

microsoft.public.windowsxp.hardware: Re: ***** sp2 bREAKS eVERYTHING!!!! *****

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From: cquirke (MVP Win9x) (cquirkenews_at_nospam.mvps.org)

Date: 09/05/04

Date: Sun, 05 Sep 2004 14:28:03 +0200

On Sat, 04 Sep 2004 (Don Taylor) dont@agora.rdrop.com

> "[cquirke \(MVP Win9x\)](mailto:cquirke (MVP Win9x) <cquirkenews@nospam.mvps.org>)" <cquirkenews@nospam.mvps.org> writes:

>> On Fri, 03 Sep 2004 (Don Taylor) dont@agora.rdrop.com

>>> Nathan McNulty <nospam@msn.com> writes:

>>>> First off, where are these posts about SP2 that haven't been explained?

>>> Ok, explanation for "click on a file and Windows Explorer crashes"?

>> Let's get some detail there, else it's GIGO (Garbage In, Garbage Out),

> I'll certainly agree with your "garbage" position, there are hundreds

> of knee-jerk platitude postings here about what people should do when

> they have SP2 problems that have nothing to do with details and almost

> no evidence that doing them has accomplished the desired goal.

Ai, be nice ;-)

Speaking for myself, I find ngs with > 500 posts a day to be more than I can manage. Up to 20 posts a day, I can read every one and reply to all that I can contribute to; I try to do that in the .za groups. Up to 150 a day, I can read all subject headers and usually maintain continuity. But xp.general's 1000-2000 a day is simply too much; I follow up threads that my Free Agent is "watching", and I look for "sp2" in the first few and the last few new subject headers, and the rest I delete unseen. Brutal, but that's all I can do.

Because I've had detailed and early exposure to the Prescott issue, I focus on that - but I don't just bang out that advice to all SP2 issues; I read to see whether it's relevant. It's relevant when the particular failure pattern comes up (installs OK, locks every subsequent boot with no error messages) or when it's a "should I install SP2?" post ("do you have a recent system with Intel CPU?")

OTOH, there are lots of posters who base thier advice on a narrow range of experience; either "works fine on the 12 PCs I installed it on" or "I installed it on mine, and it was a disaster!". That becomes a real problem when these posters arrogantly dismiss other poster's mileage, e.g. "because it worked fine on my 12 PCs, there must be

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something wrong with you or the way you installed SP2".

I don't reply to a lot of posts, but do spend quite a bit of time on each. That's all very well, but may be less effective than someone who helps more readers by replying to more posts, even if it is only to paste in boilerplate text, or off-the-page URLs.

>...love the ones that think defragging enough might yield a miracle.

Ah, that's one of my pet hates!

Please, dudes, raise your soldering iron in your right hand and inscribe the following on the back of your left hand:

"Defrag is NOT a troubleshooting tool, and is dangerous for unknown and troublesome PCs that may have at-risk file systems, hard drives or other flaky hware e.g. RAM"

A fragged file system will slow things down to a mild to moderate extent, but the only stability impact is that the critical window period of file system operations may be prolonged.

>> Which file? Where is the file? In what way does it crash?

>You can search the last 4000 postings in the windowsxp.general >newsgroup and look for Explorer to see how similar the descs are.

Er, I can't do that easily, as it happens. Dunno how to do it in Free Agent, not keen on wading around through a browser ;-)

>Most of these crash when a user clicks on an entry or double >clicks on an entry to open it. Scan all the postings an try to >see that they apparently fall into one or two, maybe three groups, >and the descriptions are actually pretty consistent.

I'd love to harvest that info, but frankly it looks like too much work. Normally, I'd suggest you post a new thread and I'd catch you there, but this "xp.general" ng is so full I'd likely never see it – and bulging a new sub-thread out of this one isn't great either.

If you like, you could email me directly, or maybe we could start a new thread in a quieter ng such as...

microsoft.public.windowsxp.configuration_manage

...and if you tell me (by reply in this thread) what subject line to look out for, I'll meet you there.

>..."my computer is on fire" and you would get MVP's saying >"scan for viruses and spyware".

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Ah, yes. Well, because malware is designed to defy troubleshooting and mimic other things (including unrelated error messages), I see great value in excluding this as part of the "prelim".

This is dogfood that I eat myself. Whenever an arbitrary PC comes in, I don't even run Windows until I've done this...

<http://cquirke.mvps.org/9x/bthink.htm>

...i.e. checked for RAM and HD errors and formally scanned for traditional malware. Only then do I go interactive, and usually the first thing I do in Windows is to scan for and manage commercial malware ("spyware" etc.). Then I know that the floorboards I'm walking on are not going to collapse, and that the black boxes I reach my hand into aren't going to contain snakes that bite me!

*>but I think a disproportionate amount of the problems in the install
>of SP2 have been "dealt with" by just pointing fingers at supposed
>viruses and spyware, with extremely few reports that this was found
>to then be the case.*

What I look for are stereotypical patterns of failure, and these usually relate to specific issues, e.g.:

- specific STOP errors on start
- keeps rebooting on start
- locks up on black GUI on all boots (Ptrescott)
- runs OK normally but Safe Mode fails

OTOH, when the PC is infected with one/some of multiple malware, the chances are it's also been subjected to bit-rot from AutoChk "fixing" broken files are numerous bad exits. The chance of any stereotypical pattern emerging out of this sprawl of permutations is slight.

*>And at the end of one of my postings, clearly anyone who was thinking
>about doing an upgrade with naive users and who easily could have had
>compromised systems would might have thought to do a scan for stuff
>like this before doing the install. That might have easily saved 90%
>of the people from having these problems*

Yes, but it's not easy for MS to make specific recommendations here, without Qs like; why recommend av product X and not Y? etc.

Also, MS may (should) find it embarrassing that NTFS lacks a proper maintenance OS from which a formal virus scan can be done.

>I cannot imagine why they didn't 1: virus scan,

Lack of mOS is a big obstacle for those who bought the hype and went NTFS. You can hardly expect MS to say...

- use the WinPE boot CD (that we won't license to you)
- use Bart's PE

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– use a Linux boot CDR
...and the usual advice to...
– use Safe Mode and Stinger (which scans for 60 out of thousands)
– visit an online av scanning site
...is pathetically weak for obvious reasons.

>2: *spyware scan,*
>3: *sfc run*

I wouldn't have thought of that ;-)

>4: *registry validate,*

How does one do that, i.e. what built-in tools does XP offer?

>5: *kill all processes*

Dangerous advice if online (need that firrewall!)

>*I don't think that anywhere in the Microsoft "instructions" did it
>say that you first needed to do a virus scan, fix any problems,
>then do a spyware scan, fix any problems, ...*

Yes – there's a conflict of interest between wanting all PCs to patch up, and warning on all the risks / precautions of patching up.

There's also an inherent tech-awareness mismatch between the low level of tech insight that SP seeks to support, and the higher level of tech insight needed to validate PC as safe for SP2 application.

>>>*I install SP2 and Windows Explorer in every use on the system immediately
>>>locks up, refuses any keystroke or mouse click.*

This is the specific issue I want to flesh out off-thread...

>>*I'd really like more detail on that, as it's not a failure pattern
>>I've seen in posts here. How does YMMV if you:
>> – run Safe Mode?
>done that*

<sigh> Yes, but what happened?

>> – *suppress all in MSConfig?*

>*checked that*

Yes, but what happened?

>> – *use Shell Extension Viewer to suppress CLSID integrations?*

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Thinking that this is likely to be where the body's buried. Most of us have pet tools and things we like to install on all systems we touch, and a conflict with one of these may make the problem look more global than it is. For example, I always build with FATxx, not NTFS, and use multiple volumes with XP installed in a path other than C:\Windows; anything that fails on that will fail on "all" (my) PCs.

>> – *use something other than Explorer.exe as shell=?*

>*nope, actually, trying to not mess too much with the system until we can actually find the real root cause of this.*

I can relate to that. If you find that Safe and MSConfig suppression both fail in the same way, then try Safe Mode Command Only, and see if that works fine until you run Explorer. If it does, then you could try normal mode with something other than Explorer as shell= (something I've rarely done in XP but often in 9x), or just proceed directly to Shell Extension Viewer – which shows shell integrations that MSConfig doesn't, and which may be active in "safe".

>> – *kill off Common Tasks and (if possible) Desktop.ini processing?*

>*nope, but run very few things like that myself*

Other things may run from there, that's the point – not just malware, but accepted software too.

>> – *disable your LAN card in this profile to suppress networking?*
>*none present*

No LAN factor? OK. Most new mobos have LAN built-in, so it's still a step worth trying, in case the PC goes off on a doomed "let's find an IP address for this PC's (non-existent) LAN" quest.

>> – *suppress BHOs via IE's Tools, Options, Advanced?*

>*I've done hijack this scans and have very few of those present*

OK, but it still may be worth suppressing these via that setting.

>> – *NTFS vs. FATxx mileage differences?*

>*Well, I'd really rather not risk blowing away my complete system*
>*just to see whether the file system makes a difference unless you*
>*can show me how much it is going to be worth to me*

No, what I meant was; are your test systems NTFS or FATxx or both? My own is FATxx, so if all of yours are NTFS and you wanted me to test on FATxx, I could, as long as you can encapsulate the test suite.

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>I did escalate my Windows Explorer problem to Microsoft. They came
>back and concluded "some file must be corrupted, repair windows back
>to the original state and try reinstalling SP2 twice while you are
>in Safe mode." Before I did that someone found that some folks see
>Windows Explorer work when they create a new user and switch to that
>user. I did that and in my case it works, also works in Safe mode.

Ahhh... OK, then what ye seek is mediated by per-account settings:

- HKCU
- HKCU overrides of HKCR (new XP feature)
- StartUp
- "other"

>I sent this additional info to MS, saying that this seemed to make
>it less likely that "some file was corrupted" and asked for their
>analysis. There has been no reponse from them for days now on this.

OK. From what you've given me, I can't get very specific either.

>>When Windows Explorer first starts, it may break on namespace
>>enumeration issues – things that aren't really drives but pretend to
>>be, that sort of thing.

>I don't know how I could tell you whether that is the case or not.

Sure, it's not always easy to get tools to show you what you need to know, and sometimes you need (hopefully free) 3rd-party tools such as Shell Extension Viewer. It's a good start to know what you need to find out, though, and that's the spirit of my advice.

Things that are relevant here:

- LAN drive mappings
- NTFS re-parse points (trickery such as "call C:\This\Path" "D:")
- other NTFS funnies (EFS, sparse files, compression, quota etc.)
- virtual CD, i.e. "copy CD to HD and treat as drive letter"
- 3rd-partyware that treats "private" files as drive letters
- 3rd-partyware that drop non-file, non-shortcut items on desktop
- anything odd that shows up outside drive letters in Explorer
- TweakUI settings to hide drives etc.
- cameraware that jumps in to manage USB plug-ins
- CDRW packet-writing sware that fiddles with CDRW drive

>>Then, when it tries to list files in a folder, it may break on
>>persistent handlers, i.e. thumbnails or other code that runs when
>>files are enumerated, before any attempt is made to select or "open"
>>them. Antivirus scanners may impact at this point.

...as can viruses, of course.

Think any sort of indexers (including the Indexing Service), anything that maintains thumbnail views, things that extract icons out of

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graphic file content, etc.

>> *Then when you click or hover over something to select it, there may be
>> further persistent handler code run to populate the status bar info or
>> tooltip, e.g. things like .DOC authorship or .ZIP content file counts.*

> *In my case Windows Explorer doesn't crash, it actually refuses to accept
> any mouse click or keystroke and just "pongs" at me.*

Ah; use Alt-Tab to see if there's an "always in front" modal dialog box that is not in front, thus presenting as a pseudo-crash.

> *most other folks report crashes on clicks or right clicks.*

Clicks, and especially rt-clicks, smell like context menu integration.

Thar be many, many dragons; think WinZip, WinRAR, IOmegaware, packet-writing CDRWare, av, all manner of fluff.

>-----
Error Messages Are Your Friends
>-----

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