

BASICS & BEYOND -- Session # 11 -- Jan. '09

THE "SEND TO" COMMAND -- The "Send To" command is a great tool which provides us with a very easy and simple means to send or move a folder, file, document, picture, music, etc., to a variety of "destinations". It also offers an extremely easy method, to back up a folder or a group of files.

As an example, when in "Explore" and we hi-lite a digital pic we can send that pic directly to an email recipient. Or, if we want to back up that pic we can send it directly to another hard drive, a flash drive or even write it to a CD or DVD. After we hi-lite the file we want to work with, then right click to bring up a menu. Select "Send To" and then select the action that you want to perform. The same action is used to send a document to a email recipient.

We can also, very easily, add a "destination" to the Send To folder. As an example, let's add our printer to the Send To folder. First we need to create a printer shortcut. Click on Start > Control Panel > Printers. Hi-lite the printer you want to use, right click on it and select Create Shortcut. This will send a shortcut to our desktop. Close out of Control Panel. Next open the Send To folder. In Win XP right click on Start > Explore > Documents & Settings > "your user name". Locate the Send To folder and double click it to open it. (In Vista right click on the Start button > Explore > Windows. Hi-lite the Send To folder and double click it to open it.) Once we have the Send To folder open minimize it and go back to the desktop. Find the Printer shortcut that we created, put the cursor on the icon, right click and select Copy. Return to the Send To folder, be sure that Send To is hi-lited, right click and select Paste. Your printer will now be an entry in the Send To menu. Other "destinations" can be added in the same manner.

Note, XP users: If, after clicking on your "user name" you do not see the Send To folder click on Tools (on the menu bar) > Folder Options > View. Under Hidden Files & Folders hi-lite the radio button "Show Hidden Files & Folders". You should then see the Send To folder.

SPEED UP VISTA'S PERFORMANCE -- If you feel that your Vista based computer is running slow check the following: Click Start > Control Panel > Hardware & Sounds > Power Options. Check the radio button "High Performance". As you will note this is a higher power consumption setting, but it should improve the performance of your computer.

And, speaking of Vista's performance there was an interesting article/editorial in Smart Computing magazine comparing Vista's basic speed versus Win XP. The writer was quite critical of the speed of the Vista operating system and strongly suggested that unless you are doing heavy duty graphics, or gaming, or unless you must replace your current Win XP machine, that you should seriously consider not upgrading and staying with the Win XP operating system. The writer stated that basic XP will outperform basic Vista.

Single Click -- Double Click ?? -- Would you rather only have to "single click" your mouse to open an item? In WIN XP go to My Computer > Tools > Folder Options > General Tab and select "Single Click To Open An Item", followed by Apply and OK. In Vista go to Control Panel > Appearance & Personalization > Folder Options and make your selection. Then, Apply and Ok.

THE MYSTERIOUS REGISTRY

CLEAN UP THE REGISTRY ?? -- Windows Registry is a file, or data base, consisting literally of thousands of files. These files tell your PC, in part, the hardware settings you want when you start up your computer and which programs to open. It also contains all the settings and parameters for programs you open after the initial startup.

Every time you add a new program to your computer files are added to the Registry telling it how this new program is to function and operate. If, however, you remove a program from your computer all of the original entries made into the Registry by that program are not always removed. This is also true for updates that you download. Over a period of time as programs are added and deleted, and their “tag ends” remain in the Registry, they tend to clutter the Registry and will have a tendency to slow down your computer. The ideal situation, of course, is to have a Registry that contains only entries that pertain to current programs on your computer. So, why don’t we just remove and eliminate the “tag ends” that are no longer functional? That, of course, would be utopia and it is the aim and goal of a “registry cleaner”.

“Messing”, as I call it, with the Registry can result in good results, or a total disaster. For the most part the “big kids” (the experts) advise us novices not to “mess” with the Registry. It is possible that one wrong change to a Registry entry could cause a total crash of your system. Probably unlikely, but possible. So why then would we want to “mess” with it? Well, some of us just aren’t smart enough to leave “well enough” alone. We just have to “tweak it” one more tweak to see if we can’t make it run a little better, a little faster, and get the “garbage” out of our Registry.

There are numerous registry cleaners available, from free to quite expensive. Some, purportedly, do an excellent job with minimum associated worry. If you are one who would like to try and “tweak” your Registry choose a cleaner that is recommended by a major computer magazine, or organization. It is highly recommended, also, that you select a cleaner that will perform a Registry backup before the cleaning process begins. Most of the quality cleaners will remove the absolute “junk” that they know will not effect the operation of your system. But, when it comes to removing questionable entries they will give YOU the choice as to whether you want the entry removed. They put the monkey on your back, thank you so much.

The bottom line? I agree with the “big kids” and say that if you don’t need to “mess” with the Registry, DON’T. I have to admit, however, that I have used a cleaner to get the “garbage” out of my Registry and it worked just fine. If you feel that you have a problem, or you have a computer that is running extremely slow, you might want to give a quality registry cleaner a try. If it does not automatically back up your registry before it begins its cleaning, you should be sure and do so. Also, remember, if you encounter a problem after using a cleaner, and your computer will boot ok, you can always use the “Restore” function to take your computer back to a point in time where it was operating just fine.

FREE SOFTWARE UTILITIES -- That you might want to consider

Auslogic Disk Defragmenter (www.auslogic.com)

The Auslogic disk defrag program, which runs on both XP and Vista, runs quicker than the Microsoft defragmenter built into XP and Vista. A small program with a quick download. I use this program. Recommended by Smart Computing.

AVG Free Anitvirus (www.free.grisoft.com)

This free antivirus program from Grisoft has been around for years and is used by millions of computer users. Remember, install only one antivirus program on your computer. I use this program and have found it to be excellent and glitch free. Recommended by Smart Computing.

Google email (google.com)

If you have ever wanted an additional email address for use when you are “required” to list your email address at a website, Google email is the answer. I use it for the previous purpose and also when I want a reply from a company, organization, or whatever, that I don’t want to have my “personal” email address. And, since all email is kept on the Google server you can access your Google email from anywhere in the world, a very handy feature. It only takes a few minutes to set up your account. Recommended by Smart Computing.

Revo Uninstaller (revouninstaller.com)

A superior and easier to use software uninstall program. You may be surprised when Revo lists the number of programs you have on your computer. It will use the programs resident uninstall feature, if it has one, and then clean up the odds and ends left behind. I use Revo and it one of my favorite utilities as it cleans “leftovers” in the Registry that other uninstall programs miss and leave behind. Recommended by Smart Computing.

XP CD Burner (www.cdburner.se)

Although the WIN XP built burner is functional, this program will also allow you to burn DVD’s, and has additional features not found in the XP burner. I have not tried this program. Recommended by Smart Computing.

TIPS & TRICKS

KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS -- Here are a few keyboard shortcuts that if you are not already using you might want to try. They can be used in MS Word and at various other places and programs when you are computing.

COPY - (CTRL-C) Copies folders, files or text and puts the info onto the “clipboard” for further action.

PASTE - (CTRL-V) Puts the info placed on the “clipboard” into a specified location.

CUT – (CTRL-X) Removes a folder, file or highlighted information and puts it on the clipboard. It will not be removed, however, until another location is selected and it is pasted there.

UNDO – (CTRL-Z) Reverses the most recent action performed.