

Continuous Reboot

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A friend has a machine with XP-Home on it which suddenly fails by repeatedly rebooting whenever it's turned on. So he called me to look at it. Some observations:

1) The first thing I see is that it appears to boot properly, then something executes which kills the system. That something may be me invoking a program, or it may happen just sitting there. XP flashes up a full page of error text and then blacks it out in about one second which is really not very helpful. The first line says something about "If you've seen this error before"... On down one can catch a quick flash something about perhaps it's got insufficient disk space. (not the problem — 20GB disk with 4GB free). Further down is something about maybe newly installed hardware or device drivers something, something, something. There is nothing newly installed though. At the bottom there's a line of hex dump that I have no idea what it is since it disappears so quickly.

2) So my second attempt is to boot the system in Safe mode. That's better, but still very twitchy and will reboot itself randomly. Nothing untoward is in the Startup folder. When I try to restore the system to a previous level the system will fail. "Help & Support" works, but when I click on the "Restore" link I get an error message: "The procedure entry point to UuidToStringW could not be located in the dll RPCRT4.dll".

3) Running Chkdsk will sometimes find a few problems to correct. I suspect that every time the machine crashes there's a possibility of screwing up the disk a little bit more and creating new problems for chkdsk to find.

4) Unfortunately, I don't think the machine's XP has been updated in a dog's age — if ever. And it can't be done now because every time I try to do so the machine fails and reboots. Don't even ask about virus software.

Is there anything to do with this short of trying to reload the operating system from scratch? And can I just reload XP without trashing the rest of the disk? I rather doubt that any backups have been done on the system, so I'd rather not trash the data files if possible until XP can be made stable enough to off load backups of the data files.

Any suggestions? Thanks.

Bill

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