

THE RHODENIZER REPORT

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THE TAKE-AWAY POINTS:

- Remote access via 3rd party, or on your own.
- Start using RA now to make your transition to web services easier.
- AVG Antivirus 8.0 has antispware as well.
- Free disk defrag tool available to download.

HOW TO ACCESS YOUR COMPUTER FROM ANYWHERE

OK, maybe not from the North Pole. But, with all the wired and wireless methods today, access to the Internet is almost ubiquitous. And, wherever you have a broadband connection to the Internet, you can access your computer - if you know how.

For the purposes of this article, we'll use the term "client" to refer to a laptop or other PC you use from a remote location. And, "host" will refer to the computer you want to access.

There are 2 practical ways to access your "host" from a remote location:

1). **Subscribe to a service.**- The quickest and easiest way is to sign up for a third party relay service like one of these:

- A). <http://www.GoToMyPC.com>
- B). <http://www.LogMeIn.com>
- C). <http://pcnow.webex.com>

2). **Setup your own.** - It takes a little time and know-how to configure but if you have Win-

dows XP Professional, or Windows 2003 Server, you don't need to buy anything else.

Using a third-party service involves installing their software on your host so it can accept connections from their web service automatically. Then, you simply login to their website via your web browser (they usually provide Secure Socket Layer security) from your client and connect through.

These services charge about \$10 a month, or less, depending upon additional features. In some cases, their software can also burden your host, making it seem slower.

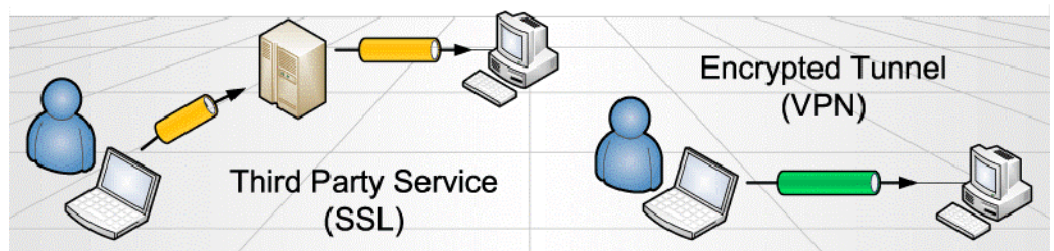
While security against outside snooping is very good, keep in mind that anyone with your login name and password can access your host the same way.

If you don't trust a third party to be in the middle of your remote sessions, you can do it yourself with free open source software.



These programs can be used to create a secure, encrypted "tunnel" for connections using Remote Desktop (instead of your web browser) creating a virtual private network between your client and your host. No third party required. Even if you have an IT pro do the setup for you, it's about \$200 for a one-time setup versus an ongoing monthly fee from a service.

Either way, you'll enjoy the benefits of controlling your PC from anywhere without the security risks associated with carrying private information outside the office. - C. R.



PART 4 OF 4: REMOTE ACCESS

Our first step toward preparing your business for the future was to get organized, and **centralize** all your data in one protected location.

The second step was about **backing up** that data and making sure that you can recover it when needed.

The third step was a **security strategy** that deals with how to control the access and handling of your private data.

Now that we've established a relatively safe environment for your data, and a policy that determines who may have access, we can look at ways to provide it safely.

The most secure method of granting access would be to have users enter a controlled environment where all kinds of physical security measures are possible. Unfortunately, that method is also the least

convenient. To balance the need for security with the need for convenient access, we settle for the compromise solution of **remote access**.

Before the Internet, remote access was usually done over telephone lines via dial-up modems. Much like in the movie "War Games" with Matthew Broderick, anyone that stumbled across the right phone number could start guessing at names and passwords to try and get in.

Today, we make the login process more secure by requiring a user to have several pieces of information. Since almost all remote access is now via the Internet, computers need an IP address or "host name" of the computer to access so they can find it.

The user also needs to know what **client program** to use,

i.e., web browser, Remote Desktop, or something else.

When they find the right address, using the right program, users are prompted for a **login name, a password, and perhaps another authentication method**. If the host system has been setup correctly, it will not permit "guessing". After a certain number of tries, it locks out further attempts for a while.

Precautions can also be taken to "encrypt" sessions between user and host to prevent electronic snooping.

If done properly, remote access is a relatively safe solution and a valuable tool for the modern workplace.

From here, your business can make a smooth transition to the web-hosted platform of the future. Have you started planning yet?



"If done properly, remote access is a relatively safe solution and a valuable tool for the modern workplace."

THE NEW AVG ANTIVIRUS 8.0

This new version combines antivirus, antispyware, and antirootkit protection into one product. It also includes Link-scanner, a technology that actively blocks malicious code from web pages.

As in the previous versions, it downloads updates automatically and scans according to the schedule you select. Mine is set to check for updates every 6 hours, and to run a complete system scan every

night at 4:00 AM. This allows me to work uninterrupted during the day.

Any new threats discovered are automatically placed in the virus "vault". From time to time, I'll check to see if I have any new prisoners. This lets me know that AVG is doing its job at night while I'm asleep.

It's easy to install and highly effective. I recommend AVG

Antivirus as part of a comprehensive security strategy that includes regular backups and a hardware firewall with SPI.

For home situations where the PC is frequently used by teenagers, I recommend an additional weekly scan using Spybot Search & Destroy.

Download both AVG and Spybot from my website. Just go to the "Cliff's Pick's" page and you'll see the links. - C. R.



QUESTIONS FROM THE INBOX

Q— “I’ve been hearing about a fake IRS e-mail scam. How can we tell whether an e-mail is fake or genuine?”

A— Sending a fake e-mail is almost as easy as mailing a letter with a false return address written in the upper-left corner. It can be done in many different ways. The only way to tell where an e-mail really came from is to have the encapsulated header information examined by an IT pro. Like a passport that gets stamped at various stops along the way, the header can reveal what country it originated from and even which ISP. But, the offending culprit is often a virus infected PC that belongs to someone who is totally unaware that their PC is being remotely controlled and used for criminal purposes.

In the case of IRS e-mails, the answer is simple: They are all fake. The IRS does not send out e-mails.

Q— “When I type an e-mail address in Outlook, it shows similar e-mail addresses that I can choose from as I type. Where are these e-mail addresses coming from and how can I delete them?”

A— You are referring to the AutoComplete cache feature in Microsoft Outlook. Those e-mail addresses should come from your Contacts. I say they should... but they don’t. They

are cached e-mail addresses that were typed at one time and are now saved in a file under your profile named “Outlook.NK2”.

You can delete individual cached e-mail addresses by starting to type the address in the “To” line of an e-mail. When AutoComplete highlights the suggested e-mail address, just press the delete key.

To delete the entire cache, close Outlook. Then, use Windows Explorer to navigate to your profile folder (or, just click “Start”, then “Run”, then type “%APPDATA%\Microsoft\Outlook” and press the “Enter” key. It will bring up a window with the contents of your profile. Delete only the “Outlook.NK2” file and close the window.

When you restart Outlook, it will create a new cache file and start over again from that point.

If you are transferring all of your information to a new computer, you can copy this file and take it with you if you wish.

Q— “I have a 2.4Ghz P4 with 1GB of RAM about 4 years old. The network port suddenly stopped working so I can no longer connect to the Internet. My friend tells me it’s not worth fixing but I would rather not buy a new

PC unless I have to. What do you think?

A— Your friend may be under the impression that you need a new motherboard because the network port is built-in. That would be expensive.

Fortunately, you can just bypass that problem by installing an old \$10 Ethernet card in one of your open PCI slots. Windows will automatically detect and configure it for you if it’s one of the common cards from 3Com or Intel that has been around a while. And, don’t be afraid of used cards pulled from old PC’s if you can find one. Get two if they’re cheap so you’ll have a spare.

If you buy a new card, or one that Windows is not familiar with, you’ll need to supply the drivers when Windows detects the card and prompts you for them. Either way, it’s an easy fix that won’t cost much. Afterwards, just plug your network cable into the card and reboot. No other changes are necessary.

The specs you mentioned still seem fine to me for common business applications. If your PC has been adequate for your needs up to now, I see no need to replace it just yet.



“... the offending culprit is often a virus infected PC that belongs to someone who is totally unaware...”

Send your questions to:
questions@rhodenizer.com

MY FAVORITE FREE PROGRAM

I found a new gem that I like so much I've set it up as a scheduled task to run automatically on the weekends. It's a free disk defragmenter and optimizer for Windows 2000, 2003, XP, and Vista written by Jeroen Kessels of Amsterdam.

JkDefrag is completely automatic, easy to use, offers options for several optimization strategies, and can handle floppies, USB disks, memory sticks, and anything else that looks like a disk to Microsoft Windows.

The free download includes a Windows version, and a com-

mand line version (for scheduling by the task scheduler), a screensaver version, a DLL library (for use from programming languages), and versions for Windows X64.

There is no "setup" or "install" and no configuration file. All you have to do is download the zip file and unpack anywhere you like. The programs are ready to run, even from memory stick or CD-ROM.

Defragmentation and optimizing will not only make a hard disk perform faster, but also lengthen its life span.

The disk will have less work to do and therefore have less

wear and tear. Also, the sorting strategies (see the "a" option) will refresh all the magnetic data on your hard disk.

However, defragmenting and optimizing is work, so excessive defragmenting and optimizing can actually cause more wear and tear than it prevents. JkDefrag is therefore set for "fast" optimization by default. The other optimizations should only be used occasionally.

To download from my website, just go to the "Cliff's Picks" page and you'll see the link posted there. - C. R.



"Defragmentation and optimizing will not only make a hard disk perform faster, but also lengthen its life span."

ABOUT RHODENIZER IT

We are a different kind of IT service provider. We don't sell any hardware or software. There are no sales incentives for steering you toward a particular product. We provide IT consulting services that include finding the best deals on what you really need and passing the savings along to you.

Our mission is to do more than fix computer problems.

Our mission is to help small companies save money, increase productivity, and safeguard private information.

We work with clients to prepare disaster recovery plans that ensure their critical data remains safe, yet easily accessible. The benefits of such strategic planning also includes money-saving ideas for managing resources and reducing IT expenses.

We have the training, experience, and know-how to provide the right solutions for your needs, and your budget.

Just call to schedule your **free initial consultation with no risk, and no obligation.**

Tell me about your computer needs or IT issues. I'll recommend a course of action that makes sense for your situation at no cost to you. What have you got to lose?

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