

STARTUP - MSCONFIG

Last week we talked about resident programs and how they slow down your Windows. This week we will talk a little about disabling unnecessary resident programs.

First, how can you tell how much stuff is running on your PC? First, close all your programs, then press Ctrl-Alt-Del ONCE. That means hold down the Ctrl key, the Alt key and then tap the Delete key. This will bring up the Task Manager. On Windows ME and 98 machines, this will show all the programs running. Our rule of thumb is, if you have to scroll, it's way too many. I personally like to see five or six things running, maximum. On Windows XP machines, the Task Manager has several different tabs. The Applications tab will show the currently running programs, and if you followed my instructions about closing your programs, this will be blank. The next tab over is the Processes tab. I always click on the User Name bar to rearrange the list so that I can see the programs that are related directly to my user account. The System, Network Service and Local Service programs are only to be touched by qualified individuals, namely me.

The Image Name list will give you an idea of what programs are running in your user account. It is important to remember that, while most of these are not essential to Windows running, if you turn everything off, you will lose services that you do need. Make a note of what is running.

The System Configuration Utility or MSCONFIG program easily allows users to turn startup programs off and on, including the ones in the Startup folder. It actually retrieves these options from many different places in the registry. To start MSCONFIG, click on Start>Run and type MSCONFIG, hit OK. There are six tabs across the top of the System Configuration Utility, we are only concerned about the Startup tab.

Down the left side of the Startup tab is a list of boxes with checkmarks in them. To the right of each box is the Command, and to the right of that is the Location. The command is generally an executable instruction, meaning that it locates a file on the computer and runs it. The location indicates where the command is being invoked from, which can be very helpful when trying to track down annoying programs that won't go away.

You can safely turn every one of these things off because I have never seen a PC that absolutely needed anything in this list to run. However, you will lose services that you previously had, like your anti-virus or firewall software. If you actually do try this and reboot, you will find that your PC is suddenly starting and running much quicker than it did before.

Your job is to go through this list and turn off the stuff you don't think needs to be running. If you find that you lose some essential function of the PC, like the hotkeys on your keyboard not working, then turn that function back on again and reboot.

If you have question or comments, I can always be reached via email sean@intrex.ca or join our forums at <http://intrex.ca> for more in-depth conversations.