

# JJS I.T. NEWS

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Excel Tips	2
TOPS Data Entry	2
Trash & Recycle Bins	2
Music Downloads	3
Processing Life	3
Cartoon	4
Pharming	4

### Mahalo means “Thank You”

Our Hawaiian Java programmer signs every email and ends every phone call with either *mahalo* or *aloha*.

Did you know aloha can mean “hello”, “goodbye”, or “I love you”?

Aloha and Mahalo are two of the most important words in the Hawaiian language.

## ALL ABOUT BOB

Welcome to the second in our three-part installment on IT staff! This month, our featured employee is Bob Kantner.

Bob came to us from NewRoads, a competitor who was located in the industrial park across Boulden Blvd. NewRoads moved to Tennessee, leaving clients (eTopps) and employees (Joyce Frazer and Bob) looking for a place to go.

Bob started working here in 2004. His background is in PC troubleshooting and repair, with more than 13 years of experience in this area.

In his spare time, Bob has several interests:

- He collects sci-fi, fantasy, and historical miniatures, and has attended conventions in the past, the most recent one last year at the Lancaster Host Resort.



- He likes to cook and makes his own dishes.
- Bob is a proponent of healthy low-carb eating.
  - While in the US Air Force, he was a Disaster Preparedness Technician and even provided Chemical Warfare Defense training.
  - Bob is trained in Isshinryu, a form of Okinawan karate that dates back to 1908. He has earned his brown belt in this form of karate.
  - He helps employees and friends with PC problems of almost any type — from infected systems to bad sound cards.
  - Bob processes all of the daily and weekly Epsilon files.
  - He has established a PC maintenance program here to help keep all of our desktops alive and well.
  - Here's to Bob, our in-house help desk!



Is it Bob or a celebrity?

## WILL MAHALO REPLACE GOOGLE?

My studies at Albright College include tons of technical research assignments. While Google is great for quick answers to specific computer errors, it is woefully inadequate for in-depth research. In several cases, the topic to be researched cannot be found, except for Wikipedia definitions, which do not go far enough for the assignments. This is where Mahalo comes into play.

Where Google does an excellent job of finding specific problems and Wikipedia does a great job of getting quick definitions, Mahalo groups information by topic. Mahalo will show the ‘top 7’ links, as well as all news, background information, blogs, and discussions related to the topic.

How is Mahalo different from Google? Google uses computer algorithms to determine top

spots. It is completely automated. This can be good for specific search information, but may not work as well when looking for in-depth whitepapers and other research material.

Mahalo is built by people, not algorithms. It is like Wikipedia in this respect, but is not open to the general public for editing. Since there is a human element, not all topics can be found on Mahalo. A search of ‘quad core CPU’ turns up the message “we haven’t written a page yet for this”. I’m given the option to request it. I’m also given a tab to all other search engines with the results of this search. Pretty cool and definitely a tool worth tracking!

## SEPARATE OUT MONTH & YEAR IN EXCEL

There are times when it's really handy to separate out the month & year from a date. For example, you want to total by month or perform conditional calculations by month. Whatever the reason, Excel makes it easy to separate out the month and year from a date on your spreadsheet. Let's suppose you have a date in cell A2. To put the month and year in column B, simply enter the following formula into B:

```
=MONTH(A2) & YEAR(A2)
```

The result will be only the month and year,

for example '32008'. Now, you can perform a conditional calculation, such as adding to a monthly total if the month/year is equal to the next row:  
=IF(\$B3=\$B2,\$D2+\$C3,\$C3)

Let's say this is entered into D3. This says if the month/year in B3 matches the value in B2, then add D2 & C3, otherwise just put the value of C3 in D3. Sounds complicated, but just try it and you'll see how easily it works.

## Just Wing It

People often spend too much time up front trying to solve problems they don't even have yet.

Don't.

Don't sweat stuff until you actually must.

— excerpt from "Getting Real" (The smarter, faster, easier way to build a successful web application)  
by 37signals.com

## IT TEAM THINKING - TOPS DATA ENTRY

The IT department has been tossing around ideas to simplify data entry for the past several months. One particular project brought this to the forefront. With this project we will be entering BRCs and sending a file to another vendor, but not fulfilling anything. We originally thought the BRCs could be entered easily into Excel and processed in BCC. That method works for low volume, but with higher volumes entering into Excel files can cause excessive data entry errors.

Our next attempt was to write a Visual Basic program for the data entry. Dolores did a great job with the program and it recorded the data neatly into Excel files. This

removed some of risk of data entry error by allowing input validation, but managing Excel files can be difficult and additional errors can occur through missed and overwritten files.

Finally, Clint came up with the perfect solution — using the d3 update editor for data entry. It is a simple, but powerful solution that provides the users with all the benefits of d3 (file locking, input validation, etc), without the complexities of writing a whole entry program for each job. The resulting solution was implemented for the BRC job and will become a guideline for future data entry projects. Way to go, programming team!

## TRASH BINS & RECYCLE BINS

This topic comes up every few months in our IT meetings, so I'm passing it along as an FYI here.

Computers provide a couple of temporary storage objects for user convenience. These objects aren't meant for permanent storage. In fact, on some systems these temporary locations are cleared every time the user logs off. Let's look at two examples of temporary storage.

The first example is the trash bin/folder in your email application. This folder should only be used to store actual trash — emails that you want to throw away. You can configure your trash folder to empty each time you close the email application and this is

an excellent way to save space.  
—> Never store legitimate email in the trash as a method for temporarily saving information!

The next example is your computer's recycle bin. This is also meant for files you no longer need — it should never be used to store anything you may need later.

Bob has been scheduling PC maintenance with most of you. Part of his maintenance work includes *emptying* the recycle bin and *deleting* old email from the trash folder. If you are using these objects improperly, you may end up losing information. Please think of these temporary storage locations as real trashcans that will be emptied regularly.

## COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT ON MP3S

In October 2007, a single mother from Minnesota was fined \$222,000 for downloading 24 songs and sharing them online using a peer-to-peer network. If she had been prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, she would have faced \$3,600,000 in fines and 240 years in jail...for 24 songs!

Copyright infringement is a topic that has come up in our home many times over the past year. My 15-year old daughter watches videos on YouTube that contain bits of movies put to popular music. She wants

to try making her own video. Is this copyright infringement? Clearly, it is. Why is the web full of kids creating these types of videos? Because the laws haven't caught up with the technology. It's all a bit fuzzy.

If you steal a CD, you are breaking the law, no question. But what if you borrow your friends CD and burn one song to your MP3 player — is this a crime? Technically it is, but what are the damages? The cost of a CD, the cost of a song, the cost per use? As it stands now, the copyright

law is brutal when applied to individual song downloads, but many kids (and adults) don't think they are breaking the law when they share music or movies with each other.

If you like to be safe rather than sorry, buy your music online, subscribe to a monthly download service, and avoid making copies for friends. No song is worth 10 years in jail!

<http://www.securityfocus.com/columnists/460/2>

## Stop Overthinking Life

Top 4 'to don't list':

1. Don't overanalyze or overcomplicate situations. Commit to taking the easy way. The shortest distance between 2 points really is a nice straight simple line
2. Don't become consumed by the negative possibilities. Don't think 'what if'. Assume a positive outcome and you're much more likely to get it.
3. Don't insist on perfection. It isn't fun. Striving for perfection will exhaust you. Nobody wants to hang around with an exhausted perfectionist.
4. Don't become angry or upset when things don't go according to plan. Just laugh and roll with it. The most memorable memories are made when things go a bit awry.

— by Gail Blanke, CEO of LifeDesigns

## PROCESS MANAGEMENT AS A LIFE SKILL?

*"We have all heard the story of the animal standing in doubt between two stacks of hay and starving to death." -- Abraham Lincoln*

I'm enrolled in the Computer Science program at Albright College and have been attending these classes for over a year. Most of the topics are a bit technical for a newsletter like this, but we just finished learning about how operating systems handle process management and I just can't resist comparing this to human behavior.

Have you ever been pressured to make a decision and simply ended up making no decision at all? Or you put off an important (but difficult) task hoping it will just go away? Or maybe you fear if you take that important step, you'll be asked to take more steps that are even scarier? Whether the issue is procrastination, fear of failure, or inability to commit, we've all experienced times when the 'process management' part of our brain doesn't seem to work effectively.

Operating Systems (OS) operate by algorithms, which are very concrete rules of behavior. To an OS, everything really is black or white — to be more concise, on or off. I understand that life is seldom that simple, but there are certain rules that govern our lives and impact the level to which we are likely to realize success.

The first rule is this: understand what you

want. What does success mean to you? What is your mission, your personal goal, your reason for existence? You cannot possibly know if your decisions are moving you in the right direction unless you know what direction is 'right' for you.

A question I like to ask when faced with difficult life decision is this: when I'm 80 years old and looking back at my life, which decision am I *least likely to regret*?

Another rule is this: we get back out of life what we put into life. This is the old adage 'we reap what we sow'. Are you investing into those things that are important? If raising good kids is your goal, do you invest time into this goal each day?

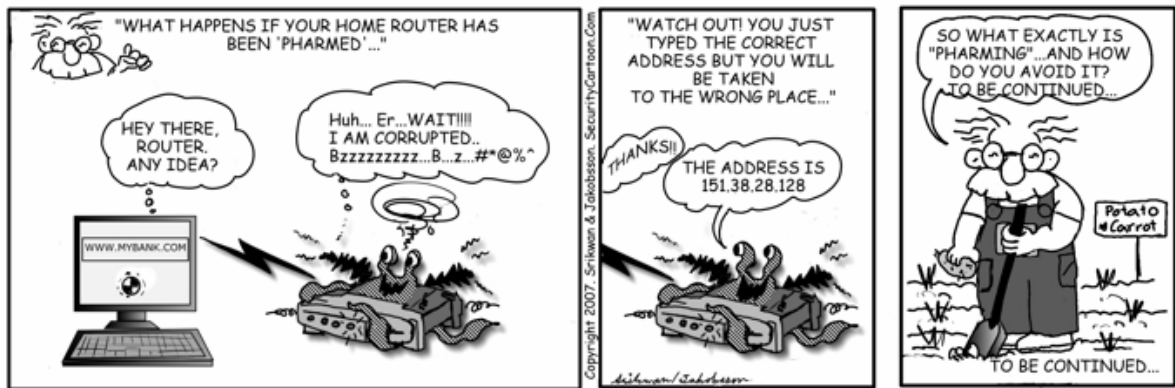
The last rule is: everyone gets 1440 minutes per day. Just like an OS has a fixed amount of resources (memory, disk space), we have a fixed amount of time each day. Everyone gets the same amount — in this area life is unmistakably fair. Bill Gates and President Bush get the same amount of time as you.

We shape our lives through the management of our time and the processes we choose to perform. Choose to spend your resources on processes that move you toward your personal, ideal *successful life*.



Sheeran Direct Marketing  
 71 Southgate Blvd  
 New Castle, DE 19720  
 Phone: 302.324.0200  
 Fax: 302.324.0213  
 www.jjsheeran.com

Editor: Lori Homsher  
 Email: lhomsher@jjsheeran.com



Reproduced with permission from www.SecurityCartoon.com

### Did you know?

Password resets are automatically done every 60 days on our network.

If you never log off or shutdown your computer, you do not get the password reset reminder.

The result? You lose connection to any network resources, such as the shared drive, network printers, etc.

If you find yourself unable to get to the network share or print to a network printer, try logging off and back on.

A new password reset may be all that is needed to reset the connection to the network.

## PHARMING

Pharming, a cousin to phishing, is a scamming practice where users end up redirected to bogus websites.

Pharming can happen by poisoning a DNS server, by compromising a router, or by changing out host files. Here is a quick description of each of these:

- **DNS poisoning:** Since DNS servers are responsible for translating host names (ebay.com) into IP addresses (66.135.205.13), if a DNS server is poisoned, its name lookup services cannot be trusted. A compromised DNS server can redirect traffic to bad web sites, often without user knowledge.
- **Router compromise (see cartoon):** routers often answer DNS inquiries for users. Wireless & home routers with default settings are among the most easily compromised. If the router is compromised, it may get bad DNS information and send users to the wrong site.
- **Hosts file:** This is one more method of redirecting a user. The host file is the old-

fashioned way of resolving host names to IP addresses. If a user's PC is infected, the malware may include a new hosts file that contains direct hostname/IP address lookups to send the user directly to pharmed web sites.

The end result is that the users get placed on a web site they *think* is trusted, but is actually bad. Normally, the bad-guy's goal is to steal identity information, access credentials, usernames and passwords.

The bad news: antivirus software and spyware removal software CANNOT protect against pharming. Web browser add-ins may help, but your best bet is knowledge, user awareness, and diligence.

For home computers, I recommend a complete security suite, such as Trend Micro Internet security. Security suites offer additional protection over plain old anti-virus by providing web filtering, fire-wall protection, intrusion detection and intrusion prevention, and wireless security.