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## A BETTER CLIPBOARD

When you cut or copy an item, it is stored on the **clipboard** that is built into the Windows operating system (OS). That's fine as far as it goes, but the clipboard only holds one item at a time. If you have ever copied something to the clipboard, then copied something else, and then found that you had to re-copy the first item, or even worse had cut the first item and can't copy it again, then you know the limitation of the clipboard.

There are several programs available that provide a clipboard that retains several items. I recently came across one that seems to really stand out. It is named **ClipCache** and not just store your cut or copied items, but also provides a folder-type organization that allows you to organize your clipboard items for easy retrieval even years after they have been clipboarded. ClipCache is a free program. If you're interested in the free version of ClipCache, get it from [http://download.cnet.com/ClipCache/3000-18487\\_4-9185.html](http://download.cnet.com/ClipCache/3000-18487_4-9185.html).

**However, there is a little lesson hidden here.** On their website, you will find an offer to get a 1-user copy of ClipCachePro for free. **Read the fine print!** The catch is that you also wind up registering for **TrialPay** which appears to be a sort of pyramid scheme. **Take a pass on it!** If you're interested in the Pro version of ClipCache, just pay for it.

## TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

When I was downloading the free version of ClipCache to try it out, I was also thinking that it's another utility that runs in the background on my office computer, as each utility I install still adds some overhead to the computer, slowing it down just a bit more.

If you have an older single-core cpu, such as an Intel Pentium or AMD Athlon, think carefully about whether or not you want to add something else to your background utilities, slowing down your computer. Keep in mind that even though my office computer is pretty fast – it is a quad-core cpu which I have overclocked to over 3.7GHz – I still try to keep down the number of wonderful utilities. Even a huge pickup with a V-10 diesel can still be overloaded to where it runs like a Yugo (look it up) if you're towing a trailer and keep adding more and more concrete blocks to the trailer.

## GET MORE and/or FASTER USB

I have recently encountered several clients who need additional USB ports. Older computers often have only 2 USB ports on the back, and those are horrendously slow USB ver 1.1 rather than ver 2.0. Newer computer often have 4-6 USB 2.0 ports on the back, and another 2 ports on the front. There are really 2 issues here.

**Number of Ports.** Since a majority of external device now use USB to connect to the computer, it's very easy to run out of USB ports. **There is an easy and inexpensive solution - get a USB hub.** This is like a power strip for USB connections. A cable from the hub inserts into one of the USB ports on your computer, and the hub then provides you with 4 USB ports on the hub. Some hubs have 5 or even 8 ports. There is no software to

install, just plug it in and use it. However, be sure to get a **powered USB hub** which has an AC power adapter that plugs into your wall receptacle. USB ports provide power to some devices and the AC power adapter makes sure that all devices can receive the power they need.

**USB 1.1 vs 2.0.** If you get connect a USB device to your computer and get a message that reads **This connection could run faster if you use a high speed USB connection** or similar text, then your older computer is using USB ver 1.1. Newer computers use USB ver 2.0 which transfers data about **30 times faster than USB 1.1** which is very significant. The solution is also easy – for about \$25 you can get a USB 2.0 adapter card to put into your computer. It is a 10 minute installation and will provide you with USB 2.0 ports. If you have an older notebook computer, you can get a USB 2.0 SmartCard (aka PCMCIA) to insert into the computer.

## FIND THE RIGHT COMPUTER FOR YOUR NEEDS

A client recently told me about a website that he used to find a computer that best suits his needs. What impressed him was that he had previously done some research and found a computer that seemed to meet his needs, and the website returned the same computer as the one that best meets his criteria. It's called **PC-Scout** and is on the Microsoft website. At this time, it only searches for notebook computers, so you can't use it to help select a desktop computer.

The website is <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/p-c-scout>. When you get to the website, you first click on the icon that best describes the type on computer you are looking for: All Around, Power Gaming; Work From Anywhere, Netbook PC, etc). On the next page you adjust sliders for your criteria,

such as price range, screen size, weight, and so forth. It's very easy.

Although PC-Scout will select a computer that best meets the criteria you have, I do not recommend just looking for the best price for that computer and getting one. Notebook computers are very individual, and each keyboard has a distinct feel and key placement. Be sure to go to a place where you can try the notebook and compare it side by side with other similar notebooks, such as MicroCenter, BestBuy, Fry's, etc. (These are only examples, not recommendations).

You can also read up on reviews, such as computer magazine websites, Consumer Reports, but keep in mind that they only give first impressions and don't evaluate how well computers turn out in daily use.

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### ONLY THE BEST WILL DO

The law of diminishing returns is basically a generalized theory that past a certain point, improvement becomes increasingly costly in terms of time and/or money. Realized gains in performance fall off approach zero at some point. OK – where is Phil taking this?

In the July 2010 issue of MaximumPC magazine, there is a short piece titled "8 Signs a Geek Has Too Much Money", and describes 8 ways to spend your money. I'll skip the details and just list the cost, a description of the item, and a website link in case you want to make a purchase. Note that I'm only listing the top 4

1. TRANSMISSION AUDIO ULTIMATE SPEAKER SYSTEM. **\$2,000,000.** That's right – two million – but that's for the entire set, and do they come with amps and a pre-amp. But I noted on the website that the section heading for these speakers reads **Extreme Performance Series – The US\$2 miljon ULTIMATE** (sic). Apparently they haven't sold enough to afford a spell checker or proofreader. [www.transmissionaudio.com](http://www.transmissionaudio.com)

2. **108"** SHARP LB-1085 LCD TV. This is a really big screen TV. **\$150,000** <http://bit.ly/aJZV5V>
3. Add bling to your \$70 Leatherman – get the LEATHERMAN DEL REY with handles sculpted from 18K gold from the Andes. **\$40,000** [www.leatherman.com](http://www.leatherman.com)

And you really should check out the speaker system website, where you will notice that the section heading for these speakers reads as follows:

#### The Top-of-the-line in the Extreme Performance Series - The US\$2 miljon ULTIMATE.

A visit to [www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com) revealed that *miljon* is *million* in Swedish. Is this an example of their attention to detail?

Also, the graphic image just above the heading indicates that it is **Extreme Performance ULTIMATE – probably the finest speaker system ever built.** Gosh – only probably? Forget these wannabes - where can I get the finest speaker system ever built and what does that cost?

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### DROID A GREAT ALTERNATIVE TO THE IPHONE

I've always liked the iPhone but just don't want to deal with ATT which has the exclusive for iPhones. I had been using a Samsung Omnia but it wasn't really ready for prime time. I recently switched to a **Motorola DROID** and find it is an excellent alternative to the iPhone. The interface is clear, easy to understand, and it works very well. Among the features that I find particularly useful are:

1. Built in GPS using Google Maps. However, to go it one better, you can upgrade Google Maps and get the free Google Maps Navigation which turns the DROID into a full-featured GPS, complete with voice recognition – just speak where you want to go and it will lay out the turn-by-turn directions. It works as

well as my TomTom dedicated GPS.

2. Easy to use built-in browser. Since the DROID (at least with Verizon service) comes with unlimited internet service, there is no extra charge beyond the **smartphone** monthly charge.
3. Apps are a big deal with iPhones. Although the number of apps isn't as great as the iPhone store (which has a few years head start on the Droid), it has a good start and will catch up quickly. One of my favorite apps is ShopSavvy which lets you scan a bar code in a store and ShopSavvy then lets you select **web** or **local** and will display prices the item is going for in local stores, or on the web.
4. The Droid has a pull-down keyboard. Although the on-screen keyboard is very usable, the physical keyboard does come in handy on occasions. However, the keys are flush and not much easier to use than the on-screen keyboard.
5. The 854x480 screen resolution is actually better than the iPhone's 480x320, so the screen is clearer and photos display better.
6. At 5 megapixels AND a flash, the Droid outperforms the 3 megapixel iPhone which doesn't have a flash.

Here is a comparison of the specs for the Droid and the iPhone: <http://technologizer.com/2009/10/28/droid-vs-iphone/>

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