is effectively shutting down your computer and then restarting it back up immediately thereafter. The benefits of this, over shutting down alone, is that the next time you go to log into your computer, you don't have to wait for the computer to start up first. Yet, locking your computer is attractive to some users as this allows them to continue exactly where they left off. However, if you always lock your computer, especially at the end of the work day, you're losing out on the benefits of a restart. In an ideal world, you could open and close as many programs as you wanted to and it would have no effect on the performance of your computer. In reality, the more programs you open, the more memory your computer uses.

Acorn Technology's VIC*

By: Christine Dela Cruz

After you close a program, you almost never get back all of the memory that was used up while the program was open. Even worse, some programs may appear to close, but actually keep a hidden process in the background and some of these actually develop a memory leak and wastes even more memory. You'll notice that over time, your computer becomes slower and slower. A restart clears out all these programs and reclaims that wasted memory. In many cases, it's faster to log into your computer after you've restarted, rather than previously just logging off.

Another benefit of restarting your computer is that it allows security updates to be installed. Acorn Technology does regular system maintenance on our customers' computers, but sometimes the computer needs to be restarted for this to come into effect. Sometimes we might even need to log into a computer to do some more hands on maintenance and we generally don't log into a locked computer, as that requires us to force the previous user to log off, which can then lead to a potential loss of work/data.

So the next time you're done for the day, choosing restart may be your best option for a fast, stable and secure work environment



When in doubt, call Acorn Technology Corporation (951) 784-3500

“Since we signed with Acorn, our employees have never asked me for help again.”

For this issue of Acornucopia, Acorn Technology Corporation is pleased to highlight Roorda, Piquet & Bessee which is a traditional full-service CPA firm in Riverside. As well as there sister firm iFinancial which specializes in wealth management and business succession as our Very Important Customer (VIC). Below is their story from Marcus Piquet which describes their personal struggles in trying to make technology work for them.

By: Christine Dela Cruz

“Roorda, Piquet & Bessee is a traditional full-service CPA firm in Riverside. Our sister firm, iFinancial, consists of Certified Financial Planners specializing in wealth management and business succession. Technology is an integral part of our business and has allowed us to do things that would have been unimaginable 20 years ago. However, contrary to what a lot of people think, most accountants are not technology nerds. We rely heavily on others to provide IT services just like everyone else.

Our journey in to the world of Managed IT Services (“MITS”) has been long and sometimes bumpy. When our firm began over 20 years ago, my father handled all of our IT needs and I’d pitch in on the weekends. That worked fine for years. We were even able to implement our first network using 10BASE-T and coaxial cable on Windows for Workgroups 3.11 in 1993 all on our own. The first time we used an IT consultant was in 1996 when we installed our first file server on Windows NT, but that was just to build the server and install the operating system. By the time I started as a full-time tax accountant with the Company in 2000, our firm had grown to about 15 employees and a significant amount of my time had to be dedicated to supporting our growing IT needs. By 2006 it had become obvious that IT management had become a significant distraction with growing opportunity cost. I was

To Be Continued on Page 7...

Going Green

By: Thomas Dye



As we become increasingly aware of the effects of climate change, it becomes increasingly clear that the burden of responsibility to protect and preserve our planet rests upon us. Public awareness of climate change has continued to grow over the past few

years, and with the emergence of new “green” technologies and the growing popularity of recycling, many of us have begun to take action. However, one specific type of harmful waste is being dumped into land-fills at an increasing rate.

Electronic waste (“e-waste”) is quite often not disposed of correctly. Many types of electronics, especially computers, contain materials such as lead and mercury. When an unwanted computer is dumped into a land-fill, these harmful materials seep into the earth, polluting the soil and groundwater.

Thankfully, public awareness of climate change has caught the attention of computer manufacturers who are now seeking ways to build computers using less of these harmful materials. Though even with the added effort of manufacturers, certain amounts of these pollutants are still required to make your computer work. At the moment, there just isn’t a way around it.

So what happens to all of our outdated equipment? According to the Electronic Take Back Coalition most of our outdated computer equipment is sitting in storage - 75% in fact. A total of approximately 20 to 24 million computers and televisions are added to storage nationwide each year. At some point, all of this e-waste will need to be disposed of, and if it all makes its way into a land-fill, the well-being of surrounding ecosystems could be in jeopardy.

There is, however, a way for you to safely



Picture courtesy of: www.ngm.nationalgeographic.com

dispose of your old computer equipment without fear of harming the environment. Many electronic recycling companies (or e-cyclers) have begun to provide free recycling services for anyone with equipment in need of disposal. When you hand over your old computer to an e-cycler, the harmful pollutants contained in the equipment are salvaged for re-use, and never make their way to a land-fill. E-cyclers can also salvage other valuable materials from old computer parts. It is interesting to note that per ton, computer components yield more gold than gold ore.

E-cycling isn’t just a good idea, it’s the law. California’s Electronic Waste Recycling Act of 2003 mandates that an extra fee be paid at time of purchase for certain electronics, such as LCD monitors, to cover future recycling costs. This money is sent directly to recycling plants; but this fee does not relieve the purchaser of responsibility to properly dispose of the products he or she purchased. In conclusion, e-cycling should be regarded as the only proper means of disposal for your old electronic equipment. We at Acorn Technology Corporation have proudly cooperated in this action and are continuously helping

our customers recycle their equipment. If you have E-waste you would like recycled, please contact Thomas Dye at Acorn Technology, (951) 784-5000 or tdye@acorntechcorp.com



Acorn Technology's VIC* Continued from Page 5...



spending over 500 hours a year providing IT services; at a billing rate of over \$100/hour that was costing the firm \$50,000 in lost revenues. I projected that opportunity cost to grow rapidly in upcoming years as both the hours required and the billing rate increase; by 2008 we'd be sacrificing \$100,000 a year in lost revenues!

In addition to the lost revenues, I was spending a significant amount of time "off the clock" to keep myself up to speed technically. By 2008 we were using Windows Server 2003, Exchange Server 2003, and SQL server 2005 and supporting 25 employees. More and more of our critical applications are migrating to SQL server. Additionally, we had the need to back up all of these servers and design a sound disaster recovery plan, and I realized we were in an unsustainable position with respect to our IT needs. I couldn't keep doing it all and keep developing professionally at the same time.

Of course our initial thought was to hire someone else who could take over the IT services. To hire someone that would be qualified to competently manage all of those server technologies and provide complete support to our employees would be very expensive, and even if we did, we're not big enough to keep them busy more than a couple days a week. Nobody with that skill set is going to want a part-time job. We thought of looking for some brilliant computer science student working his way through college who could work for us part time; but what happens when he graduates? We needed a sustainable and cost efficient solution.

I stumbled upon the concept of Managed IT Services by listening to podcasts and reading blogs related to Microsoft Small Business Server. The idea made sense – we could hire a company to provide the support we need for a flat monthly fee. These companies make money by keeping your network running smoothly, and are not continuously trying to sell you elaborate software and hardware solutions you don't need like a typical IT consultant. They can afford to employ staff with different specialties, like a SQL expert, an Exchange expert, and general Windows Server experts, so we'd be able to benefit from the vast technical knowledge rather than rely on the limited knowledge of just one person.

We found a MITS provider in Irvine that seemed to fit the bill. The manager showed up in a jeep that was completely "wrapped" in his company logo. He named off the different technicians he had that specialized in a lot of impressive technologies – SQL, Oracle, Virtualization, Exchange, etc. He promised to implement a true disk-based backup system of all of our servers that would allow a restore to dissimilar hardware in a couple of hours. We decided to give it a try – and they fell flat on their face. It turns out that this company was really a franchise, and that all of the expert technicians resided in Denver. Not only were they not local, they weren't available when we needed them. The disk-based backup solution they implemented was based on Acronis True Image, but built into their overall network management software designed by the franchisor – and it started crashing our file server! Our MITS provider couldn't go directly to Acronis for support because it was embedded in their management platform. He had to go to the Denver franchisor for support, who then would have to go to Acronis for support. Pretty soon we had a real mess on our hands, with people at about five different layers trying unsuccessfully to solve a customer's problem. To add insult to injury, the technician assigned to support our employees didn't keep appointments and was under qualified to serve our company. Many times I ended up showing him

Acorn Technology's VIC* Continued from Page 7...

how to solve the problems our employees brought up. Within a month, the employees had lost faith in the MITS provider and were again coming to me directly for IT assistance. Finally, the MITS provider was never able to implement a Disaster Recovery plan that included a remote backup of our data. To say the least, our organization was feeling the pain of buyer's remorse and it was obvious that we had to make a change.

One day I received a direct mailing from another MITS provider out of Rancho Cucamonga, who was proudly announcing their new data center in Riverside. That was exciting to me because any MITS provider big enough to be running a true data center in Riverside must have the kind of local expertise – and remote backup ability – that we were lacking in our prior experience. Having been burned once, however, I was pretty skeptical. I set about trying to locate the data center, which did not turn out to be an easy task. After about an hour on Google I was able to narrow the location down to a specific area of Riverside but I still didn't have an address. I set out on my lunch break to try and find it. The large backup generators and cooling systems around the center gave it away instantly. Next door I saw a MarquisNet Riverside logo on Acorn Technology Corporation's door and decided to go inside and check it out. It turns out that the MITS provider from Rancho Cucamonga was only leasing space from the data center managed by Acorn. I also learned that a major part of Acorn's business is MITS services. I soon met Mickey McGuire and Christine Dela Cruz and realized right away that I was dealing with a much more significant operation than our prior provider. We began a thorough evaluation process of our current network which was done with no up-front cost and eventually signed a MITS contract with Acorn Technology Corporation.

In business it's the results that count. Since we signed with Acorn six months ago, our employees have never asked me for help again. They get immediate 24/7/365 support from

Acorn and they've always been able to solve their problems. They're only five miles away from us, so if a particular problem needs local attention they are always here right away. Their technicians are not only competent, but they know how to communicate with our employees. Acorn's performance has been a hundred times better than our prior experience."

Marcus R Piquet
Roorda, Piquet & Bessee, Inc.

*Very Important Customer

Upgrading to Vista?

By: Ryan Hoskin

It's been over a year and a half since Windows Vista was released and still its adoption has been mediocre at best. Comically, Microsoft's largest competitor is its own Windows XP software. I will take a look at some of the advantages of Windows Vista and I will have a look at why there has been so much reluctance in its adoption.

In the beginning Vista had strong support from developers and IT professionals. There were two huge new features that Vista was proposed to include. These were the Aero interface, which was designed to compete with the beautiful interface with Mac's OSX operating system, and WINFS, which was designed to provide an entire new level of security and functionality left out by Windows XP. As deadlines loomed, Microsoft ended up pulling both of these key features from Vista, causing supporters to be in an uproar. Regardless of these setbacks, Vista does provide some functionality that is designed to make your system easier to use for the average consumer and more resilient to malicious software and viruses. Vista comes with a completely redesigned Start menu

Upgrade to Vista Continued from Page 8...



which is supposed to be more intuitive to the untrained eye. This combined with an upgraded Windows Explorer are extremely powerful as it makes finding your files and programs much easier. User Access Controls (UAC) act as your big brother while using the computer with a set of dialog boxes that will confirm that you indeed want to take any action on your computer which is potentially harmful. For example, if you go to install a new program which makes modification to some of Vista's core components, you will get prompted to make sure that you really want to perform this action.

By far the biggest issue with Windows Vista has been its instability: many programs aren't compatible with Vista, hardware won't work with Vista, or the system just crashes at random. If you are able to purchase a machine with Vista pre-loaded, there is a good chance that you won't encounter many issues as the manufacturer has straightened out a lot of the issues with hardware drivers. Users who upgrade their own system to Vista may not have the same positive experience. Just as with Windows XP, as Microsoft is able to release new patches and updates to Vista, the software has become more and more stable.

What's next? There are rumors of Microsoft's next operating system, simply named Windows 7, will be released in late 2009. It may be worth it to stay with your current setup until Microsoft is able to release a product that is more reliable than Windows XP.

Dates of Interest:

Windows XP Release Date: December 31, 2001
Windows Vista Release Date: January 30, 2007

June 30, 2008
PC manufacturers stop selling computers with Windows XP installed.

Jan. 31, 2009
Microsoft stops selling XP altogether.

April 14, 2009
Mainstream support for Windows XP (free live support and warranty support) ends. Free maintenance is limited to security fixes.

April 8, 2014
All support for Windows XP ends.

