Presto offers alternative to hibernate and sleep

May 6 2009, By Craig Crossman

In this day and age of instant gratification, we don't like waiting for anything. Some of us can remember having to wait when we turned on the television as the tubes inside warmed up and the picture slowly faded into view. As a kid, I remember my amazing portable Zenith transistor radio that played instantly when I turned it on unlike other radios that had to warm up.

We really don't like having to wait for anything anymore when you power them on. Even electric cook tops now offer instant heat using magnetic induction technology. So why does the single most important technological device of this century still take about three minutes on average to boot up?

Yes I'm talking about the personal computer, our technological icon of the digital age. Every morning I sit down, turn my computer on and find something else to do instead of just sitting there watching it slowly creep through all the startup screens, waiting for the countless little components to sequentially load in and begin whatever processes they are supposed to do as the little pictographs appear across the bottom of the screen with cryptic little messages fading in and out while the hard drive light incessantly flickers as more and more processes begin to activate. Is it done?

I mean the light sopped flickering so can I begin now? No, wait, it's flickering again and more little balloon messages fade in and out. And all I really want to do is quickly check my e-mail, type a letter or two and

check out a few websites. Why can't I just turn this thing on and go to work? And shutting it down is almost as bad. Sometimes it takes the computer longer to turn off than it does starting up!

Fortunately there's Hibernate and Sleep modes. These alternatives to shutting down the computer let me get up and running in a fraction of the time. Still there are some compromises one makes using these options. While Sleep mode is the fastest path back to being ready to work, it requires a low power drain to keep things active in memory. If power is somehow interrupted, whatever work you had suspended is lost. Hibernate doesn't require any power as the state of the computer is saved in a special file which is read back into the computer's memory when turned back on. But while it takes more time to come back on, it's still faster than having to reboot from scratch. Constantly using Hibernate can also cause data to become fragmented and eventually you need to reboot anyway.

There is something new you may want to check out that offers an interesting alternative to Sleep and Hibernate. Presto ($19.95) is a little utility that lets you run certain programs without Windows. Because you don't need to launch Windows, your computer starts in seconds rather than minutes. It also shuts down instantly. Presto won't let you do everything you can do in Windows but it certainly covers most of the everyday items.

You can check e-mail, browse the web using Firefox, chat using instant messaging, play games, make Skype calls, listen to music, watch videos, view and edit Microsoft Office documents and lots more. There's even a Presto Application Store website you can visit to access and download a growing number of applications that are designed to work in the Presto environment. These applications are divided into categories such as Games, Education, Business and Productivity. Many of them are free.

You can try Presto free for seven days to see if you like it. After the trial period is over, it will only run something for 10 minutes before it stops. If you like it, you can buy the license key right at the Presto website. So if you're completely tired of having to wait every time you turn your computer on and off, stop wasting time and check it out.

More information: prestomypc.com

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