



Executive Stress

OFFICE SUPPORT

Newsletter — December 2003

Welcome!

Volume 3, Issue 4

I'm back from three weeks in New Zealand - probably a week too long for our four year old, and just in time to get us out of there for the Australia v New Zealand World Cup Rugby Match!!

It was a great few weeks - but as the saying goes, there's no place like home.

I then fell foul of some illness that knocked me over for three weeks - I so appreciate the support of those clients who needed work done during that time and remained flexible ... so soon after my leave! Thank you!

I now have a daughter at home with Chicken Pox ... even though she was vaccinated!



I guess the moral of this story is that the Bishops should never go on holidays! :)

This newsletter is a little more light-hearted - in the spirit of the season!

We've included some more tips from

Woody Leonard's *Office for Mere Mortals* on PDF files.

There's a light-hearted look at God's thoughts on lawns, and some interesting research from Cambridge University.

As we head into another

Australian summer, turn to page 2 for the hilarious "Diary of a Southerner".

At this time of year I'd like to thank all my continuing clients for another great year, and thank you for your ongoing support! I do hope to be working with many more of you in 2004.

I wish you and yours peace, joy and happiness! Merry Christmas! Blessings for Yule / Midsummer (depending on the hemisphere you live in!)



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Happy Hanukah, Kwan-zaa and Eid ul Fitri! Stay safe!!!

Peace

Lyn P-B v



Research at Cambridge University

According to research at Cambridge University, it doesn't matter in what order the letters in a word are, the only important thing is that the first and last letter be at the right place. The rest can be a total mess and you can still read it without problem. This is because the human mind does not read every letter by itself, but the word as a whole. Amazing huh?

There's a tremendous Web page that examines this statement in detail, with several enlightening demonstrations. It's from Dr. Matt Davis, a researcher at the Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, Cambridge University.

Well worth a few minutes. <http://www.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/~matt.davis/Cambridge/> v



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Technology Talk: PDF

Reprinted from Woodie's Office for Mere Mortals #4.15

What is PDF?

It was pointed out in previous newsletters that distributing Word .doc files or posting them on the web can lead to all sorts of problems, with lots of personal information being added to files. Converting documents to PDF before distribution would therefore make a lot of sense: not just in order to reduce file size, but from a security standpoint. A PDF file isn't anything at all like a Word document.



A Word .doc contains all sorts of things: text, formatting, macros, revisions, histories, links to other files, histories of links to other files, and heaven-knows-what-else. A PDF ("Portable Document Format") file is more like a snapshot of a printout: a representation of what the printed document should look like.

Adobe Systems - the company that truly revolutionized desktop publishing - was founded in 1982 by Chuck Geschke and John Warnock, two engineers at Xerox's famed Palo Alto Research Center. Adobe first developed and then popularized PostScript, a language that describes how text should appear on a page. PostScript has many virtues, but most of all it's "device independent": a PostScript file should print precisely the same way on any printer, no matter what printer, no matter which operating system, no matter which computer originated the file.

PDF is based on PostScript, with a couple of important extras. First, a PDF file can contain fonts, so if you create a PDF file with WoodrowGothic 17-point bold, you can be sure that whoever prints the file will see precisely the fonts you intended. Second, PDF compresses everything on the fly, so there's no need to independently compress, say, picture files that are embedded in the document.

Working with PDF Files

Adobe gives away its PDF viewer/printer. Free. The Adobe Reader as it's called, can be downloaded at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readermain.html>. The Reader is a remarkably stable piece of software.

Of course, Adobe isn't giving away the Reader out of the goodness of its heart. They want to sell you Adobe Acrobat, the program that lets you create, search and modify PDF files (Acrobat 6.0 Professional - AU\$700+). Acrobat also lets you create fill-in-the-blanks forms, which can be filled in by anybody with the free Reader.

There are many, many programs that create files in PDF format: PDF is a well-documented file format specification and (according to Adobe), 1,800 companies now make products that use the PDF format.

PDF in the Future

You're going to hear PDF mentioned more often, as an alternative to Word .doc files. There are just too many Word documents with embarrassing hidden information running around. Comparison with Office-generated XML files is inevitable (although the technology is entirely different). At this point, PDF is a simple, cheap, reliable ubiquitous alternative. Whether XML will ever reach that sage remains to be seen. ▼

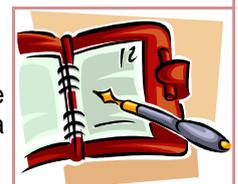
Diary of a Brisbane Summer ... a Southerner's view

August 31st:

Just got transferred with work, and moved into our new home in Brisbane!! Now, this is a city that knows how to live!! Beautiful sunny days and warm, balmy evenings. What a place! I watched the sunset from a deck chair on the verandah. It was beautiful. I've finally found my home. I love it here.

September 13th:

Really heating up. Got to 35 today. Not a problem. Live in an air-conditioned house, drive an air-conditioned car. What a pleasure to see the sun everyday like this. I'm turning into a sun-worshipper.



Diary of a Brisbane Summer (contd)

(Continued from page 2)

September 30th:

Had the backyard landscaped with tropical plants today. Lots of palms and rocks. What a breeze to maintain. No more mowing lawns for me. Another scorcher today, but I love it here.



October 10th:

The temperature hasn't been below 30 all week. How do people get used to this kind of heat? At least today it's kind of windy though. But getting used to the heat and humidity is taking longer than I expected.

October 15th:

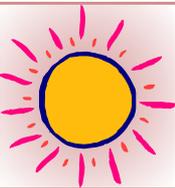
Fell asleep by the pool. Got 3rd degree burns over 60% of my body and missed 3 days of work. What a dumb thing to do. I learnt my lesson though. Got to respect the ol' sun in a climate like this.

October 20th:

I missed Kitty (our cat) sneaking into the car when I left this morning. By the time I got to the hot car for lunch, Kitty had died and swollen up to the size of a shopping bag and stank up the \$3,000 leather upholstery. I told the kids that she ran away. The car now smells like Whiskettes and cat poop. I learned my lesson though. No more pets in this heat.

October 25th:

The wind sucks. It feels like a giant bloody blow dryer!! And it's hot as hell. The home air-conditioner is on the blink and the AC repairman charged \$200 just to drive over and tell me he needed to order parts.



October 30th:

Been sleeping outside by the pool for 3 nights now. Bloody \$450,000 house and we can't even go inside. Why did I ever come here?

November 4th:

It's 35 degrees (again)! Finally got the ol' air-conditioner fixed today. It cost \$500 and gets the temperature down to 25, but this bloody humidity makes the house feel like it's about 30. Stupid repairman. I hate this stupid place.

November 8th:

If another wise arse cracks, "Hot enough for you today?" I'm going to strangle him. Bloody heat. By the time I get to work the car's radiator is boiling over, my clothes are soaking wet, and I smell like baked cat!!

November 9th:

Tried to run some messages after work. Wore shorts and sat on the black leather seats in the ol' car. I thought my arse was on fire. I lost 2 layers of flesh and all the hair on the back of my legs and my arse. Now my car smells like burnt hair, fried arse, and baked cat.

November 10th:

The weather report might as well be a bloody recording. Hot and sunny. Hot and sunny. Hot and sunny. It's been too hot to do anything for 2 damn months and the weatherman says it might really warm up next week. Doesn't it ever rain in this damn place? Water rationing will be next, so my \$2,000 worth of palms just might dry up and blow into the bloody pool. Even the palms can't live in this heat.



November 14th:

Welcome to HELL!!! Temperature got to 38 today. Now the air-conditioner's gone in my car. The repairman came to fix it and said, "Hot enough for you today?" My wife had to spend the \$2,500 house payment to bail my arse out of gaol for assaulting the repairman. Bloody Brisbane, what kind of a sick demented idiot would want to live here? ✓

God's Thoughts on Lawns

GOD: Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there on the planet? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect, no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honey bees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. But all I see are these green rectangles.



ST. FRANCIS: It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers "weeds" and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD: Grass? But it's so boring. It's not colorful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees, only grubs and sod worms. It's sensitive to temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD: The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it - sometimes twice a week.

GOD: They cut it? Do they then bail it like hay?



ST. FRANCIS: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

ST. FRANCIS: No Sir. Just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

GOD: Now let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

ST. FRANCIS: Yes, Sir.

GOD: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

ST. FRANCIS: You aren't going to believe this Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus, as they rot, the leaves form compost to enhance the soil. It's a natural circle of life.

ST. FRANCIS: You better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD: No. What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter and to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS: After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD: And where do they get this mulch?

ST. FRANCIS: They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

GOD: Enough. I don't want to think about this anymore. St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?

ST. CATHERINE: "Dumb and Dumber", Lord. It's a real stupid movie about ...

GOD: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis. ✓



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"Professional Assistance for the 21st Century Professional!"

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