Dispatching items collected from the suggestion box

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Okay, I got around to digging through the suggestion box, and today I'm going to dispatch the items that don't require much thought but seemed worthy of reply to some degree. You won't learn much of anything today.

- Topics I try to avoid
  "I would like to hear your opinion of the programming languages you have used."
  "What, in your opinion, is the strengths and weaknesses of the difference programming languages included in Visual Studio?"
  "What things do you wish had been added to Win32 that never were?"
  "What one thing do you believe should never have been added to Win32?"
  I try to avoid pure opinion pieces on technical matters. (Especially if they aren't funny.)

  "How is Microsoft working to eliminate the CRT-based 96dpi default setting in future versions of Windows?"
  "How has the command line evolved and where is it heading?"
  "How might Win32 evolve in the next version of Windows?"
  I try to avoid speculating about the future.

  "Do Microsofties keep their checkouts on their own hard drive, or do you have a home directory on a server?"
  "Does anyone ever get fired for making a mistake that costs everyone a lot of time and money?"
  I don't feel I have the authority to discuss this.

- Topics that are outside my realm of expertise

  "How should I store a user's credentials securely?"
  "Sometimes when we query the SID of a computer we get back a blank SID."
  You want to ask a security person, like say Michael Howard.

  "Terminal Services sessions won't span more than 1 monitor. Any workarounds or suggestions?"
  This a question for the Terminal Services team.

  "Why is it so hard to make Windows Messenger go away?"
  Try asking the Windows Messenger team.

  "Why doesn't the Office/Visual Studio team release the code for their neato UI's."
  "How do I paste pictures into a Word document?"
  "How do I position page numbers in Word?"
  "Why does the VBA ROUND function differ from Excel?"
  I am not the Office or Visual Studio team.

  "So, I'm wondering who to go to talk about COM marshalling stuff."
  "What settings is Windows saving when it says it's saving your settings at shutdown/logoff?"
  "Why are mutexes internally known in Windows NT as "mutants"?"
  "Is there any way to shutdown USB device using keyboard instead of clicking on notification icon?"
  "Can you comment on the IXmlSerializable interface..."
  "A question about the windows networking system..."
  "Is there any good reason Windows hardly ever finds the CD drive, or whatever directory you've already specified 17 times has the drivers?"
  "How about when you make some very minor change in TCP/IP settings and Windows reinstalls about 34 .dll files that are already in System32?"
  "Why does my 200GB drive show up as 131GB?"
  "How do I install Message Queueing?"
  "How do I fix the error 'Visual Basic module is corrupt'?"
  "Why does Internet Explorer lose my status bar?"
  I have no idea. I have never worked on logon/logoff or COM marshalling or USB hardware or the CLR or networking or Plug and Play or backup... (Though for the status bar question, I have a wild guess which is likely to be completely wrong. If the last window you close is a pop-up ad with no status bar, then maybe it is that "no status bar" that is the one that ends up being saved as your preference. Just a wild guess.)

"Why can't I customize X?"
Every customization comes at a cost. The line has to be drawn somewhere.

- Topics not of general interest (usually "please debug my computer")

  "Why does running MS Money make these shortcuts slow down to a crawl?"
  Sounds like something you should take up with the MS Money folks.

  "What's with that taskbar bug where you click the button for one window and another pops up right before it does?"
  I've never see this.

  "Why can't I rename My Computer?"
  "My Computer" renaming works for me.

  "In my program, I get an error resource not found."
  "I'm having a problem with backing up my computer."
  "I want to grep date or timestamp of files in UNIX through shell script where date format or timestamp is like 'Jul 9' or 'Jul 12'. In this where day is of single digit the space between month and day is 2 characters, but where day is of 2 digits the space is of 1 character."
  "I have a form that needs a date field to populate upon opening the file. Then the date will be used to generate a number for Tracking purposes. Then when the file is saved and e-mailed to the next person the date and number must remain fixed. What is the best way to set this up?"
  These questions aren't of general interest. One of them isn't even about Windows, and I don't understand that last one, but please, don't explain.

  "Help me get my iPod working."
  "Please translate this into German for me."
  "Please forward me some information as well as a demo and some samples of Blogs." (from a Fortune 500 company no less)
  "How do I take a screenshot of my Powerbook G4?"
  I am at a loss as to how I should respond to these requests.

- Short answers

  "At one point with tab controls it was documented to let you set the color of the tab. Why was it removed?"
  You could do that? News to me.

  "Why do you make it so hard to properly create a replacement shell?"
  It's not that anybody makes it hard; rather that nobody goes out of their way to make it easy.

  "Why is explorer.exe monolithic? Why wasn't there a desktop.exe, taskbar.exe, etc?"
  Processes are expensive.

  "If a program has a dialog box open, why does Alt+Tab show the dialog box title, but Task Manager shows the application title?"
  Because Alt+Tab is for switching among windows. But Task Manager is for switching among applications.

  "What is the history of the "X" button?"
  Nothing earth-shattering. Studies showed that people didn't know how to exit programs, so some people sat down and tried to work out some universal symbol that would clearly indicate "Close".

  "Why can't you change the bitmap on the Start menu?"
  It's branding.

  "Why is it so hard to write a program that does gross things to Explorer?"
  Allowing other programs do gross things to Explorer wasn't on its list of design goals.

Other entries require more thought. Each non-code entry takes me a half hour or so, more if I have to do research (if somebody asks me a question outside my area of expertise and I feel like hunting for the answer), and the code entries require an hour and a half or more. Some of them take days. I think I spent three weeks on the dialog box template series, and about as much on the context menus. (And there are plenty of other series in various stages of completion.)

I don't get paid to do this. It's just a hobby. It's frustrating when people order you to spend more time on your hobby. And then when you decide it's too much and start closing comments to try to get some of your life back, people call you a coward and assume that you stopped for some nefarious reason. (Like when they say, "Look, Raymond closed comments as soon as people started asking embarrassing questions." But the comment timestamps prove otherwise. I closed comments weeks or months later.)

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