

Radio Days – 2012-03-10

Tip of the Week – Usernames and Passwords

The inevitable has happened: two users rang me in the same week and stated that they could not access one of their usual haunts on their computer.

Problem One

Problem one was an unusual one. My client stated that he had always been able to get onto his internet-based emails using his normal username and password. This week everything had changed and he was locked-out of his emails. Because he needed to access his emails for his small business he was getting desperate. Time for the caped superhero to fly to his rescue!

On investigating there was nothing wrong except for the fact that he could not access his emails. The message which appeared was *Unknown username and/or password*. He was adamant that he was typing everything exactly as he had been doing it for the last century or more.

I asked him to try one more time while I watched. This time I noticed that he pressed the *caps lock* key to make the first letter of his password a capital. When I pointed this out to him he tried again, this time making sure that he pressed *shift* instead of *caps lock*. This time he could access his emails.

Problem Two

The second problem was slightly different: my client could not access her Skype account. She had asked her (supposedly more computer-literate!) nephew to create her Skype account for her so that it was done correctly. There were two problems.

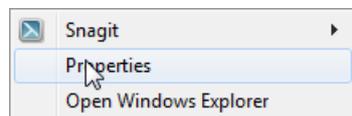
- We could not get Skype to email a new password to her because the registered email account did not exist. It turned out that her nephew did not know how to spell. I remember changing the registered address for my car to a Dunolly address a month before I moved to Maryborough so that I paid the cheaper insurance rates in the country. The street name, written on my first registration certificate, was *Pane Killa Gully Road*. When I asked the young clerk to correct the two errors in the street name he asked me what the errors were! My client's nephew had made a similar misspelling of a common word in her email address.
- I then asked to see the piece of paper where her password was written. There, as clear as day to my eyes, was her password: her name, her husband's name and a number: 1. When I had asked her for the password she had not read the 1. Correct the password: all is now well and we can correct the spelling error in the email address.

How to Customise the Start Menu

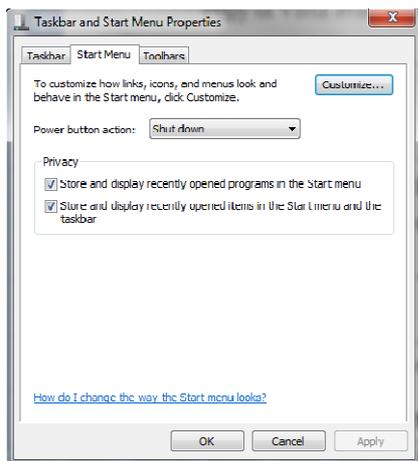
The Start menu is one of the most-used parts of the Windows interface for many people. Others place everything on their desktop and run their programs and documents from there. Today's talk is aimed at those people who feel that the Start menu could be changed to be better suited to your needs.

Today's talk is mainly aimed at those people who use Windows 7, but there is also a section for those who use Windows XP. I cannot help Windows Vista users because I do not have a copy of Vista available, but you will probably find that it falls between Windows 7 and XP.

Windows 7 - Start Menu



The Start button in Windows 7 is the most malleable of all Windows Start buttons. To take advantage of this malleability just click once with your right mouse button on the *Start* circle then click once on the word *Properties* in the menu which appears. This opens the main window so that you can customise to your heart's content.



When you click on *Properties* you will see this window. As you will note there are tabs for:

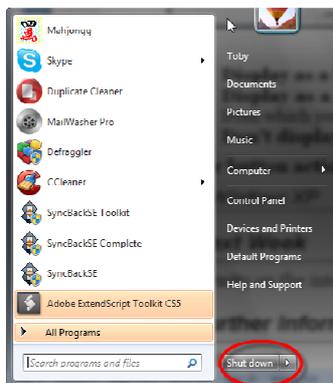
- Taskbar
- Start Menu
- Toolbars

I will cover each of those in turn, starting with the current tab: *Start Menu*.

The top option, *Customise*, governs what appears when you click the Start button. At the bottom of the Customise page is the option to *Use Default Settings*. This is your **Get Out of Jail Free** card so you can easily revert to your starting position if you do not like the results of what you did.

For many of the options you have three choices:

- **Display as a link:** you have to click on the item to open a new window.
- **Display as a menu:** when you hover your mouse over the item a new menu opens from which you can select your preference.
- **Don't display this item:** this one is obvious!



Power button action: This button is shown in the red circle in the image. There are a number of options that you can set the *Power Button* to do:

- Switch User
- Logoff
- Lock
- Restart
- Sleep
- Shut down

Select the option which you will find the most useful. Remember that none of this is set in concrete so, as this setting is so easy to change, you can reset this to any of the available options whenever you want.

When you click on the arrow to the right of *Shut down* in the *Start Menu* you will see all the remaining options. This makes it easy for you to perform any of the available options with a few mouse clicks.

Please experiment to see which one is the most useful for you!

Privacy: below the *Power button action* is a section entitled *Privacy*. This selects which of your actions are shown on the *Start Menu*. If you want to keep recently-used programs and documents on the *Start Menu* for quick access then keep both of the *Privacy* options ticked. If you need to keep things more private then remove the ticks from these two options. You can change any option quickly and easily so experiment to see just how you can improve your experience of Windows with just a few mouse clicks.

Windows 7 – Taskbar

The *Taskbar* is the narrow bar which stretches, often across the bottom of your screen, from the *Start* orb at one end to the clock at the opposite end. There are three sections for setting the taskbar properties:

- Taskbar appearance
- Notification area
- Desktop preview

Taskbar appearance: this section allows you to *Lock the taskbar*, *Auto-hide the taskbar* and *Use small icons*. You can also specify on which edge you want the taskbar located and whether you want to combine open windows. When you first start Windows the taskbar is located at the bottom of your screen and taskbar icons are always combined and labels are not displayed.

Again, these options are easily changed so you can set Windows up just to suit you.

Notification area: this area is normally just seen as a small triangle next to the clock. Click on the triangle and a list of hidden programs appears. You can change which, if any, of these hidden programs are shown on the taskbar. Because I like to vet my emails before I see them in my email program I have the MailWasher icon sitting next to the notification triangle. Also, because I often insert and remove USB backup devices I have the *Safely Remove* green tick sitting on my taskbar for easy access.

Desktop preview: just to the right of the clock is a small area. If you click here you display your desktop. If you have desktop preview set you will see your desktop when you move your mouse over this preview area. If you click the preview area you will be taken to your desktop so that you can do anything which is available on your desktop.

Windows 7 – Toolbars

Windows 7, like all versions of Windows since Windows XP, has a number of toolbars which can be displayed or hidden at will. When you select this tab you will see a list of all toolbars which are available on your computer: select those which you would like to display. These toolbars are displayed next to the clock.

Because the taskbar can become a jumble very quickly if you add too many items, you may like to consider a free program called Objectdock. This program takes over some of the duties of the taskbar and can free-up some of your desktop. This will allow you to make more space on your taskbar available for the programs which are important to you: programs like your web browser and your email program.

Windows XP

Windows XP users can start to modify their taskbar by starting with a right-click on the *Start* button. Now click *Properties* to display the *Taskbar and Start Menu Properties* dialogue box.

Start Menu: the *Start Menu* has two options. The first option, titled *Classic Start Menu*, is a single column menu reminiscent of the one which appeared in Windows 95. Selecting this, in my opinion, deprives you of advanced options which later appeared in Windows XP. It also misses out on many of the advanced settings available in the two-column option.

The two-column option, titled *Start Menu*, has many more customisation settings. For most people this is the option which you will want to use. You can choose:

- Large or small icons
- Number of programs on the start menu
- Your favourite internet browser
- Your favourite email program

There are also some advanced settings which mirror those available in Windows 7.

Taskbar: these settings are identical for both the single-column and double-column *Start Menu*. There are a number of options which you can turn on or off individually in the *Taskbar Appearance* section. They include:

- Lock the taskbar
- Auto-hide the taskbar
- Keep taskbar on top of other windows
- Group similar taskbar buttons
- Show Quick Launch

The options in the *Notification area* section of this dialogue box are:

- Show the clock
- Hide inactive icons

Summary

Changing the way your *Start Menu* works is both quick and easy in both Windows XP and Windows 7. I urge you to try this way of customising your computer so that it works just the way that suits you.

Despite what many people seem to think, working with computers can be made much easier if you take the time to customise your computer in the way that you customise your car or your wardrobe. It just takes a little time and experimenting.

Further Information

Objectdock www.stardock.com/products/objectdock/