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BROWSER WARS

Microsoft and Firefox have released new versions of their browsers in recent days. The updates are noticeably similar with Microsoft incorporating many features which existed in prior versions of FireFox. Both browsers have brightened up their interface, enhanced their search capabilities, and incorporated RSS newsfeed managers. IE has tabbed browsing now like FireFox, and Firefox has included an in-line spell-checker.

Most importantly, both browsers have introduced anti-phishing technology that protects users from identity theft by detecting inauthentic web sites that have been set up to appear as if they are legitimate portals to businesses such as banks or credit card companies. Users are often led to these sites by following links in very genuine-looking e-mail messages. IE7 can be overzealous and issue dire-looking warnings when users visit their organization's Outlook Web Access sites if the site is self-secured and doesn't contain a certificate from a third-party commercial vendor.

MANAGED SERVICES

You may of noticed something new on invoices over the last few months, Server Maintenance. We have implemented a program of periodic, monthly for most networks, server maintenance. We have been rolling out this program over the last several months and now are including most clients. Some of the services provided are: Free Disk Space, CPU Utilization, Virus Definitions, Backup Drive Status, Disk Defragmentation, Server Room ventilation to name a few. The goal is to minimize downtime by catching potential problems early.

We have evaluated several programs to automate this service, but surprisingly have found manual methods work best.

LASER PRINTER SERVICE

Since 1996, LANsultants, Inc. has used QLC Technologies as our primary laser printer service company. As an HP, Lexmark, Epson Authorized Service Company, we have them to be an almost ideal solution for our client's needs. On October 1st QLC was acquired by Ribbons-Express, Inc. of Cherry Hill. With Ribbons-Express, Inc.'s additional technicians and innovative printer maintenance concepts we believe this will acquisition will lead to improved service for our clients. One Ribbons-Express program which we find very interesting is Total Laser Care, where you agree to buy toner from Ribbons-Express at competitive costs and printer service is provided at no cost.

WIDE SCREEN DISPLAYS

Over the last several years we received requests to set up multiple LCD monitors for selected users. Usually, two monitors are used, but sometimes three. This setup allows for the simultaneous management of multiple documents or programs. The downside to this kind of setup is the added cost of the second monitor, a loss of desk space, the need for a dual-monitor video card, and the occasional user interface instability as icons might jump from one screen to another. These issues are resolved by using a single widescreen LCD monitor.

I recently set up a Dell 2407 WSB, 24" widescreen LCD monitor on my desk and it has changed the way I work. I have found I can keep two programs open side by side, streamlining application switching and data copying. I have also found that having my word processor in two-page mode to be beneficial. Though not inexpensive, 24" LCD monitors have come down in cost and are now frequently less than \$700.

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