



THE RHODENIZER REPORT

JANUARY 2008

www.rhodenizer.com

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THE TAKE-AWAY POINTS:

- Cloud computing is the inevitable future of data management.
- Scan suspicious links before you click them.
- Part 1: Centralize and organize your data.
- Where to download more free software.

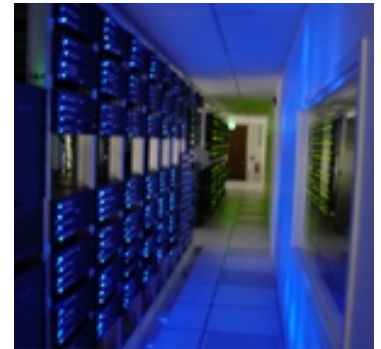
GET YOUR BUSINESS READY FOR THE FUTURE

We are entering a new age of information technology that history will best describe as the advent of “cloud computing”. This new strategy will dramatically change the way in which we manage our business information—saving time, money, and opening doors to new possibilities we never dreamed of. Even small businesses will benefit from outsourcing IT to the global “cloud”. Imagine instant access to information from anywhere at anytime using portable high speed wireless devices that cost nothing to use (much like over-the-air TV), and it’s only a few years away.

The best way to understand how it will work is to recall the early 1900’s when factories generated their own electricity

with their own power plants. Each plant had its own generators, engineers, and maintenance workers to supply power to company buildings and equipment. When utility companies began building huge power grids that offered more reliable and cost-efficient electricity, it made more sense to tap-in and buy electricity than produce it.

Cloud computing applies this concept to computer networks. Instead of your business maintaining it’s own servers and networks, the idea is to upload all files, databases, and applications to a “Borg-like” Internet cloud with faster, more robust, and more cost-efficient resources than you could afford to build and maintain yourself.



Sounds like science fiction? It has, in fact, already begun. In the previous Oct. and Nov. issues of the Rhodenizer Report, I wrote about free online file sharing being offered by Google and Microsoft gaining popularity rapidly. Microsoft and IBM are allowing scientific researchers to borrow storage space and computing power on networks of super-computers they could never have (cont. on P. 2)

FREE SCANNER FOR SUSPICIOUS WEB LINKS

Have you ever hesitated to click on a link because you weren’t sure what would happen?

Web links embedded on a web page or in an e-mail can be potentially dangerous because you don’t know where they may lead or what programs could be unleashed on your PC once that link is activated.

One way to test a suspicious link is to use the “LinkScanner” provided free by EXP labs.

Just go to www.explabs.com and scroll to the bottom of the main web page. Paste the suspicious link into the address bar provided and wait for the LinkScanner to examine the destination for hidden exploits

and hostile code. If no danger is found, you can at least click on the link with some level of assurance that it will be safe.



PART 1 OF 4: CENTRALIZE AND ORGANIZE

This is the first of my new four part series intended to help you organize, protect, and prepare your business information for the future. Each step builds upon the previous accomplishment:

JAN - Centralize & Organize.

FEB - Backup and Recovery.

MAR - Data Security Needs.

APR - Using Remote Access.

This month, get rid of clutter! Delete or archive what you no longer need and organize all you do need in one place. Following this simple philosophy leads to greater efficiency, easier management, and lower storage costs.

Start by designating a space where all your data can be housed. This can be a server,

a shared PC, an external USB drive, or just a folder with plenty of space. You have to start somewhere. Gather files scattered among other PC's, or various folders on the same PC, and consolidate them all into one place. (Be aware that by moving database files, such as those used by QuickBooks and Outlook, those applications will not be able to find them until you specify the path to their new location the next time they start up).

Once you get all your files organized into one location, you can move the entire directory of folders you've created to a better storage system later. For now, just organize folders and subfolders according to categories that make sense to you and to

others you work with. If you share files with co-workers, solicit their input so everyone feels involved and understands the new strategy to centralize and organize. This not only helps get everyone else on-board with the new program, but also motivates others to contribute whatever data files they may have stored in various places.

This is also a great time to identify and eliminate duplicates or out-dated copies of files. Reducing the number of files also reduces the amount of storage space needed and reduces the time needed to run virus scans and backups.

Next month: How to backup your organized files on a regular basis and recover them when needed.—C. R.



“Get rid of what you don't need, and organize all you do need in one place.”

GET YOUR BUSINESS READY FOR THE FUTURE (CONT.)

(cont. from P. 1) afforded on their own. Amazon and Yahoo are hosting large databases of information for other companies who have seen the advantages of outsourcing to these Internet giants. A large majority of individual and business websites are now managed by web hosting companies using economy-of-scale to provide website and email services at prices that continue to decline.

The way we access web-based information is also

changing from wired to wireless, and from desktop to portable. Google is presently pursuing plans to build its own version of the iPhone and offer it free to consumers over a high speed wireless network that many believe can be funded by advertising revenue. This prospect forces existing wireless carriers to develop competitive strategies in case it becomes a reality. Will this lead to free smart phones and free Internet access? Possibly.

This could mean the end of worrying about viruses, backups, and remote access difficulties... if the issues of trust and security can be worked out to our satisfaction. One thing is certain: It will soon cost more for you to manage your own data than it will to join the cloud community.

The article on page 2 above is the first in a four-part series that will help you get your business information organized and ready for what the future holds.—C. R.



QUESTIONS FROM THE INBOX

Q– “What is a podcast?”

A– It’s like a video broadcast, but instead of broadcasting from a TV station, it’s made available for viewers over the Internet. Many websites now do podcasts on a regular basis. Some have even built a loyal following of viewers and make money by advertising on those websites.

Anyone with a digital video camera, a computer, and a website can create a podcast. Many people create promotional videos and upload them to sites such as YouTube and Google Video in order to advertise and attract viewers to their own sites.

You can view some of the free instructional videos I’ve created on the “Video Tips” page of my website.

Q– “How can we run QuickBooks in our office from more than one PC at a time?”

A– You can buy a multi-user version of QuickBooks that allows installation on multiple computers; one of which must be designated as the “database manager”. That’s where the actual data for your business is housed. You must then “share” a designated folder on that PC with the other PC’s by networking in either a client/server, or peer-to-peer configuration.

User accounts must also be created for each user in the

“Administrative Options” menu in QuickBooks on that PC. The 2008 version of QuickBooks Pro makes this procedure relatively simple.

Security precautions must be taken when handling confidential files so I recommend setup by an IT professional.

Q– “What kind of maintenance do I really need to do on my computer?”

A– Computer maintenance should have two primary objectives: To save time, and to safeguard information. If you aren’t concerned about either, maintenance doesn’t really matter in your case. Not to sound facetious, but some systems are setup for a single purpose and can be quickly replaced. In such cases where no data is saved, maintenance is not really necessary.

In most other cases, the PC or server must perform quickly and reliably for multiple applications. It may also store critical data we must protect. **Regular procedures are vital to maintaining optimum efficiency and safety.**

Viruses and spyware of all kinds (malware), can degrade system performance—even to the point of instability or failure. They also present a real threat to the security of your data through file corruption, deletion, or covert access. A

good **anti-malware** product is necessary for any PC that has access to the Internet, but is not an end-all solution.

File fragmentation is also detrimental to performance and file integrity. It happens as a result of normal use over time. As file fragments are scattered over available drive space, it takes longer for Windows to re-assemble them when called upon. There are 3rd party defragmentation programs, but many bog the system down by running in the background constantly—thus negating any added performance benefits. I recommend using the built-in Windows **Disk Defragmenter** on a regular basis. You can find it on Windows XP by clicking “Start”, “All Programs”, “Accessories”, then “System Tools”.

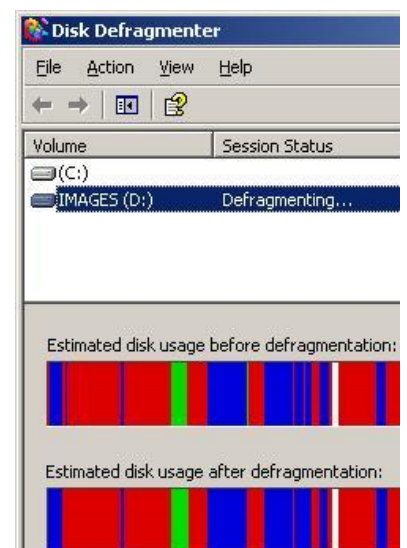
The most important routine for safeguarding your data is performing **regular backups** and storing those backups in a separate location. Also, keep your anti-malware software and Windows operating system up-to-date.

It is well worth the price to be proactive and get **annual checkups by an experienced IT pro**. Have him/her show you the best way to protect and maintain your system in your unique situation.

Send your questions to:
questions@rhodenizer.com



“Computer maintenance should have two primary objectives: To save time, and to safeguard information”.



MORE FREE PROGRAMS AND GOODIES

Recover Deleted Files:

If you've ever accidentally deleted a file, you can imagine how nice it would be to have a utility that could recover it for you. Here's one that even recovers pictures deleted from digital cameras or USB flash drives. Best of all, it's free: www.recuva.com.

Send Self-Destructing E-mail:

Just like "Mission Impossible", there are services that offer delivery of "Read Once Then Self Destruct" e-mails. Sites, like Kicknotes.com and WillSelfDestruct.com provide

message recipients one-time access to a secure Web page containing your message which can only be read once before it is destroyed. It's free and untraceable.

Internet Explorer 7 Pro:

IE7Pro is an add-on for Internet Explorer 7 which adds a lot of features and extras that the developers claim "makes browsing faster, more responsive, and sleek." It includes spell check, super drag drop, mouse gesture, Web accelerator, webpage capturer, AD Blocker, Flash

Block, spyware blocker, and many more features. I've read some favorable reviews and it appears to be legit. Download it from IE7pro.com for free.

Free PDF Creator:

You don't need to buy Adobe Acrobat if you just want to create ".pdf" files from your original documents. There is a free, light-weight program you can download and install from TinyPDF.com that allows you to create professional looking PDF files in the same way. Check it out!



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 at all times. Benefits of such strategic planning also include 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, problems, or issues of concern. Then, let me recommend a course of action that will make sense for your situation—at no charge.

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