



Islander November 2008 Technology Update

Christmas Gadgets

We're coming up to Christmas again so it's time for another serious look at all the latest "gadgeteria".

I don't know where to start, as the Christmas Gadget selection grows and grows each year. In recent years, hard work and disposable wealth have created an unprecedented demand for gadgets, otherwise known as "things you never knew you needed"! This demand may be about to shrink, as what was disposable income turns into the all-important rainy day fund. As you are no doubt aware, gazillions of little knick knacks are now available from several gadgeteering websites, many of which I have been surfing diligently over the past few weeks, purely with your interest at heart...

So, here goes with some ideas to help you provide a little light entertainment for your loved ones this Christmas, or alternatively to provide some inspiration when faced with the dreaded "secret Santa" for the office party.

As this column is nominally a Technical Update, I have decided to stick to that theme by looking at just one technical subset of the great gadgets of the world. Don't be put off when I say that these are all USB devices. After all, this abbreviation can have many interpretations. Look through beer glasses and you may see UnSolicited Brats, Ugly Since Birth, Under Slung Bra, Ugly Sensitive and Boring, or, through your agua con gas glasses, you are more likely to read Unreal Speed Boost, Usage Sensitive Billing, Un Sporting Behaviour, or even Universal Serial Bus. Anyway, the USB port itself is clearly not very interesting, but all the gadgets which you can connect through this little socket on the side of your computer certainly are. Read on.

The USB Stress Button

When you see your boss heading towards your desk, you may wish to adopt some 'I really am very busy' techniques in order to disguise the fact that you are actually playing Sun Bingo or ordering all your Christmas presents from Amazon.co.uk. One technique is the 'furrowed brow and rapid mouse clicking' technique. However, this does require an awful lot of concentration to convincingly pull off.

Another option is to hit the **USB Stress Button**. When you do, it instantly opens a boring document on your desktop to conceal the non-work-related web page you've just been browsing.

Your boss will make his final approach, see that you are absorbed in your numbers, charts, and graphs, and turn back with an impressed smile on his face.

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Includes:

- 1 x USB Stress Button
- 1 x Windows software CD

Product Specification:

- Requires a computer with Windows XP, 1.66mhz processor and above, 64MB RAM and USB port
- Not Mac compatible for obvious reasons
- USB powered

As recommended by most of my staff...

USB Foot warmers

Your feet are two of the most useful, if sometimes unsightly, appendages you own. Should they freeze, your ability to stand, walk, run, and go home after a hard day in the office will be severely inhibited.

USB Foot Warmers to the rescue - these slippers will warm one's peripheries during your working day or night, even in the height of summer when the air conditioning gets too much. Simply plug them into a USB port for instant warmth and comfort.

Features

- Made from soft, snugly fur
- Warmed through a compact, ultra-flexible heat panel in the sole
- Heat panel can be removed so foot warmers can be washed
- Plug and Play - no software required
- Connects to any old computer with any USB port

As recommended by some of my staff...

USB Greenhouse

Are you the kind of person who can't keep a plant alive on your window sill, desk, cabin or owner's state rooms? The secret, of course, is all down to tender loving care, a bit of silver-tongued chat, regular watering... and a high-performance PC.

Yes, a high performance PC is essential. It's only now that the benefits of computer processing are trickling down and being felt in the little-understood field of office-based horticulture.

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Introducing the USB Greenhouse. You get the complete office gardening kit, including a USB-powered miniature greenhouse together with adjustable growth light, PC interface to monitor growth and well-being, marigold seeds and artificial soil. Even the soil is virtual.

Simply plant your seeds, sit back, watch and let the computer take the strain of the monitoring. All that's required of you is to log in on a regular basis and do whatever you're told. Ezy pea zee.

Features:

- USB powered mini greenhouse
- User manual
- Software CD
- Marigold seeds
- Artificial soil

Note: USB Stress Button not compatible with the USB Greenhouse.

As recommended by none of my staff.

USB ECO Button

I feel a cynical Clarkson moment coming on here, but it is nevertheless my duty to report on this USB device.

Go green with the multi award-winning Eco Button. This is one of those ideas straight out of the 'now why didn't we think of that' department. I'm feeling a little sick!

Combining an ever-present reminder of the need to save energy (and therefore CO2 emissions), with an easy way of actually doing it, this clever, money-saving device is designed to help you, your colleagues and the whole planet from the scourge of idling PCs.

Imagine how much energy is wasted every time you leave your desk to make a cup of tea, have a fag break, go out to lunch, or go to the loo. We don't shut our PCs down for the duration, because, let's face it, they take an age to boot back up again. Easier to leave them on, but needlessly wasteful.

In one fell swoop, the Eco Button obviates all that shutting down and booting up nonsense. Connected to one's computer by the marvel of USB technology, giving the button a gentle press will automatically activate your computer's deep-level energy-saving 'eco' (or 'sleep') mode.

It will happily doze, using as little as 1.8 watts, with all your programs still open, ready to be reactivated on your return. Simply

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tap any key (or, in some cases, touch the power on button) and your computer will be instantly restored to life - having saved oodles of watts in the process.

How it Works

- 1) Plug the Eco Button into your USB port
- 2) Press the button when leaving your computer
- 3) Your computer will go into standby
- 4) Press the button on returning
- 5) Admire how much money and CO2 emissions you have saved
- 6) Office smokers can organize their own carbon offset program

System requirements:

- Minimum 5Mb hard disk space and 256kb RAM
- Compatible with Windows 2000 / XP / Vista 32 bit
- Not Mac compatible
- Some older PCs and HP models may be incompatible with Eco Button

As recommended by my eco-warrior daughters...

USB Accessory Gift Pack

This is a special for all those Christmas Scrooge bosses out there, who need to encourage their staff to work harder and spend much more time at their desk working on their computers.

If any of your staff or colleagues complain that they are spending too much time sitting in front of their computer screens, here's a little USB Gift Pack, which should keep them more comfortable, while still making sure that they don't leave their post. Here's how.

First item in the Gift Pack is something to avoid dehydration, so the brain and body keep functioning at an optimum level. The **USB Cup Warmer** will keep a warm drink to hand, and ensure that there's no need to keep getting up and leaving your work station in order to make fresh cups of tea or coffee throughout the day. One cup of coffee will stay warm (if not fresh) all day.

One problem that results from overworked keyboards, sometimes with a few spilt drinks and biscuits thrown in, is sticky keyboard syndrome. If keys get stuck or the computer starts to malfunction, productivity drops. The **USB Keyboard Vacuum** has a built-in LED light that illuminates the smallest areas on the keyboard where crumbs might be hidden. The light is also useful for those forced to work through the night. It also comes with a brush attachment for

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cleaning right between the keys, ensuring a dust-free keyboard that continues to work efficiently day and night!

Finally, to avoid complaints that you are pushing too hard, you need to keep your staff and colleagues free from aches and pains if they are to remain happy at all times. The **USB Body Massager** is a hand-held device, with a high speed setting, that can slowly soothe away the neck, shoulder, or back cramps that come with sitting over a computer for hours on end.

We recommend the USB Gift Pack to encourage greater PC productivity. Look after your staff and earn the "Thoughtful Boss" Award Certificate.

Features

- All USB devices have a stylish titanium/chrome look
- The USB Keyboard Vacuum comes with a 303cm coiled cable, for easy reach, and reusable dust bag.
- A "Thoughtful Boss" Award Certificate for your office wall.

Includes

- USB Powered Keyboard Vacuum Cleaner (with build-in LED light)
- USB Powered Body Massager
- USB Powered Cup Warmer

As recommended by me.

USB phone charger

There's nothing more irritating than finding you have forgotten to pack your phone charger or power adapter when arriving in a foreign hotel. In the office, pulling unidentified plugs out of sockets in an attempt to find one to charge your mobile can be like Russian Roulette. One plug might belong to the office printer. The other might be your boss's computer.

To avoid this potentially explosive situation, charge your mobile with the **USB Phone Charger** instead. It is light and compact and has an auto-retract design so it doesn't get tangled up like a regular charger and is easy to carry.

Features

- Auto-retract design so it doesn't get tangled up
- Comes in a stylish black presentation box



- Compatible with many of the following models: Nokia, Siemens, Motorola, Sony Ericsson, Samsung.

As recommended by us all.

Well, that's all folks. Have a Universally Serious Binge this Christmas! Many, many thanks to all our customers and we wish you all good health and prosperity in 2009.

Roger Horner of E3 Systems

For any answers, questions or information on any of the above, please contact us.

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