READY NET GO ... NEWS

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Tips of the Month

If you have a Windows 98 machine, pay attention!

Microsoft is **discontinuing security updates for Windows 98 as of June 30, 2006**. This means that any computer with the Win 98 Operating System will not receive security updates after June 30, 2006. These computers either need to be removed from the network or relegated to non-Internet activities only.

If the Win 98 computer remains connected to the network, it will be vulnerable to new attacks and may compromise other computers on the network.

Security Tip

If you receive an email from either Microsoft or your anti-virus company telling you to click a link to update your computer - - **DON'T!** More than likely, when you click the link or open the attachment, a Trojan Horse will be installed on your computer rather than an update.

Remember: No reputable company will send a personal email to you for updating your software or asking you for personal information to update their records. Spoofed emails and websites are becoming common so all computer users must be vigilant about what they open and download.

If the email looks legitimate but you're uneasy about something, **contact the company directly** (you must initiate the contact) and ask them if they recently sent an email asking you to update their records. If they have, give them the information. If not, you just saved yourself a major headache.

Understanding PDF's

One of the most widely recognized document formats is the **PDF** which stands for **Portable Document Format**. A PDF file is actually an image of a document which is viewable on many platforms including Mac, Linux and Windows. One of the main reasons why PDF files are so popular and widely used is that when you create a PDF, the original formatting of the document is maintained. In our global era of communication, PDF files have become the universal format for sharing information.

While PDF files are a valuable means of presenting information, there are many instances where converting a document to PDF is not optimal given the constraints of the format. We'll list some of these drawbacks in this newsletter after we discuss the different types of PDF programs.

Types of PDF programs

Currently there are two types of programs: **PDF creators** and **PDF readers**. A PDF creator program can read, edit, and create PDF's while a reader can only view, save, and print PDF's. The most famous manufacturer is Adobe who has created Adobe Reader and Adobe Acrobat. (There are other programs which have identical features to the Adobe line which we'll discuss later).

Most people have a PDF reader program installed on their computer which will allow you to view, save, and print a .pdf file but you won't be able to edit the text or make changes to the document. That's where PDF creator programs take over.

WWW (Websites Worth Watching)

1. www.kidsdomain.com/craft - Got kids? Get crafting!
2. www.sesameworkshop.org – Classic Sesame Street now online
3. www.factmonster.com – Just for kids – fun with learning – puzzles, games, help with homework, more.
4. www.infoplease.com – For teenagers and adults; learn something new with this easy to navigate site. Use the dictionary, thesaurus, almanac, or encyclopedia.

Adobe Reader

The Adobe Reader is a free program that allows the user to view, save and print a PDF file. You cannot edit or create PDF documents with this software.   Adobe saw the need for a universal format and believed that brand recognition would suit them well. In the PDF world, Adobe is to universal file conversion as Kleenex is to tissues. Other companies are jumping on the bandwagon though so you don't need to use the Adobe Reader program anymore to read PDF files (see Alternatives below).

Adobe Acrobat

Adobe Acrobat ($150-$450) allows the user to create or edit a PDF file in addition to viewing, saving and printing. One of the best features of this program is the seamless integration with MS Word. With one click, a user can convert a Word document into a PDF (with some exceptions). Adobe Acrobat is a highly valuable tool for its accuracy and widespread usability as well as its time saving feature.

Strengths of PDF / Adobe Acrobat 7.0

- Create a .pdf file from MS Word, Excel or PowerPoint
- Can be viewed across many platforms by having a PDF reader installed on the computer
- Accessibility features such as Read Out Loud in Adobe Acrobat 7. The voice is a bit monotone but for those who have vision difficulties, the read out loud feature works very well
- By using reflow, documents will automatically word-wrap – no horizontal scrolling
- Create simple fill-in forms with short text boxes, drop down boxes, and checkboxes. Formatting is maintained and non-editable. Abolish handwritten documents …
- Create more advanced forms with LiveCycle Designer included in Acrobat 7.0 Professional
- Password-protect a form so that only individuals with a password can gain access to the document
- Add a digital signature for authorizing documents
- Add active hyperlinks to documents so users can automatically go to an associated webpage
- Assemble multiple documents into one PDF file
- Get feedback from multiple reviewers on the same document

Weaknesses of PDF / Adobe Acrobat

- Although PDFs have become more accessible to disabled users, HTML documents are still preferred for fine tuning accessibility features.
- Some PDF documents, such as certain fill-in forms, will not have the same functionality as a word processing program such as MS Word or WordPerfect. Since a PDF is actually an image, there is a limit as to how much the file can change and still preserve its original formatting.
- MS Publisher documents cannot be converted into PDF using Acrobat 7.0
- Some features in Acrobat require individuals to use the latest version of the reader for full functionality. Users must be able to update their software on their computer.

Alternatives to Adobe Products

There are other manufacturers who have created similar software. Some are similarly priced while others are free. If you regularly create PDF programs, it will be helpful to use a program that integrates with MS Office specifically with MS Word. Some alternative programs include: **pdf995** – www.pdf995.com ; **CutePDF** – www.cutepdf.com ; **deskPDF** – www.docudesk.com ; **pdfFactory** – www.pdffactory.com ; Costs vary for each of these programs but they all offer trial versions to review the program before you buy.