

Small Business CompuFiciency

Money motivate\$ Time i\$ money. The power of \$econd\$.....	2
Place calculator in 'Quick-Launch' toolbar	2
Google Desktop - "Information when you want it, right on your desktop!"	3
Put commonly visited web sites one click away.....	4
My Absolute FAVORITE - RoboForm Web Password Manager	5
One user, two monitors, 300% more CompuFicient.....	6
Accept credit card payments using your computer.....	8
THE single best tip \$\$\$ can buy! Right-click... awesome.....	8
Ctrl-key combinations are DYNAMITE!	9
Wireless keyboard / mouse – de-clutter your desktop	10
Online banking - THE ultimate small business tool	11
Windows-E for Explorer Window (My Favorite Key Combination).....	13
Email distribution lists	13
A huge time-saver... the quick launch bar	14
Change where MS Office puts your documents	15
How can hyperlinks benefit me? Dozens of ways!.....	15
Comments in Excel - excellent place for 'corporate knowledge'	17
Two documents from one with 'hidden text' in Word.....	18
Save all key documents as PDF	20
FREE download lets you create your own PDF files	21
Need more advanced PDF file conversions?	22
Save Time and Typing with Outlook 2007's Quick Parts.....	22
Free (but not cheap!) OpenOffice.org 3.0 glowing review.....	24
Not a good typist?? Have you tried dictation software?	25
Mozy.com - the GOLD standard in off-site, online backup	25
Open Source. Forbidden fruit? Or powerful, FREE, business software?	26
Folder & file naming conventions - a great payback for the time spent!	28
OpenOffice.org 3.0	30
Set reminders to email messages	31
Automatically add holidays to your Calendar	32
Use Filenames That Sort Properly	32
Create speedy highlights and summaries using 'Spike'.....	33
Embrace the internet for constant savings opportunities	34
Windows Live FolderShare beta.....	34
Rule, or be ruled, by databases - Lose your fear of databases now	34
Online Appointment Booking for Services / Professionals	35
Automatic backup = peace of mind	36
Add valuable "Document Info"	38
Windows OS Folder and File System Navigation Training	39
Compu-telligent design - a compuSmart "Folder Tree"	39

Every small business owner must be a jack-of-all-trades. Typical business owners are also the primary 'doers' and must spend the bulk of their time doing what makes them money, and dreading the 'business' stuff. So anything that makes managing the 'business of business' easier is great!

Unfortunately, it takes a lot of time to learn the countless capabilities a modern day PC can offer the small business owner. As a small business owner myself, I have captured some of the most useful ways in which the PC has helped me to conquer the drudgery of running a business, and offer it FREE to you.

The price is right — do yourself a favor and troll through these pages. Even one new idea will make it time well spent.

Money motivate\$ Time i\$ money. The power of \$econd\$

We all know money is time, right? Want to add a free week to your work year? Your admin specialist? Let me show you how.

Say you learn 50 **compuSmart** ways to save 10 seconds a day. 500 seconds = 8.33 minutes

8.33 minutes X 250 work days per year = 2,083 minutes.

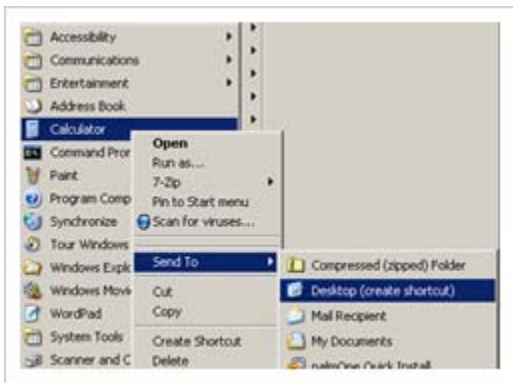
That's 34.7 hours, 4.34 days, or *nearly one week* - **\$aved by the \$econd.**

Applied **compuFiciency** will net an office worker 50 opportunities to save 10 seconds—take my word on it!

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Place calculator in 'Quick-Launch' toolbar

1. Us computer users routinely need a calculator
2. A FREE calculator comes with the operating system (buried 5 layers deep!)
3. Take 68.3 seconds and make it [one click away](#) — NOW!



Here's how:

1. Drill down your Start, Program menu to 'Calculator'
2. Right-click on 'Calculator'
3. Select 'Send To'
4. Drill over/down to 'Desktop (create shortcut)'
5. Close Start and Program menus
6. Go to Desktop.
7. Drag the 'Calculator' shortcut icon to the ['Quick Launch'](#) toolbar
8. Launch 'Calculator'

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Google Desktop - "Information when you want it, right on your desktop!"

If you find Google handy for web searches, imagine bringing that same deep-search capability to your desktop.

And that is exactly what Google Desktop does. It searches your entire PC and catalogs the contents. You then query your computer to find information the same way 'Google' something on the web. Talk about compuFicient!

Here's what it looks like after I did a search for AEP (note the word 'Desktop' — that's about the only difference you'll see). I have 9 emails, 9 files, and some web history. Click each category to see which is the 'right' one. Very cool!



Here is what [Wikipedia](#) has to say:

File indexing

After initially installing Google Desktop, the software completes an indexing of all the files in the computer. And after the initial indexing is completed, the software continues to index files as needed. Users can start searching for files immediately after installing the program. After performing searches, results can also be returned in an [Internet browser](#) on

the Google Desktop Home Page much like the results for Google Web searches.

Google Desktop can index several different types of data, including [email](#), web browsing history from [Internet Explorer](#) and [Mozilla Firefox](#), office documents in the [OpenDocument](#) and [Microsoft Office](#) formats, [instant messenger](#) transcripts from [AOL](#), [Google](#), [MSN](#), [Skype](#), [Tencent QQ](#), and several multimedia file types. Additional file types can be indexed through the use of plug-ins.^[1] Google Desktop allows the user to control which types of data are indexed by the program.

I have found this invaluable. Download, install, and begin using it today. You'll not be disappointed. [\[Get it here\]](#)

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Put commonly visited web sites one click away

CompuFicient users put their most *commonly used* web links on their *toolbar*. Sites are one click away—a real time-saver!

Here's how:

1. Go to the web sites you use frequently
2. As a preparatory step, you may need to right-click on an 'empty gray' portion of the Internet Explorer toolbar and make sure that (a) the 'Lock Toolbars' is *unlocked*, and (b) the 'Links Toolbar' is *showing*
3. In the URL window, grab the icon *in front of the actual URL*. Drag the icon down to the 'Links' toolbar
4. Release the icon on the toolbar
5. Right click on the newly created button and change the name (shorter is better, makes room for more) to something you like



This tip is guaranteed to save collective hours in the course of a year for anyone who uses the web for any portion of their business computing.

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

My Absolute FAVORITE - RoboForm Web Password Manager

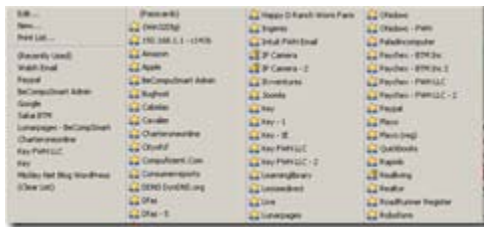
RoboForm Web Password Manager [RoboForm Web Site](#)

Best \$29.95 money can buy for busy Internet users.

If you do much business work on the Internet *at all*, the odds are you'll love this program as much as I do.

Imagine never needing to login to sites again, remember countless login names and passwords. Imagine completing tedious forms requesting basic name, address info in one click... well, you get it.

ALL is now done with a simple click due this brilliant and inexpensive little browser (Internet Explorer, FireFox, etc)



How it works

1. Install the browser addin
2. Give RoboForm some contact information (don't worry, it's all secure) and even credit cards if you order much online
3. Browse to any site requiring a login and password or contact information
4. When you are prompted for First Name, Last Name, Phone, etc. RoboForm pops up and allows you to automatically fill it in with one click
5. When you navigate to a password protected site, as soon as you 'Submit' your login, RoboForm intercepts it and asks if you want to save it? You click 'Yes' and from now on RoboForm enables you to click *directly* to that site and does the filling in for you! You can zip through five password protected sites (e.g. bank account, web mail, personal Google or Yahoo account, company or school intranet login) in seconds.

Talk about **compuFiciency!** Tools like RoboForm will save you oodles of time immediately.

Disclosure: I am not getting one dime for this recommendation.

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

One user, two monitors, 300% more CompuFicient



Rating. You'll *never* go back to a single screen.

The uses are endless.

So-o-o simple, relatively inexpensive (\$200 - \$250+ for a 19-inch flat screen monitor), and immediate **compuFiciency** payback.

For instance, right now I'm looking at my MS Word outline on the left-hand screen while working in Live Writer for the blog entry in the right-hand screen.



I might have an excel spreadsheet up filling it with data from my business accounting software, or a web search for an address of a company I see mentioned in a news article.

The possibilities are endless (on other monitor, I just Googled cost of flat screen monitors).

Here's how:

1. Install the drivers for the second monitor
2. Hook up the monitor to the second video port on the back of your computer
3. Right-click on your Desktop and select 'Properties' (Windows XP Pro in example)



4. Drop down the 'Display' and configure as you desire. Place one left and other on right. You'll have to play a bit with the sizes and comfort level regarding which is 'primary' and which is secondary (primary has the normal desktop icons, Start menu, quick start toolbar, etc).



5. Now, you just drag applications from the 'primary' screen to the 'other' screen. Both are there to view.

In no time you'll wonder how you *ever* made it with only a single monitor.

Seriously, for a business user this is one of *the best investments* you could make in hardware or software—the payback is immediate and dramatic!

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Accept credit card payments using your computer

Many service businesses (non-retail) have occasion to accept credit card payments but are not set up to do so. CompuTelligence to the rescue!!!

You can use your computer and PayPal Virtual Terminal to establish a business account and then accept credit cards as a form of payment. Attached is an example of an invoice paid in this fashion and it was flawless. Further, the government entity *could not have used my store* without the ability to pay using a card.

Visit www.PayPal.com to learn more about this capability.

View actual PayPal credit card receipt [\[click here\]](#).

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

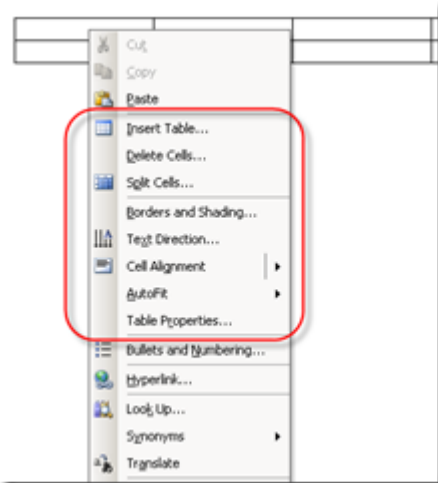
THE single best tip \$\$\$ can buy! Right-click... awesome

Compu-telligent folks skip the technical name ‘context-sensitive help’. They just remember that **right-clicking gives them what they’re looking for 99.5%** of the time!! No kidding.

Watch this. In a normal Word document you might find these command options by right-clicking



But right-click in a table and you’ll get a different menu of options (likeliest ones you’re needing)



And on a photo you get an entirely different set of menu options.



In most cases, a **compu-telligent** user will find what's needed **simply by right-clicking where it's needed**

Note: this applies to all MS Office applications and most well-written Windows productivity programs.

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Ctrl-key combinations are DYNAMITE!

Can't remember the most time-saving aid in Windows you say? Try this...

Just remember they're on **the bottom left row** of keys and you'll be 99.5% there.



Ctrl-B - turn bold on/off or bold the selection

Ctrl-V - Paste from clipboard

Ctrl-C - Copy selection to clipboard

Ctrl-X - Cut selection

Ctrl-Z - Undo

Just learning these five key combination shortcuts is bound to save any active office worker oodles of time. Try it.

I only have one **worn out** key and it's my **Ctrl-** key!

[» Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

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Wireless keyboard / mouse – de-clutter your desktop

Desktop space and computing freedom are priceless, so why not make the most of them? For less than a meal for two you can cut two cords that bind you more than any others.

Just like your cordless phone, your keyboard and mouse are paired to a tiny receiver, and all inputs are made without wires. Talk about liberating. For a business computer user, it's greater than a TV remote or the cordless phone—and you have invested in these, right?

Time to install: 5 minutes. **Cost:** as low as \$29.99 for a Logitech EX110 at TigerDirect.com. **Payback:** priceless.

[» Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Online banking - THE ultimate small business tool

Besides having a dual-screen system, I can think of no single technology benefit to press for harder than **every business owner banking online**.

The rewards are that great, period! As lifestyle-changing as pay-at-the-pump, the microwave, cell phones, seriously!

Every business owner knows the incredible pressure of ‘tending the store’, especially when it comes to managing finances, bank, credit card, and check accounts. And rightly so! What is more important to business than **timely insight into finances, cash flow, credit lines**, and maintaining data accuracy!



Date	Type	Description	Debit	Credit	Transaction Balance
07/20/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		1,200.00
07/15/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		2,400.00
07/10/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		3,600.00
07/05/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		4,800.00
06/30/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		6,000.00
06/25/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		7,200.00
06/20/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		8,400.00
06/15/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		9,600.00
06/10/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		10,800.00
06/05/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		12,000.00
05/31/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		13,200.00
05/26/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		14,400.00
05/21/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		15,600.00
05/16/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		16,800.00
05/11/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		18,000.00
05/06/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		19,200.00
04/30/08	Check	Payroll	1,200.00		20,400.00

Computelligent business users can cut 90% of the stress and 100% of the drama compared to their counterparts. How? By doing ALL of their banking online and checking their accounts daily. Don't have time you say? It takes less time than daily email! (OK, I'll admit, if you're not even using email you may not be a candidate for *online banking*.)

I know. I own and manage 100% the books for two different corporations, about 12+ accounts, and payroll for 17+ employees—in minutes each day. With tools like [RoboForm](#) it's only a matter of seconds.

Here's how to get started with baby steps, no cost (typically), and no risk:

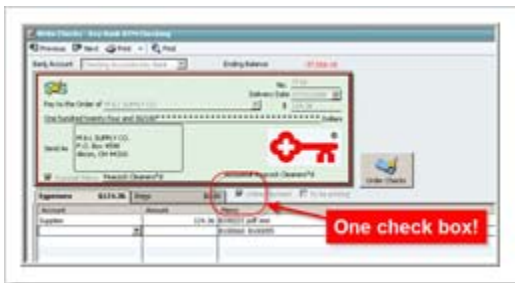
- Get signed up with your current bank using your current accounts
- From your web browser, send yourself a check to learn the interface



- Enter that check into your 'checkbook register' or accounting package (I use QuickBooks Pro)
- Look at your balance daily and compare cleared deposits and transactions and balances to expectations

Next, take off the training wheels:

- Do look into a robust financial management software with online capabilities (QuickBooks leads the pack)
- Do check into banks for the depth of their online business banking interface
- Some banks have pretty good online web banking pages but limited QuickBooks interface. This requires double entries, one into the web site, and a duplicate entry into your accounting package
- Other banks are so tightly integrated to QuickBooks online that *all* of your work is done *only in QuickBooks* and you never double-enter.



The benefits are over the top! Stamps are \$.42 each, envelopes \$.12 each, checks .10 each, making the **cost of each paper check approx. \$.64!** Factor your time cost to handle, whether yours or an employee's, and you're starting to incur some real business cost of doing business.

For a small monthly fee to receive unlimited online checks, you can eliminate incredible amounts of time, and potentially sizeable sums of money—depending upon how many checks you write each month.

Besides a dual-screen system, I don't think I could press harder than for every business owner to bank online. The rewards are that great, period!

Talk about scaring the non-computer savvy boss...
business+internet+checks+paperless... "Oh... my... goodness..., what will you propose next. **I don't even trust my wife/husband with the business checkbook.**"

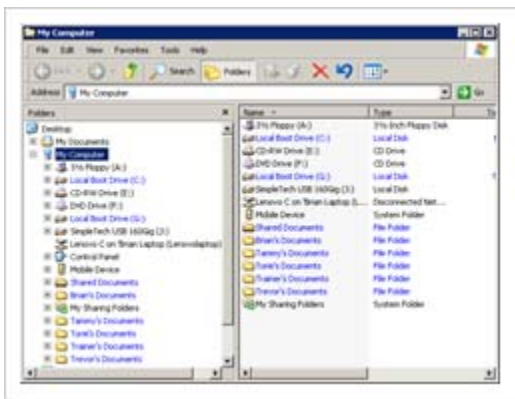
» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Windows-E for Explorer Window (My Favorite Key Combination)

Bet you didn't know that hitting the **Windows-E** (key in lower left of keyboard with Windows logo) combination would bring up the **Explorer** in a jiffy!

If you're like me, always jumping all over the network, searching through folders and files, then this is **the perfect tip** to make you more COMPU-ficient today.

Simply hit **Windows-E** and this pops up pronto!



» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Email distribution lists

Wouldn't it be nice to send an email to 'Family', or to 'Work' or 'Bowling' or 'Team'? There is this ability, and it's called **Distribution List**.

Select *File / New / Distribution List* from the menu.

Type a desired name *for the list*

Now just *add members to the list* using the 'Add, New' or 'Select Members' button

To use the list, simply type the *group name* into your email To: or Cc: or Bcc: input boxes. Until you're confident in what you're doing, when the name appears, you can double-click to see the expanded list of addressees.

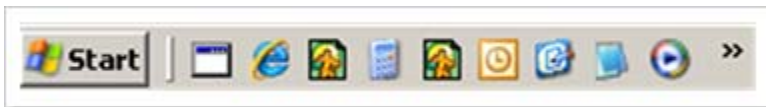
For more on this see About.com “**How to Use Contact Categories as Distribution Lists in Outlook**” by [clicking here](#).

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

A huge time-saver... the quick launch bar

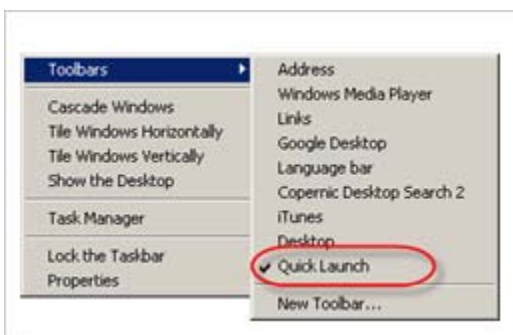
Down at the bottom of the screen, just to the right of your 'Start' button is a gold mine called the 'Quick Launch' toolbar.

Compuficient users put links (icons) to their most frequently used applications here. Then, you *never* have to wade around menus, desktops, etc. to start your applications... just click the readily available links!



Here's how

1. Right click on the gray area of the bottom toolbar
2. Make sure the 'Lock the Taskbar' option is *not selected*
3. Click up to the 'Toolbars' option on that same menu and
4. **Turn on Quick Launch** toolbar option
5. That's all there is to turning it on (enabling it)



How to use it

1. Drag an application icon from your desktop to the 'Quick Launch' toolbar
2. Release the icon
3. Click the new icon to launch the application

4. You can also drag application icons from the menu bar after hitting ‘Start, All Programs...’

This one is a dandy! Once you’ve tried it, you’ll never go back to the Easter egg hunt of old!

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Change where MS Office puts your documents

Do you rely too heavily on ‘My Documents’? Worse yet, do you have to browse to change directory *every single time* you open or close a Word document, Excel spreadsheet, etc?

The remedy is simple: change your ‘option’ for file storage location. Here’s how in Word (the other applications are similar)

1. Select ‘Tools, Options, Files’
2. Double-click ‘**Documents**’ (or click ‘Modify’) and browse **for the last time** to the folder you want to default to
3. Do the same for ‘**User templates**’ and ‘**Workgroup templates**’

You’ll save hundreds of clicks and browse searches this way.

CompuFiciency payback: be a ‘force multiplier’ by setting up each of your co-workers’ primary folders *on a shared drive* as sub-folders of the primary document repository. Then, everyone can access needed documents and there will be a backup.

Even better, set the company templates on a shared template folder for all to use. If you spend some time creating templates based upon a master, you can save hundreds of hours, force conformity and standardization to company standards, and make yourselves look exceedingly smart!

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

How can hyperlinks benefit me? Dozens of ways!

Don’t only be a *user* of hyperlinks, be a *creator*. You’ll save lots of time and energy in the process.

Here are some ways *any office* can put hyperlinks to great use.

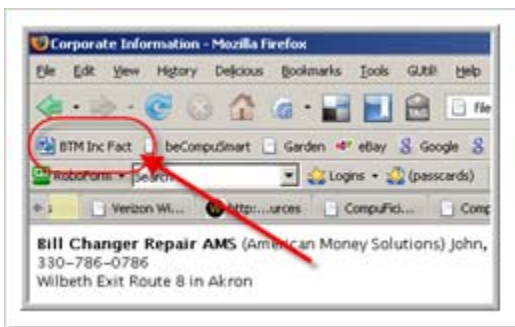
1. Using Word, create a table with absolutely everything your company needs at ‘fingertip’ access

2. Embed hyperlinks to internal documents, templates, calendars, policies, etc
3. Embed hyperlinks to frequently used (or better those you can *never* remember when needed!) web sites
4. Embed links within the document and click to some section (for instance a payroll training procedure)
5. Save that document *as an .html web file* on a *shared or accessible folder*

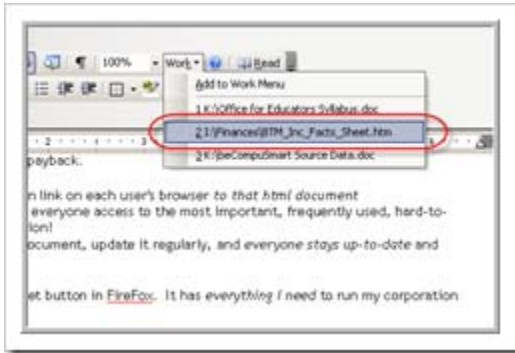


Here's the **CompuFiciency** payback.

1. Place a menu button link on each user's browser *to that html document*
2. Now *one click* gives everyone access to the most important, frequently used, hard-to-remember information!
3. Here's my BTM Inc Fact sheet button in FireFox. It has *everything I need* to run my corporation **one click away!**



Keep track of the document (great use of [‘Work Menu’](#) as in image below), update it regularly, and *everyone stays up-to-date* and informed



» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Comments in Excel - excellent place for 'corporate knowledge'

In business, there is nothing worse than being ‘one deep’ or having all the smarts locked in an employee’s head.

Customers rightly become angry when told “We can’t [fill-in]... until next [fill-in]... the person who knows/does [fill-in]... is on [fill-in]... and none of the rest of us knows how.”

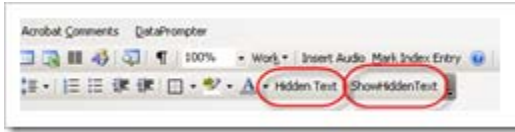
That is a surefire way to anger customers at best or lose them at worst.

Likewise with internal processes and documents. “The spreadsheet was created by so-and-so. No one here can understand it (or make any decisions) because so-and-so is unavailable”, or worse yet, gone from the business. This is no way to run a business, but most are run this way—whether large or small, government or private.

One small step to begin to solve these types of problems is by liberal use of cell comments in a spreadsheet. Simply right click on the cell and click ‘Insert Comment’. Cells with contents display the small red triangle.

Total Sales	Tax Owed	Tax Paid	Date
\$ 60,537	\$ 3,935	\$ 3,905	1/16/2008
\$ 10,504	\$ 683	\$ 678	2/6/2008
\$ 9,244	\$ 601	\$ 596	3/4/2008
\$ 8,317	\$ 541	\$ 537	4/2/2008
\$ 7,221	\$ 469	\$ 465	5/15/2008
\$ 11,546	\$ 750	\$ 744	11-Jun
\$ 9,567	\$ 622	\$ 617	16-Jun
\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
\$ 5,590	\$ 363	\$ 360	10-Sep
\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	

Here is a very simple macro (VBA code) to show or hide the ‘hidden text’ in your document. I attach this to a user created toolbar button and my one document becomes two documents—one for internal usage and another for external publication.



Very compuFicient way to avoid duplicating effort.

How is this valuable to me, you ask?

Say you have to create an agenda. But you also need ‘talking points’ to remind you of specifics, facts, etc. Format everything you want the world to see normally and format your own stuff as ‘hidden text’. Then print the **two different views** and distribute as appropriate.

Or, create a PDF while the hidden text is hidden, and then un-hide the text for ‘internal only’ distribution before saving.

Many uses for a compuTelligent user armed with this little technique.

Don’t let the VBA or macro scare you either. If you don’t know these techniques for [adding toolbar buttons](#) or creating macros, simply turn the text on and off manually. Here is a link explaining how easily it is done. [\[Hide/Show Word text\]](#)

```

Sub macShowHiddenText()
‘
‘ macShowHiddenText Macro
‘ Macro recorded 9/25/2008 by Brian T Mickley
‘
    With ActiveWindow
        With .View
            If .ShowHiddenText = True Then
                .ShowHiddenText = False
            Else
                .ShowHiddenText = True
            End If
        End With
    End With
End Sub
  
```

Here is a macro to format selected text as hidden and colored brown (chose preferred color). A second click returns the text to normal, like a toggle switch

```
Sub macMakeHiddenText()  
'  
' macMakeHiddenText Macro  
' Macro recorded 9/25/2008 by Brian T Mickley  
'  
    With Selection.Font  
        If Not .Hidden = True Then  
            .Hidden = True  
            .Color = wdColorBrown  
        Else  
            .Hidden = False  
            .Color = wdColorAutomatic  
        End If  
    End With  
End Sub
```

NOTE: the second code FORMATS the text as hidden or plain; the first code determines WHETHER 'hidden' text is displayed or not. Hidden text is never printed (even in print preview)—check it out!

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Save all key documents as PDF

Let's face it, 97.3% of the paperwork we business owners save and file is never again touched. That's a lot of wasted time, effort, and space!

But then there is 2.7% that we do need again, and again, and again—yet it is always a hassle to find those documents, let alone transmit them to someone else.

Forget about the day-to-day receipts. Focus on these one-time documents.

Examples:

1. your business tax returns are requested by loan officers,
2. or you need to submit them for annual verification after your loan has been approved.

3. a copy of you driver license, or
4. professional certification, training attended... you name it.
5. how about key contracts, leases, policies
6. In seconds I can forward to anyone the sales agreements, purchase price and distribution of assets for six businesses I own.

Having these electronic documents on file, *properly named and organized*, will save you oodles of time when you least want to be wasting it (during a sale or purchase of a business, requesting a loan, tax preparation, etc)

Don't plan or offer to fax to anyone unless it's absolutely necessary and no other option exists. The get blurred, lost, and take time. There is no 'paper trail', and you can't do a 'Save As'.

Use email to send PDF documents and *always request an email* instead of fax, too.

CompuFicient solution: save all of those documents as PDF files in a **key documents folder** *the moment you get them*.

Admittedly, if you don't already own them, this may require purchase of a scanner and PDF software. But I can't imagine a CompuFicient office *not* having these mandatory tools.

Seek a 'two-fer'... find a scanner/printer/fax that 'scans to PDF'. These are compuFiciency workhorses, inexpensive, and highly time-saving devices I couldn't live without.

[» Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

FREE download lets you create your own PDF files

Let's face it, the PDF file format is here to stay. If you're not creating them for your customers, or sending vital key documents as PDF formatted files, then you may want to reconsider — especially given how inexpensively you can begin creating your own PDF files.

There are many solid business reasons to embrace PDF files, not the least of which is security for the recipient. I can assure you that I do not download any file format other than PDF or HTML, and other knowledgeable users are equally as wary.

Admittedly, not everyone has the budget to purchase the full-fledged Adobe Acrobat. But on the other hand, unless you need the full power of that suite there is no reason to think that's the only way to generate these important files.

You may not realize that creating a PDF file is as simple as 'File, Print'. The only added step is selecting the PDF print driver rather than your standard printer. The file you saved as a PDF is then available on the network to email, print, or simply store for future use.

There are any number of open-source free programs available for download that create PDF files. One worth looking at is **doPDF** at <http://www.dopdf.com/>.

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Need more advanced PDF file conversions?

As mentioned in a previous post, PDF files are highly prized in the business sector. Yet it is equally true that not all small businesses need or can afford the full weight of Adobe Acrobat.

But don't limit yourself by an all-or-none mentality. Many programs exist which afford you considerable capability at a fraction of the cost. Check out the free [Print2pdf](#) download available at . Here is what the folks at **LifeHacker.com** had to say about it:

“Like other PDF apps, Print2PDF installs itself as a printer, but after you hit “Print,” you can add watermarks, passwords, change the read/edit/print permissions, add attachments and auto-email, manually change the compression levels, and do much more. Print2PDF also integrates itself directly into Microsoft Word, Excel, and Internet Explorer, and supports encryption for sensitive documents. It's probably more than the average home user needs, but office workers may find its options seriously handy. Print2PDF is a free download for Windows systems only.”

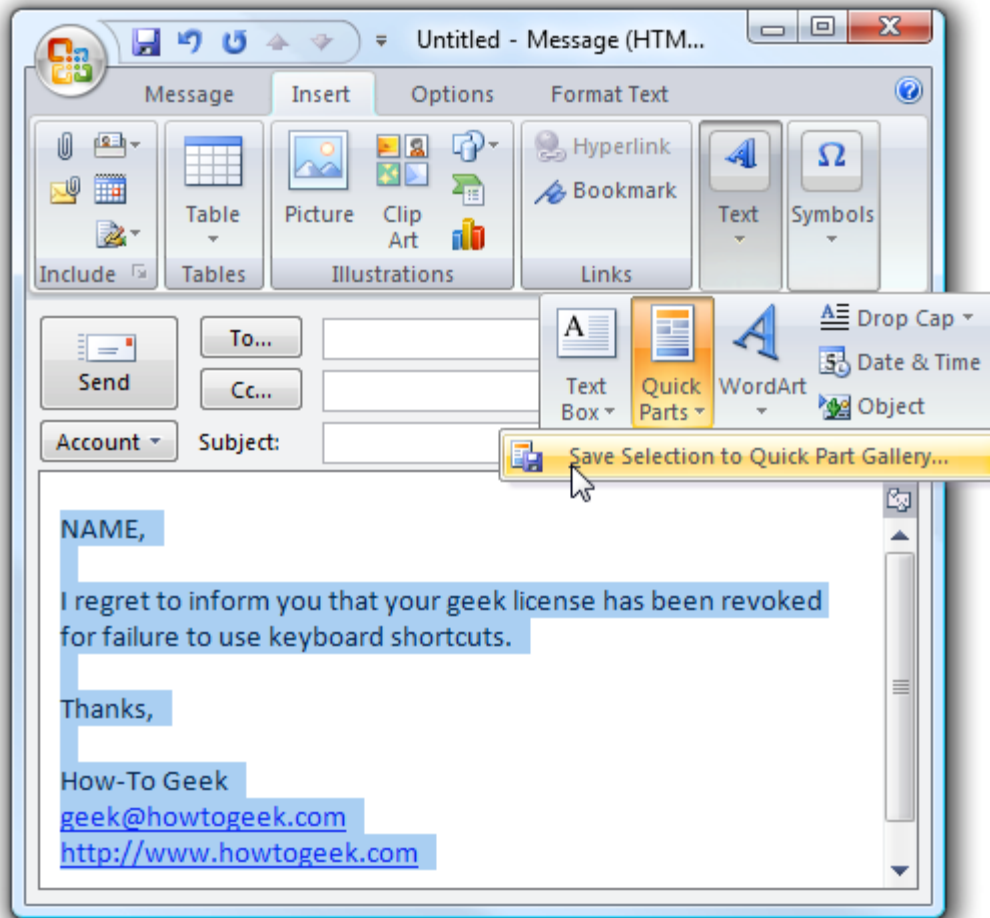
» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Save Time and Typing with Outlook 2007's Quick Parts

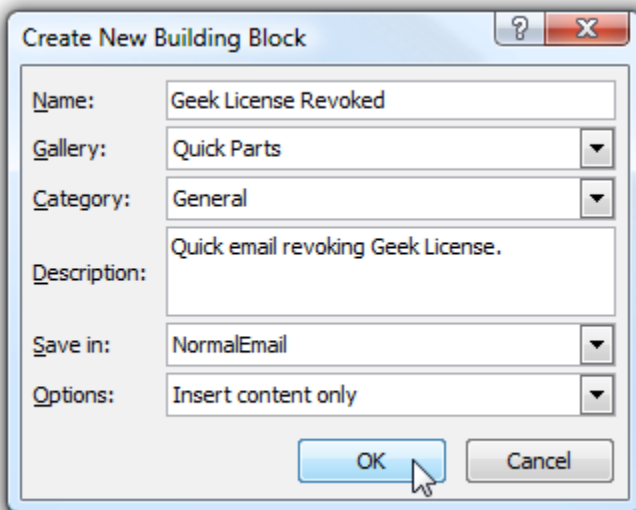
Click here to go to original web post: [Step By Step: Save Time and Typing with Outlook 2007's Quick Parts](#)

Outlook 2007 users, if you find yourself entering the same things into email messages, you should take a look at the Quick Parts feature, which saves snippets of both text and images for easy reuse. While Gina briefly mentioned this feature in her [guide to Tweaking Outlook to empty your inbox faster](#), let's take a closer look at how to use it.

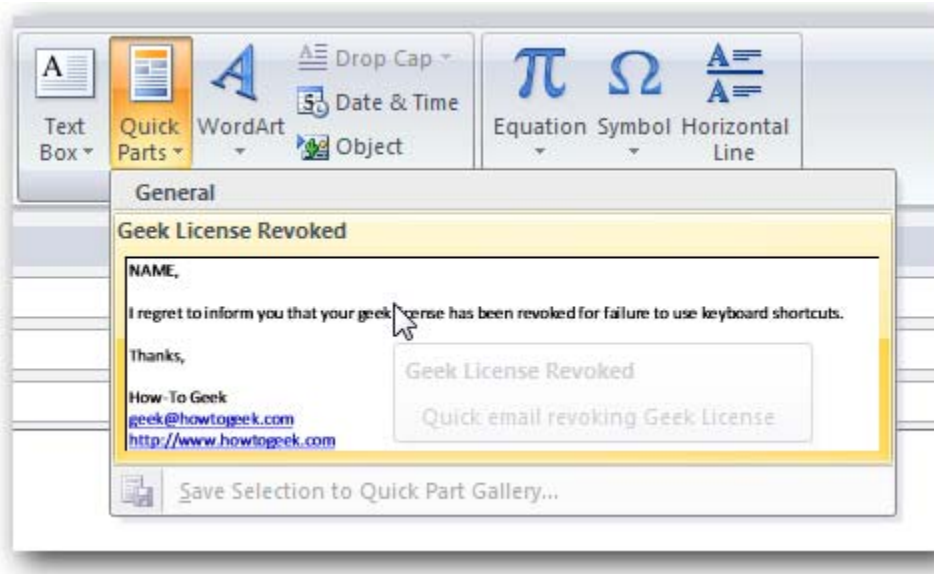
Open up a new email and create the “Quick Part” that you want to save for later re-use, then find Quick Parts in the Text section, and choose “Save Selection to Quick Part Gallery”.



Give it a name and a brief description so you can easily find it later.



Now, any time you want to enter that snippet of text, you can simply pick it from the drop-down button menu. Hovering your mouse over it will show you the description that you entered above.



If you want to edit your Quick Parts, you can right-click on any one of them, and choose “Organize and Delete” from the menu.

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Free (but not cheap!) OpenOffice.org 3.0 glowing review

I feel compelled to share this PC Magazine review of the biggest competitor faced by Microsoft Office. If you are a charity, **small business with limited budget**, equipping the kids 3rd or 4th PC, then this may be the answer. By all means check it out, at the very least.

Bottom Line

OpenOffice.org 3.0 is the best, cheapest alternative to Microsoft Office, but there's no need to switch if you don't require open-source software and you've already paid for a copy of Microsoft's suite.

Pros

Free. Open-source. Feature-packed. Highly compatible with Office 2007 formats. Single interface for all apps.

OpenOffice.org, now released in its long-awaited 3.0 version, is a free, open-source replacement for [Microsoft Office](#)—and the *first and only application suite that can be seriously considered to be a substitute for the massive power and flexibility of Microsoft's suite*. OpenOffice.org used to look clunky and work slowly, but the 3.0

version, which I tested in its final Release Candidate version (RC4), is sleek and fast. It still retains the essential look and feel of [Microsoft Office 2003](#) and earlier versions, instead of imitating the new ribbon interface of Office 2007, but that's a plus for many users who want as much continuity as possible when switching to a new application. OpenOffice.org doesn't include all of Office's features, but it adds some conveniences that Office can't provide, such as built-in PDF export and a single interface for opening and editing word-processing documents, HTML files, worksheets, presentations, and drawings.

[OpenOffice.org 3.0 - At A Glance - Reviews by PC Magazine](#)

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Not a good typist?? Have you tried dictation software?

Right now I am speaking into my headset microphone and have not touched the keyboard at all. The only error that I see is the addition of one extra question mark above.

For those who do not like to type, or cannot type, or those who simply want to jot thoughts or instructions... perhaps dictation software is a great solution.

The version I am using is called Dragon naturally speaking and it is probably the most highly regarded at the moment. A little of training and a half ways decent microphone, and you're off and running.

This entry took me less than two minutes to write and I have not touched the keyboard, so you can see that the accuracy is pretty darn good!

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Mozy.com - the GOLD standard in off-site, online backup

What value do you place on peace-of-mind? Data failure happens when you least expect it.

Peace-of-mind alone is worth the price of off-site automatic backup capability that happens with no effort by you (after initial setup).

All of my business files, documents, emails, contacts, course materials, etc. are redundantly backed up by **on-site** RAID storage. This took 10 minutes to set up and a couple hundred dollars for the [HP Media Vault](#) and second 500g drive.

I have approximately 10g of highly critical data files (not applications!) backed up **off-site** by [Mozy.com](#). Using the highest levels of security algorithms available, this redundant **off-site** backup protects me against fire, flood, and catastrophic failure of any sort.

For less than \$150.00 per year I protect valuable business assets that are literally irreplaceable—my data.

I'll wager you two things: first, your insurance company doesn't insure data loss; second, even if they did you would have nothing to recover if the catastrophe were great enough (fire, flood, etc).

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Open Source. Forbidden fruit? Or powerful, FREE, business software?

Nothing smacks of cheap more than FREE, right? If it's free it must be without much value, or somehow compromised and inferior.

We smart business folks learned long ago '**ain't nothin' free**'. Yet nothing could be further from the truth when it comes to an entire huge library of what are known as 'Open Source Software'. From FREE web browsers (Firefox, Opera - both outstanding, BTW...) to email (Mozilla Thunderbird) to office suites highly competitive with MS Office. And they are absolutely free.

What's the rub? Only the thousands of volunteer software engineers committed to the availability of a free alternative. (HINT: many of these same folks work by day for the 'big boys'). **This is good stuff.**

What's in it for you, the small- to medium-sized business owner or worker? You can save oodles of \$\$\$ bypassing XP or Vista, Office 2003 or 2007, and choosing open source software instead. **This is not cheap stuff, just free!**

Here are some links to point you in *some* right direction. Once you begin trolling around you'll find *much, much more* that may meet your needs.

[Source Forge](#) [Star Office](#)

[Open Office](#) is a collection of applications that work together closely to provide the features expected from a modern office suite. Many of the components are designed to mirror those available in Microsoft Office. The components available include:



[Writer](#)

A [word processor](#) similar in [look and feel](#) to [Microsoft Word](#) or [WordPerfect](#) and offering a comparable range of functions and tools. It also includes the ability to export [Portable Document Format](#) (PDF) files with no additional software, and can also function as a basic [WYSIWYG](#) editor for creating and editing [web pages](#).



[Calc](#)

A [spreadsheet](#) similar to [Microsoft Excel](#) or [Lotus 1-2-3](#) with a roughly equivalent range of features. Calc provides a number of features not present in Excel, including a system which automatically defines series for graphing, based on the layout of the user's data. Calc is also capable of writing spreadsheets directly as a PDF file.



[Impress](#)

A [presentation program](#) similar to [Microsoft PowerPoint](#). It can export presentations to [Adobe Flash](#) (SWF) files, allowing them to be played on any computer with the Flash player installed. It also includes the ability to create PDF files, and the ability to read Microsoft PowerPoint's .ppt format. Impress suffers from a lack of ready-made presentation designs. However, templates are readily available on the Internet. [\[12\]\[13\]\[14\]](#)



[Base](#)

A [database](#) program similar to [Microsoft Access](#). Base allows the creation and manipulation of databases, and the building of forms and reports to provide easy access to data for end-users. As with Access, Base may be used as a front-end to a number of different database systems, including Access databases (JET), [ODBC](#) data sources and [MySQL/PostgreSQL](#). Base became part of the suite starting with version 2.0. Native to the OpenOffice.org suite is an adaptation of [HSQL](#). While ooBase can be a front-end for any of the databases listed, there is no need for any of them to be installed.



[Draw](#)

A [vector graphics editor](#) comparable in features to early versions of [CorelDRAW](#). It features versatile “connectors” between shapes, which are available in a range of line styles and facilitate building drawings such as flowcharts. It has similar features to [Desktop publishing](#) software such as [Scribus](#) and [Microsoft Publisher](#).



[Math](#)

A tool for creating and editing mathematical formulae, similar to [Microsoft Equation Editor](#). Formulae can be embedded inside other OpenOffice.org documents, such as those created by Writer. It supports multiple [fonts](#) and can export to PDF.

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Folder & file naming conventions - a great payback for the time spent!

Storage capacity keeps growing (160 gig drive for under \$100!!), and the number of *retained* folders and files increases exponentially. Many people, rather than create well-organized folder systems, simply keep making copies of ‘important files’ and saving it somewhere else.

The problem with the make-multiple-copies-of-files approach is two-fold. First, simply having a ‘backup’ to revert to does no good if you cannot locate it. Second, working on any ‘copy’ of the document when there is more than one is a recipe for disaster because the odds are great that you’ll not update all of the others. You will then be in the same boat you started in... the most important *single* copy is the one most recently updated. All of the ‘old copies’ are out-of-date, and potentially without value.

Rather, you *must first* implement an analyzed, structured, and disciplined, folder tree system. *Next*, you must create a meaningful file-naming convention and stick to it. *Lastly*, you must back-up the folder tree, the critical branches, or the specific folders which contain business-critical data.

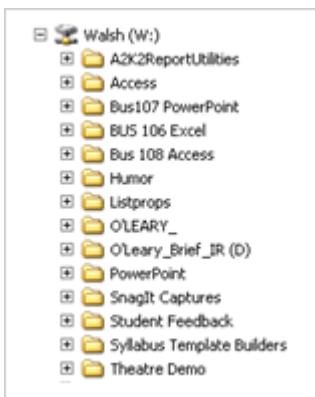
“... Like getting a flat tire (inevitable if you drive enough) data loss is a statistical probability. The magnitude and cost are the only variables.”

Let me show my own ‘tree’ as an example, far from perfect, but largely effective. I offer no set criteria, only the concept of *process*.



Note that I have created 'logical' drives for special purposes. I created a drive for each of the institutions where I teach (W:) and (S:). I also have one entire drive that is solely for all corporate data (I:) and another for the beCompuSmart initiative (K:).

Under each drive is a folder tree directory. Under (W:) you will find these folders, each course has it's own folder, syllabus materials their own, text book data yet another.



Now, anything I create or receive for this institution must go in one of these folders, or into a new one created *under* the Walsh(W:) drive. This is old news to many, but certainly foreign to far more computer users than necessary. Even savvy, heavy computer users, far too often reveal a mile-long list of files stored on 'MyDocuments' !

The *next* step is proper *naming* of files to ensure they can be located when needed. This can be incredibly simple or highly complex. What it can't be is random or ad hoc, which is the source of all the problems. Besides a detailed enough descriptive file name, the first thing every user should take into consideration is the *sorting capability* Windows Explorer file views. If you create file names that will *group* themselves automatically and then *sort* themselves within that group, you have 87.3% of your problem solved!

Some examples: Agendas may be labeled 'Agenda May 08.doc', 'Agenda Jun 08.doc', 'Agenda Jul 08.doc', and 'Agenda May 08 minutes.doc' 'Agenda Jun 08 minutes.doc' 'Agenda Jul 08 minutes.doc' These would sort themselves into all agendas located along with their corresponding minutes grouped tother when you click the sort by file name

feature. What's that you ask? It's the gray box on top of the file list. You can also sort by date (my **most frequent sort**) so the most recently used file pushes to the top.

Name	Size	Type	Date Modified
B100022.pdf	32 KB	PDF Document	6/17/2008 11:59 AM
B100023.pdf	222 KB	PDF Document	6/17/2008 1:28 PM
B100029.pdf	193 KB	PDF Document	6/3/2008 3:33 PM
B100030.pdf	88 KB	PDF Document	7/4/2008 10:37 AM
B100031.pdf	213 KB	PDF Document	5/31/2008 1:11 PM
B100032.pdf	29 KB	PDF Document	5/31/2008 1:11 PM
B100033.pdf	63 KB	PDF Document	6/17/2008 12:00 PM
B100034.pdf	153 KB	PDF Document	6/10/2008 12:02 PM
B100035.pdf	154 KB	PDF Document	6/17/2008 11:59 AM
B100036.pdf	154 KB	PDF Document	6/3/2008 1:08 PM
B100038.pdf	1,546 KB	PDF Document	6/17/2008 12:00 PM
B100039.pdf	76 KB	PDF Document	6/3/2008 1:08 PM
B100040.pdf	74 KB	PDF Document	6/3/2008 1:08 PM
B100041.pdf	54 KB	PDF Document	5/27/2008 8:20 PM

How do I do this? **I select an existing file name and edit it in the 'Save As' dialog box** to ensure the similarity and pattern remains.

Other file naming conventions are more elaborate, and more valuable. In this example below, each client estimate or invoice is automatically saved with the following fields:

Client name _ Invoice Number _ Status (Estimate or Invoice) _ Dollar value _ Date generated. Now any sort will put any sales staff within reach of all orders or estimates ever created for a given client, and provide enough information to decide *which is the correct one* to open.

Jeffersonville Nursing & Rehab_6241_1315_Est_16K_29Aug06.pdf
Jim Coleman Company_6241_1338_Inv_6.7K_29Aug06.pdf
Joe Furda Laundromats_6241_1339_Inv_7.1K_29Aug06.pdf
Louis Meek_6241_1305_Inv_6.7K_29Aug06.pdf
Louis Meek_6241_1316_Inv_6.7K_29Aug06.pdf
Mottier Amusement Inc_7088_0832_Inv_17K_29Mar07.pdf
Moulton Electric Inc._7354_1535_Inv_25K_20Dec07.pdf
Moulton Electric Inc._7354_1537_Inv_25K_20Dec07.pdf
Ohio Laundry_6241_1344_Inv_29K_29Aug06.pdf

NOTE: you can take this concept even further by adopting file properties, as [discussed in other posts](#).

The final piece of the puzzle is backups. That is a highly personal matter, there are a zillion ways to go about it, and many are quite cheap and easy. So why do so many businesses and workers neglect it? Perhaps because they've never lost weeks of effort, lots of money, or a job due to data loss. Simple luck. Like getting a flat tire (inevitable if you drive enough) data loss is a statistical probability. The magnitude and cost are the only variables.

[» Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

OpenOffice.org 3.0

Bottom Line

OpenOffice.org 3.0 is the best, cheapest alternative to Microsoft Office, but there's no need to switch if you don't require open-source software and you've already paid for a copy of Microsoft's suite.

Pros

Free. Open-source. Feature-packed. Highly compatible with Office 2007 formats. Single interface for all apps.

OpenOffice.org, now released in its long-awaited 3.0 version, is a free, open-source replacement for [Microsoft Office](#)—and the **first and only application suite that can be seriously considered to be a substitute for the massive power and flexibility of Microsoft's suite**. OpenOffice.org used to look clunky and work slowly, but the 3.0 version, which I tested in its final Release Candidate version (RC4), is sleek and fast. It still retains the essential look and feel of [Microsoft Office 2003](#) and earlier versions, instead of imitating the new ribbon interface of Office 2007, but that's a plus for many users who want as much continuity as possible when switching to a new application. OpenOffice.org doesn't include all of Office's features, but it adds some conveniences that Office can't provide, such as built-in PDF export and a single interface for opening and editing word-processing documents, HTML files, worksheets, presentations, and drawings.

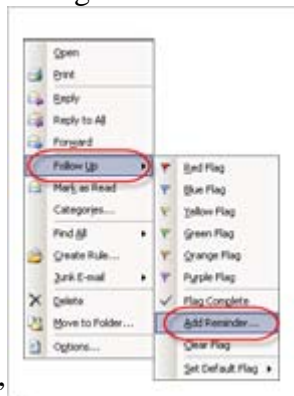
[OpenOffice.org 3.0 - At A Glance - Reviews by PC Magazine](#)

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Set reminders to email messages

Talk about a no-brainer! You've just received an email requiring action, follow-up, or feedback. How do you **remember to do it**?

Very simple. Right-click the message and select 'Follow-up, Add

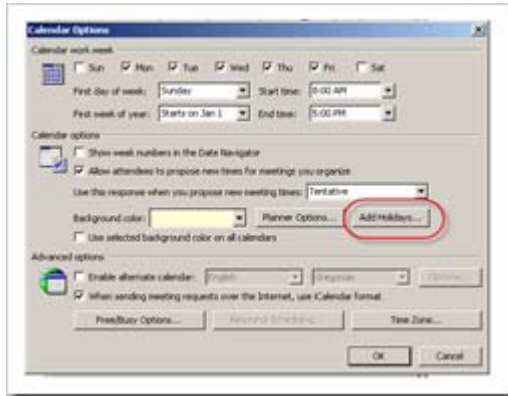


Reminder'

From there, select whatever type of reminder will benefit you most. Be sure to use a calendar date for an actual suspense.

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Automatically add holidays to your Calendar



On the 'Tools' menu, click 'Options, Calendar Options'. Then click the 'Add Holidays' choice for your locale.

This is a great way to ensure you don't schedule conflicts with those lesser known holiday events scattered throughout the year.

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Use Filenames That Sort Properly

File storage is a bigger problem the more files you have, the longer the time since creation or last use, and the number of copies of the same file you've created and saved. This is a known set of business problems. The first is remedied by creating well-thought file naming 'conventions', the second is file 'configuration management.' If you keep creating copies, you may never know which is the 'correct' version. That is a very common problem to computer users.

It's important that you adopt a way to name your files. Here is one way Alan Wyatt solves the problem.

Summary: If you take some care when you name your document files, you'll find it much easier to manage those files at a later time. This tip provides some guidance that you may find helpful as you consider how you should name your files. (This tip works with [Microsoft Word 97](#), Word 2000, Word 2002, [Word 2003](#), and Word 2007.)

[Topics: Use Filenames That Sort Properly](#)

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Create speedy highlights and summaries using 'Spike'

If you ever wished you could just cut and paste selected sentences or distill a document into the main points then **spike** is what you're needing.

In plain English... Using Word, you cut snippets of information from here and there and then paste those snippets in one location.

What's so powerful about that, you ask? This capability isn't limited to Word documents. By stepping slightly *outside the box* with some applied CompuTelligence we come up with these scenarios:

- You've done a bunch of web research, but everything is HTML and way too much extraneous information.
- First, paste it into Word and use the Spike **CTRL+F3** to get only what you need
- Then, use the Spike paste **CTRL+SHIFT+F3** to place it where you need it for editing

Same with a bunch of emails you want to summarize, or some spreadsheets, etc. Get the excess verbiage into Word, cut and Spike what you want to keep, and edit only that which remains.

Not an everyday tool but great to have in your arsenal when you need it!

Here's how Microsoft defines Spike: **use the Spike to move text and graphics from nonadjacent locations**

To use the Spike, you remove two or more items from nonadjacent locations, append each item to the Spike's contents, and then insert the items as a group in a new location or document. The items remain in the Spike, so you can insert them repeatedly. If you want to add a different set of items to the Spike, you must first empty the Spike's contents.

1. To move an item to the Spike, select the text or graphic you want, and then press **CTRL+F3**.

You can repeat this step for each additional item you want to move to the Spike.

2. Click in the document where you want to insert the Spike's contents.
3. Do one of the following:
 - To insert the Spike's contents and empty the Spike, press **CTRL+SHIFT+F3**.

- To insert the Spike's contents without emptying the Spike, point to **AutoText** on the **Insert** menu, and then click **AutoText**. In the **Enter AutoText entries here** box, click **Spike**, and then click **Insert**.

[» Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Embrace the internet for constant savings opportunities

I can't overstate how time-saving and money-saving savvy internet use can be.

This month alone I have placed online orders for car parts, computer electronics, cell phone batteries, and even ceramic tile.

Not just any tile, but a **specific** tile manufacturer, style, color, and in 4 different sizes - to match patterns in the rest of the house.

"So what?", you may be thinking?

Well, just FINDING the original tile took me all over the county 4 years ago. Then it had to be special ordered. So we waited... Then we had to return to pick it up. We even returned a THIRD time to remedy the company's error.

Not this time. I sat at my PC, **Googled** a search by product manufacturer and series, weeded through many suppliers, chose the best site and lowest prices... and now, 35 minutes later, the tile is on the way—all without leaving home and spending \$4.69 per gallon diesel fuel.

Learn to think this way and you'll save time, aggravation, fuel, and more!

[» Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Windows Live FolderShare beta

[Windows Live FolderShare beta](#)

<http://webtoolsandtips.com/uncategorized/foldershare-how-to-synch-files-and-folders-online/>

[» Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Rule, or be ruled, by databases - Lose your fear of databases now

Modern companies are only as strong as their database. Strong companies have big databases, powerful databases, endless data analysis, and data-driven reports that lead to greater business dominance.

Let's face it. Databases intimidate even average- to above-average computer users.

Actually, they don't so much fear *databases* (which they use *non-stop*), but rather they fear database *applications*.

Why is that? Because the database *interface* is s-o-o-o confusing to the non-initiated. It offers no help and doesn't have any direct comparisons in the rest of their lives.

When MS Word opens, it *looks* like a piece of paper - we intuitively know what to 'do' with it. When MS Excel opens, it *looks* like an accounting grid - most people can stumble their way into a bit of successful 'spread-sheeting'.

But open MS Access, and ... "What the heck is *that*?" Which is really unfortunate because nothing benefits a small- to medium-sized businesses more than mastering database technology.

How can I say that? Simple. **Name the 20 most successful companies in the last 20 years.** If your list even comes close to mine, I can argue compellingly these companies rule *in large part* because they have either masterfully exploited database technology *in their sector* (WalMart, Fed Ex, Progressive Insurance, etc), or they *are themselves databases* (Google, FaceBook, YouTube).

In short, today's leading brands are crushing the competition *because of data exploitation*. They know the *value* of data, *how* to get data, *how* to make *data work for them*, and so on.

I'll be building some posts specifically for databases. Even a little learning will go a long way. Don't pass by without trying... or, resign yourself to being ruled by those who have mastered data exploitation.

A computelligent user **must learn to exploit database** strengths and versatility.

[» Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Online Appointment Booking for Services / Professionals

[Online Appointment Sites](#)

Doctors, attorneys and dentists have largely missed the e-commerce boom. So have other service-based businesses like salons and interior design shops.

Sure, your website can provide information about your business. But it can't make a sale. That's because your clients can't book appointments online.

Your clients still must call or e-mail to schedule an appointment. And you probably can't handle client requests 24/7. This means wasted time calling back clients for scheduling.

New sites are offering solutions to the problem. They make it possible for clients to schedule appointments online.

Stop the phone tag

You can eliminate the back-and-forth and reduce the time spent on scheduling. And your clients will appreciate the simplicity, too.

Online Link to *Kim Komando* who hosts the nation's largest talk radio show about computers and the Internet.

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Automatic backup = peace of mind

I can't emphasize enough the importance of backing up business critical data. That doesn't mean *all* data, just *business critical* data.

That's why I recommend placing *all* critical business folders under a couple of **key folders**...

Then, when it's time to backup (write a script to do it nightly!) it's simply a matter of backing up those key folders.

Ahhh, what peace of mind a current backup brings!

Here's a **free** way to backup nightly using **Windows Task Scheduler** (found in XP under 'Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools')



You'll need to download the attached file [Nightly Backup Script](#)

Using Notepad,

1. Open the file and change the script as indicated (substitute your own drive:/folder/filename.ext)
 - o **Magenta files are source (what you want backed up)**
 - o **Green file names are backup file names and destinations**
2. Save the file on your c:\ drive and name it something memorable (my example is 'BackupExpressQuote.vbs)
3. This path and filename.vbs you enter into the task scheduler
4. Click the other tabs and set the time and frequency

Option Explicit
On Error Resume Next

```

*****
* This script Copies Teeters Orders FE and Order Details database files *
*****
'
' Instantiate the script objects
'
Dim objNet : Set objNet = CreateObject("WScript.Network")
Dim objFS : Set objFS = Wscript.CreateObject("Scripting.FileSystemObject")
Dim WSHShell : Set WSHShell = Wscript.CreateObject("Wscript.Shell")
Dim objFolder, BtnCode

'
' Copy file(s)
'
    btnCode = wshShell.Popup("Please wait...Updating your files...", 1,"Copying...", 64)
    objFS.Copyfile "c:\A - Teeters Access\Teeters Products FE 2003.mdb", "C:\temp\Teeters Products FE
2003BackupFile.mdb"
    objFS.Copyfile "N:\A - Teeters Access\Teeters Orders Details.mdb", "C:\temp\Teeters Orders Details
BackupFile.mdb"
    objFS.Copyfile "C:\Brian T Mickley Inc\Finances\Brian T Mickley Inc.QBW", "H:\QB Finances\Brian T
Mickley Inc AutoTask COPY.QBW"

```

```
btnCode = wshShell.Popup("Your file(s) have been updated. This window will close in 3 seconds...", 3, "ALL DONE!", 64)
```

```
Release objects from memory and terminate execution
```

```
Set objNet = nothing  
Set objFS = Nothing  
Set WSHShell = nothing  
Set objFolder = nothing  
Set objFolder = nothing  
WScript.Quit
```

Now, select the timing and frequency tabs and you're all set. Remember, the computer must be running for these to run!

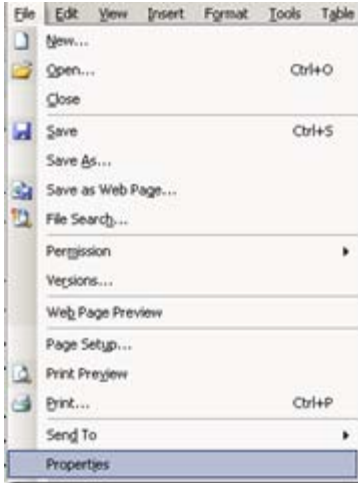


» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Add valuable "Document Info"

Business users generate many files. **Compusmart** business users not only put them in [sensibly organized folders](#), they also **add document information** to help them locate the file and remind them of it's purpose. Never heard of document properties? It's very, very easy.

From within the document (spreadsheet, presentation file, etc), simply select File, Properties



Then, add sufficient data to accurately identify the file, author, purpose, etc.



“Ok, so what?” you say. Knowing what to do with them is even more valuable. That’s where ‘Details’ folder view comes in...

[» Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Windows OS Folder and File System Navigation Training

If you’d like to learn more about *how* to create folders, visit the training video at the link [Windows OS Folder and File System Navigation](#).

Mastering this skill is vital to becoming **compu-ficient**.

[» Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)

Compu-telligent design - a compuSmart "Folder Tree"

MyDocuments and MyPhotos may be suitable for home use, but **not for business!**

Learn to **create folders** and make them make compu-sense *in your business*. What's that mean? Spend time thinking about every single aspect of your business. The file cabinet *might* be a good place to start.

Think of a lawyer. He has clients. What kind? Corporate Clients, Business Clients, Personal Clients.

So, under **Main Street Law Office LLC** we find some folders like this



Then they'd want to create some business folders for their own purposes so they add MS Law Office LLC and put the Documents, Financial, Personnel, and Taxes folders under that.



Now, when it's time to **back-up** files (What, you say? A small business that backs up!! **I don't have time for that!** How in the world can they?), all they need to do is back up the main folder 'C:\Main Street Law Office LLC' and *everything else* pertaining to the law firm is automatically backed up.

Notice the **Inactive Clients** folder. What a simple way to 'clean out' without throwing out. Storage is cheap—use it smartly.

» [Return to Top](#) | [Permanent Link to this article](#)