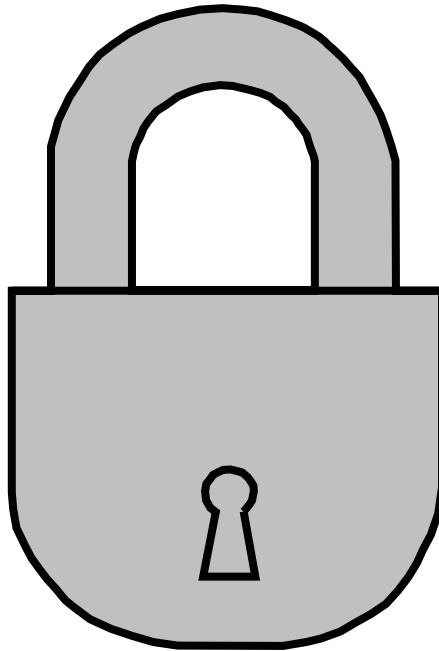


# Bits & Bytes

**A Publication of the Kern PC Users Group**



**Matt Anzaldo on  
HIPAA and IT Security  
7 pm. Sept 11**



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Summer is over for the kids and school is back in session. For all the parents, I give a great big Yee Haa! Kids have something to do now and aren't bored anymore. I'm still waiting on the weather though it hasn't cooled down much, still being around 100 degrees.

September Speaker will be Matt Anzaldo on HIPAA & IT Security. It should be pretty good cause it has to do with security of our medical files and what the medical field is allowed to do with it. See you there on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Rhonda [:-)

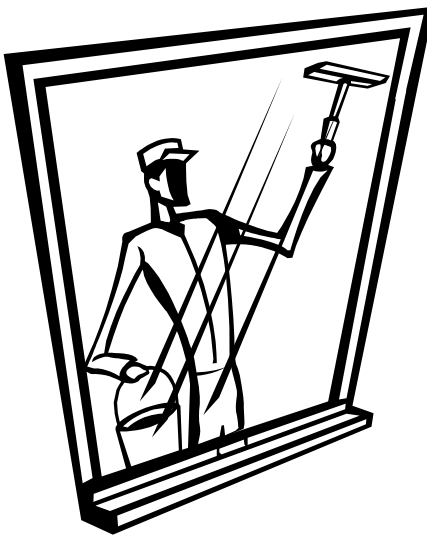
## Why is a computer more like a car than a television set?

No, the title of this article isn't a lead-in to one of my infamous jokes. It's actually an analogy that will begin to make sense after you read on a bit. The comparison is that your car requires maintenance and upkeep and your television doesn't.

Our cars are largely mechanical with all sorts of mechanisms which all have to work for the car to be reliable and dependable. Regular oil changes, tune-ups, parts replacements and factory recommended maintenance are all accepted and necessary. Our television sets, on the other hand, are entirely electronic and don't require ANY maintenance or upkeep other than an occasional dusting and screen cleaning.

Unlike our TV's, our computers are a mixture of both electronic and mechanical devices more like our cars.

As an experienced computer tech, I know that regular upkeep and maintenance on our computers is as critical to their continued reliable operation as it is to our cars. Like your car, if you NEVER do anything to maintain your computer, it will fail at the most inconvenient time possible and cost you more to fix than it would have been to maintain.



Don't get me wrong here. I'm not saying that most computer problems are mechanical. Over the past several years as computer mechanisms and electronics have become more reliable, the number of actual component failures has taken a back seat to software problems. A good half of the computers that come into my

shop for repair don't really have anything electronic or mechanically wrong with them. Either something like the CD-ROM drive or the floppy doesn't work because they are full of dust "woofies" (a result of the computer having NEVER been cleaned

inside) or the system won't work because of a myriad of software problems. Many of these types of problems are caused by never doing ANYTHING to keep the hard disk cleaned of Internet "Junk" files, defragmenting or checking for viruses. The other common problem revolves around a fouled up Windows operating system.

Interestingly, the most common complaint that I hear for customers is that their computer seems to be running slower than it used to. Sound familiar? If you are experiencing that problem or haven't done anything to clean your computer physically or software wise in years, grab the next copy of Bits & Bytes when it comes next month for information as to how to do something about maintaining your computer yourself.

Bill Peacock  
On-Site Computer Services

## Linux Moves In.

An 'operating system' is the collection of software programs that runs computers, including your PC. Once upon a time it seemed like it was inevitable that everyone would use Microsoft software everywhere. How things can change in a few short years! The increasing utility and usability of Linux have caused many people to take a serious look at it. Those looks have led to an explosion in the use of Linux. The robustness and openness of this twelve-year old software 'phenomenon' are well known in the computing community. Uptimes of over a year are considering unremarkable when you're running Linux!

Originally used mostly as a server platform, Linux has improved so much over the last couple of years that many companies are now looking to deploy it on the desktop. The GUI (Graphical User Interface) has improved in usability and looks (leading to the phrase "eye candy"). Its increasing ease of use, and simplified installation and configuration, are making it more attractive for home desktops, too.

Unlike Microsoft OS's, many applications you'd need to buy come with Linux. Things like OpenOffice, a complete suite of great desktop apps compatible with MS Office; a great graphics program GIMP, to rival Printshop, and many other applications all come with the CD's, at the same low, low price! When you do a Linux installation they're all installed, and can be found on the menus for your use.

Yes, Linux is inexpensive. It can be had for

as nothing, by just downloading the ISO (CD) images from the net. (See **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** for sites you can download Red Hat Linux from.) Or, if you're relatively inexperienced, buying a copy of a Linux distribution at your local store is a good way to start, as you get some great documentation with the CD's.

There are specialized versions of Linux, too. If you're interesting in trying Linux, you can try it without even loading it on your hard disk. Knoppix Linux is a Linux that runs right off of a CD. You can get your feet wet with Linux without making a commitment. Knoppix Linux is found at <http://www.knoppix.net/>.

There are specialized versions of Linux. Some are designed to run strictly as a firewall for your household. They're fast and easy to install and configure. Search google for Smoothwall, IPCop, or ClarkConnect; I use the latter, and it was fast and easy to install and configure. I burned a CD, booted with it, answered a couple of questions about what type of incoming line I had (PPPoE, DHCP or static IP?) and turned it loose. Twenty minutes later it was up and running, protecting my household network!

What kind of hardware do you need to run Linux? In the famous words of Anonymous, "it depends". If you just want to use an old PC as a firewall, you'll need a PC with two Network Interface Cards (they don't have to be PCI, but it's easier if they are). The firewall will run nicely on a Pentium 100 with 32 Megabytes of RAM and 500 Megabytes of disk space.

On the other hand, if you want to run a workstation, with a high resolution screen with deep color depth, it takes more CPU power to move those windows around on the screen. Still for good performance Linux doesn't require as much horsepower as WindowsXP (for example). Good results can be had with a 600 Mhz PC, 128 Megs of RAM, and 3-4 Gigabytes of disk space (a bit more if you go crazy and click on "load everything").

And if you don't feel comfortable with the idea yet of switching out your whole operating system, you can experiment with Open-Source software in the comfort of your Windows computer: OpenOffice is available for Win32 as well as Linux (<http://www.openoffice.org>). GIMP, the Photoshop replacement has been ported to Windows. (<http://www.wingimp.org/>), and GAIM, the GNU Instant Message program that's compatible with AIM, is found at <http://gaim.sourceforge.net>. It's improved so much recently that many people prefer it over AIM. It's also multi-lingual, speaking AIM, ICQ, MSN, and several other instant messaging protocols.

And if you burn CD's with these programs, feel free to share them with your friends; they're under the GPL (GNU Public License), and can be legally copied.

If you start working with Linux and need help, there are many LUGs (Linux Users Groups) around the Southland. Their members are happy to give you a hand. You can find your local LUG at <http://www.ssc.com:8080/glue/groups/>.

Additionally, the Southern California Linux Exposition, a non-profit, community organization, holds SCALE (the SoCAL Linux Expo) every year. SCALE is a show where commercial Linux vendors, Linux enthusiasts, and academia demonstrate the many facets and features of Linux to a curious public. The first SCALE was held last November, and was a raging success. So much so that the 600 attendees overflowed USC's Davidson Conference Center. Pictures and an article about SCALE are here: <http://socallinuxexpo.com/past/2002/pictures/index.php>.

SCALE2X will be November 22nd, at the Los Angeles Convention Center. For up to the minute information, including complete lists of speakers and their bios, and sponsor info, check <http://www.socallinuxexpo.com>. <http://www.socallinuxexpo.com/> Come and see why Linux is so attractive. But be warned – it's seductive in its power and utility!

Orv Beach  
orv@orvsplace.net

VP, Simi-Conejo Linux Users Group

## **Take that, Telemarketers!**

Wouldn't it be nice if there were a Web site you could visit to get your name and phone number(s) removed from telemarketers' call lists? Well folks, just such a site exists. A function of the Federal Trade Commission, the web site, located at <http://ftc.gov/donotcall> will let you register up to three phone numbers (including cell numbers) into a nationwide "do not call" database each time you log on.

Starting in October, the FTC's new TSR (Telemarketing Sales Rule) requires telemarketers to download the registry database at least once every three months and not call any registrants. If you receive a telemarketing call after registering, you can use a toll-free phone number (or log onto the web site) to lodge a complaint with the FTC. The telemarketer can then face a fine of up to \$11,000 for EACH unwanted call. Hooray!

Political and charitable organizations aren't required to download the database (big surprise on the political part)

but, if you ask such an organization not to call, that organization can also be fined for making subsequent calls. If you're already registered with a "do not call" list through your state government, you can either wait for the FTC to transfer that list to its own or you can register directly with the FTC.

In order to use the system, you must have an email address. After you go to the web site and register, the system will send you an email for each phone number you enter. After you receive the email from the FTC, you just click on the built-in address to finish the registration. I got the returning email from the FTC system just minutes after I registered.

Remember to put the FTC site in your "favorites" list so if you get another call from one of those pesky telemarketers, you can file a complaint and (hopefully) cost that sucker \$11,000.

Bill Peacock  
On-Site Computer Services

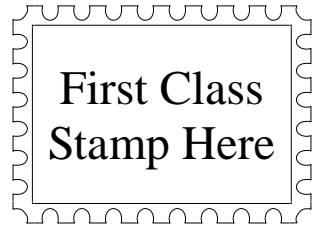


**Nice clean space in a newsletter.  
Used only once a month**



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Bakersfield, CA

*We are on the web at*  
**WWW.KIPUG.ORG**

**Your Address Here**

**Sarah Perelli-Minetti Webmaster**

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month  
at the Kern Superintendent of Schools Building.  
17th and L streets Downtown  
Meeting Time is 7 pm