

Rich's Ramblings February 2006:

Hamachi:

I have not digressed to my days in the USN where I was stationed in Yokosuka Japan so don't worry about Rich getting senile (although some might differ) or whatever. I have been working with a Virtual Private Network (VPN) program called Hamachi. (which stands for some kind of tuna sushi) I found out about this real neat program while listening to a podcast by Steve Gibson from Gibson Research. Steve is one of the high tech security guru's in the PC world. His evaluation of Hamachi is described on his web page at <http://grc.com>. Check it out and because it is free, the price is right. Hamachi works on Windows 2000 and above as well as Linux. The Macintosh version is still in the alpha stage. WINDOWS 98 or ME are not supported.....

The bottom line description; is that this program sets up a private internet path between your computer and others over your existing internet connection. It is encrypted and then encapsulated into your (IP) Internet Address assigned to you by your Internet Service Provider like Verizon or Comcast. High speed internet access is almost a requirement. Dial-Up is not a viable option.

From their website at hamachi.cc here is a short description of the Program.

*Hamachi is a UDP-based virtual private networking system. Its peers utilize the help of a 3rd node called mediation server to locate each other and to boot strap the connection between themselves. The connection itself is direct and once it's established **no traffic flows through the hamachi mediation servers***

I have been using Hamachi for over a month to be able to remotely control my small business client's servers. Hamachi has a free version but it is restricted to 16 users on a single network. (probably more than enough for most people) Once you have downloaded the program and installed it, You then must create a VPN network with a network name and password and anyone who has Hamachi installed (and you give them the network name and password) can then log onto your system using any one of the free remote control programs or Symantec's PC-Anywhere over IP (Internet Protocol) program. The security of the network is two fold, first is that no one unless they are a hamachi user, have your network name and the password, can even see your network IP. This IP is initially assigned to you when you first install the program by the Hamachi mediation server. It's number is in the 5.xxx.xxx.xxx range. Which is not Internet routable. In other words the internet master hubs will always ignore or discard any IP numbers that are classified as private such as 192.168.xxx.xxx and the 10.xxx.xxx.xxx range. The VPN is setup once you bring up Hamachi and join a network and supply the correct password. Of course the security and firewall settings on your computer must be setup correctly to allow or disallow these other people to be able to browse or use your computer files.

Setting up a VPN is as easy as picking a name and assigning a password. No one can figure out what

your network name or password is unless you tell them in a message or over the phone. The password can be as short as 3 characters or as long as 256 random numbers and letters. The more complicated the password you create, the more secure your network will be. The data between you and the other end of your VPN is encrypted by the password. More information can be obtained by visiting their site at hamachi.cc (they are located in Canada).

Sites that you can visit to get all the information on Hamachi and VPN's

<http://www.grc.com/SecurityNow.htm#22>

<http://hamachi.cc>

hamachi.cc/security page

<http://www.ultravnc.com/>

The last URL website is where I downloaded the free ULTRAVNC program. Quoted from their web site:

UltraVNC is an easy to use, fast and free software that can display the screen of another computer (via internet or network) on your own screen. The program allows you to use your mouse and keyboard to control the other PC remotely. It means that you can work on a remote computer, as if you were sitting in front of it, right from your current location.

The program works so easy that it is almost scary the options you have available at your fingertips. You have to remember that your not sitting at the computer so if you want to access a CD-ROM, you better have someone there to put one in the local cdrom drive. <G> that's a big grin.

All in all, I highly recommend hamachi and Ultravnc for those of you who need to control remote computers over the internet. Unlike <https://www.gotomypc.com>

This one is free and the experts seem to think that the security of Hamachi and Ultravnc is pretty darn good.

New Subject:

A letter to the editor in the January 2006 Monitor jogged my memory about comments from a long time ago.

“Those young wipper snappers will have us believe that the clutch on automobiles will disappear and be replaced by automatic transmissions.”

“Putting your arm out the window to give turn signals will always be a drivers license requirement.”

“No one will ever need or use over 640Kilobytes of memory”

“Real men use Pine for their email”

“This graphic stuff will never be popular”

“OS/2 will rule the world”

Not to be a spoil sport but Capital PC User Group (CPCUG) does need to acquire new members and keep the ones that are here. I know that computers are getting so cheap that a pretty powerful Dell with all the bells and whistles can be purchased for less than \$600, and cheaper at times. Back when computers cost \$5000, we had a different breed of computer user. Things have changed. Time to wake up and get out of our 10+ year sleep. Times are a changing and computers are just like Televisions or toasters now a days. All the user wants to do is to take it home from one of the office supply stores and plug it in. They expect to and should be able to get it up and running with a minimum of aggravation. They don't care about RAM, DOS, hard disks or assembly language programming.. They know it should work out of the box and most of them do. When was the last time you took a toaster or TV home and it did not work correctly? The people who sell these cheap computers provide trial versions of Anti-Virus software and Windows has a firewall, but many who buy these cheap computers neglect to upgrade to the full pay version and therein lies the problem. They sit fat-dumb-and-happy that they are on-line. And they will eventually need CPCUG's member help. Educating this evolving class of home users is an area that CPCUG can get involved. I don't have the answers but I can see the problem and the need for CPCUG to be able to help.

Although there are some schools of thought that people who buy computers should know how to program in assembly language. No such thing is ever going to happen and Windows is here to stay. Even though there are some who believe that Operating systems and software should all be free. No such thing there, either.. I am not a Microsoft proponent as I believe they should do more in the security of their programs and Operating systems. I guess I should be dodging and weaving at this point, expecting some incoming missiles in the next issue of the Monitor.

Rich Schinnell can be reached via email at rich@schinnell.org or on his home page www.schinnell.org. The web page address's listed in this column are also listed on his home page.. As a last resort by phone at 301 949-9292 (I have caller id so crank calls won't hide you) <G>

I started out on the IBM-PC with 64K of ram and a 40 column color adapter for his TV. He now has a bunch of Pentium IV's and also a Macintosh Mini as well as an Ipod Nano. I will be 70 years old in March of this year and still learns something new each day. I still use the DOS prompt and write DOS batch files..