PC Update Procedures: An Overview

How to keep your workstation up to date and secure

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At one time or another, we have all been notified that a brand new Adobe, Java or Windows update is ready to be installed. And just like many PC users, you've probably ignored them once or twice because of the hassle of having to reboot, close your browser windows, or for fear that they are malware in disguise. This article is intended to shed some light on how to tackle the seemingly endless task of running software or driver updates, and will ultimately help your workstation run more smoothly and securely.

Windows updates are perhaps the most important of all standard updates on a workstation. They consist mainly of patches and security fixes for the Windows operating system, Office applications, Windows Malware Removal Tool, Internet Explorer (IE) and any other Microsoft products. Periodically, Microsoft bundles all previous patches and fixes and sometimes incorporates new product features in major update releases known as service packs. The installation process for service packs typically takes between 30-60 minutes and can require several reboots; however, they are extremely important and should be installed as soon as possible. The update process is not to be interrupted as this could result in corrupting the operating system and potentially rendering a workstation unusable. If you do not see the Windows update icon in the notification tray you may access pending Windows updates by using IE to navigate to update.microsoft.com, or by clicking Start > All Programs > Windows Update. Windows updates are released on the second Tuesday of every month, and as needed to repair dangerous security loopholes.

Adobe and Sun Microsystems (Java) are trusted third party software companies that most web surfers are very familiar with. Adobe Flash and Java are two programming platforms that can be used to deliver media and web content to the end user. If you cannot view a video in IE, you encounter web content not displaying properly, or you experience crashes while navigating web sites, chances are your problem lies with an add-in from one of these providers. Adobe and Java are very diligent about notifying users of pending updates. In the event that you are not prompted, you can

always grab the latest releases of Flash Player and Java from their respective websites, get.adobe.com/flashplayer and www.java.com/en/download. Be forewarned, however, because these are free releases, you will occasionally notice a software "hitchhiker" during the download or installation process. Read the installation and download windows carefully before clicking the OK button, or you might end up with a shiny new McAfee Security Scanner or Ask Toolbar by mistake.

If all of this seems too overwhelming, there is good news. There is an online tool that provides PC users with a one stop shop for software updates. Found by navigating to www.secunia.com and clicking the "Scan Now" link, this tool will search your computer and within about one minute, you will receive a list of outdated software installed on your PC along with direct download links to all manufacturer update files. This is a handy tool requiring no software installation or fees and provides a great alternative to searching through the different vendor sites for updates.

Driver updates for system and peripheral hardware are equally as important as software updates. In short, a driver can be defined as a piece of software that instructs the operating system how to communicate with various hardware components. Without the appropriate driver, Windows is unable to recognize and interact with all of the hardware components in your system such as your graphics card, network card, and printer. Drivers do not need to be updated as frequently as the previously mentioned software applications, but should be considered a best practice for annual maintenance. The procedure for obtaining device drivers varies greatly. If you have purchased your computer from a major hardware provider such as Dell, HP, or Lenovo, then you are in luck. Located on the main pages for each vendor you should find links to the driver download sections of their sites. Dell has taken it a step further by allowing you to input their version of a serial number known as a service tag (which can be found on your computer) to display a categorized list of all applicable drivers specific to your computer, thus simplifying the update process. When dealing with third party add-in or expansion hardware, it is best to consult the vendor website or manual for proper update procedures.

This overview is only meant to assist users with basic software maintenance procedures. To cover all aspects of workstation maintenance in this article would be impossible, but this should help provide some guidance with respect to keeping an up-to-date and more secure PC.

We at TechSolutions are always available to help you keep your computer running as efficiently and smoothly as possible so please don't hesitate to call us for assistance or guidance.

Tablets: Revolution in the Making?

People who study technological advances and world-changing innovations typically agree on one point: nothing revolutionary comes out of the blue.

New ideas and technologies spend a long time hiding in plain sight before they suddenly change the world as we know it. Moreover, the agents of radical change are often already familiar to us.

Consider the Internet Revolution. At its heart you have a rather mundane concept: connect a bunch of computers to each other. But think about how much this mundane concept has changed our lives -- often in exciting and unexpected ways.

The Internet Revolution seemed to happen in the blink of an eye, but computers --even computer

networks -- had been around for decades. The same goes for other 'breakthroughs' in history. Automotive technology was already old news by the time Henry Ford came along and changed the world with his Model T. Going back even farther, we learn that moveable type had been around for years before Gutenberg unveiled his printing press. (» See also: Everything Is a Remix)

Which brings us to tablets. The technology behind tablets is familiar. Impressive, yes, but not mind-blowingly new. Yet there are indications that there's a tablet-driven revolution in the making.

After years of simmering on the back burner, tablets have suddenly reached a boiling point. They are now threatening the dominance of traditional computing devices—PCs. You can see these slim machines at work in virtually every industry, from the courtroom to the cockpit.

What do you think? Will tablet computers become the catalyst for major change -- on the scale of networked computers (aka the Internet)? Many people will shrug and say the tablet as just another computer, only smaller. Then again, the Internet is just another network, only bigger.

Mistakes Were Made: Lessons Learned from PR Disasters

A phone hacking scandal. A massive oil spill. A wardrobe malfunction. What do these events have in common? They're case studies of unfortunate events that were made worse by terrible PR. What can we learn from these goofs? Here are some specific examples (and lessons):

News Corp. Phone Hacking Scandal
PR lessons learned: Take it seriously. Downplaying only makes you look bad. Also, firing everyone (the entire newspaper) but the person (the editor) who presided over the scandal looks terrible. Ditto for having a defiant tone.

British Petroleum Gulf Oil Spill
PR lessons learned: The bad news will get out sooner or later. Don't make things worse by hiding, spinning or massaging the data. Rip off the band aid and tell us exactly how many gallons of oil are gushing into the Gulf of Mexico.

Superbowl Halftime Show Wardrobe Malfunction
PR lessons learned: Don't insult our intelligence with ridiculous phrases like "wardrobe malfunction." Own up to your mistakes, acknowledge your stupidity, fall on your sword, etc. Everyone will move on much faster.
» See also: The 15 Biggest PR Disasters of the Decade

On the other hand, good PR can turn a bad situation into an opportunity. Here are three examples in which smart people/organizations snatched victory from the jaws of defeat.

Conan Gets Canned
Well, he didn't get fired, but when his late-night comedy show was unceremoniously kicked to a terrible time slot, Conan O'Brien knew what he had to do: quit, consolidate his fan base, and use social media to maintain his popularity through the transition.

» Read Conan's masterful press release here

Mouse in the Salad
Recently, Freakonomics co-author Stephen Dubner recounted a stunning PR comeback: against all odds, an upscale New York City restaurant was able to put a positive spin on possibly the worst thing that can befall a fancy restaurant -- a dead mouse in a patron's salad.
» Listen to the full story here

Tylenol Recall
Every textbook on PR mentions Johnson & Johnson's 1981 recall of over 31 million bottles of Extra Strength Tylenol. After several people died from cyanide poisoning (from tampered bottles), the company leapt into action and initiated the first major product recall in American history. The incident became a testament to the company's integrity.

The final lesson? How you handle a bad situation can make or break your image – and maybe even your business!

Free Tools for Tracking Your Online Reputation

Keep tabs on the conversation! Here are some great resources for watching what's happening with your name and reputation online.

1. Google Alerts – Get free email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) on your brand name or industry keywords.
   » http://www.google.com/alerts
2. SocialMention – Like Google Alerts, but for social media. Get free email alerts when certain phrases (e.g. your brand name) get mentioned in the social mediasphere.
   » http://socialmention.com/alerts
3. TweetDeck – Put your finger on Twitter's collective pulse. TweetDeck presents your connections and feeds for easy viewing and organization.
   » http://www.tweetdeck.com
4. Technorati – A blog search engine and directory, Technorati lets you see the rank and authority of all blogs on the web (i.e. yours and your competitors').
   » http://technorati.com

Smart Summer Reading for Ambitious Business Owners

Looking for a great book? Here's a list of recommended titles from users at Quora.com:

"Good to Great" by Jim Collins
"Rework" by Jason Fried and David Heinemeir Hansson

"Purple Cow," "Linchpin," and "All Marketers are Liars" by Seth Godin

"The Art Of War" by Sun Tzu

"The Tipping Point," "Outliers," and "Blink" by Malcolm Gladwell

"Innovators Dilemma" and "Innovators Solution" by Clayton Christensen

"Do More Faster" by Brad Feld and David Cohen

"Gamestorming" by Dave Gray, Sunni Brown, James Macanufo

"Delivering Happiness" by Tony Hsieh

"Four Steps to Epiphany" by Steve Blank

Happy reading!