

# New Style



Newsletter of the La Crosse PC Users Group

Volume 22 Number 9

September 2002



## First Logic August 2002 Meeting

*By David Donskey, Secretary*

### Presentation

The presentation was by Steve Wallin, Education Services Manager at First Logic. Steve started his career as a High School Math teacher then decided he wanted to teach adults and therefore made the move to First Logic (formerly PostalSoft).

Steve explained that the software they sell is a complex business software not a consumer software, and that training for in house people, particularly those that are going to be trainers, takes anywhere from 3 to 8 months.

The company started with a program for Bulk mailers, to sort addresses to receive a postal rate discount and has now expanded to include other database processing.

First Logic employs approximately 300 employees nationally and around 240 in the Lacrosse area, with other offices in Denver and Chicago along with individual offices elsewhere around the country.

First Logic software is used by large mailers, such as U.S. News and World Report, who use their software to sort mailing for postal discounts along with tracking customers to do selective mailings, such as to people who have discontinued their subscription, etc.

Their software is also used by many companies to help track customers as part of a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) package to match records and correct address information to help in matching data from multiple databases.

Data quality is one of the selling points for their product, it has been reported that poor data quality can cost an organization 10 % of revenue. Also, if names and addresses are not updated within three years approximately 50% will be outdated. This shows the need to keep databases up to date.

First Logic software solutions can come in many forms, real-time, client server applications, batch processing and stand-alone applications where data is extracted, updated and then returned.

The University of Wisconsin is one of their customers, using First Logic's software as an integrated part of Peoplesoft (one of First Logic's partners) to track student records.

Their software is customizable to the needs of the customer and can be used in many different ways with an organization.

They receive monthly updates of the address database from the USPS, which they use to update mailing address in databases.

Steve explained that First Logic is a rapidly expanding company and even in the current economy is holding their own compared to other technology companies.

### Question and Answer

How big a problem is identity theft? Steve explained that you should beware of giving out your Social Security number online or elsewhere for that matter. Also be aware that when you're on the Internet, sites you visit are being tracked and while companies cannot use or sell this information, they can track tendencies and target you with advertisements.

Problem with laptop, when shutting down it starts right back up and says it was not shutdown correctly. Chuck suggested trying a windows update from the web and see if that corrects the problem.

Zonealarm (<http://www.zonealarm.com>), can it be transferred to a new computer? Chuck said best thing to do is redownload zonealarm to the new computer. Free download for personal use! The free version is available from Download.com and the most current version (as of the printing of this newsletter) is 3.1.291.

Juno (<http://www.juno.com>) offers free e-mail and Internet though with a limited time. Which can be an alternative to paying for Internet service if your time requirements are low or as a backup provider.

**Editor's Note:** As announced earlier, due to schooling David will no longer be able to act as secretary for the club. We need someone to volunteer for this position. You can volunteer by sending an e-mail to the listserve or at our next meeting. The secretary's main roles are to keep notes of the meeting and write an article for the newsletter reviewing the minutes of the previous months meeting.

## La Crosse PC Users Group (LCPC) Treasurer's and Membership Report August 2002

*Dick Dahlby, Treasurer  
September 13, 2002*

Income received in August was \$100.00 from five membership renewals. They were La Vonne Buchner, Robert Guggenbuehl, Delaine and Robert Stolpa, Dick Dahlby, and Leon Wolfe. A \$20.00 renewal from David Donskey has been received so far in September. Thank you all for your continued interest and support.

Expenses paid in August were: \$10.00 to State of Wisconsin for renewal of the organization's non-profit incorporation status, \$16.90 for postage, and \$6.33 for 30 photocopies of the July LCPC Newsletter. The current expense for September include \$14.95 for annual renewal of the registration of our Domain Name. The LCPC checking account balance as of 09/13/2002 is \$950.53.

We presently have 53 enrolled members in LCPC.

Members whose annual renewal fees (dues) are presently past due are: (July) Ralph Dupae, and Darrell Garner. (August) Keith and Barb Barghahn, and Dennis Graves.

Membership renewals due in September are: John Benton, May Borgedahl, Betty Mullenbach, and Arlene Wiese.

Membership renewals due in October are: Lita Bower, Arthur Osborn, and Paul Pfaff.

Annual dues are \$20 (individual or couple), and checks should be made payable to La Crosse PC Users Group. Dues may be mailed to either of the following addresses.

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Reminder to all members: Remember, if you change your email address, it is very important to inform LCPC of the change, so that the Membership ListServ can be changed accordingly. To do so, please send me an email with your new email address and I will see that the ListServ is changed. If you haven't received an email from the ListServ within the last two weeks, please let me know that also, so that I can check on it. Thank you.

*Dick Dahlby  
ddahlby@cs.com*

## A New Newsletter Editor

*By: Shane Lambert*

Well this will be my first attempt at a newsletter so I hope you will let me know what you think. One of the first things you will notice is that the newsletter has been changed to a two column format as I believe it is easier to read. However, if you would like me to go back to a three column format I will do that with the next issue. I have also removed a lot of the special fonts, mostly because my system doesn't have them and mostly because I think the Arial and Times New Roman fonts are easier to read. Besides, does it really matter if we have fancy fonts in a newsletter?

OK, so those are the basic changes, but there are more. One great thing about Adobe Acrobat files is that you can embed web page links in the stories so you can just click the link or text instead of having to copy and paste it. Try it now by clicking here to go to our home page. I will try to remember to do that for any link I post in the newsletter.

Another neat trick is the use of anchors, meaning linking text to a certain area of the document. An example of this would be the headlines listed in the "What's Inside" index on the first page of this newsletter. Rather than having to scroll down to find the article, you can simply click on the headline and you will be taken to the beginning of the article. Try it now by going back to the first page and clicking on the title of this story.

Hopefully this version of the newsletter is as good as the rest, and I promise that in the future they will be better. I am new to using this PageMaker program, which is nothing like the standard Word Processor. I have made a lot of mistakes and screwed up a lot of things, and there isn't always an undo function! It's been a lot of "try this - no - delete it" type of learning experience, but I am enjoying it. Maybe by the time someone else decides to take over the newsletter I will have it figured out!

## Ultimate Boot Disk

**A followup to Jack Storlie's August 2002 Article  
"Favorite PC Utility Software"**

*By Shane Lambert*

After reading Jack's story about the Ultimate Boot Disk ([www.startdisk.com](http://www.startdisk.com)) in the August 2002 issue I took a few minutes out of my busy schedule to download and try it. Although I couldn't find the Windows XP disk right away Jack was nice enough to send it to me. So I tried it on both my Windows XP systems and my Windows 98 systems and was very impressed with both of them. The utilities included with this disk helped me to fix a few problems on a couple of my machines and now I keep a copy of the Ultimate Boot Disk next to all of my systems! Check it out, it's free and it will really help you in your time of need!

## To Backup or not To Backup?

*By: Shane Lambert*

You've all heard the discussions in this newsletter, on the mailing list and at the meetings, but is it really all that important to maintain backups of your data? If you're still asking this question then I congratulate you on never having your hard drive fail or suffering from a tragic loss of data. Maybe you should write an article on how you protect yourself from these common problems that plague 99% of all computer users.

I learned a long time ago that data backups are more important than the data itself. If you keep only one copy of your data and it is lost or damaged either by computer failure or your own mistake, then how do you get it back? Sure, you could recreate the file and enter all the information again, but who has the time for that. There are several simple solutions to the backup dilemma:

**Floppy Drive Backups:** I would have to believe that your computer still has at least one floppy drive, most likely a 3.5" drive as the 5.25" drives went by the wayside so many years ago. Floppy disks are cheap and disposable and very easy to use - just put the disk in and save your files to drive A. However, floppy drives are limited in space and aren't very reliable. This I learned from experience after trying to access my tax records for 1997 off a floppy which was stored in the safe since April of 1998. There has to be a better solution.

**CD-RW Backups:** The low cost of CD-RW drives and the fact that most new computers are equipped with these makes this a viable solution. The blank disks are very cheap and many times free after rebate. CD's hold as much as 700 Mb and are generally very reliable, if they are stored properly. It's even possible to restore damaged CD's and retrieve the data.

The biggest problems with CD-RW Backups is that the average person isn't quite sure how to use the software and it isn't very user friendly. Burning a CD is also a time consuming process, even with the faster CD-RW drives, and if you are updating an old backup it can take even longer. However, I think that most of us can overlook these problems to have a reliable and inexpensive backup option.

**On-Line Backups:** Backing up your data to an on-line provider or to your web hosting space has become very popular with the low cost of web hosting, but security of your data can be a problem. Placing your data on your web site makes it available to hackers, and transmitting with regular FTP or Front Page means anyone can intercept your transmission and access your data.

One service that I have used for quite some time is iBackup (<http://www.ibackup.com/>) which allows for secure transfer of your files to the server using SSL protection. This service also has software that will allow you to map your backup account to a drive letter on your computer. You can copy files to that folder and even open, edit and save files directly into your

backup account. Of course I wouldn't suggest this on a dial-up account due to speed considerations, but those of us with high-bandwidth modems can really make good use of this. iBackup will even burn your data to a CD and send it to you (for a fee) whenever you like.

I am sure there are other on-line backup services, some I have tested and some I haven't. I prefer iBackup for the drive mapping software, FTP access and on-line access. If you know of others, let me know so I can review them for future newsletters.

I know there are a lot of other backup solutions, including tape backup, RAID systems, mirrored systems and more, but looking for a cost perspective I think the CD-RW path is the way to go for most people. It might take a while to get used to the software but for reliability and accessibility, you really can't beat it, unless of course you need to store more than 700 Mb of data on one disk.

So my advise to you on this subject - BACKUP, and BACKUP often! As a rule of thumb, I always make weekly backups of everything, NOT just the stuff that changed. I keep four weeks worth of backups at any given time. I also make a full monthly backup which is verified to work BEFORE reusing the weekly backup disks. The monthly backups are never re-used and are kept for one year in the safety deposit box at the bank. Yes, they get old and useless but you can never be too careful.

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## August 2002: Cumulative Patch for Internet Explorer

{Derived from Microsoft.com Web Site}

The "August 2002, Cumulative Patch for Internet Explorer (Q323759)" eliminates all previously addressed security vulnerabilities affecting Internet Explorer, as well as additional newly discovered vulnerabilities. This update includes the functionality of all previously released patches. Download now to continue keeping your computer secure.

### System Requirements

This update applies to:

Internet Explorer 6

Internet Explorer 5.5 SP2

Internet Explorer 5.5 SP1

Internet Explorer 5.01 SP3 with Windows 2000.

Internet Explorer 5.01 SP2 with Windows 2000.

Editor's Note: I have already done this and I suggest that everyone do this as well (if you are using any of the versions above). If you are viewing this online you can click here to go directly to the web page for this patch.

## The MS easy rider crashes again

by Tom Chance

<http://www.tomchance.uklinux.net>

The stories of users migrating from Microsoft Windows to a Free Software alternative (or attempting to do so) have usually had one large sticking point: The alternatives are much harder to learn than Microsoft Windows. Conventional wisdom says that when GNU/Linux, FreeBSD and others become as easy to use as Microsoft Windows (or when Microsoft's EULAs become too unreasonable), the migration will be inevitable, and it will be a good thing for all. I beg to differ.

My own tale began during my last job, where I worked as an IT trainer in a small firm whose name I shan't mention. My duties included teaching clients (one-to-one), maintaining the training computers, and occasionally making sure the server was still running OK. The whole office ran on Microsoft NT4 and Exchange. All the training and staff computers ran Windows 98, and we used Office and Outlook for most of our work.

It seemed like a happy solution on the surface, because everything was integrated and worked. But there were cracks in that picture, due to the philosophy that has consumed the IT industry ever since the a marketing department managed to put the words "easy" and "computing" in the same sentence.

To begin with, we didn't really *only* use Microsoft product. We had a package called *Janna* to manage our contact database, and then had a horrible time switching between Janna, Outlook, Word, Excel and a filing cabinet to keep track of things.

We could have set up a really well thought out system using customised groupware, such as a solution using a Web server and a modified version of a Free PHP groupware suite. But that would have been a hassle, and it would have required some rudimentary training with the staff to make sure someone could maintain the Web server.

Also, the Windows NT server kept having odd problems. Remember, the management wasn't willing to train anyone to maintain it; instead they sent down a technician once in a while to poke around at it. So we were left with an unstable server, and quite often, unhappy customers not being able to do their courses. The problem was that it was just too easy to tell us which buttons to click on to do normal tasks, and then leave us to it.

Management wanted a solution whereby we were shown what to do, without knowing why, because it was quick and easy.

Regardless of the obstacles, I implemented a Linux system while I was with the company, and it helped us keep track of all our clients and their progress. The staff loved it — it saved us time, allowed us to give higher quality service, and it was easy to use. No annoying features we didn't want; it was customised to our exact needs. Yet, when I left the company, they scrapped it, because the management didn't want to train another employee to learn how to reboot GNU/Linux (I even

offered to train them). So they went back to a mis-mash of applications and paperwork.

There is a direct parallel between my experiences in an office that didn't want to spend money on expertise, and the wise words of Larry Wall, the creator of the Perl programming language. In a recent Slashdot interview, he was asked for his opinion on Perl, and the difficulties in getting several people to work with the same code. His answer was simple:

"You wouldn't expect to hire random people off the street to come in and collaborate on writing a novel. You can do it by hiring a few good novelists who already know how to figure out how to work together, or at least how to fight with each other productively."

Programming is not *meant* to be easy. What Larry was saying is that if you make it too easy for programmers, then poor programmers will be able to do things best left to good programmers, and will inevitably do them poorly. Everyone will suffer in the long term as a result.

I am of the opinion that the same applies to computing and server administration: If you make it too easy for people to administrate systems, then poor administrators will do the job, and do it poorly. Better to keep it (relatively) difficult, and keep the administrators of a high quality. That way you may have to spend a little more training and retaining the staff, but you will benefit in the long run.

Untrained administrators, with a poor understanding of their server, from the service acronyms to the administrative GUIs, cause more harm than good. Wide-open servers have done more damage to Microsoft's reputation than high-profile benchmarks can ever undo. They have also helped to propagate endless viruses, facilitate many a major cracking scandal, cause endless crashes in offices small and large, and bring about all kinds of other problems to people working with them.

This attitude of *cheap and dirty* vs. *expensive quality* is something that applies to the very philosophy of management, and especially IT management, in the United States (and increasingly in the rest of the world). The philosophy of Microsoft and others is only accelerating this, promoting the idea that it is a good idea to get unskilled people to maintain "easy" systems that are, in reality, very complex.

It is a similar, but not identical story with desktop users. When teaching people to use Windows or Office or Photoshop, the most frequent problems people had were due to them not understanding the computer they were using. I, and other trainers, frequently had to sit people down and explain what was going on. While Windows was quite happy letting people think in terms of moving "files" between "c" and "a," we found that talking with students and explaining what files are, and what "a" and "c" meant, helped them immeasurably. Many people would claim that you shouldn't need to understand about hard drives and file systems to use a computer, but these students, even 80-year-olds, benefitted from knowing it.

*Continued on Page 5*

**MS Easy Rider ... Continued from Page 4**

I am not saying that you should teach every desktop user about mounting devices and memory management, but a deeper understanding of the computer can make day-to-day use far easier and much more rewarding. Though at first people would insist that "they don't want to know x, they just want to know how to do y", once they learned x, y became obvious.

By analogy again, when you take driving lessons you learn a little about your car, its engine, chassis, steering, how they react in different weather conditions and, to some extent, why, even though you just want to learn how to get the car from a to b. We couldn't dream of letting motorists onto the road only

knowing that "this pedal makes you go, this one stops you. This turns you left and right." Similarly you wouldn't let an unqualified person drive a large freight truck just because the controls had been made easier to understand. So why do we persist in trying to do the same in computing? Rather than making the bridge for people, it is time we just made sure they learn how to make it themselves.

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**What is spam?**

Derived from <http://spam.abuse.net>

Spam is flooding the Internet with many copies of the same message, in an attempt to force the message on people who would not otherwise choose to receive it. Most spam is commercial advertising, often for dubious products, get-rich-quick schemes, or quasi-legal services. Spam costs the sender very little to send — most of the costs are paid for by the recipient or the carriers rather than by the sender.

There are two main types of spam, and they have different effects on Internet users. Cancellable Usenet spam is a single message sent to 20 or more Usenet newsgroups. (Through long experience, Usenet users have found that any message posted to so many newsgroups is often not relevant to most or all of them.) Usenet spam is aimed at "lurkers", people who read newsgroups but rarely or never post and give their address away. Usenet spam robs users of the utility of the newsgroups by overwhelming them with a barrage of advertising or other irrelevant posts. Furthermore, Usenet spam subverts the ability of system administrators and owners to manage the topics they accept on their systems.

Email spam targets individual users with direct mail messages. Email spam lists are often created by scanning Usenet postings, stealing Internet mailing lists, or searching the Web for addresses. Email spams typically cost users money out-of-pocket to receive. Many people - anyone with measured phone service - read or receive their mail while the meter is running, so to speak. Spam costs them additional money. On top of that, it costs money for ISPs and online services to transmit spam, and these costs are transmitted directly to subscribers.

One particularly nasty variant of email spam is sending spam to mailing lists (public or private email discussion forums.) Because many mailing lists limit activity to their subscribers, spammers will use automated tools to subscribe to as many mailing lists as possible, so that they can grab the lists of addresses, or use the mailing list as a direct target for their attacks.

**"Isn't stopping spam a violation of the First Amendment?"**

Not at all. The First Amendment allows people the right to free speech, but it doesn't guarantee them the right to force others to hear their message. CAUCE (<http://www.cauce.org>) does not support the outlawing of commercial speech, but does believe that those who wish to engage in commercial speech should either bear their own costs or limit their cost-shifting to those who have overtly expressed a willingness to bear those costs.

This is not a new concept in the law. There is a law prohibiting *all* unsolicited advertisements via fax machines. The law has been challenged in court on First Amendment grounds and each time courts have upheld the law because it is not censorship... it's about making the advertiser bear their own costs. We believe that is an excellent approach.

When spammers try to hide their destructive and often illegal activities behind the First Amendment, it is helpful to remember the words of Federal Judge Stanley Sporkin in a case called *Turner Broadcasting v. FCC* where the plaintiffs sought to defend their activities on First Amendment grounds:

*"[They] have come to court not because their freedom of speech is seriously threatened but because their profits are; to dress up their complaints in First Amendment garb demeans the principles for which the First Amendment stands and the protections it was designed to afford."*

When spammers try to cloak their damaging, often fraudulent activities in First Amendment garb, all defenders of free speech should be outraged. In summary, we think one of the best analyses of this theme comes in a famous case about junk postal mail. In the Supreme Court's decision in *Rowan v. U.S. Post Office*, the court held:

*"Nothing in the Constitution compels us to listen to or to view any unwanted communication, whatever its merit. . . We therefore categorically reject the argument that a vendor has the right under the Constitution or otherwise to send unwanted material into the home of another. . . We repeat, the right of a mailer stops at the outer boundary of every person's domain."*

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New Style is published eleven times a year, monthly January through October with a combined Nov-Dec issue. General meetings are held in the Overholt Auditorium at the Lutheran Hospital on the last Wednesday of January through October with a combined November-December meeting on the second Wednesday in December. A list of our upcoming meeting topics is available at our web site at <http://www.lcpconline.com>. Thank you, Gundersen-Lutheran, for making this wonderful facility available. Meetings begin around 7:00 PM. Everyone is welcome, attend a meeting or two with no obligation to join.

Membership Dues are \$20 and cover an annual period following the month of payment. Membership entitles you to attend meetings, tap into the corporate wisdom, receive special user group discounts from publishers and others, and receive (and contribute to) this newsletter. You may also obtain software provided by publishers for review of the product.

The monthly newsletter is printed the Wednesday before the meeting, please submit advertisements and articles by the 13th of the month to [editor@lcpconline.com](mailto:editor@lcpconline.com). Unsigned articles are written by the editor. Other user groups are welcome to reprint with proper credit to the La Crosse PC Users Group and must include our web page address. Please contact the Newsletter Editor for commercial advertising rates. There is no fee for non-commercial advertisements placed by members.

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