Gadgets, Gizmos and Apps

By Jim Calloway

In the early days of personal computing, you had to load everything you wanted to have on your computer yourself.

The Internet was still being established. You could use your 300 baud modem to log into computer bulletin board systems (BBS) or access message board networks with names like "Fidonet."

When someone fixed a software deficiency or created a workaround, it was commonplace to post the file so others could use it. The BBSs were packed with helpful little utility files. I remember installing one utility file that was supposed to save paper and ink by letting you print rough drafts of documents reduced so that four pages could be printed on a single piece of paper. (I think my eyesight was better back then.)

There were lots of "hobby coders" back in those days and the financial arrangements, if there were any, consisted of "send me a donation if you like it." Then Microsoft and other companies emerged as a power. The utility programs were sometimes purchased by Microsoft to be incorporated into an operating system or application. Often a feature would be incorporated into the next release from Microsoft, rendering the coder's creation useless.

So today we mostly buy larger, comprehensive software suites like Microsoft Office. There are more features than we are likely to ever learn or use in modern software suites. More features will be incorporated in the next version.

So, here are a few utilities (for computer, not for phone) that you might find to be of interest — at least until Microsoft or Google assimilates them.

Stickies (www.zhornsoft ware.co.uk/stickies/) – Do you have yellow sticky notes all over your work space, attached to your monitor, cell phone, briefcase, laptop and the dashboard of your car? Then you live in a sticky state of mind. Never fear, there is a free application to take your sticky notes to the next level. Integrate them into your computer desktop using an app appropriately called Stickies.

This nifty little application functions like a to-do-list with alarms, a memory, and the beautiful square yellow visual of a sticky note. In a perfectly disciplined mind, all of the uses for sticky notes would be incorporated into the functions in your email application using reminder notes, appointments and tasks. For some of us, that will never happen. Enter Stickies. This tiny app, contained in a super fast download and install, was recently reviewed by *PCWorld*. (www.pcworld. com/downloads/file/ fid,24249/description.html). Take a look and see if this might be a tool that helps your sticky state of mind stay organized.

Once installed the icon resides in your task tray near the clock in the lower right corner of your monitor. A click on the icon or the key combination Windows key + S creates a new note; a right click on the icon displays options to create a new note. A right click on the title bar of an existing note lets you change options. Although it is not a web-based mobile app, it is a very tidy, quite handy addition to your monitor desktop. (The Stickies material above was reprinted with permission from the PMA Tips blog. http://pmatips.com/ wordpress/).

Microsoft Security Essentials — This one is a puzzler. It is from Microsoft and it is free. Really? Well, according to most reviewers, this works very well in detecting and removing malware. Read the *PC World* editors' review of the product here: www.pcworld.com/ downloads/file/fid,79777/ description.html. The download link is there, too. It is a free way to protect your PC from malware.

Pure Text 2.0 (www.steve miller.net/puretext/) – By now all lawyers have learned the difference between Paste and Paste Special in their word

processors. Paste Special allows you to paste in just the letters and characters from your clipboard into your document. This keeps you from having numerous, unwanted fonts and other formatting within the same document. This works great in either Microsoft Word or WordPerfect. Pure Text 2.0 allows you to paste unformatted text (pure text!) into anything, including web forms or other applications that do not have a paste special feature. This program is completely free and works in versions of Windows from Windows 95 to Windows 7. As the sites states, "PureText is basically equivalent to opening Notepad, doing a PASTE, followed by a SELECT-ALL and then a COPY. The benefit of PureText is performing all these actions with a single hot-key and having the result pasted into the current window automatically."

SimplyFile and EZDetach (www.techhit.com) — Email management is certainly a pain for most of us. These two Outlook plugins from TechHit can greatly assist the practitioner. One of the basic steps in managing email is setting up topical folders in Outlook to store emails. Some lawyers have folders with client's names, or other indentifying labels like Personal, Bar Committees, Vacation, Child sports or any one of a number of things. SimplyFile assists you in filing the emails correctly. It can predict where the email should be filed and improves as it learns from your use of Outlook. It also has a Quick-Pick option to let you quickly choose a correct folder. SimplyFile costs $49.95 and comes with a 30 day risk-free trial.

For those of us who fall behind in keeping up with our

Outlook inboxes or keep a lot of emails filed in Outlook folder. You may hear from the IT department that your PST file is too large and you need to clear out some stored email. (If you do not have an IT department, your computer will let you know as Outlook begins to crash frequently.) Going through emails to delete ones you no longer need is a necessary, but time consuming task. Well, emails can take up a lot of hard drive space but the thing that really uses hard drive space is the attachments to emails. EZDetach allows you to remove the attachments and store them in a folder on your computer or network. They are no longer in the Outlook PST file. But they are replaced with a link to the file. If you decide to forward that email, then EZDetach asks you if you want replace the attachment in your outgoing email. EZDetach is $39.95 and also comes with a 30 day risk-free trial.

Credenza (www.credenza soft.com) – If you are a solo practitioner with no staff and using Microsoft Outlook to run your practice, then Credenza may be just the product for you. The reference to solo practitioner is intentional. Credenza Basic is now free. But it lacks several features of Credenza Pro, including full-text searching, some billing functions and sharing your "client files" with others. Credenza Pro has those features, but it costs $24.95 per month per user. So with several lawyers and staff that could add up quickly. You can compare the features here: www.credenzasoft.com/comparison.html.

Here is a colleague's review on the product: www.okbar.org/s/fzzd1. Several of us are concerned that when an email

is deleted in MS Outlook, then the email is in effect removed from the "client file." So we are talking with the developer to more fully understand this. This product is from the same people who produce Amicus Attorney.

X1 and Copernic (www.x1.com and www.copernic.com) — Desktop search is an important tool. We all try to logically store things so they can be found when we need them, from email to word processing files to paper files. But sometimes you still cannot locate files quickly on your computer. Desktop search tools index all of your files, so they can be quickly located. X1 and Copernic both do that very well. Each product costs $49.95 and has a free trial.

Microsoft Vista and Windows 7 have good desktop search features. The Apple Mac OS X for a long time has included the desktop search feature Spotlight. So if you have those operating systems you may not need these utilities, but the free-trial period lets you compare and make that decision for yourself.

Copy2Contact (www.copy 2contact.com) — This is another program in the oldie-but-goodie category. Having good information on your contacts in Outlook is very helpful, especially since so many of us now synchronize our smart phones with our Outlook contacts. You never know when you will need a fax number or street address on the road. Most all of us have opened up an Outlook Contact looking for an address or phone number, only to find that it only has the name and email address. Copy2Contact allows you to copy all of the contact information from a digital source, such as an email

signature block, group roster, web page or electronic pleading. Then you can insert the information into an Outlook Contact in one easy step and the software magically places all of the information into the proper places in the contact form.It is almost always correct. Copy2Contact Personal is $39.95. The Pro version adds more features for $79.95. There is a 14-day free trial. There are special versions for Blackberry, iPhone and Google apps, as well.

CCleaner (www.piriform.com/ccleaner) — Sometimes your computer gets junked up with too many old and unused files. Sometimes an old computer is taken home when it is replaced and you want it to be clean of all traces of the prior user. The CCleaner website claims it "is the number-one tool for cleaning your Windows PC. It protects your privacy online and makes your computer faster and more secure. Easy to use and a small, fast download." It removes temporary files, history, cookies and download history for all of the major browsers as well as unused and old registry entries. It comes in three "flavors" — free with no support, home edition for $24.95 and business edition for $34.95. (These prices reflect a $5 reduction for its end-of-the-year sale.)

CCleaner got a five star rating from CNet: http://download.cnet.com/ccleaner/.

Darik's Boot And Nuke (www.dban.org/download) There have been lots of horror stories about computers being discarded or donated with lots of confidential information still on the hard drive. Files that are merely deleted can be recovered and viewed by the next user. DBAN is *the* free tool to reformat a hard drive so that no information can be recovered. It is very simple. Just burn the file to a blank disc and boot the computer with it. But be very careful as this really is like a nuclear weapon. Put it in the wrong computer and all the data will be wiped with no hope of recovery. Use a marker to write warnings on the CD before downloading to it and discard it after use. You can download it again if you need it in the future. In my judgment, a DBAN-loaded CD is too dangerous to keep around the office.

Keepass (Free Open Source — http://keepass.info/) **and LastPass (free or premium version for $1 per month** — https://lastpass.com/) — Today even the most modest Internet user has dozens of user name and password combinations. There are three insecure ways to keep track of them: 1) Using the same password for most or all online sites, 2) writing them down on a Post-it note or sheet of paper or 3) having a document on your PC named Passwords that has them all. The best practice is to use a password manager to keep track of all passwords. Then you can have long secure passwords for everything and you only have to remember the password for your computer and the password for your pass-word manager. These prod-

ucts have other helpful features as well.

YouSendIt (www.yousendit.com) for many years has been the easy way to transfer large files for free instead of attaching them to an email. You upload the file to YouSendIt and give the recipient a link to download the file within the next seven days. The premium version has additional features. There are many similar products and many of my colleagues swear by MediaFire (www.mediafire.com/), but I have not tried it yet.

SnagIt (www.techsmith.com/screen-capture.asp) is a great tool to capture an image of anything that is on your computer screen. It is $49.95, but they offer a free 30-day trial. The Windows 7 clipping tool performs the same function and is already on your computer if you run Windows 7.

TrueCrypt (www.truecrypt.org) is a "free open-source disk encryption software for Windows 7/Vista/XP, Mac OS X and Linux." If you want to encrypt a USB flash drive or a laptop's hard drive, this is a great free tool. Check out the FAQs on the website to learn of all of the features.

Well, we are out of space this month. But I will close with two sources for phone apps that I have mentioned here earlier in the year, www.iphonejd.com and http://thedroidlawyer.com/ from Oklahoma City lawyer Jeffrey Taylor.

Mr. Calloway is director of the OBA Management Assistance Program.