



One If By LAN, Two If By C

I am a process-oriented guy. While I am on the safe side of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Guy, I'm not too far off. I have an internalized ritual for many facets of my life. My computing, of course, is extremely organized. I perform monthly backup of my computer hard drive (because I'm *experienced*—and have worked on far too many computer systems that crashed with extreme regularity). I perform weekly backup of critical data. I manage to synchronize an office desktop, a personal laptop, a home desktop, and a second laptop that my wife and daughter use but is always hot-swappable for my laptop in case of an emergency.

So when my company recently offered to replace my functional but aging laptop with a top-of-the-line desktop, who was I to refuse dual 21-inch LCD monitors? With everything I have backed up, how hard could it be?

The *Transfer File* and *Settings* wizard was outdated on the older machine. Once updated, it complained about going from a 32-bit laptop to a 64-bit desktop. I use Firefox for now (gotta love that Tabbed Browsing — hurry up Internet Explorer 7.0!) and there is no simple way to transfer saved passwords. Have you looked at how many extensions you have in your browser? Note that they *do not* transfer.

Need I mention that there is a slight chance that I use a *few* third-party applications? Wonder where the install disks are? Did I bother to save the registration code from when I downloaded most of them from the Internet? Do they work with the new drivers? What are the hidden settings of most of these third-party applications?

Oh my gosh — I must have about 100+ fonts installed on the laptop. Do I transfer them all (thus slowing down the new system)? Or do I weed out those I'm sure I'll never use? (And where in the world did I EVER get a font named *©appucino*?) Do you have ANY idea how many updates to XP and Office are needed with a new system? Why does every application update seem to require a separate reboot?

The old laptop and single monitor were small in terms of real estate. The new desktop is too big for the desktop and needs to sit on the floor. How come the video cables are ALWAYS (HURCULANUM — what kind of name is that for a font?) too short. Hey, with eight USB ports, I can hook up all of the assorted hard drives that I have accumulated. Why are there only six outlets on the surge suppressor?

Been there? You know, I haven't migrated from one machine to another in more than three years. Used to be that all of my *stuff* used to fit on a single CD. Now, my *My Documents* folder alone requires four dual-layer DVDs. Just like people accumulate stuff in their house, you accumulate stuff in your *My Documents* directory.

It took three days, but I'm finally up and running again. I seem to have accounted for all of the items mentioned above, and even managed to reconnect the personal folders under Outlook.

Could I do this over again with less bother? Oh yeah. In fact, I even managed to create a folder on my hard drive called *Application for Reinstall*. I also cleared out a desk drawer and put all of the CDs and DVDs in one place just in case there is a next time. And, of course, I made a commitment to continually update both the folder and desk drawer over the next three years. Unless I forget. Or get too busy.

This is why you need a process in your professional life. Processes let you learn from the mistakes or tribulations of others (or, if you're REALLY good, you can actually learn from yourself!). In days gone by, I have sung the praises of CMM and CMMI. I have taught the PSPSM (Personal Software ProcessSM) to any developer and engineer who would sit still. And, over the years, I have come to understand and appreciate Agile methodologies.

It's all about sizing. I once consulted for a military organization that was CMM Level 4, well on their way to CMM Level 5. They were so good that a fellow organization decided to adopt

their practices. Unfortunately, the first organization had more than 100 personnel while the second had around 20. While the first

organization eventually soared on to greatness, the second organization spent SO (Jester font) much time working on the process, that they never produced anything.

Processes are like shoes. They're personal. What fits one might not fit another. Some folks need industrial-strength, steel-toe, slip-resistant, oil-and-water-resistant boots. Others can live with \$5 flip-flops. If you try to create a shoe (or a process) that fits **EVERYBODY** (Marker Felt font), then it fits nobody. It's like a caffeine-free diet soda: It doesn't really provide anything (and can give you gas).

Need a process? It's like shopping for shoes. Need Manolo Blahnik shoes (hey, I used to watch *Sex in the City*)? Or will a workable and affordable pair from Payless work? Need heavy-strength CMMI? Will Agile work for you? It depends: Are you building a mission-critical real-time distributed application? Or a relatively simple Web application?

It's all about fit.

— David A. Cook, Ph.D.

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