

Radio Days – 2011-10-22

Tip of the Week – Happy Birthday, Windows XP

Windows XP was released on 25 October 2001 so will turn ten this week. This is an unusually long life in the Windows world: even Windows 3.1 only lasted from 6 April 1992 to 24 August 1995, a period of just three years. Not only has Windows XP lasted a long time, its life has been extended until April 2014. This is the date when Microsoft stops support for Windows XP. By this time it is possible that no new programs will run on Windows XP because, in three years' time, Windows will have changed out of all recognition. This process is currently starting with Windows 8, which is expected late next year. If you are still running a Windows XP computer by next Christmas that will be the time to think about getting a new computer running Windows 8.

To put all this in context, Apple produces a new version of its Macintosh OS every year with massive improvements and Ubuntu produces a new version of its style of Linux every six months. Both of these organisations produce excellent products, and neither has produced the sort of catastrophe which both Windows ME and Windows Vista turned out to be.

Where does Microsoft go wrong?

Creating Websites

There are many factors to consider when creating a website. One of the most fundamental, and perhaps the most overlooked, is the design of the site. It is all very well to create a large number of pages (this is easy with free tools) and to publish these pages to a website (this also is easy with free tools), but if people can't get to these pages easily their fingers will walk their mouse to another website.

In this short article you cannot hope to get much information. If you are prepared to put the effort into creating an excellent website you will be able to learn how to create your website from the web itself: just use your favourite search engine to start searching. Then act!

Planning ahead, and getting advice before you start, are two pieces of advice which I urge you to follow. Both of these are simple, but oh so difficult, tasks for most people to do but doing them can save you much time, money and angst. The urge to stop and think before taking action in the heat of the moment is probably the most common, and most ignored, advice.

Domain Name

You will need a *domain name* so that your website can be found on the internet. This is the equivalent of having a telephone number and, like a telephone number, needs to be renewed every two years. A domain name has, by now, a familiar format. It contains the name, the site type and an optional country code. As an example:

- The name — eg GoldfieldsFM or EasyMix
- The site type — eg .com, .org, .net
- The optional country code — .au for Australia

Thus we get these two domain names: *goldfields.org.au* and *easymix.com.au*. It is usual to add the common prefix of *www* to get *www.goldfields.org.au* and *www.easymix.com.au*.

Design Your Website

If you do not design your website (or anything that you build) **before** starting construction you will, inevitably, find that you will have to start again to fix the mess that you have created. Designing a website, like designing anything, is best started with a pencil and paper. Do some reading, do some thinking, do some doodling, then start again with some more reading, thinking and doodling. When you have something that you like please try it on your friends to see if they can see what you see in your design. If they have trouble understanding, or

navigating around, your site then you have better start again. If your friends cannot work your creation then nobody else will bother with your site.

Repeat this process until your website works.

Creating Your Website

This stage involves a number of concurrent sections:

- Creating the pages for your website (the HTML)
- Creating the layout of each type of page (the CSS)
- Creating the menu system for navigation

Each of these sections must work well with the others so that your website has a consistent layout across each type of page. You may well have a number of types of pages for different sections of your website, and these different types must appear as a coherent whole to your visitors.

If you have followed my advice you will be able to create these three sections easily with help from the internet. The internet contains much good advice, most of it available for free, and a list of excellent programs, again most of these programs are free, to help you create your website.

There is one gotcha that a client ran into: just because a program (in his case a paid program) produces an excellent website it does not mean that you can upload it to the internet without major contortions on your part. It pays to see just how a website produced by your program can be uploaded before parting with your hard-earned folding stuff.

Hosting Company

So that your website is visible on the internet you need a hosting company to let your adoring fans access it. Your hosting company will need your domain name and a secret code which you get when you register your domain name. In turn they will give you the secret codes which you will need when uploading your site to the internet.

Uploading Your Website

This is the last stage of your website design. There is an excellent free program which I use to upload my website each time I make changes or add pages. This program is called *Web Site Publisher* and is downloaded from the link below.

You will need some information which you will get from your hosting company to use when uploading, but this setup is only done once for each website.

Making Changes

The inevitable will happen at some stage: you need to make a change (large or small) to an existing page. Depending on how you create pages you will find that this operation can either be a piece of cake or a piece of major surgery.

Again, planning for change can make your website easier to create in the first place, then easier to change when the time comes to make these changes.

Further Information

Apple	www.apple.com
Ubuntu	www.ubuntu.com
Microsoft	www.microsoft.com
Google	<i>free website creation tools</i>
Web Site Publisher	www.cryer.co.uk/downloads/websitepublisher/