

WORKSTATION BEST PRACTICES

Although not an all-inclusive list, the following *Best Practices* are being provided to help you keep your workstation performing at its best.

ADOPT

The following items should be adopted as essential parts of the work cycle of every desktop computer.

- **Scan Periodically:** At regular intervals, run software that scans your computer for viruses, worms, trojan horses, adware, spyware, and other types of malicious, unauthorized software that may infiltrate the machine. Delete or quarantine the titles detected by the scan.
- **Perform Preventive/Periodic Maintenance:** You or your technician should:
 - ◆ Periodically scan the surface of your hard disk for media errors.
 - ◆ Defragment your hard drives at least once a month.
 - ◆ Regularly clear your Web browser's temporary internet files.
 - ◆ Ensure you always have more than 10 Gigabytes of Free Diskspace.
- **Restart:** Reset or restart your machine every few days. Restarting does not harm any part of your computer and is sometimes the only way to recover lost resources which cause performance degradation over time.
- **Reinstall:** This sounds extreme, but you need to periodically reinstall your entire operating system and all applications. Very conservative users may find their Windows workstation will operate for years and show no reduction in performance. However, it is more typical for workstations to become increasingly bogged down over time, despite our best efforts to keep them free from unwanted software invaders and to keep the drives and operating system well-tuned. To get like-new performance, an expert could spend days tweaking an old, bogged-down system, or they could simply reinstall everything from scratch in a few hours and restore the machine to its factory-fresh brisk operation.
- **Keep Backups:** Naturally, you will keep backups of all data files. In addition, create occasional disk-image backups of the entire computer. When your computer's performance begins to degrade, the fastest way to restore it to its former glory is to wipe the hard drive and restore from a disk-image backup you made at a time when the machine was still running well.

AVOID

Every process you add that is *not* strictly necessary leaves you with incrementally less power to do the tasks that *are* strictly necessary. Use your best judgment in the following cases, but the more of these things you avoid, the better your machine will run.

- **Avoid Multimedia:** If playing an audio CD, a DVD movie, or an MP3 recording causes no perceptible degradation of your computer's overall performance, then feel free to do so. However, if your workstation is performing sluggishly, the first thing you should do is turn off all multimedia applications.
- **Avoid Live Scans:** While it is important to use software that detects harmful interlopers, the detection software itself can consume significant system resources. Live scans are designed to detect viruses, etc. as soon as they reach your machine. It may be preferable to disable live scans and rely instead on an off-hour scheduled scan. Again, if you are using live scans and you find that your system still performs well, you obviously do not need to make any changes.
- **Avoid Extra Background Applications:** Applications that run in the background are indicated by icons located on the lower right hand corner of your screen. Each of these background applications continuously consumes a portion of your system's power. Aside from the Volume Control, the Clock, and the Eject Hardware, keep a critical eye on the background applications in your taskbar. If you experience performance problems, examine these background applications and determine whether there are some you can do without. Instant messaging, continuous email scanning, quick-launchers and the like are luxuries you may be better off without.
- **Avoid Browser Add-ons:** While many of the various browser add-ons perform tasks we deem important, every browser add-on is, in the final analysis, an unnecessary drain on machine resources. You may find it helpful to add a pop-up blocker or a search bar.
- **Avoid Heavy Multitasking:** Try to work with no more than a handful of applications and windows open at the same time. Close applications when you finish tasks.
- **Avoid Additional Applications:** Chances are good that your workstation already has plenty of tools installed. Unless you really need them to do your work, do not install more programs. After viruses and spy/adware programs, the software we *choose* to install is often the biggest cause of system slow-downs.

NEVER

Some activities are so obstructive that nobody in a work environment should engage in them.

- **Never Use Pier-to-Pier File Sharing:** Pier-to-Pier (P2P) Software systems like Kazaa and Napster can engage a very high percentage of both your workstation's capacity and the capacity of your entire local network.
- **Do Not Listen To or Watch Streaming Web Broadcasts:** Streaming web broadcasts consume net bandwidth better reserved for work-related activities. The software required to play such broadcasts also consumes a large part of the resources of even advanced desktop computers.

DIAGNOSTIC RECORDS

Computer problems, just like organic problems, are easier to diagnose if you know the 'medical history' of the patient.

- **Check Connection Speed:** From time to time, record a measured reading of your Internet/LAN connection speed. Perhaps document on a chart for historical purposes. If you notice a sudden and

prolonged drop, or a gradual decline in connection speed, find out what is causing the decline and have it repaired.

- **Track Installs:** Keep a record of everything you install on your computer and when it was installed. When a Windows installation goes bad, the failure is usually caused by something recently installed.

As stated above, this is only a partial list of the things you can do to maintain acceptable workstation performance. Please contact your computer technician(s) for further advice and/or assistance.

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