Improving the world one bad analogy at a time

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One thing I am known for at Microsoft is my frequent use of bad analogies. Everybody else at work has had to suffer; now it's your turn.

Why are there so many copies of svchost.exe running? What is svchost.exe anyway?

Traditionally, each service runs in its own process. When you are developing and testing your service, having it in its own process makes debugging a lot easier.

But if you look at your list of services (in Computer Management, Services), you can see that if each one got its own process you'd sure have a whole lot of processes lying around. Since there is a cost to each process merely for existing, having so many processes running would be a waste, since many services are used only sporadically. Tapisrv, for example, is active only when you are doing things with your modem.

For performance reasons, groups of services are thrown together and run in a shared process called svchost. Sort of like a reality TV show, but without the voting.

This means that if you see a copy of svchost.exe going a bit haywire in Task Manager, you can't really tell which service inside it is responsible. For performance reasons, groups of services are thrown together and run in a shared process called svchost. Sort of like a reality TV show. Knowledge Base article 314056 describes how you can dig into each svchost to see which services are running inside it. This will at least narrow the problem down to a subset of all the services.

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