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## Email Is Making You Stupid



Thomas Fox is president of Tech Experts, southeast Michigan's leading small business computer support company.

"The research is overwhelming. Constant email interruptions make you less productive, less creative, and, if you're emailing

while you're also doing something else, just plain dumb."

That quote - and the headline - comes from an article by Joe Robinson in Information Week magazine. When it arrived in my inbox, I was compelled to read it.

The fact is, as business owners, our lives have gotten incredibly more complex as we become more and more connected. Smart phones keep our email in front of us 24 hours a day, seven days a week - which compels us to be available on the same schedule.

The study Robinson sites was conducted by the University of Minnesota. It found that managing "peripheral tasks" - those things we do while we're also doing something

else - triggered twice the number of errors, and increased levels of annoyance by anywhere from 31 to 106 percent.

### Time Is Money

Given our constant state of "connectedness" to clients, employees and prospects, it's easy to think that we have to respond instantly to a request. I get caught in that trap: Thinking I'm being efficient when I handle something immediately.

Interestingly, Intel conducted a study of employee productivity, and found that email overload cost the company almost \$1 billion a year in lost productivity. Each day, a typical office employee checks email 50 times, and uses an instant messaging application 77 times.

Interruptions like this not only sidetrack employees from their jobs, but also lower overall attention spans and increase stress by measurable levels. Job satisfaction and creativity also suffer.

### Myth Of Multitasking

Again, from Robinson's article: "Human brains come equipped with two kinds of attention: Involuntary and voluntary. Involuntary attention, designed to be on the watch for

threats to survival, is triggered by outside stimuli - what grabs you. It's automatically rattled by the workday cacophony of rings, pings and buzzes that are turning jobs into an electronic game of Whac-a-Mole. Voluntary attention is the ability to concentrate on a chosen task."

As your attention span is bounced around by constant interruptions, your brain changes: Interruptions erode an area called effortful control, and with it the ability to regulate attention.

In other words, the more you check your messages, the more you feel the need to check them - an urge familiar to BlackBerry or iPhone users.

The cult of multitasking would have us believe that compulsive message-checking is the behavior of an always-on, hyper-productive worker. But it's not. It's the sign of a distracted employee who misguidedly believes he can do multiple tasks at one time. Science disagrees.

People may be able to chew gum and walk at the same time, but they can't do two or more thinking tasks simultaneously.

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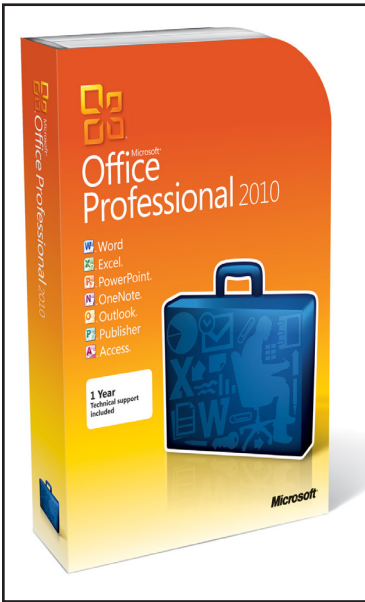
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## Office 2010: Definitely Worth Upgrading Your System



*Corey Bogedain is a network technician and web developer with Tech Experts.*

Now that Office 2010 is available, companies should consider whether to invest in the latest version of the software. My answer is: It depends, with a strong leaning toward “yes!”

The “it depends” part considers the current state of your business’ hardware, what version of Office you are currently using, how your firm’s other software applications integrate with an upgrade and most importantly, your technology budget.

### Office 2010: The Latest

According to Microsoft, the Office 2010 suite is designed to make work flows more efficient; to effectively use Web applications to make work available anywhere; and to make collaboration with others much easier.

When considering whether to upgrade to Office 2010, Outlook’s integration with Exchange Server 2010 may be a consideration for some firms.

Exchange Server 2010 is designed to reduce deployment costs; simplify high availability and disaster recovery, ease administration and provide greater mobility and flexible access.

### Your Hardware and Operating Systems

For some, the decision about whether to upgrade to Office 2010 may depend on where your busi-

ness is in its hardware life cycle. If you have older machines that might not support the increased hardware requirements of Office 2010, it is probably best to wait for the upgrade to coincide with your hardware refresh.

For businesses that still use Windows XP, upgrading to 2010 may not be an option, since the newest software program will probably not run efficiently on the older operating system.

### Your Current Version of Office

Many companies are still using Office 2000 or Office 2003, so their choices may be between forging ahead with Office 2007 or jumping straight to Office 2010.

The learning curve is an issue to consider. Office 2007 and Office 2010 are strikingly different from the 2003 version, while Office 2010 has a more similar look and feel to Office 2007.

This is particularly true when it comes to the “ribbon,” the Office Fluent User Interface that replaced the traditional menu and toolbars in Office 2007.

Firms that are upgrading from Office 2007 to 2010 will have fewer training issues than those that are still using Office 2003 or Office 2000.

### Integration Issues

Integration issues should always be a concern for any business considering new technologies.

Integration with your billing, document management, client relationship management, and calendaring software should all be considered.

Often, third-party applications will require patches or updates in order to work seamlessly with Office 2010.

Communicate beforehand with your vendors to ensure that all applications will function without a hitch during and after the installation of Office 2010.

Proper planning is key, but so is testing. Testing should include both compatibility and usability.

The staff that will use the software should have an opportunity to examine it - they’ll be the best judge of how much additional training will be required.

### Budgetary Issues

Now more than ever, small businesses need to get the biggest bang for their technology buck. It is not the time to roll out a new software program that may be buggy or have integration issues.

For firms with limited IT budgets, the more-proven Office 2007 could be the smarter choice, especially if the new version of Office is purchased with Microsoft Software Assurance, which gives you upgrade rights in the future to Office 2010.

Regardless of the decision your firm makes about upgrading to Office 2010, preparation is the key.

You’ll need to prepare your staff for any changes and plan for a reduction in productivity during the initial roll out.

Planning is extremely important, to ensure that the integration proceeds smoothly and the firm employees can reap all of the benefits they expect - and that they have paid for.



## Many Factors Influence Video Speed And Quality



*Ryan Seymour is a PC hardware specialist and the Tech Experts Service Manager.*

on a computer system.

Websites like YouTube, Flickr, and MetaCafe have taken the online video revolution and turned it upside down the last few years with advances in audio/video technologies and the affordability and availability of high speed Internet connections.

So you are on the Internet watching one of your favorite videos on YouTube, but the video does not play smoothly, seems to skip frames, and sometimes even just sits there and does nothing; why you might ask.

I will go over a few tips and tricks that can either fix the problem, or move you in the right direction to resolving those frustrating video issues.

As you can imagine, there are a number of reasons why this could be happening, but let's start with your system before exploring other possibilities.

A good quick test is to play a video from either a CD or DVD that you have in your possession or one you have already downloaded onto your system's hard drive.

If the media plays from your local system with no issue, the problem probably exists outside of your

system and other options should be explored, but what if it's not?

are several hundred thousand other people attempting to stream the same video as you, this can cause the video to be slow.

Although this one isn't as typical as the others' it still happens, and the only way to check against this would be to try the video at a later time in the day.

Again this applies to the users who are accessing content via the

system and other options should be explored, but what if it's not?

### Memory

Ensure your computer has enough memory. If you're not sure how much you have or you should have, give us a call to have your machine checked over for upgrade options.

### Virus/Malware

If your system is infected with a virus or some type of malicious software, it could be consuming

valuable resources that your system needs to stream videos.

Try running a scan with your antivirus software and again if you're not sure we're here

to help with the virus removal.

### Internet Speed

If your Internet connection is on the slow side, this could also cause a problem.

Remember when you're accessing videos from the Internet, the data is transferred across the Internet to your system where it is played, unlike putting a DVD/CD into your disc drive and playing it right from your system. The data is all there and does not need to be transferred, compiled, and played.

### Congestion

If the video that you are trying to play is out on the Net and there

are several hundred thousand other people attempting to stream the same video as you, this can cause the video to be slow.

Although this one isn't as typical as the others' it still happens, and the only way to check against this would be to try the video at a later time in the day.

### Buffering

Again this applies to the users who are accessing content via the



Internet, try pausing the video, and letting the progress bar on the video build up before playing. This is called buffering, which can stop choppy videos from stopping and playing.

These are going to be the top five reasons I've come across when diagnosing video quality issues on a computer and via Internet web sites.

Remember there are several factors that affect the performance and quality of your video, and many times a combination of factors. But if you keep an eye on these five, your video experience should be a lot less frustrating.



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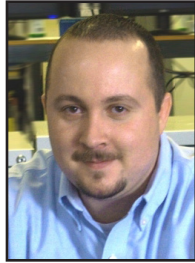
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## Is It Time To Explore Alternatives To Internet Explorer?



*Will Alston is a PC hardware technician with Tech Experts.*

Internet Explorer, for most part is incorporated in our everyday lives, in one way or another.

Internet Explorer is a very solid web browser, but you may be tired of it and want to try something new or different out.

Some people say that they are frustrated with the constant updates, script errors, and the warnings over and over again. The frustration can end today!

Here is a brief overview of the three most common web browsers that are used other than Internet Explorer. All three work on most Windows based Operating Systems and are all free to download and use.

### Google Chrome

This is Google's gateway into the realm of Internet browsers. Chrome is a stripped-down web browser that

So, how do we crawl out of the attention void? Interruption management. Here's some things I'm trying:

Turn off all of the alerts that let you know you've got mail.

Pick a few times per day - four maximum - to check your email. Outside of those designated times, keep Outlook closed.

Don't let email be the default communication device. Communicating

is designed to run "lean and mean." If you are using a slower computer or maybe you are concerned about resource usage on your system then this is the browser meant for you.

The layout of this browser is a little different than what most people are used to, it is sort of plain looking, but gets straight to the point.

I highly recommend giving this one a try for a few days and see if you like it or not. Download is available at [google.com/chrome](http://google.com/chrome).

### Firefox

Mozilla Firefox is currently the second most widely-used web browser in the world. Firefox programmers routinely fix security issues as well as develop many useful plug ins to enhance the entire operation and your web browsing experience.

I do not recommend downloading every plug in, but there are many that you will find useful. Download is available at [Mozilla.com](http://Mozilla.com)

### Opera

The least known web browser of them all is Opera, made by Opera

Software. Opera works on all Operating Systems.

It is one of the fastest browsers now available and it also has the added advantage of being optimized for use on mobile devices. It is also specially designed for users who have visual or motor impairments.

Opera has received tons of positive reviews and is winning industry awards for usability. Download is available at [opera.com](http://opera.com).

All of these web browsers have their strengths and weaknesses, but you don't have to settle for the browser that came with your system.

If you're not happy with Internet Explorer, then I would give all three of these a try. They're all quick to install and use.

If you have trouble installing or using any of these web browsers give the Tech Experts support team a call at (734)-457-5000. Or, you can just bring your system in to us and we'll work with you to get everything set up properly.

## Email Is Making You Stupid, Continued From Page 1

by phone or face-to-face saves time and builds relationships.

Respond immediately only to urgent issues. Just because a message can be delivered instantly does not mean you must reply instantly.

Severely restrict use of the reply-all function.

Put "no reply necessary" in the subject line when you can. No one knows when an e-conversation is over without an explicit signal.

Resist your reply reflex. Don't send emails that say "Got it" or "Thanks."

Use automatic out-of-office messages to carve out focused work time, such as: "I'm on deadline with a project and will be back online after 4 p.m."

Please email me at [tfox@expertsmi.com](mailto:tfox@expertsmi.com) and tell me about your interruption management methods. I'll let you know in a the next few months how it goes.