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Five More Annoying PC Annoyances

Steve Bass tackles five of his most irritating annoyances.

By Steve Bass, Contributing Editor, PC World; by Steve Bass, author of PC Annoyances, 2nd Edition

When I wrote *PC Annoyances*, I thought I'd soon run out of annoyances to fix. Ha! No sooner had the book landed in bookstores than I was barraged with email from—who else?—*PC World* and O'Reilly readers, tossing me more annoyances to handle.

That led to the second edition of *PC Annoyances*. I've added 160 more annoyances—and fixes—to the new book. (You can grab a copy on Amazon at

<http://snurl.com/annoyed2>

or see at a chapter sample at:

http://snurl.com/sample_annoy.

It didn't take long (nothing does with computers, right?) for readers to send another batch of irritating problems. So, for your reading pleasure, here are yet *Continued on page 3*

CES 2005 – Phones

By Terry Currier

What I seemed to see the most of at CES were two things: LCD and plasma screens (to include TVs), and VoIP—Voice over IP (Internet). There were a lot of companies showing both.

Note here, the listed prices for products have been rounded up to the nearest dollar. I never liked the \$9.99's—I put them at \$10. SRP is Suggested Retail Pricing, MSRP is Manufacturers Suggested Retail Pricing, and ESP is Estimated Street Price. The fees given are for U.S. and Canada. Each company also has low rates for international calls.

Internet Phone Service – VoIP

VoIP is Voice over IP(Internet) using broadband. Typically describing any Internet connection that has a bit rate higher than 100kps. The term PSTN means Public Switched Telephone Network.

Actiontec

<http://www.actiontec.com>

With the Actiontec Internet Phone Wizard using Skype Technologies' Internet calling service, consumers can make and receive free, or low-cost Internet phone calls. Their Wizard product allows you to use the same phone for both regular and Internet calls, avoiding the

complications of needing separate handsets for each. You can use your regular corded or cordless phone to call any Skype user for free, and anyone else at low SkypeOut rates.

As a bonus, you get a second phone line free. If a family member is on a landline call in one room, you can pick up your Skype-connected phone in another, tap a few buttons, and make an Internet call on the spot. Just plug it into your PC, connect to Skype via the Internet, and dial anyone on your Skype "Speed-Dial"



list. If you receive a regular call while you're on the Skype conversation, press the # key twice to put the first call on hold and pick up the second.

Calls made are as clear as regular connections, thanks to the latest echo-cancellation technology. No network configuration, change in firewall or router settings is required. Available for \$70, cables for connecting the device to the PC and telephone are included. Minimum system requirements include a Windows 2000/XP PC with a 400 *Continued on page 4*

Telephone Help Line

PROGRAM/SOFTWARE	NAME	PHONE	TIME
CorelDraw & Ventura & PhotoPaint	Sunny Lockie	949-644-0103	6-10 p.m. weekdays 9 a.m.-10 p.m. weekends
Hardware	Jonathan Means	714-542-1653	6-9 p.m.
Internet	Cathy Grammer-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
Novell, NT & Networking	Jonathan Means	714-542-1653	6-9 p.m.
Quicken & Quickbooks	Max Lockie	949-720-8170	6-10 p.m. & weekends
Windows 95,98,Me,Xp	Siles Bazerman	714-897-2868	9 a.m.-8 p.m.
Word for Windows	Cathy Grammar-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
WordPerfect Windows	Sunny Lockie	949-644-0103	6-10 p.m. weekdays 9 a.m.-10 p.m. weekends

General Meeting
April 9
Orange Coast College
9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon
in Science Room #149

Terry Currier

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PURPOSE

WINNERS, a computer association, is a volunteer organization providing a forum for sharing information and experiences related to Windows-based software, encouraging ethical use of computers and software, and offering service to our communities.

MEMBERSHIP

Annual membership is \$20.00 for individuals; \$5.00 each additional family member.

MEETINGS

WINNERS generally meets the second Saturday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon at Orange Coast College in the Science Building, Room #149, 2701 Fairview, Costa Mesa.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Steve Dela 714-775-8373
stevede@aol.com

Vice President

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tcurrier@aol.com

Secretary

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Treasurer

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Membership

Louise McCain 714-964-8031
swpghmom@aol.com

Programs

Terry Currier 714-774-2018
tcurrier@aol.com

By-Laws

Max Lockie 949-644-0103
mlockie@pobox.com

Editor/Publisher

Sunny Lockie 949-644-0103
sundesigns@pobox.com

Board Members

Ken Kamber 714-637-4496
kkamber@stanfordalumni.org
Ed Koran 562-427-2560
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Charles Schreiber 714-378-1253
cschreib@csulb.edu

Info/Message Line 949-644-0295
Website: <http://windowsusers.org>

FUTURE MEETING DATES

- ★ April 9
- ★ May 14
- ★ June 11
- ★ July 9

more annoyances. (These are actual annoyances contributed by annoyed *PC World* and O'Reilly readers.)

Speed up Adobe Acrobat Reader

The Annoyance: I use Adobe's Reader 6 to read Acrobat PDF files, and it takes aeons to load on my already slow PC. Isn't there a way to speed it up?

The Fix: There's a quick-and-dirty fix that will make the Reader fly onto your screen. It's a free tool—Adobe Reader SpeedUp—that removes many of the add-ins the Reader ordinarily loads and few of us need. Get the tool at the

http://snipurl.com/adobe_speedup.

Kill Some Time: The guy's (almost) a marketing genius. He's been covered all over the internet. Too bad he doesn't have an area code on his truck, eh?

<http://www.snurl.com/plumbtruck>.

SP2 says "Reboot now"

The Annoyance: OK, so I have Automatic Updates set to Automatic in Windows XP. But no matter what I'm doing, this last upgrade keeps smacking a message in the middle of my screen asking if I want to reboot now or wait until later. It's happening every ten minutes and driving me nuts, and no, I can't turn off this alert.

The Fix: Unpleasant as it is, when Microsoft has an update it considers critical for you to install, Automatic Updates slams an icon in your system tray. That's its not-so-subtle way of informing you that upgrades are available to download and install. But here's the rub: on these oh-so-very-critical updates, Windows wants you to reboot your system once the installation is complete. And like a pouty three-year-old, it doesn't care what you're in the middle of doing.

So when you click on the icon in the system tray and choose either Express Install or Custom Install in the dialog that appears, you're stuck. XP will keep reminding you to reboot until you're so

aggravated that you throw in the towel, close all your open apps, and reboot.

My recommendation? Wait till the end of the day before clicking on the icon and agreeing to take the update.

Kill Some Time: How about reminiscing back to the time before web bugs, spam, and, well, the internet. Remember "NYC's Bozo Show," "Wonderama," and "The Felix the Cat Show"? (Didn't think I was that old, eh?):
<http://www.tvparty.com/lostny2.html>.

Unfreeze Windows XP

The Annoyance: You're happy because your recent upgrade to Windows XP Service Pack 2 went like a breeze. But all of a sudden, your system freezes.

The Fix: I know, you want me to tell you why XP crashed and how to prevent it from happening. You could try switching to a Mac or waiting for me to write a 1,600 page-tome (neither of which I suspect will happen). In the meantime, here's a quick way to get yourself out of the jam. Even though Windows XP is locked up solid, chances are good you can still open Task Manager by pressing Ctrl-Alt-Del. In Task Manager, click on the Processes tab, choose *Explorer.exe*, and click on End Process. Then select File -> New Task (Run), type *explorer*, and click on OK. No harm if it doesn't work; nifty rescue if it does.

Kill Some Time: The best I could do on Escape

<http://snipurl.com/dodgeit>

a tough and deeply annoying game, was 9 seconds. I could probably do better with my eyes closed. You'll find out right away that bumping the black frame ends the game.

AOL idle Terminator

The Annoyance: I've about had it with America Online. Even if I'm downloading a big file, I have to respond to that pesky "You have been idle" warning. Hey, AOL, I'm not idling!

The Fix: You need the Terminator. And no, it's not the California governor. It's a tool that keeps your AOL

connection cooking past the 46-minute envelope allowed by AOL. And it doesn't matter whether you're downloading a humongous file or just sitting and, yes, idling. The program's free to try and costs a mere \$5 if you keep it. Grab a copy at

http://snipurl.com/AOL_terminator

Kill Some Time: I'm often accused of offering links that are too cerebral. That, of course, just ain't true. Witness Blacksheep

<http://snipurl.com/blacksheep>

a cool mouse-clicking Flash game. The trick is to pass the cursor over just the black squares, never the red ones. (Warning: lower your PC's volume.)

Importing DVD presentations in PowerPoint

The Annoyance: I'm well experienced with PowerPoint and can import most everything—except DVD videos. I've been hunting high and low for a way to do it; is there a trick I'm missing?

The Fix: You can call off the dogs. The trick is to spend \$99 for Visible Light OnStage DVD for PowerPoint. The handy utility adds itself to PowerPoint, and with it you can import DVDs to your heart's content. For details—and a trial version—visit

<http://www.snipurl.com/visiblelight>

Kill Some Time: You know what happens when you get to a web page that no longer exists, right? You get a 404 error. Here's a 404 that's a huge waste of time and will keep you busy past at least one deadline:

<http://www.ukpaganlinks.co.uk/404.htm>

Copyright © 2005 by Steve Bass and O'Reilly Press. Reproduced with permission. Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and a founding member of APCUG. He's also the author of the second edition of PC Annoyances: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things about Your Personal Computer, O'Reilly Press. Check out a sample chapter at http://snurl.com/sample_anno

MH processor, and an available USB port, plus a LAN or modem-based Internet connection.

Belkin

[http:// www.belkin.com](http://www.belkin.com)

callEverywhere is Belkin's Broadband Phone Service which lets you make calls using your Internet connection and simplifies message management with voice mail, email, and calling features. With it users can access all their messages from any web-connected computer. The service is presently available nationwide, in 34 metropolitan areas and over 900 cities throughout the United States. It works exclusively with Belkin's VoIP Phone Adapter for which they give a lifetime warranty. Features include:

- No activation fee, no cancellation fee, and no contract
- 24/7 technical support and a 30-day risk-free trial period
- Calls placed to other callEverywhere subscribers are free, not counting against your monthly minutes.
- Call waiting, caller ID, 3-way calling, call forwarding
- Choose your own area code from cities throughout the country

Calling plans: Three home calling plans starting with the Basic 500. For \$15/month they get 500 local and long distance minutes in the U.S. and Canada. Premium is \$25/month for unlimited local and long distance minutes in the U.S. and Canada.

In addition to voice mail, all business plans include a toll-free phone number and fax service.

With a free download you can use their callEverywhere SoftPhone letting you make calls with just your broadband Internet connection, PC microphone, and PC speaker. With it you get free calls to other callEverywhere customers, free

email, call holding, voice mail, and 3-way conference calling. Get it at

[http:// www.everywhere.net](http://www.everywhere.net)

Check the website for more plans.

BroadVoice

[http:// www.broadvoice.com](http://www.broadvoice.com)

Two plans with unlimited calling: Unlimited World at \$20 month to 21 countries and the Plus at \$25 to 35 countries. Simple unlimited In-State is \$10. Features include:

- Anonymous Call Rejection / Do Not Disturb
- Call Forwarding
- Last Number Redial
- Caller ID - Name Retrieval Voice Messaging/Management

Dialpad

[http:// www.dialpad.com](http://www.dialpad.com)

For \$12 a month their home plan will give you unlimited calls to anywhere in the United States and Canada. Calls are made through your landline phone. Local, 911, and 800 numbers are routed through the PSTN line. Long distance calls are made using the Dialpad 11 digit dialing.

D-Link

[http:// www.dlink.com](http://www.dlink.com)

The DVG-1120 is a VoIP Gateway equipped with two standard phone ports, one is a lifeline voice port for fail-over to standard phone services. There is one WAN Ethernet 10/100BaseTX Port, and one LAN Ethernet 10/100BaseTX Port. D-Link has partnered with VoiceGlo to bring an alternative VoIP solution to the market using the GloPhone Blue service. The service allows consumers to make unlimited point-to-point VoIP calling through a personal computer and the D-Link USB Phone (DPH-10U). Devices such as the DVG-1120 require a Call Management system to function. These services are offered independently of D-Link, but are only required if user would like to use voice features. Because it shares

your single ISP IP address, it masks the local users' IP addresses from the outside world, preventing intruders and hackers from gaining access to network resources, data files or personal information. Support includes hardware based Quality of Service (QoS), voice compression, echo cancellation, dynamic latency (jitter) buffers, silence suppression, and comfort noise generation.

The DVG-1402S/L VoIP Router is designed for businesses or homes that want to take advantage of Internet connectivity and Voice Over IP using a single gateway. Up to four computers can share a Broadband Internet connection. Firewall features keep unwanted intruders out of the network. You can connect up to two regular phones, and comes with a free trial of VoIP from Lingo™. It gives unlimited local, long distance, and international calling. Additional features include Caller ID, Voicemail, 3-Way Calling, Call Forwarding.

FreeWorld Dialup

[http:// www.freeworlddialup.com](http://www.freeworlddialup.com)

Use FWD to make free phone calls using your telephone, or computer and any broadband connection. You start by downloading a free, self-configuring program. Then combine it with a simple inexpensive converter and any home phone. Call from your house or a public hot-spot, for free. FWD allows you to make free phone calls using any broadband connection using devices that follow Internet standards. This can be a 'regular' telephone connected to a packetizer, an IP Phone or any number of free soft-phones (software for your PC or PDA). To make free calls, you and the person you wish to call need to sign up for FWD and install a IP phone, Phone & Adapter, or software. Using a prefix access code, FreeWorldDialup customers can call the subscribers of most non-FWD

Internet telephone services (e.g., Vonage, Packet8).

Lingo

<http://www.lingo.com>

First month is free and they give a 30-day-money-back guarantee. Cost is \$20 a month. You can choose a area code number from 46 states and 14 countries. Over 25 calling features including voicemail to email, 3 way calling, caller ID, and call forwarding.

FWD Communications

<http://www.pulver.com/communicator>

A free download, the pulver.Communicator provides Instant Messaging service with which subscribers can send IMs to the four most popular IM networks (AOL, Yahoo!, ICQ, and MSN). The



Call-Me Link feature can be used to establish VoIP connections with non-SIP-enabled Buddy List contacts. The recipient of a Call-Me Link need not be a Free World Dialup subscriber, they just need to be running XP on a PC that has a microphone and speakers. Now users can broadcast video to their SIP-enabled contacts via webcam and receive webcam video from those contacts as well.

Packet8

<http://www.packet8.net>

Anyone with broadband Internet access can use their regular phone to make unlimited calls to anywhere in the U.S. and Canada for \$20 per month. Upon signing up you are shipped a broadband telephone adapter (at no extra cost). Along with the equipment, you will receive a

10-digit activation code. Packet8 will transfer your existing number or give you a new telephone number from the area code of your choice. There are no extra numbers to dial, no special instructions and no talking through your computer. Just pick up your phone, and dial any phone number. Incoming calls ring your phone the same as any traditional phone. Features include voicemail, caller ID, call forwarding, and three way calling.

Soyo Group

<http://www.soyogroup.com>

Combining a voice gateway and a broadband router in a single unit, the Z-Connect router AVRO 3001 features a standard analog telephone port, one WAN Ethernet 10/100Base TX port, and four LAN Ethernet 10/100 Base TX ports. Simply plug your phone into the telephone port to get the benefits of VoIP service. The router also allows two or more PCs to share a single Internet access point, and provides Internet security as well.

The Z-Connect G668 telephone is an IP device that plugs directly into your broadband connection for instant VoIP capability. Additional features include advanced QoS (Quality of Service) technologies such as CODEC negotiation, enhanced jittering technology, lost packet reconstruction, echo cancellation and packet delay recovery to provide reliable high-quality voice communications. Users can make phone calls to any phone number with the Soyo IP phone service, which is pre-loaded to the IP phone set. Cost is \$180. Basic plan is: Free IP to IP calls or within the Z 2 Z Network, No monthly fee, and no activation or cancellation fee.

VoIPVoice

<http://www.voipvoice.com>

PDT today introduced the VoIPVoice Cyberphone K USB telephone that is integrated with Skype. Powered through the USB and all the necessary telephone



functions used with Skype are accessed direct from the unit itself. The keypad enable users to scroll through their list of contacts, adjust the call volume, and mute calls. Simply lifting the handset from its base automatically opens the Skype application on the computer screen. Acoustically isolated speaker and microphone eliminate echo. Available online for \$60.

Uniden

<http://www.uniden.com>

Launching their first consumer Voice over IP product, DTA 200 Digital Telephone Adapter is a 5.8GHz digital expandable cordless phone with a built-in VoIP adapter. It converts standard telephone signals to a VoIP digital signal so they can be sent across a broadband Internet connection. It supports two telephone lines and features like Caller ID, Call Waiting and 3-Way Calling. The UIP1868 is a 5.8GHz digital expandable cordless phone with built-in VoIP adapter, expandable up to ten handsets, allowing consumers to experience the extended features, convenience and affordability of VoIP communication in every room of their homes.

Vonage

<http://www.vonage.com>

With the Vonage Premium Unlimited Plan you can make unlimited calls anywhere in the United States and Canada for \$25 a month. Free features including: voicemail, caller ID with name, call waiting, call forwarding, and 3-way calling. No contract to sign, pick area code you want. You can get a Toll

free number for \$5 per month allowing your incoming caller to call you at no charge from anywhere in the US, anytime. 100 incoming minutes are included every month and each additional minute is 4.9 cents. You can add on SoftPhone and turn any PC or laptop into a full-functioning telephone. Vonage features include voicemails, caller ID with name, call forwarding, and more.

Video Phones

D-Link

<http://www.dlink.com>

The i2eye™ DVC-2000 Broadband VideoPhone is a full-featured desktop videoconferencing device with a built-in 5" color LCD screen. It is a standalone device, using advanced video compression technology, maximizing the image and audio quality within the available bandwidth. It can send and receive video at up to 30 frames per second to deliver real-time audio and video. With Auto IP Mapping initiating a videoconference call over the Internet is as simple as dialing a phone number. Instead of identifying your IP address, you will assign it a "phone number" of your choice. As incoming i2eye callers dial that phone number, a remote directory service provided by D-Link (at no charge) automatically converts it into your i2eye's corresponding IP address. For added convenience, a speakerphone mode provides you with hands-free videoconferencing. The privacy mode blocks video and/or audio from being sent to the other end of the call.

Leadtek Research

<http://www.leadtek.com>

The BVP8882 is a standalone videophone that makes phone calls without a computer. The 5" LCD screen and CCD camera are mounted on a platform which can be rotated and tilted and provide clear viewing even in a dimly lit



environment. It is perfect for videoconferencing, distance learning, visual consultancy, personal identification, video surveillance, and sign language communication. Priced at \$599 SRP, it connects to a broadband network via a router, ADSL modem, or cable modem. There is a built-in USB port. For hands-free operation, the phone has a built-in microphone and speakerphone. Video and audio can



also be recorded to external devices, such as a VCR, through built-in video and audio connectors.

Their Leadtek BVP8759 is a Set-Top Box Videophone using the TV as a videophone display. A corded or cordless microphone connects the user's voice to the unit. Priced at \$499 SRP. Both units come with a baby monitor mode.

Motorola

<http://www.motorola.com>

Ojo is designed for broadband leveraging the existing cable and DSL infrastructure. As a SIP-compliant endpoint, it requires no additional headend equipment for DOCSIS® cable modems.



Users can make IP video calls and PSTN or VoIP voice-only calls over a current telephone number. Comes with a 5.6" diagonal LCD monitor, with high-resolution 16:9 display, true-to-life video and audio quality, and Picture-based caller ID and phonebook. Callers can leave both a video and voice message. Video is transmitted at 30 frames per second. MSRP is \$799.

Packet8

<http://www.packet8.net>

Subscribers with videophones can make video calls for \$30 per month. They get world wide unlimited calling to other Packet8 subscribers at no extra charge. Calls to non-Packet8 international numbers (outside the U.S. and Canada) are charged at a low per minute rate. Incoming calls ring your phone the same as any traditional phone. Features include voicemail, caller ID, call forwarding, and three way calling.

Cell Phones

LG Electronics

<http://www.lge.com>

PM-325 Bluetooth Slide-Design Mobile Phone is LG's first handset featuring Bluetooth technology. Features an integrated CMOS digital camera with 8x digital zoom and built-in self-portrait mirror, Web browser with image support, email capability and a voice memo recorder. Available now at a SRP of \$230.



A7110 has a slide design, highlighted by the full color LCD screen. It features EDGE class 10 capabilities for High-Speed Data Transmission, Mobile Instant Messenger, two-way short



messaging services and photo caller-ID. Its integrated camera and advanced messaging features allow users to send photos and videos with personalized text, voice and/or sound.

The VX8000 features Video and Music on Demand for streaming, downloading and playing video and audio clips, Video Messaging capabilities and an integrated CCD 1.3 mega pixel camera with macro



mode with four digital zoom settings for shooting video and still images. Users can compose and view their shots with large internal and external 262K TFT color LCD screens. It has a 500 contact phone book, MIDI sound, personal organizer and more.

Samsung

<http://www.samsung.com>

Unveiled was the Samsung's p207, the first phone with the new VoiceMode technology that allows consumers to simply speak the words



of a message and have the phone translate those exact words into text. This voice activated text messaging application allows users

to quickly and easily address the message then use their voice to create text, bringing virtually hands-free and eyes-free communication to text messaging. Using advanced voice



activation technology, consumers also can send pre-programmed short messages with the sound of their voice.

The QuickPhrase feature debuting on Samsung's a890 makes it easy for consumers to address a message and activate one of the frequently used short messages pre-programmed in the phone. Once in the messaging application, users can activate phrases such as "Call me" or "Will call you later" by simply speaking those words, and the text is included in the message. Features include: V Cast allowing the user to download and view video clips from a library of content all from your phone. Choose from premium content, 3-D games, music videos, and other premium video clips. EV-DO, a broadband high-speed data service. 1.3 Megapixel digital camera. Also shown: QVGA phone that allows consumers to record up to one hour of high quality video directly on their phone, connect the phone to their television and view the video on TV; the U.S.'s first multi-mega pixel camera phone line up, including a two mega pixel and a five mega pixel camera with 3X optical zoom capabilities.

Sanyo

<http://www.sanyo.com>

Along with Sprint and announced plans today to offer Sanyo's first multimedia phone, the Sprint PCS

VisionSM Multimedia Phone MM-7400. Allows customers to view on-demand streaming video and audio as well as shoot VGA pictures and extended 30-second video clips with the integrated camera and camcorder. The phone also offers capabilities for walkie-talkie style communication. Suggested retail price is \$380 or \$230 after rebate. Customers get streaming audio and video content from sources such as: NBC Mobile, CNN, ABC News, FOX Sports, and The Weather Channel. Multimedia content is delivered to the handset at up to 15

frames per second. The integrated camera features a built-in three-mode flash, and the camcorder has a movie light for low-light situations. With Picture MailSM and Sprint PCS Video Mail, users can instantly take and share special moments with family and friends.



- Built-in speakerphone
- 2.1" Internal TFT LCD, 65K color screen
- 1.0" External TFT LCD, 65K color screen
- New voice-activated dialing system – dial by contact name or number with no voice pre-programming required.
- New "Meeting Mode" feature – auto-answer a call and place it on hold while you step out of a meeting

Miscellaneous

Cellboost

<http://www.psyst.com>

Cellboost is a disposable battery/charger for cell phones from Compact Power Systems. They deliver an average of 60 minutes of talk time with no need for electrical

outlet. The small unit plugs into the normal AC slot of the phone and gets it a boost of power. Just announced they are expanding into units for camcorders, Nintendo Game Boy Advance SP, and Apple iPods. They typically sell for \$6-\$7.

Infone

<http://www.infone.com>

A personal assistant telephone service they introduced a voice e-mail retrieval feature that allows those on the go to read and respond to e-mail without access to a computer. The first five calls are free, additional calls cost 89 cents for any call up to 15 minutes and 5 cents per minute after that. There is 24/7 access to a live personal telephone assistant who can assist with a number of services, including:

- Providing access to your Outlook or Palm contacts and appointments
- Obtaining event times and locations
- Providing driving directions and appointment reminders
- Making restaurant reservations
- Purchasing movie tickets

The StarBack® feature allows users to make numerous calls within one 15-minute session. After being connected with the first person users can press the star key, return to the operator, free of charge, and be connected with the next listing, check e-mail, ask for directions, etc. The feature can be used up to four times in one call.

Orb Networks

<http://www.orb.com>

A developer of streaming media software and services for mobile devices. It provides a simple way for consumers to view, hear and control all kinds of their digital content from virtually any Internet-enabled device, from anywhere in the world. Their solution provides access to a person's music, live television, videos, photos and other digital content from any device that can



connect to the Internet, such as a cell phone, PDA, or notebook, allowing users to create their own "personal media portal." Using any web browser it provides a simple, intuitive interface to the user's content located on their home PC or on the Internet.

RCA

<http://www.thomson.net>

A subsidiary of Thomson was showing the RCA Cell Phone Docking System (Model 23200). For households that do not have a landline telephone simply place the docking system in a room that receives the clearest cellular reception, then while it charges the digital handset(s) are used to make or answer calls anywhere in the home. Users with a landline telephone can plug the phone wire into the docking system, essentially creating an instant "second" phone line. To identify whether a call is coming in on the home telephone or the cell, the handset features



different ring tones, and separate buttons allow the option of making calls using cell minutes or the home phone line. The system also features a call timer to track cell minutes used while the user's cell phone is in the docking system. Available in the spring, the suggested retail price of the RCA Cell Docking System is \$150.

Texas Instruments

<http://www.ti.com/wireless>

You won't see it right away but TI announced development of the wireless industry's first digital TV on a single chip for cell phones, which will capture broadcast signals and allow cell phone users to watch live broadcasts. Code-named "Hollywood," the chip will receive live digital TV broadcasts using new television infrastructure. The broadcast TV will be at 24-30 frames per second, paired with full audio.

Ear and Headsets

Body Glove markets a number of different models carried by Fellowes. They include the Earglove line and Bluetooth headset.

<http://www.fellowes.com>



Cardo Systems uses Bluetooth for connection to phones. Their WindGuard™ technology overcomes wind interference. The scala-500™ comes equipped with all high end features and weighs only .58 oz (16.8 g). The user will get up to 9 hours of talk time.

<http://www.cardowireless.com>

scala



Flamingo it's weight is 8 grams, there is a standby time up to 130 hours, and 8 hours of talk time. It uses Bluetooth for connectivity.

<http://www.flamingo-headset.com>

GN Netcom has three ear pieces with various lengths for the microphone from the ear. They also have headphone units.

<http://www.gnnetcom.com>

Plantronics has the largest selection of headsets and ear pieces. They range computer pieces, to cell phone, to even units especially made for VoIP.

<http://www.plantronics.com>

SageTV Media Center 3.0

A VerMedia UltraTV 1500 MCE

By Terry Currier

I'm going to combine two product review here since they went together so well. I have to say I have reviewed two of the AVerMedia TV products in the past. Both of them I liked, but I had to return them after reviewing them (I know, bummer). I did like having a TV card in the computer. They are easier to program than a VCR and convenient. So when I saw the Hauppauge WinTV-GO on sale for \$20 after rebate, I bought one. I have to tell ya—I got what I paid for. I put it in my main computer (I normally look at this one most of the time). The interface is not bad, but not as good as AVerMedia's. It is the picture quality that really lets me down, though. I have a PNY (nVidia clone) video card in my main computer with 128Mb of RAM. I put the AVerMedia UltraTV 1500 MCE in my secondary computer. It has Intel video on the motherboard with 56Mb of RAM, and the TV picture looks better on my secondary computer.

With the Hauppauge card I can watch or record shows I want. It uses what they call SoftPVR which uses your PC's processor to digitally record your videos to disk in MPEG or DivX® formats. It has the ability to record planned times I set for it very easily. With the DivX compression you can put up to an hour of video onto a VideoCD. You have to realize

though with the compression there is some quality loss.

Frey Technologies is the developers of the SageTV software. It interacts with the TV card to record shows from it, but much more. If it was just a recording program, I would be saying so what. What is great about it is the information capabilities. When I installed SageTV it asked me my zip code and connected to the Adelphia TV guide setup. If you do not have cable or satellite it will also work with an antenna hook-up. Putting the cursor



arrow over the show name displays information about that show. Clicking on it gets even more than what I could get from the Adelphia site itself. The LiveTV Guide will list all the shows for up to the next 14 days.

From the guide, I can click to watch the show, record it, mark it as a favorite, set it as watched, or don't like. The recording can be set to different levels, the default is 'great,' which is DVD quality. If I mark it as a favorite I can have it record future shows, I can even have it look for only new episodes and ignore reruns.

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Clicking on Scheduled Recordings takes you to a menu choice of:

- Create Timed Recording
- View Upcoming Recording Schedule – There you will see what programs you told it to record.
- Favorites Manger – Listing of shows you marked as favorites. You can also add favorites by title (presents you with a list of shows available for you to choose from), actor (again a list of actors), or category.
- Search for Programs to Record – I can have it search for a title, actor, description, all fields, or categories. For the categories there are 125 categories to choose from. They go from Action to Western. There is even Sumo Wrestling in there, and no I'm not kidding.

Even if you are just watching a show, SageTV records it first to the hard drive. Compared to live TV, there is about a two-second delay. Everything is recorded so you can timeshift while watching it. It allows you to pause, rewind, or fast forward. They use what they call Intelligent Recording, it deletes those unscheduled recordings of live TV when you exit the program. It



keeps those programs you did schedule, are favorites, or you manually it told to record. If you try to record something else while another recording is scheduled, a conflict window pops up and ask if you want to cancel the other recording. When it does record a show, I like how it labels the show name and episode name. Compare that to just the channel number and date for the Hauppauge recording.

While you are watching TV, if



you click on the screen, it will bring up the On-Screen Display (OSD). What you see at the top is information about the currently-playing channel including the program information. The bar below shows where you are in the current recording—23:45 into 1 hour of “Wickedly Perfect” on KCBS Channel 2. The white shows what you have watched, the red shows what section wasn't recorded, the blank is the section to be recorded. If you watch a previous recorded show there is a green part that shows what has been recorded and waiting to be watched.

SageTV lets you load up and watch all currently recorded shows. Currently recording shows are identified with a yellow border, Manual Recordings have a red border and Favorites have a white border. Program Information for each show is listed above and there are a number of different grouping and sorting options.

If you have more than one TV card in your computer system, you can utilize and record from each, even at the same time. If you only have one card, you can still watch one of the previously recorded shows while recording another. There are parental controls if you choose to use them.

After using SageTV with the AVerMedia card I also had to try it with the Hauppauge card. It worked, but not completely. It installed, yet it never asked me for the license key. The LiveTV Guide worked okay, but it refused to record.

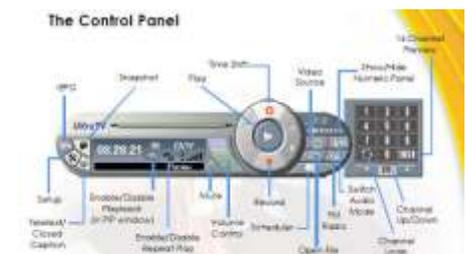
SageTV Requirements Overview

Microsoft Windows 98SE, 2000 SP3 or higher, ME or XP
128MB RAM, recommended
256MB RAM

Intel Pentium III 600 MHz or AMD Athlon 600 MHz with additional requirements including TV Tuner Card, Video Card and additional software.

You can download a 14 day trial version from their website. If you have a TV card you really should try this. The SageTV Media Center software is available at <http://www.sageTV.com> for \$79.95 Windows.

The AVerMedia UltraTV 1500 MCE uses V-Sharp Technology a deinterlace technology which removes interlace artifacts to enhance image clarity and sharpness. The card will work as a Personal Video Recorder (PVR). It will record your favorite TV programs or videos in high-quality MPEG I/II formats. Up front you don't need SageTV, I just think it works even better with it. It supports other input sources, such as a TV signal, a camcorder or other analog devices. You can also listen to FM Radio on your PC, then record and burn it to a CD (MP3



format), or download it to your MP3 Player. You can schedule the recording, so you never miss your favorite FM radio shows or music.

It does not record all the time like SageTV does, but the card does have a Time Shift Function. So you if you're watching TV while cooking and you realize you're missing an ingredient, no problem.

Just start recording and when you return, you can watch where you left off while it continues recording the rest of the program. You can Pause and Rewind live TV, or even do Instant Replays. Afterwards, simply fast forward to go back to the regular broadcast.

16-Channel Preview



The coolest thing is the 16-Channel Preview feature. You can preview a series of 16 channels at a time. You will see a thumbnail image of each channel and once you've

decided on the channel you want to watch, simply double-click the image

(channel) and you'll be ready to watch.

I should add, the TV window you are watching is fully resizable from one corner up to full screen. If you are going to look at TV tuner cards, check this one out. The price is \$79.99 at their website <http://www.aver.com>

Note: The screen captures were done with SnagIt. I used the guide manual from AverMedia for theirs – it was already nicely labeled.

Demystify mobile gadgets with Crabby's Help

Applies to: Outlook, Word, Excel

From <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/assistance/HA011565421033.aspx>

It's come time to re-enlighten you (and thereby myself) and revisit some of the coolest features of today's mobile devices. Let's untangle some acronyms and get the skinny on what "mobile" can mean for you.

Earlier this year, I wrote a column called Fly me to the moon: Go mobile with Office, in which I introduced you to three types of Windows Mobile-based devices: The Pocket PC, the Pocket PC Phone Edition, and the Smartphone. So why am I writing another column about the same three types of gadgets? Well, I am going to talk about them, but what I really want to do this time is talk less about the devices themselves and more about the coolest mobile device features, what

they actually do, and how they all work together. (And, anyway, this is my column and I can do what I want.)

Note When I use the word "device" or "doohickey" or "gadget" in this column, I'm referring to anything that is a computer, computer-related, or computerish apparatus such as a Pocket PC, a cell phone, a digital organizer, etc. You know what I mean. Not on that list: a pillow, chocolate coins, ornaments for your fake white tree...

Thanks to some folks over in the Windows Mobile Demo Lab, I got to demo three brand spankin' new Windows Mobile-based devices:

- The Audiovox SMT 5600 (Smartphone)
- The HP iPAQ h6315 (Pocket PC Phone Edition)
- The Dell Axim X50 (Pocket PC)

While I'm no gear-head, it warmed the cockles of my heart to experience



how the hardware elves and the software elves worked together to make productivity and mobility the best of friends.

You may not remember the differences among these three types of Windows mobile devices (even though I did create a handy little table last time around that offered a quick overview). Lucky for you, I found a much nicer looking table that I'll share with you now: Compare Windows Mobile-based devices. If you're not sure what kind of device you want (or want to buy as a gift — 'tis the season, you know), check out that comparison table and then come right back here. We have a lot to talk about.

With me now? OK, so now you know that with all three devices, you can sync your Outlook calendar, tasks, and contacts; surf the Internet; listen to music; and play games (all

sorts). But then the differences start to take over. Let's figure out what some of the technology and features are, how they're used, and which devices have what features.

Lets bandy about some terms

When I got my packages of fun from the loaner desk here at Microsoft, I have to admit that I was somewhat of a wireless ignoramus. I didn't know my Bluetooth from my Wi-Fi, and I confused GPRS for GPS (imagine that!). So, once again, let's begin at the beguine and demystify some terms.

Bluetooth

You know all those wires, cables, remotes, plugs, ports, and hubs that you have scattered around and under your desk? Well, you need them for a variety of reasons, the most important one being that you need some of these devices to communicate with each other. On a physical level, Bluetooth is a radio frequency — simple as that. It's a standard (meaning an agreement made by a variety of electronics manufacturers) for providing short-range wireless connections between computers and other devices. In other words, it's a way for electronic thingamajigs to connect to one another. For our purposes, Bluetooth provides a fast, convenient way to exchange information between a Windows Mobile-based device and a home computer. (Some of the mobile gadgets have built-in Bluetooth capability; others accept a separate Bluetooth expansion card.)

Wi-Fi

Otherwise known as wireless fidelity, Wi-Fi (which just sounds much more hip, but don't confuse it with "Hi-Fi" or you'll be outing yourself as an over-40 geek) lets you connect computers anywhere in your home or office without the need for wires. The computers connect to the network using radio signals, and the computers can be up to 100 feet or so apart. (Some of the devices we'll be talking about have

built-in Wi-Fi capabilities while others need Wi-Fi expansion cards.)

GSM/GPRS

Did you know that a cell phone is basically a sophisticated radio? I didn't know that either, but now I do (And so do you; aren't we special and sophisticated).

I'll explain: GSM stands for Global System for Mobile communications, and it's a type of digital cellular technology that is the most popular standard for mobile phones all over the world. How about these numbers: GSM is used by more than one billion people in 200 countries. GSM operates on a couple of different frequencies (See? There's the radio part) and it's the standard in most European, African, and Asian countries.

Basically, the different mobile phone companies in those countries all have roaming agreements, making it easy for people to make calls from country to country. Until fairly recently, this was not the case here in the good old U.S. of A, which was using (and still is sometimes) a different standard (but that's another story for another day and one that bores me to tears). Most U.S. companies and phones use the GSM standard if they're worth their salt. If you have a phone with GSM, you can use it in just about any country. Yes, you have a global phone.

GPRS, an extension of GSM, stands for "General Packet Radio Service" and it's a technology that lets you have a connection to the Internet only when you have data to send (or receive), which is a lot more efficient than a continuous connection (especially if you are paying by the minute, otherwise known as "through the nose").

Note Don't confuse GPRS with GPS, which stands for Global Positioning System and helps you find your way home (or even out of a paper bag, if that's where you've found yourself) if you're too proud to stop and ask for directions.

SMS messages

SMS (Short Message Service) is a feature available with some wireless phones that allows users to send and receive short (140-160 characters) text-based messages. Similar to e-mail, SMS messages are sent and then stored at SMS centers so that you can retrieve your messages later if your network is unavailable or you, yourself, are unavailable (or don't want to read tiny messages on your cell phone while in the ladies room).

MMS messages

MMS (Multimedia Message Service) is a method of transmitting graphics, video clips, sound files, and short text messages over wireless networks. Like SMS, but more fun.

SIM card

A SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) card is a smartcard used in GSM cell phones that contains your personal information and phone settings. You can switch it from phone to phone and never have to enter the same info over and over gain.

Hot Spots

Wireless access points that are found in public places such as airports, conventions centers, hotels, and coffee shops.

Cockles

That space inside my heart where I get a feeling of well-being or sentimental contentment (as opposed to cold, hard, factual contentment).

Ladies and gentlemen, start your devices

Now let's get to the devices I demoed and what enchantment each one holds. I'm just going to give you the quick and dirty of what I think are the coolest features of each device. Ready? Let's go shopping!

Windows Mobile-based Smartphone

The Smartphone I demoed was the Audiovox SMT 5600 Smartphone and, at the time of this printing, it's the word's smallest Windows Mobile Smartphone. (See? Sometimes smaller is better!)



I was most excited about this one since it synchronized quite nicely with my Outlook data on my desktop PC and to my Microsoft Exchange server. And while I didn't plan to do much word processing or spreadsheeting, I did like the idea of being able to access my calendar and contacts and then send a text message along with a photo of my daughter and I at our local coffee shop. Then I could use Smartdial — a cool feature that helps you locate any contact really fast by displaying a list of contacts based on the letter or number you type in — and call Mom and Dad to see if they got the message and the photo, and then we'd all lament about how much cheaper and simpler life would be if I lived next door. (Truth is, they'd lament that I didn't live next door; I'd be silently thanking the stars above — no offense Mom and Dad.)

So this Smartphone really is smart; perhaps even smarter than I. It's got a large color display (2.2" may not seem large, but it's all relative here) and a camera for both video capture and pictures. And what about those

high-techie features I mentioned above, you ask?

- **Bluetooth** Integrated. 'Nuff said.
- **Wi-Fi** No, I'm so sorry.
- **GSM/GPRS** Why, yes!
- **SMS/MMS** Yes again!
- **Extras** Comes with Windows Media Player 10 Mobile, which enables you to synchronize your media files between your Windows XP-based computer and your Smartphone. Update your play lists, copy your music library, synchronize your files, and use music services with DRM protection (DRM=Digital Rights Management: a way to protect the copyright of those songs you've downloaded) — all in one place: your hand.
- **Cockle factor** I ended up liking this one, but not immediately. I popped out the SIM card from my old cell phone and away I went. It took a bit to figure out how to work all the controls, but once I did, I was hooked. If you have decide to purchase a Smartphone, make sure you shop around to get the best deal not only on the phone itself, but for the data account you need to make it work.

Pocket PC Phone Edition

If you want to be able to use your Pocket PC as a phone too, a regular Pocket PC won't handle that duty and you'll look silly with it pressed up against your ear. That being said, a Pocket PC Phone Edition looks almost identical to a regular Pocket PC although it does have an antennae poking out of the top to serve your signal needs.

If you don't give a hoot about what other people think of you or your device and you need something that works as a phone, a word processor (Pocket Word!), a spreadsheet maker (Pocket Excel!), a connection to the Internet, all the while being synced up with your Outlook data, then the Pocket PC Phone Edition is for you. In fact, the



one I demoed, the HP iPAQ Pocket PC h6315, is the first mainstream handheld with integrated three-way wireless capabilities (Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and GSM/GPRS).

One of my favorite parts of this device was the teeny tiny snap-on thumb keyboard. I found myself writing my column while I was smashed between two people talking to themselves on the bus coming in to work. I also sent text messages to my editor (in language designed to irk him) (Ed: Irk successful.), e-mailed my mom to ask for a certain recipe for a certain holiday coming up, and called my house to leave a message on the machine designed to scare my dog and get him off the kitchen counters.

And what did this doohickey offer?

- **Bluetooth** Built right in.
- **Wi-Fi** Also built right in.
- **GSM/GPRS** You betcha — integrated too.
- **SMS/MMS** Of course, and I just couldn't stop. People who hadn't heard from me in years all of a sudden started receiving daily curt messages from me.
- **Extras** Four-inch VGA screen and, of course, that little keyboard.
- **Cockle factor** As much as the idea of a wireless phone/computer/camera/text messenger doohickey got my cockles all revved up, the cost for data ser-

vice can be a bit pricey. So make sure you shop around for one that suits your needs.

Windows Mobile-based Pocket PC

The Pocket PC I got to take for a spin was the Dell Axim X50. It was sleek, thin, and I could definitely see it at a runway show in Milan. . . . This is one pocket pal that's easy to use and pretty self-explanatory (a definite plus in the cockles area). It



has Pocket Word and Pocket Excel all loaded and ready for your brilliant input. And of course, the integration with Outlook and Exchange is ready and waiting for you. It also comes with Windows Media Player 10 Mobile, which is one fun-filled music application, I can tell you that.

Lets see what this bad boy has for us:

- **Bluetooth Integrated.**
- **Wi-Fi Integrated.**
- **GSM/GPRS** Since this devices isn't a cell phone, it won't have GSM or GPRS (and if it does, you bought the wrong thingamajig).
- **SMS/MMS** Again, not a cell phone so you can't send these kinds of messages. But if you get a special little card, you can send instant messages which are almost as good.... Alternatively, you can also use MSN Instant Messenger over Wi-Fi.
- **Extras** Also comes with Windows Media Player 10 and a super-vivid VGA resolution screen.
- **Cockle factor** Pretty good. It was light and easy to use, I didn't have to sign up for a data service (since this isn't a cell phone), and since I know how to use a PDA already (I have an older iPAQ), my ramp-up time was virtually nil.

Final words

I hope I answered some of your burning questions about what all these mobility terms mean. And I have one piece of advice for you if you're thinking about buying one of these gadgets: Shop around and spend some time on the message boards on the Web — the ones that discuss mobile gadgets and the various services out there. You can learn a lot about what type of device to buy, which company offers the best deals, and get some really useful how-to tips too.

Happy mobiling, and before I go, let me jump up on my stump and say this: Get off that phone and stop text messaging when you're paying for your groceries or ordering at a restaurant or in a coffee shop. It's rude, and it makes me want to snatch that thing out of your hand and, well, you get my point, Kitten. Consider that my quotation of the week.

“A person travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it.” — George Moore

About the author

Annik Stahl, the Crabby Office Lady columnist, uses Office all day long. She gets her column ideas from your wild suggestions and demands, so if you're feeling demanding or just want to toss a comment her way, leave Crabby some feedback. If you have an Office tip you'd like to submit, send that to her personal mailbox at crabby@microsoft.com. (While she does read all of your e-mails, she can't offer personal assistance, so don't be offended by her curt auto-reply...)

Browser Doohickeys, Doodads & Gizmos

by Vinny La Bash
Sarasota Personal Computer Users
Group, Inc., FL

Most people change their surrounding to suit themselves. Your desk probably has some pictures that trigger pleasant memories. You may have added some new plants to your garden. Whether you have engaged in something as monumental as redecorating your house or as trivial as changing the default ring on your cell phone, your general point is to make your surroundings look and act they way you want them to, not the way someone else thinks they should.

Tweaking your internet browser isn't any different. Due to the number of software add-ons available, you can change or add many different features. Some allow you to change the appearance of the interface; others help you to retrieve information more quickly. Several of them may even make using the internet easier. Despite their sophistication, most install quickly, and the majority of them are free.

Almost everyone who searches the Web uses Google, Yahoo or both. There are many other search engines, but these two dominate the bulk of the traffic. Switching between the two sites gets old quickly, so why not try Google's tool bar? It maintains a link to Google's web site, allowing instant access to many of Google's features no matter where else you may be on the Web. You can search, spell-check, block pop-ups, even turn UPS tracking numbers into web links.

Yahoo's tool bar has similar features, and it lets you search on-line yellow pages. You can check local movie and TV schedules. Yahoo has a nice email element, and it's very strong in financial features. You also get an anti-spyware tool.

Yahoo's tool bar is easy to find. Go to

<http://www.yahoo.com>

Look toward the upper, right-hand corner of your browser window, click on the link, and follow directions.

For Google's entire bag of goodies, direct your browser to

<http://www.google.com>

and then click on the more button.

You may need to scroll down the list of other tools to get to it. When you're finished make a trip to <http://labs.google.com>

and enjoy the feast. This is Google's technology sandbox. These are prototype projects Google is currently working on, meaning they are not quite finished yet. Even if you're not particularly adventurous, try the new Map feature. You may be so impressed you'll never use Mapquest again.

I do a lot of research online, and I have become a fan of Net Snippets because I can straightforwardly save a snapshot of a web page or any part of the page. The utility lets me save these "snippets" to organize for offline viewing. This eliminates the need to search for the same page multiple times, and is a godsend if the site ever goes offline. Net Snippets is the kind of tool you never knew you needed, but now you can't live without it. There is no one thing that grabs you, but a host of little things like the ability to highlight and annotate that make Net Snippets a "must have" tool. Get it at

<http://www.netsnippts.com>.

RSS readers are rapidly emerging from obscurity to necessity. Depending on whom you ask, RSS stands for "Rich Site Summary," "RDF Site Summary," or "Really Simple Syndication." RSS is a dialect of XML and its "geek-speak" nature has probably contributed to its slow acceptance, but its benefits are undeniable. The technology notifies

you whenever something on your favorite web sites changes.

The original RSS was designed by Netscape as a format for building portals of headlines to mainstream news sites. It has rapidly evolved into something far different and much more useful. Get news headlines, stock quotes or alerts when an item you've been waiting for is available. You can save yourself a lot of time because you don't have to visit individual web sites to see what's new. A large bonus is that RSS feeds can't be tampered with. What that means is they are immune from attacks by spyware, viruses, Trojans, and other assorted evil-intentioned software.

In Windows, Pluck is the most popular RSS add-on. It's easily downloaded from

<http://www.pluck.com>

If you're still using the basic plain vanilla browser, try at least one of these tools to boost your web experiences.

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April 9 - 9 a.m. to 12 noon Orange Coast College Science Building #149

Terry Carrier

Our speaker originally scheduled for April is having to go out of the country so Terry Carrier will com in April and BenQ will come in May now.

Terry will show you how to take your old vinyl records and record them into the computer so you can then put them onto CDs or just play them from your hard drive. This also works for cassette tapes.



WINNERS
WINdows usERS
PO Box 9804
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Pig Sig at the Coco's on Harbor near OCC

