

# HORIZON NEWSLETTER

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## XP, another version of Windows

### Inside this Issue

And Now, Windows XP .....	1
Pros .....	1
Cons .....	1
Sticky Notes .....	2
What is Turbo Note? .....	2
Benefits .....	3
Palm Pilot .....	3
Excel Tips .....	3
Launch Excel without a Blank Workbook .....	3
Preview Pictures .....	3
Default Worksheets .....	4
Rounding Numbers .....	4

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### And Now, Windows XP

Yes, Microsoft now has a newer version: **Windows XP**. (*Insert yawn here!*) Like the pattern with other releases of Windows, this is now the latest and greatest of everything you could possibly hope for. (*Got time for one more yawn?*) It is intended to replace Windows Me but is based on the more stable Windows 2000 version.

Based on information from other reviewers, here is my opinion. We have not had time to actually try the product and probably won't until forced to do so. **Recommendation to companies and individuals is to avoid it.**

#### Pros

There must be some, but the only one I can find so far is increased revenue for Microsoft.

#### Cons

Each application contains commands such as "Buy the DVD,"

"Get Prints of This Photo," and so on. XP stands for "eXperience," but the revenue links built into the operating system make it look as if "eXtra Profits" are the focus. With a declining growth rate for PC sales, Microsoft has apparently decided to position XP so they can collect a piece of the business generated when users send their images out for photo-finishing, buy multimedia content, or use other tied-in services.

More applications have been bundled such as a MSN.com specific browser, Instant Messaging, Passport, proprietary Media Players, and so on. This makes XP **bulkier, slower, and more prone to security holes.**

#### Microsoft made Passport a requirement to use Windows Messenger and other features.

Despite the severe security weaknesses of Microsoft's Passport authentication system (<http://www.avirubin.com/passport.html> for an AT&T Labs analysis), XP repeatedly requests the user's e-mail address and password to create a Passport e-commerce account.

The passport authentication program, used by millions of people to log on to Hotmail, is trivially easy for a Trojan horse to compromise on Windows 9x and ME systems. A breach can expose a user's financial information, including credit card numbers that were typed in by a user and stored on Passport's central Web server.

If you use MSN, somebody can get your Passport ID, password, and the phone number to dial your ISP. Because a person's e-mail address and password are used to sign onto the Passport server, an unscrupulous person at an ISP could easily steal credit card numbers.

Passport enforces a single user name and password for all participating Web sites. The service will be all but mandatory, which tells users, "You need a Passport to use Windows XP Internet communications features ... and to access Net-enabled features."

The Passport agreement, which you accept by clicking OK, **permits Microsoft and its partners to send you an unlimited number of commercial e-mail messages.** You can't rescind Microsoft's permission to use your e-mail address. You must unsubscribe from every partner's e-mail list individually. One marketing study found that many well-known companies won't take you off their e-mail lists even after several requests.

This agreement also says that Microsoft can change the contract's terms at any time, merely by editing a Web page. Every time you use Passport, you're supposed to re-read this page to detect any changes. *I'm fairly sure that the chances of users re-reading this agreement are close to zero. I would also expect that eventually there will be a monthly fee.*

Instead of including the latest version of Java support, as a recent Sun-Microsoft lawsuit settlement would suggest, XP will default to a 4-year-old version. Users can get a new Java download, but its 5MB size will discourage many.

Internet Explorer loses support for all Netscape-style plug-ins, including embedded QuickTime clips. New users surfing the Web under XP will undoubtedly run into sites that IE will no longer handle properly.

What all these new XP "features" have in common is that they make Windows more convenient for Microsoft but less convenient for users.



## Sticky Notes

Seldom do I find a software utility that I can get excited about, but I think **Turbo Note** will get your heart pumping faster.

Look at your monitor. Does it have sticky notes stuck all over it? Do you wish you could easily pass a sticky note to someone else? Do you wish you could put an alarm on a sticky note to help remind when to do something? Would you like to have the sticky notes in different colors to represent different categories? Do you run out of sticky notes, just when you need one? Do you or your company pay to buy the sticky notes? Has a sticky note ever unstuck, and two days too late you find it on the floor? If you answered yes to any of the questions, Turbo Note is for you.

Maybe you don't use sticky notes. Do you write notes in some other format, but then forget where you put the note? Or have you ever forgotten to do something because you didn't check your notes or memos? If so, you are also a candidate for Turbo Note.

### What is Turbo Note?

Turbo Note is an easy to use (*and I do mean easy to use*) software utility that allows you to create notes that are placed on your monitor screen. You can change the color and size. You can hide the notes, have them only appear on your desktop or always appear on top. You can set an

alarm on a note to get a reminder to do something. You can send a note to other users.

### Benefits

You get rid of the clutter on your monitor. Very convenient to use. It is free!!

To download your copy of Turbo Note, go to the address <http://www.turbopress.com/tbnote33.exe>. This link will automatically start a download process. Save the exe file to your c:/windows/temp directory. Open explorer and double click on the exe file to install. The install process is very brief. You are ready to go.

### Try it, you'll like it!!



### Palm Pilot

The Palm Pilot has been around for several years, but only recently did I get one. *Actually several months now.* When I first saw one I thought cute, nice toy but who needs it. Well, I proved myself wrong!

I now use the Palm for my contact list, schedule, memos, to do's, time tracking, and yes I have become

addicted to the Back Gammon game. You can also use it for Email, but I haven't gone there yet.

One of early concerns was would it recognize my horrible handwriting. After about 10 minutes of learning how to print letters palm-style, I was off and running. The only letters I sometimes still have problems with are Y and Q.

The beauty of the Palm lies in the simplicity of use. The Palm OS is very solid. Synchronizing data from and to your PC is as easy as pressing a single button.

It took a while to convince other staff members of the benefits, but now almost everyone is using the Palm. We are even using it to track our time and produce our weekly time sheets.

There are hundreds of free or very reasonably priced software packages that you can download from the Internet. My favorite site is <http://www.tucows.com>. Installing new software doesn't get any easier. There is even an Excel look-alike spreadsheet package that automatically interfaces with Excel for a whopping price of \$39.95.

We use the IBM version, WorkPad, which is exactly the same as the Palm Pilot. It has 8MB of memory. Even with hundreds of contact records I still am only using 92% of the memory. The battery life is loooooong. Sometimes I don't

charge my unit for over a week.

The Palm is somewhat pricey, but when you considering you can carry all of the information you need in your shirt pocket, I think it is well worth it.



### Excel Tips

#### Launch Excel without a Blank Workbook

When you launch Excel from the Start Menu or a shortcut, Excel opens a new, blank workbook named Book1. If you want Excel to start without a blank document, you can do so by using the **/e startup switch**.

*To add the /e startup switch...*

- Right-click the Excel shortcut
- Click on Properties
- Click on the Shortcut tab
- Click in the Target: box
- Press the END key
- Type a space followed by **/e** at the end of the command

#### Preview Pictures

Have you ever tried to find an old spreadsheet and find yourself opening several spreadsheets before you find the right one? There's a way to avoid this time-waster: Create preview pictures. This allows you to see a snapshot of the workbook in Excel's

Open dialog box.

*To use this feature...*

- Open a spreadsheet
- Select File/Properties
- On the Summary tab, check the **Save Preview Picture** box

To see the preview picture when you're searching through files in the Open or Save As dialog boxes **click the Preview icon** (second icon from the right at the top of the dialog box). When you click on worksheets that have previews, you'll see the snapshot in the preview pane.

### Default Worksheets

By default, Excel creates three worksheets in every new workbook. If you find that you don't use all three or that you require more,

change the default number.

*To do so...*

- Select Tools from the menu bar
- Click on Options
- Click on the General tab
- Change the number in the **Sheets In New Workbook** to number of desired sheets

### Rounding Numbers

Often, you'll store numbers that have several decimal places with cells formatted to display only one or two decimal places. In these instances, Excel rounds the displayed result. This is usually fine, but you may find that calculations appear to be off because formulas use the real values, not what you see.

There is a quick and easy way to

force Excel to use the values as they appear in the worksheet, but use it with caution. The technique involves using the Precision As Displayed feature, which affects all numbers in the workbook. The conversion is one-way and you won't be able to retrieve the original number value, even if you later disable the Precision As Displayed feature.

*To use this feature...*

- Choose Tools from the menu bar
- Click on Options
- Click on the Calculation tab
- Check the **Precision As Displayed** box

A warning displays that the change is permanent. Simply click OK to commit the change. **Note that this setting change applies only to the currently active workbook.**