safe surfing
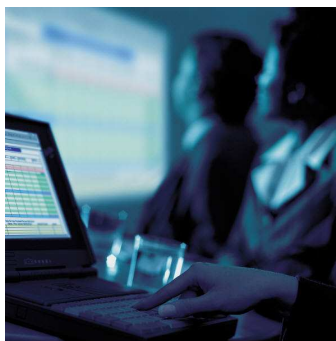
ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF
PERSONAL COMPUTER USERS
WHO FREQUENT THE INTERNET,
WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON GIST
SUPPORT GROUP MEMBERS.

❶ VIEW POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS
❷ SCAM ALERT
❸ BLUETOOTH HEADSET UPDATE
❹ BEFORE SENDING EMAIL
❺ WEB SITE FINDS
❻ STUMPER CONTEST

How to View PowerPoint Presentations

Do your friends email you PowerPoint Presentations you can't view because you don't have Office or have a version without PowerPoint? You don't have to go out and buy the package to take care of this relatively simple and common problem. Just go to this url and download the free PowerPoint Viewer Microsoft offers:
http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=428D5727-43AB-4F24-90B7-A94784AF71A4&displaylang=en

You may not think this is a very essential download, but, if you don't have the ability to view PowerPoint presentations, you are missing a lot of very imaginative and high quality content. Some presentations are produced by amateurs and some by professionals, some are sophisticated pieces that include graphics, text, charts, video and audio and some are basically slide shows put to music. If you want to see some excellent examples, refer to my March newsletter where I offered the urls of several great sources of PowerPoint presentations:
http://www.gistsupport.org/media/computerstuff/surfSafeNewsletter0308.pdf

SCAM Alert

There's a real rotten bunch of folks out there perpetuating a hoax that targets military families. The caller claims to be from the Red Cross and in need of personal information in order to process paperwork for a hospital transfer. Then the scam tries to get into the pocketbooks of the shocked family.

The American Red Cross never advises family members of casualties and rarely contacts them directly for any

reason. Contact is almost always made through a known military member.

I have no first-hand information on this scam, but the Red Cross has circulated their own bulletin, so it seems prudent to alert your military friends.
http://www.snopes.com/fraud/identity/redcross.asp

http://www.redcross.org/pressrelease/0,1077,0_113_6732,00.html

Bluetooth Headset Update

OK, the results are in: I have decided between the several models and brands of Bluetooth headsets I've tried. They include the Motorola H500 and HS850, the Plantronic Explorer 220, the Blueant Z9 and the Jabra BT040. I think I prefer the Jabra. It is very small and sleek, and it provided the most reliable connection with my phone (the Samsung Alias). It does take considerable time to get used to the earbud design (there's no ear hook, just the gel bud). But they provide three pairs in three different sizes, so one will probably suit you.

There are also two new versions of Bluetooth hands-free devices out now: the visor or cigarette lighter plug-in style and those incorporated into your GPS navigation units.

I have not tried the visor units, but friends who have tell me they're very good in isolating voice and filtering ambient sound. I believe them because I have been using a new Garmin GPS with built-in Bluetooth that has really surprised me with its clarity and effectiveness.

If you know you are only going to be using your Bluetooth hands-free unit in the car, one of these devices would be perfect. But relying on the GPS version only makes sense if you also know you will always have your GPS connected and on. Otherwise you'll probably use it as a Bluetooth device like I do, only when you want to use the GPS too. The visor/plug-in version would be perfect if you aren't likely to want a Bluetooth device in your ear out of the car. Sure, it looks pretentious wearing one in the supermarket, and how many times have you thought someone wearing one was talking to you when they were not? But they are very efficient tools around the office or anywhere else that you'd like to have your, you guessed it, **hands free**!

Before You Press……...
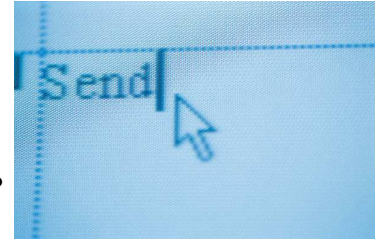
Have you ever sent an email you later regretted? Sure you have. Who hasn't? In fact, it's at least as likely you've said something you regretted in an email as it is that you've said something you've regretted in person. That's because it's so much easier and more impersonal to draft and send controversial or emotional words via email. Mary Jane Pulley and Jane Hilberry, authors of "Get Smart! How E-mail Can Make or Break Your Career and Your Organization," give us some very useful questions to ask before sending an email. The questions seem just as relevant to your personal email as they are to your work email:

1. Would you say it face to face?
2. Is it necessary and does everyone need to receive it? (Usually "Reply to All" is not appropriate)
3. Would you want it to appear in the New York Times?
4. Does it pass the morale test (How would I feel if I received this email?)?
5. What's so funny (Does it translate to the written word and to this audience?)?
6. Does it fit in with your company's (or you family's or your circle of friend's) culture?
7. What would your lawyer say?

If you'd read some of my emails you'd be surprised that I'd be preaching this sort of reserve and caution. Just shows you anyone can learn!

Web Site Finds

Questions on the Road?
Here's a nifty feature for cell phones (not really a "web site find") that one of my sons-in-law discovered. If you are on the road with nothing but your cell phone and want to know virtually anything ("What time is American Idol on tonight?" "Where is the closest dry cleaners?"), simply text 242-242 and text in your question. Registered "guides" screened for their expertise answer your questions. Learn more at www.chacha.com.

How Stuff Works
I remember getting a Father's Day card recently that I thought was hilarious but that I also couldn't relate to in terms of my own personality. Something about how a father's job is "making stuff up" in answer to difficult questions. Here's a site that certainly beats asking me: www.howstuffworks.com. It's fun to just

browse when you have a spare moment, and it's particularly valuable when you're stuck.

Brain Terminal

I believe I've recommended this site to you in the past: http://brain-terminal.com. It's hosted by Evan Coyne Mahoney, a bright young video journalist with a real future. Now he's produced a full-length documentary that is getting rave reviews as it screens around the country. It has not been picked up yet by a major studio, but I suspect it will be soon. If you like his style, the trailers and what you learn at his site, you can either buy the DVD or help him get the documentary distributed. Take a trip to his marketing site to learn more and to see the trailer: http://indoctrinate-u.com/pages/trailer.html

Best-Of Collection

At the end of this year I'd like to include a "Best-Of" article in one of the year's last issues. Please forward me your thoughts on the web site finds or tips that you found most interesting or useful to you from the year's issues.

Stumper Contest

What are some setting changes that can be made to your system to enhance your computer's performance?

Of course there are housekeeping actions that should be taken as regular maintenance. These include running your updated anti-virus, anti-spyware and anti-adware programs, running Disk Cleanup and Disk Defragmenter from within Windows and regularly deleting browsing history from within Internet Explorer (especially cookies). But there is more, much more you can do.

There are a slew of performance enhancers that can be applied to PCs running Windows Operating Systems called "tweaks." Tweaks used to be considered the purview of hackers and PC experts. Now they are very commonly used to improve computer performance and I recommend you examine them to see if they might help in your situation.

Probably one of the most popular and credible sites is http://tweaks.com which routes you to their OS-specific XP and Vista sites and then walks you through their extensive tweaks.
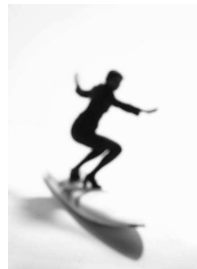
There are loads of fixes recommended for your specific system and problem. The individual actions are thoroughly described, and each site also offers a piece of software for sale at about $40 that will automate the fixes for you. I always prefer "free" and there is a significant learning benefit to be achieved by not buying the program and going through the tweaks individually. But that does take considerable time and study.

My favorite site for ease of use is http://pcpitstop.com/. This site's performance boosts can be run automatically at no cost, unlike the sites above. The site's "full scan" is the best choice and requires registration, but don't worry, the site is safe. There is also software available to buy there, but you don't need any of it. Of course be careful there, and everywhere else you go for that matter, not to click on a link that requires you to buy something you didn't intend to buy. A dead give-away is when they ask you to give up your credit card info. That should clue you that you are about to buy something. It's secure enough, but it's not really necessary. Just use their free system.

Next month let's ponder this common source of anxiety: If you routinely write to sites online using their own web site message writing process, you've had this problem. You go to "Contact Us" and enter the required information including a lengthy text entry constituting your message in their form. You then click on "Send" and their system either rejects your message for some obscure reason that requires you to make a correction (e.g., "quotation marks are not permitted"), sending you back to a blank form entry page, or their system "times-out" or crashes, also sending you back to the beginning without your original draft. What simple step can you take to insure this does not happen to you and that you retain your sanity?