focus onTECH

HP Designjet 110plus, Registry Mechanic, 'cloud computing' in the news

By Art Snyder

The technology juggernaut never stops. A look at a new **Hewlett Packard** printer that can generate signage is one indicator of this good news. Others are the free **Registry Mechanic® 8 for Windows** utility — excellent! — and a discussion on "cloud computing," among other developments to benefit your rink. Details are below.

HP Designjet 110plus

When it comes to printing tasks at your rink, you want *versatility*. Perhaps you need to print a few birthday post-

HP Designjet 110plus

cards, a memo to your staff, or a media announcement and mailing envelopes about an upcoming school fundraiser. After that, you have to print colorful new signage about a 2-for-1 Pepsi special in your snack area. When the sizes of your messages vary like that, you can look to the **HP Designjet 110plus**. This sleek new color inkjet printer is designed to meet those challenges. It prints at an expected laser-like sharpness, and with four individual ink cartridges (black, magenta, cyan and yellow), you'll see the vivid colors that are a hallmark of inkjet printers. The four-cartridge feature also saves you money, since you have to replace only the specific cartridge that runs out of ink. The standout feature of the **HP Designjet 110plus**, however, is its oversized-prints capabilities. The printer has one feeder tray for posters that measure 18 by 24 inches (this tray also holds standard printer paper), and another that holds a roll of paper (the printer has a built-in cutter, to cut to whatever paper length you require), for larger posters and other signage that could benefit just about all your rink profit centers. A third feeder slot lets you print on paper or cardstock that is 24 by 64 inches. With these print options, you could alert customers to a

weekly special in your redemption area, for example, or tell them about new skate specials or upcoming hockey league play. And holiday signage — from Valentine's Day to New Year's Eve — can sparkle with the oversized signage produced with the **HP Designjet 110plus**. The printer is designed for any **Windows XP** or later operating system, and the printer itself measures 41 by 16 inches, a compact size, considering it plus-sized abilities. For more, visit hp.com.

Registry Mechanic® 8 for Windows

Registry Mechanic® 8 for Windows is the world's top registry cleaner for **Windows**, with more than 60 million downloads of the utility from the company Web site. The program is arguably the world's best registry cleaner, as it cleans and repairs any **Windows** registry. This helps prevent system errors, conflicts and crashes. **Registry Mechanic® 8 for Windows** also has an option to defragment your hard drive, to optimize your PC and improve its speed and performance. Even though I'm an experienced tech user, I really like **Registry Mechanic's** ease of use — once you download the program and install it (this takes just a few minutes), you can activate the program and simply click an on-screen button to safely clean your PC's registry or defrag the hard drive. I recommend that you do this every few days, if not daily, to maintain the best performance of your **Windows** system. The parent company, **PC Tools**, also has updates of registry problems, and you can download them anytime via another on-screen button of your **Registry Mechanic** program. Other features of **Registry Mechanic® 8 for Windows** allow you to compact your registry (to save hard drive space and improve performance) and to monitor your registry (to intercept unauthorized changes and similar digital spyware and virus mischief, and to alert you to these problems). **Registry Mechanic® 8 for Windows** is a free utility, and the updates

are free, too. The parent company offers several other utilities that you can buy, and you can do this by download or CD purchase. Visit pctools.com for more.

Desktops vs. laptops

If you or a staff member at your rink sit at a computer every day to mind all the back-office tasks, the choice between buying and using a laptop or a desktop computer might not be clear. True, a laptop has a much smaller footprint, and that's appealing. Laptops are attractive and trendy, as well. That's one of the reasons that **Dell**, **Sony**, **Hewlett Packard** and others give laptops the marketing spotlight. Laptop *profit margins* are much higher, too, and that's a stronger reason they get the corporate nod. There are several other points to note, however, when considering a computer upgrade at your rink. Frankly, laptops are a *theft magnet*. They're easy to lift and conceal, and they bring a nice, fast and easy return on the black market. That "distinction" can raise your insurance costs, however, so it's vital that you talk to your insurance agent if you want to keep a laptop at the rink. Another problem that goes with laptop theft is the heist of the data *inside* the laptop, on its hard drive. For a host of reasons, you don't want to lose your digital

Dell Vostro

records tucked away on a laptop. That's disastrous. Another negative with laptops is their lack of *ergonomics*. The laptop keyboard is not designed for easy use, as your scrunched-up hands and fingers will tell you (carpal tunnel, anyone?). And your eyes will tell you that a laptop screen is never the match of a spacious 22-inch monitor, the norm with most of today's desktops. A further problem with laptops is *technical* — their connectivity (a limited number of USB ports, for example) and their ease of access for upgrades and repairs are minuses. And being compact,

laptops are much more prone to heat buildup and consequential hard drive and other operational failure. This alone can significantly increase your year-to-year expenditures. With all of this in mind, you can see why a *desktop* at your rink is the smart way to go, and this is why reviews and other coverage in this column are tailored to the desktop world.

Windows XP, Windows 7

Windows XP has been in use for several years, and it's evolved into a reliable, robust operating system, but its days are numbered. The reason isn't **XP's** successor, **Windows Vista**. It's **Windows 7**, due to be commercially available this fall, in new computers or as an upgrade to computers that have the hard-drive capacity and sophisticated underpinnings to properly utilize the operating system. Note these developments: **Microsoft** has announced it will offer very limited support after 2009 for **Windows XP**, as that operating system will be newly available on only beginner computers termed netbooks. Mainstream computers from this autumn on will be supplied with the **Windows 7** operating system. I've tested pre-release versions of **Windows 7** all the way up to their last release candidate, and while I don't have room here right now to go over system details, let me say that I think you'll enjoy the system and be open to its broad modernization of **Windows**. I recommend that you monitor a few Internet sites to bring yourself up to speed with the new system before you adapt it at your rink. Good information on **Windows 7** can be found at windows-7news.com and windows. microsoft.com, and go to youtube.com to type in "Windows 7" to see informative videos.

Products mentioned in this column are widely available. Check local office suppliers, computer and technology vendors, mass-merchandise and discount retailers, and mail-order and online sources. With broadband Internet access, software programs are a fast, easy and often cheaper download, saving you staff time and improving efficiency in many ways.

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