

## Tweaking and Optimizing Windows XP

**Windows XP** is highly customizable. Microsoft took care to make a great deal of its tweaks easily accessible to users of any experience level. Experimenting with them and getting your hands dirty is the best way to find your personal sweet spot in the mix of eye candy and system performance. One of the easiest ways to optimize XP is to simply use it. XP has some of built in files that are “smart”, well as smart as Microsoft wants them to get. Anyway, these files observe the boot pattern and the programs that you run. Supposedly every three days the system optimizes itself by tweaking your boot and load sequences based on your past habits.

**Multiple User Profiles:** Windows 9x offered only one desktop for all users to share. The dad had his shortcuts to computer “stuff” (a geekly technical term by the way), one kid had shortcuts to half a dozen games, another to a dozen school papers and the poor mom just had to hunt through everything to find the internet shortcut. With Windows XP that is no longer necessary. Every person can have their own log on name that takes them to their personalized desktop. No more looking at “stuff” that doesn’t apply to you. This makes for a more personalized computing experience.

If you are the only user of your PC or everyone uses only one login then you have some resources being eaten up by *Fast User Switching*. To disable this feature go to *Start / Control Panel / User Accounts*, select *Change the way users log on or off*. There are two check boxes you can remove. If you remove the checkmark by the *Use Welcome Screen* both boxes are automatically unmarked. The *Welcome* screen is presented before you see the desktop and is where you choose the user (Betty Lou or Bubba or whatever you named the users). This is the one I would uncheck. If you are not sure and may want to add additional users in the future you can always go back and recheck this box.

If you uncheck the box marked *Use Fast User Switching* only the services will not run and this will free up some boot time and some system resources (CPU time and RAM space) while you are working. The system will still run the *Welcome* screen during boot, even if you do not see it because it is still referenced but not run if there is only one log on name.

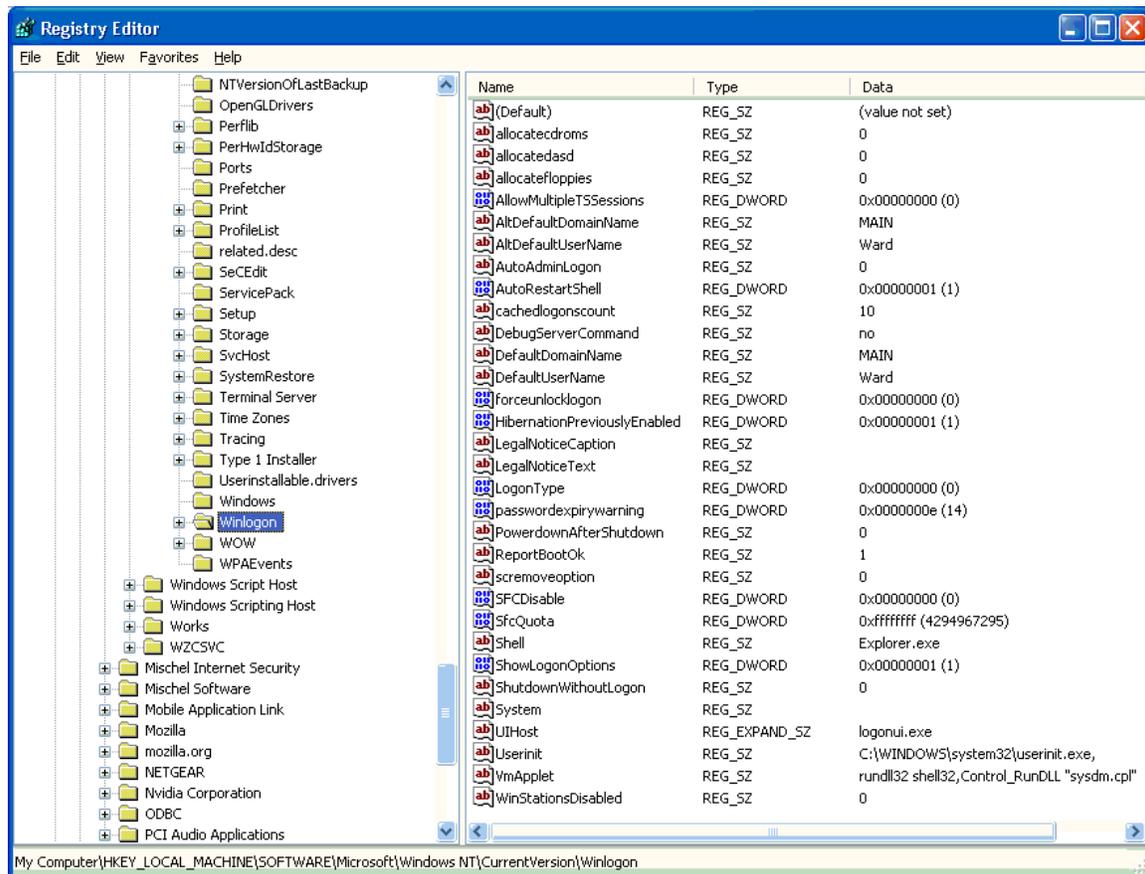
If you are the only user of your computer or do not use multiple users (I highly recommend this feature to keep you desktop clean of the kids junk and the spouses desktop clean of your “stuff”) you can bypass the logon screen. If you do not want to be bothered with this but just want to go straight to the desktop you need to set up the system for automatic logon. This will require a registry edit (yes, again!)

**Dangerous path ahead! Even though the *Caretaker* brought *Voyager* into the *Delta* quadrant unharmed, if you go there without a proper registry backup and without following this star chart exactly you will end up too close to the black hole in galaxy *RXJ1242-11*, and trust me that wouldn’t be a pretty sight!**

Now back to our lesson!

Go to *Start / Run* and type in *regedit* and then select *OK*.

Navigate the left side of the registry by clicking on the plus (+) signs to *HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE / SOFTWARE / Microsoft / WindowsNT / CurrentVersion / Winlogon*.



4BiiXP-0

Double-click on the right hand value *DefaultUserName* and type your user name in the *Value Data* box, if it is not already there.

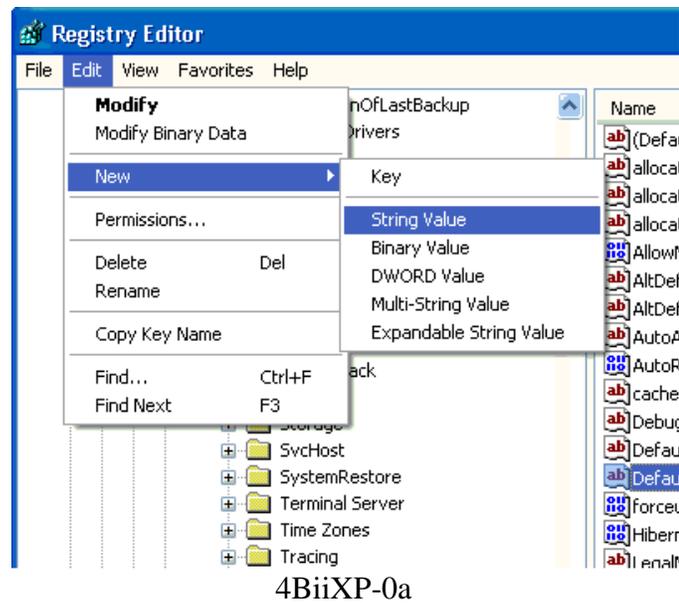
Select *OK*

Next select the *DefaultPassword* value (again in the right hand column) and type in your password in the *Value Data* box.

If there is no *DefaultPassword* value as in the example above you can easily add one.

First make sure *Winlogon* is highlighted in the left hand column.

Since you are already in the registry editor simply go to *Edit / New / String Value* as in the example below.



After clicking on *String Value* type in *DefaultPassword* (with no spaces and capitalized exactly as shown here).

Now double-click the string you just created (*DefaultPassword*) and type in your password in the box labeled *Value Data* and then click *OK*.

Next double-click *AutoAdminLogon* in the right hand column and change the value from 0 (zero) to 1 (the number one) and once again click *OK*.

IF there is no *AutoAdminLogon* value as in the example above you can easily add one. Simply go to *Edit / New / String Value* as in the example above.

After clicking on *String Value* type in *AutoAdminLogon* (with no spaces and capitalized exactly as shown here) and press the *Enter* key on your keyboard.

Now double-click the string you just created (*AutoAdminLogon*) and type *1* (the number one) in the box labeled *Value Data* and then click *OK*.

Finally exit the registry.

To double-check your changes make sure everything else is finished and click *Start / Shutdown / Restart*.

**Video and Display:** As nice as a great looking display is you need to remember that the GUI (Graphical User Interface) eats up system resources and slows the computer down. I am not advocating going back to a black screen with green text only, I am simply suggesting that we tweak and adjust some items that are going on in the background.

1. To adjust some special effects you need to *right-click* on *My Computer*.
  - a. If the icon is not on the desktop select the *Start* button in the lower left of the screen
  - b. Then *right-click* on *My Computer*.
2. Select *Properties / Advanced / Performance / Settings / Visual Effects*.
3. For a quick performance boost select *Adjust for best Performance*. If you are willing to experiment then you can choose *Custom* and place a check next to the individual boxes

for the items you want to use. If you do not put a check in the box the item will **not** be used. If you decide to customize your choices then I would suggest removing all *Shadowing* and *Fading*.

4. While you are under the performance settings check out the *Advanced* tab. You will get a window as shown in figure 4BiiXP-1.

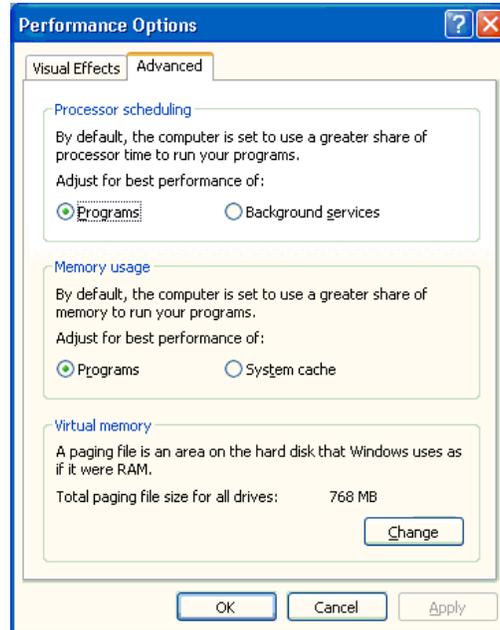


Figure 4BiiXP-1

5. If your computer not a server be sure that *Processor Scheduling* is set for *Programs* and *Memory Usage* is also set for *Programs*.
6. If your computer is a server or is sharing resources frequently (for example your hard drive is accessed by other computers on a network because all of the accounting files are on it, or if your computer has the only printer in the room and other computers that are networked to yours print to it) then you would want to enable *Background Services* and *System Cache*.

These are only for network situations where a significant load is on your system.

7. Don't turn on *Background Services* and *System Cache* if others only print 10 pages a day to your system or access one file throughout the day. One exception is to select *System cache* if you have an abundance of RAM I would set up to run with *System cache* if a system had no less than 768 MB of RAM.

**Virtual Memory:** There are some GREAT articles on the web site with more information than I cover here, feel free to visit [www.TheWeeklyGeek.com](http://www.TheWeeklyGeek.com) and search for "Virtual Memory"

- 1) To set the virtual memory you need to *right-click* on *My Computer*.
  - a. If the icon is not on the desktop select the *Start* button in the lower left of the screen
  - b. Then *right-click* on *My Computer*.
- 2) Select *Properties* (Figure 4BiiXP-3)/ *Advanced* (figure 4BiiXP-4 upper right corner)/ *Performance* / *Settings* / *Advanced* (figure 4BiiXP-1)/ *Virtual Memory* (bottom section of the window).

3) You should see figure 4BiiXP-2.

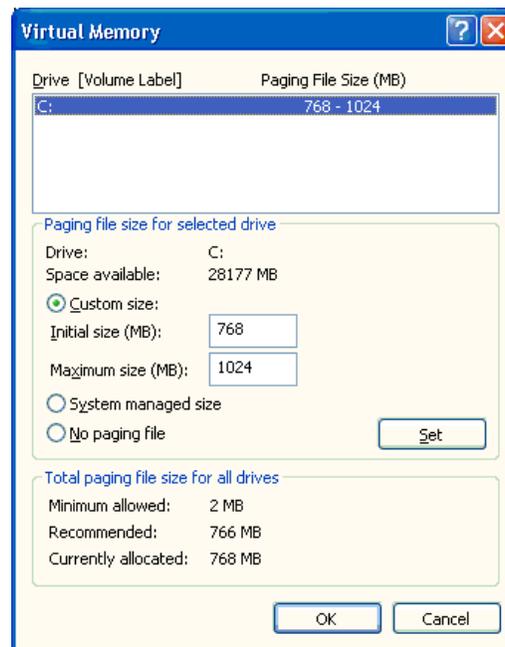


Figure 4BiiXP-2

- 4) You should select *Custom Size* and the *Initial size* should be 1.5 times the total amount of RAM you have up to 2048.
- 5) The *Maximum size* should be double the amount of RAM you have with a maximum of 2048. If you are not sure how much memory (RAM) your system has, go to the desktop and right-click on *My Computer* and then select *Properties* as in figure 4BiiXP-3

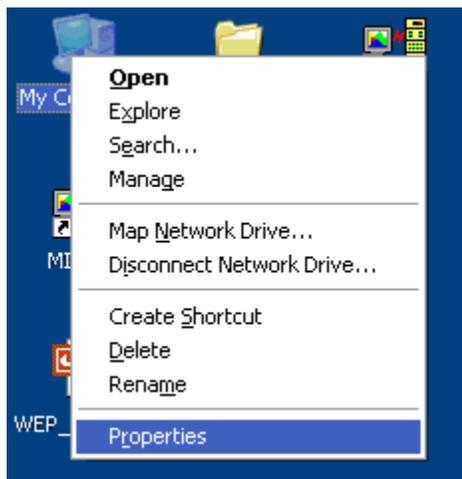


Figure 4BiiXP-3

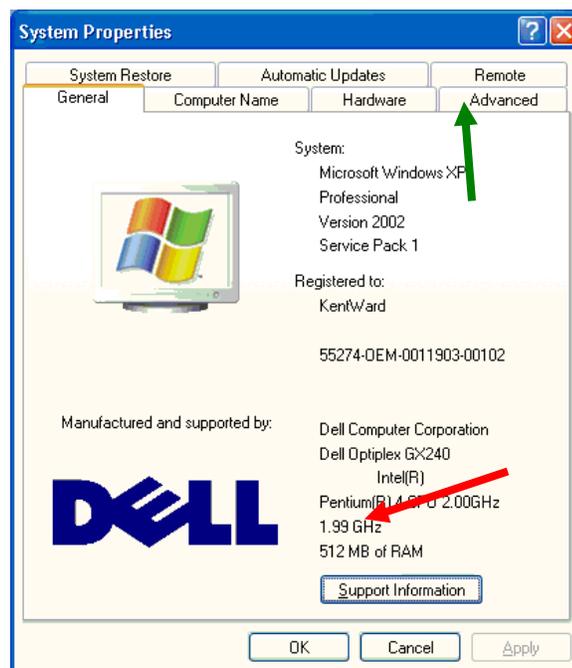


Figure 4BiiXP-4

The total amount of memory will be listed toward the bottom of the screen as shown in Figure 4BiiXP-4. Let me give you an example of how to set the virtual memory (VM). If you have 256 MB of RAM (actually if you have 256 the best way to help your computer is to BUY MORE RAM) then your *Initial Size* should be 384 and the *Maximum size* should be 512. There is no need to enter any zeros after the computer is expecting megabytes. Don't go over 2048 in either box because the hard drive is so slow compared to RAM as well as the loss of space to store data.

When you defragment your system, I suggest that you turn off your VM before defragmenting and then turning it back on afterward. Turning off the VM is as simple as choosing the *no paging file* button as seen in figure 4BiiXP-2 and rebooting. Just remember to turn it back on when the defragmentation process is complete.

Also while we are discussing virtual memory, sometimes Windows places key system files into virtual memory, we don't want this. In order to keep the operating system responding as fast as possible we need all of its files kept in RAM. To prevent the shifting of operating system files into the VM we need to make a registry edit.

**As the great Jimmy Buffet reminded all computer users,  
Can't you feel 'em circlin' honey?  
Can't you feel 'em swimmin' around?  
You got fins to the left, fins to the right,  
and you're the only bait in town.  
You got fins to the left, fins to the right,  
and you're the only registry in town.**

**So backup your registry before the technicians, with the big white teeth, come knocking on  
your door,  
You know them honey, those sharks that swim on the land.**

Open the registry (*Start / Run / Regedit*) and back it up (*File / Export*) make sure the *Export Range* is selected as *All* and export to you backup file you created in Chapter 1.

Now you need to navigate to *HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE / SYSTEM / ControlSet001 / Control / Session Manager / Memory Management*.

Now you need to double-click on DWORD value *DisablePagingExecutive* and set the value to 1 (either Hexadecimal or Decimal since one is one either way).

## Use that old USB drive for Virtual Memory

Now that you have several "old" and "small" USB thumb or stick drives around that you don't use anymore you can format them and install them on the back of your computer and use them as Virtual Memory instead of using the hard drive. This should both increase your computing speed and make you feel good about recycling old computer parts. To be clear, I am not talking about external hard drives, just the little drives that are about the size of your thumb, hence the name "thumb drive".

Now that you are done scrounging through your pencil drawer looking for old drives and you have finished hugging yourself for saving a USB tree from being dismembered, let's continue.

Before we go any further, yes you can use an old SD or Compact Flash card for the same effect in Windows XP they just usually are not as large in capacity as USB stick drives so I will refer to them in this article but you can substitute as you please. As a rule of thumb, USB drives are faster than the current mechanical hard drives (the new SSD drives are faster and I hope to write about them soon).

Using two 512MB USB drives is better than nothing, but using one 2GB is even better. I would not use more than two drives (only one is really needed) and several small ones can slow things down instead of speeding them up, so use the old 32 and 64 MB drives on your kids computer, just because you can.

Now be 100% sure you don't want the data on the drives and then format the drive. To do this click on the "Start" button and then on "My Computer", in the new window that appears, right-click on the USB drive (be 100% sure it is the drive you want to format and use). Select "Format" from the drop down menu and off you go.

Now follow the directions in the previous section about VM above, just note that at Figure 4BiiXP-2 you will also see the USB drive listed. Simply enter the numbers using the full size of the USB drive under the "Custom" section.

More directions are available in the site at <http://www.theweeklygeek.com/2005/10/21/virtual-memory-part-4/>

If you want the best performance, I would suggest purchasing a new drive. Personally I like the "OCZ 4GB Rally2" if I were to buy a new one to use for virtual memory. The reason is that this is simply the fastest USB drive available and you want speed for your virtual memory, however whatever you have is better than nothing.

**CD Self Start:** Do you insert CD's frequently but do not want them to automatically play? For instance do you copy a lot of data or need to search on backup CD's for information but do not want them to run when you place them in the computer. Every few seconds (15, I think) Windows goes out and performs an automatic search to see if a CD was slipped into the drive while it was not paying attention. By removing this feature and starting any disk you put in manually (by selecting the drive) you save the CPU the cycle time it has set aside.

To remove the CD auto run you will need to go to the registry.

**Reminder, editing the registry can have dire consequences. The last person to improperly edit the registry lived in Pompeii about 79 A.D. near Mount Vesuvius, and we all know what happened next don't we? Well he lost all of his data and had to fdisk and reformat his hard drive.**

To open the registry, go to *Start / Run* and type in *regedt32*.

Now make a backup of the registry (*File / Export* then through the menu choose the C: drive). If things go wrong and you can get to the *Command* prompt (C:\) then you can type in the name of your registry backup and things should return to normal.

On the left side of the screen you will need to navigate by clicking on the "+" symbols to *HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE / SYSTEM / CurrentControlSet / Service* (figure 4BiiXP-5). Click on *Cdrom* under this group (figure 4BiiXP-6). In the right hand pane you should see several values. *Double-click* on *Autorun*. A menu should pop up similar to Figure 4BiiXP-7.

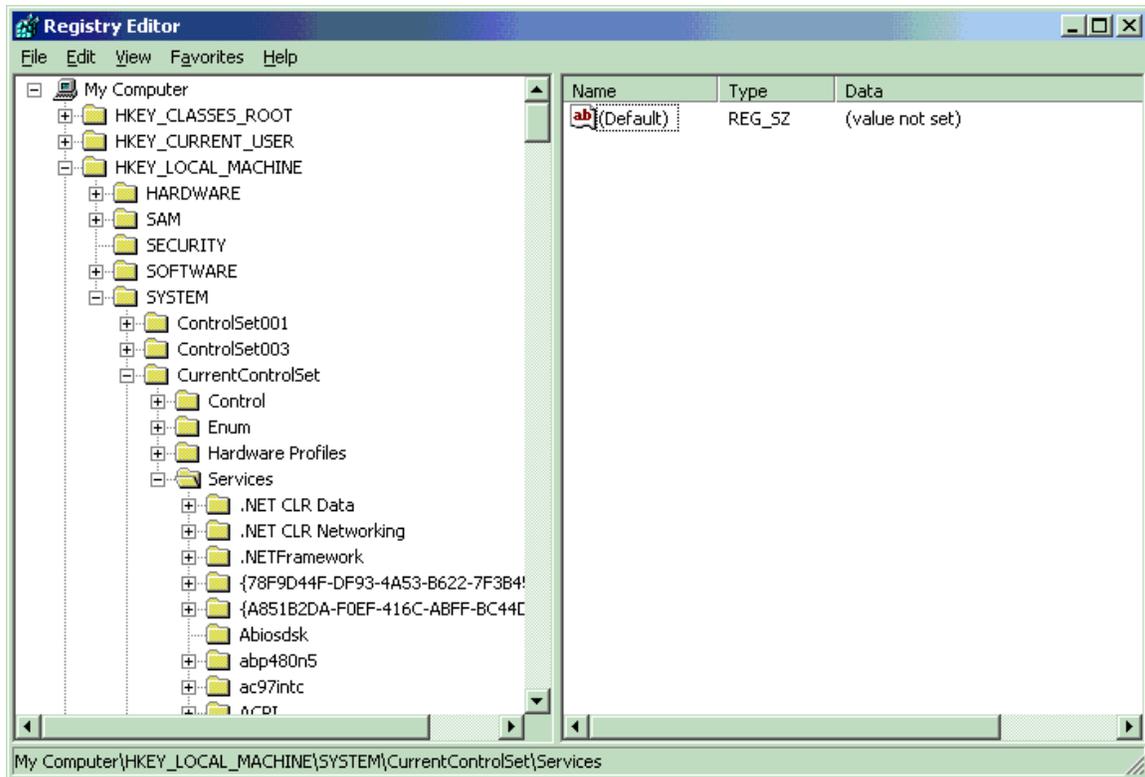


Figure 4BiiXP-5

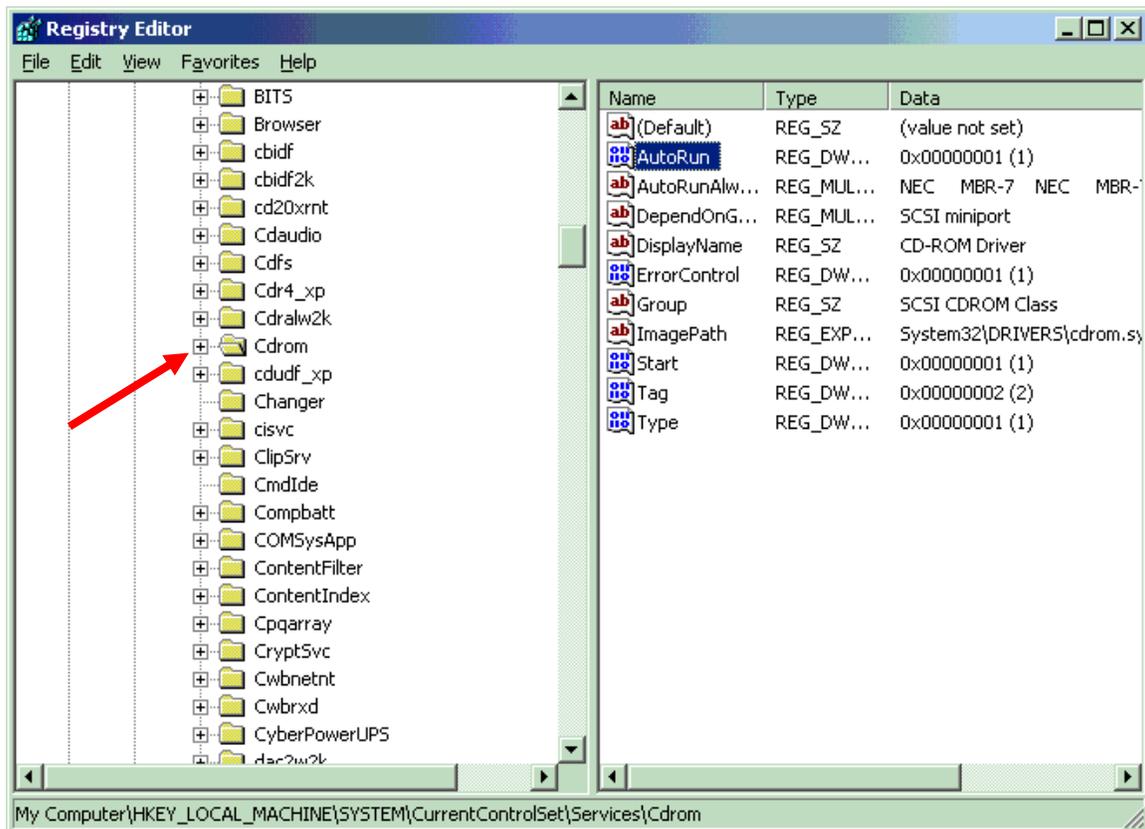


Figure 4BiiXP-6

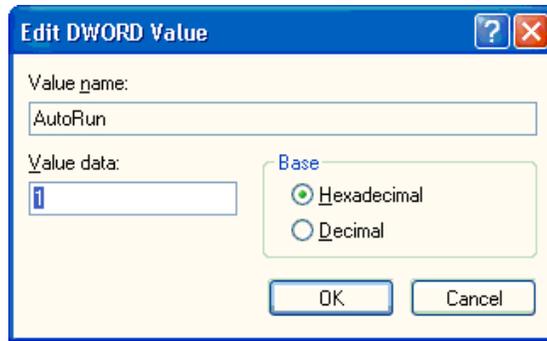


Figure 4BiiXP-7

Change the *Value data* to 0, select *OK* and then close the registry (*File / Exit*) the change is automatically saved but not implemented until you reboot the computer. Be sure that you have properly closed all programs and then to reboot go to *Start / Shutdown / Restart*. That is all that is necessary to make this change. Double check yourself by inserting a CD (a music CD works best) and see if it tries to run or if you have to open it yourself.

**Floppy Drive performance:** Are you tired of waiting on a fast computer that's hampered by actions that are slow? Do you have to wait while your computer tries to read what, if anything is in the floppy drive each time you double-click on *My Computer*? If this has happened to you, the possible cause is an incorrect registry value. This is fairly simple to correct. (Before you make the following changes to the registry, be sure to first back it up.)

**There once was a story of a man named Jed who edited the registry carelessly and now his computer is dead, that is why he could barely keep his family fed. Due to this he sold his hunting rifle, never shot at that rabbit and instead some Robber Barron found that Black Gold, Texas Tea and he kept his family in Beverly Hills while Jed went to work in the coal mine.**

Click *Start / Run* and type in *regedit* and then select *OK*. Navigate to: *HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER / Software / Microsoft / Windows / CurrentVersion / Policies / Explorer*. Double-click on *NoDriveTypeAutoRun* entry and change the value to 95 (see figure 4BiiXP-8). *OK* your changes and close the registry.

Restart your computer for the changes to take effect. When your computer has restarted, open *My Computer* and see if your drives appear immediately in the window without the system first attempting to access the floppy drive.

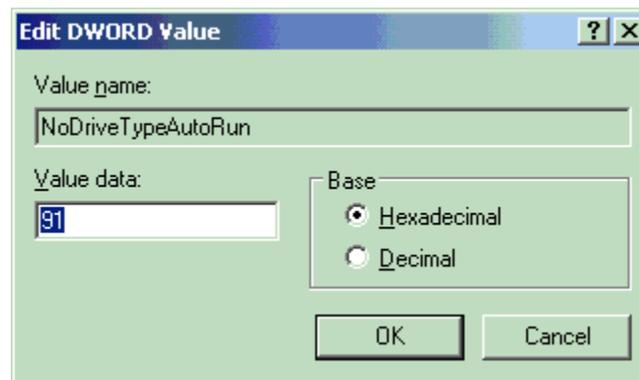


Figure 4BiiXP-8

**Does a new window open up every time you open a folder?** At times this is nice if you are frequently switching between folders, but if not this can be a major clutter problem and if you are like me and cannot stand clutter this can be a little more than annoying. Microsoft has decided for you that you need these multiple folders. To remove this option so that each folder opens in the same window you have two options.

**The permanent option.** Open *Windows Explorer* (NOT Internet Explorer) (I prefer to do so by pressing the Windows key {between the “Ctrl” and “Alt” keys} and the “E” key or go to *Start | All Programs | Accessories | Windows Explorer*) then select *Tools | Folder Options*. Under the *General* tab look for the *Browse folders* section and place a checkmark next to *Open each folder in the same window*.

For a **one time option** simply hold the *Ctrl* key down when clicking on the folder you wish to open.

XP has several **“Balloon” pop ups**, small advice from Microsoft, that appear every so often depending upon what you are doing. Many people just follow their advice without knowing why or even if they have a real choice. One balloon that gives you a choice is the *Passport* balloon. This balloon is used to get you to open a Microsoft Passport account. I consider them unsafe and opening you up to invasion of your privacy. If, like me, you do not want to sign up for an account and are tired of being harassed to sign up open up the registry (*Start | Run | regedit*). Using the left side of the screen click the little plus (+) signs through the following *HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER | Software | Microsoft | MessengerService* on the right side of the screen you will see a label named *PassportBalloon*. To open it, double-click on it. You will want to delete the value and enter *0a* (that is the number zero followed by the letter a).

**Pay attention, editing the registry requires concentration. You don’t have to be Hawkeye Pierce to edit the registry but you had better be more careful than Frank Burns**

If you use Microsoft’s **Instant Messenger** but are tired of it appearing every time you open Outlook Express to check your e-mail you can remove it by making a registry edit. To make the change, go to *Start | Run* and type in *regedit* then press *OK*. Navigate in the left column to *HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE | Software | Microsoft | Outlook Express*. Look on the right window pane for *Hide Messenger* and double-click it, change the value to *2*. If *Hide Messenger* does not exist, right-click in an empty area on the right pane and choose *New | DWORD Value* enter the name *Hide Messenger* (yes, with a space between the words) press the *Enter* key. Next double-click on your new setting and change the value to *2*. You will need to exit the registry and reboot in order for this change to take effect.

Even after disabling Windows Messenger it sometimes comes back from the grave. Windows XP offers two options that will get rid of it completely.

Follow these steps to remove Windows Messenger:

1. From Notepad (*Start | Programs | Accessories | Notepad*), open the *Sysoc.inf* file within the *c:\i386* folder.

You must have turned off *Hidden* attributes for system files. To do this open Windows Explorer (press the “Windows” key and “E” at the same time, Select *Tools | Folder Options | View* under the *Advances Settings | Files and Folders | Hidden Files and Folders* select the

*Show Hidden Files and Folders* check box and make sure that *Hide extensions for known file types* is not selected. Select *OK* until you close out Windows Explorer

2. Back in Notepad find the line that starts with *msmsgs*, and remove the word *HIDE*. Make sure you don't delete anything else!
3. Save the changes (*File / Save As* and then make sure you change *Save as file type* from *Text Documents* to *All files* and then close Notepad.
4. Go to *Start / Control Panel* and select *Add/Remove Programs*.
5. Choose *Add/Remove Windows Components*. Check *Windows Messenger*, which should appear at the bottom of the list, and click *Next*.

If you don't want to mess with the *Sysoc.inf* file, you can directly run the uninstall routine for Windows Messenger.

1. Make sure you are logged in as an administrator.
2. Go to *Start / Run*.
3. Type *RunDll32 advpack.dll,LaunchINFSection windows\INF\msmsgs.inf,BLC.Remove* in the Run box. If you upgraded from Windows NT or 2000 then *windows* should be *winnt*. Make sure to type that in one line and exactly as written, including the spaces and commas. The deletion process for Windows Messenger will begin.

Hey, here is another way to remove that pesky Windows Messenger. What, another way to disable Messenger?!? Yup!

Here are two additional ways to remove Windows Messenger. Each way is depending on the version of Messenger that you have. In order to tell which version you have, right-click on the Messenger icon in the system tray (lower right corner of the screen) and choose *About*.

#### **Version 4.0 to 4.4**

- *Start / Run* type in *gpedit.msc*
- Navigate down through *Local Computer Policy / Computer Configuration / Administrative Templates / Windows Components / Windows Messenger*.
- Check *Do Not Allow Windows Messenger to Run*.
- Then choose *Enabled*
- Click *OK* and close all of the open window boxes.

#### **Version 4.5 and up**

- *Start / Run* type in *Regedit*
- Navigate the left window pane to *HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE / Software / Policies* Click one time on *Microsoft*.
- On the *Edit* menu (at the top of the window) highlight *New* and select *Key*.
- Type *Messenger* in the provided space.
- Now open the *Messenger* folder (now on the left side of the screen) by double-clicking it.
- Select *Edit / New / Key* from the menu and add the name *Client*.
- Open that folder.
- Go to the menu and select *Edit / New / DWord value*.
- Type in *PreventRun* for the DWord name.
- Double-click the *PreventRun* and type *1* (that is a one) in the *Value Data* box.
- Select *OK* and exit the registry then close Windows Messenger.

**Editing the Registry is Risky Business. Make sure you make a backup before you do anything else (File / Export). One false move and you could expose your Network Administrator to the Death Ray of Krypton, leaving the Intergalactic Conference of Techno nerds without proper shielding from the Gamma Rays from Venus and worse yet, cause your entire computer to have to be reinstalled losing all your data.**

Do you want to get rid of more of XP's **memory and system hogging stuff**?

Go to *Start / Control Panel / Performance and Maintenance / Administrative Tools / Services*

Here is a listing of the *Services* that Microsoft has on your system. Not all of them are running but many unneeded ones are.

To edit one of the following items simply double-click on the name and then under the *General* tab (this should be the default location) and in the middle of the page is the *Startup Type* by selecting the down arrow you will receive the choices *Automatic, Disable, Manual*. The *Manual* simply means that the item is on or off until someone or some program sets it to the other position. I feel this is the safest option. By *Disabling* the item a person must go back in here and turn it (the service) back on. This prevents hackers and bad programs (mal-ware) from causing problems, but if you install an item that needs one of these items it may take you a while to figure out why it (the thingy you added) does not work.

### Services to Consider Disabling:

**Automatic Updates** - *Disable* it. This enables the download and installation of critical Windows updates. All too often Windows updates cause problems. Yes they should be run but you should run them. Also if you are relying on a dialup connection this **will** slow your accessing the other web sites you are intentionally trying to go to. By default it checks every 5 minutes,. Yup, every 5 minutes, does that tell you something about Microsoft? Hmmm, well, I will leave that one up to you. This service runs in the "background" meaning that you cannot tell when it is sneaking around on you.

**Computer Browser** – *Disable* it if you are not on a network or are on a *Client/Server* network (where you are required to log on with a user name and password). The **only** reason to have this *enabled* is if you are on a *Peer to Peer* network (Like a home network). This service maintains an updated list of computers on the network and supplies this list to computers on the network.

**DHCP Client** – *Disable* it only if you are not on any type of network and use dialup for your internet, otherwise leave it at *Automatic*.

**DNS Client** - *Disable* it only if you are not on any type of network and use dialup for your internet, otherwise leave it at *Automatic*.

**Error Reporting Service** – *Disable* it. This is the message stating *Microsoft has detected an error do you want to send a report?* Or something to that effect. Yes in theory you will help Microsoft resolve issues with compatibility. In my opinion you are opening yourself up to snooping by Microsoft since the document or file you were working on is sent to Microsoft. Imagine with me if you were working on your banking file that has all of your bank accounts, saving accounts IRA and credit card numbers. Now I hope you can see the potential risk.

**Fast User Switching Compatibility** – set to *Manuel* if there is only one user or you all use the same profile. If you choose a name or icon (picture) when Windows first boots up, then the system goes to your desktop you will want this left on *Automatic*.

**Indexing Service** – *Disable* it. Every X number of minutes Microsoft will run out to your hard drive(s) and check on usage and properties in order to *speed up* your access to the files. This is a very similar feature to Windows 9x/Office 97 *Fast Find*. In reality it slows you down in overall performance and uses the *bandwidth* that your hard drive needs to actually be transferring the files you are using.

**Messenger** – *Disable* it. This is **not** related Microsoft Messenger that is used for chatting. This is for Administrators to send pop up alerts to you. Since most Administrators communicate via e-mail and the majority of readers here are not on a *client server* network there is no need for it.

**Network Location Awareness** – *Disable* it. This service is for keeping your computers knowledge of network configurations updated. If you are **not** on a network or **are** on a *client server* network then you do not need this. *Peer to Peer* network can use it but set it to *Manuel*.

**Portable Media Serial Number** – set it to *Manuel* if you do **not** use an external iPod or an MP3 player for music. If you **do** use one of these then leave it on *Automatic*.

**QoS RSVP** – *Disable* it. This service provides network signaling and local traffic control setup functionality for QoS-aware programs and control applets. If you don't know what QoS is then you don't need it (it stands for Quality of Service). Rumor has it that you can free up to 25% of your network bandwidth by turning it off. If you do not have a network then this is another "feature" that just eats up ram and CPU time.

**Remote Access Auto Connection Manager** – *Disable* it if you do **not** have a network or **have** a small home network. It allows remote access to your PC so on a *client server* network the administrators may need or require it

**Remote Access Connection Manager** – set to *Manuel* only if you are not on a network. If you ever connect to a network then set to *Automatic*. If you *disable* it and later try to get on a home or any network you could spend hours trying to figure out why you cannot connect.

**Remote Registry** – *Disable* it. It allows remote computers to change your registry. This is an open sore for hackers to attach and make changes that can ruin or destroy data. There are some network administrative programs that use this so if you are on a *client server* network leave it in *Automatic*.

**Remote Task Manager Service** – *Disable* it. It provides remote management for tasks, processes, services, events, etc. Only network administrator will use this feature. Once again hackers can use this to get into your system.

**Routing and Remote Access** – *Disable* it. This service offers routing services to businesses in local area and wide area network environments.

**Server** – Set it to *Manuel* only if you are not on any type of network otherwise leave it at *Automatic*.

**Smart Card** – *Disable* it unless you actually use a Smart Card to log onto your system. It manages access to smart cards read by this computer. If this service is stopped or disabled, this computer will be unable to read smart cards.

**Smart Card Helper** – *Disable* it for the same reasons as above.

**Wireless Zero Configuration** – Set it to *Manual* unless you use a wireless (WiFi) network. This service provides automatic configuration for the 802.11 adapters.

**Highlighted Program names:** Another XP feature that drives me crazy is the *New Program Highlight Feature*. When you install a new program the shortcuts listed under *All Programs* are highlighted so that you can easily find them. These shortcuts are supposed to remain highlighted until you use them (run the program). My problem is that several users, including myself, have programs that we installed the first time we used XP and now a year or more later they are still highlighted even though the programs have been accessed dozens of times. To turn off this “feature” right-click the Start button, choose Properties and select Customize. Be sure the *Advanced* tab is selected and remove the check mark next to *Highlight Newly Installed Programs*. Select *OK* two times to exit out. You will need to restart the computer for these changes to take effect.

**Passwords:** I greatly dislike passwords on home (non-business) computers, they are all too easy to forget, and unfortunately XP makes passwords a necessity. Yes, you can just press enter leaving the password blank the first time you run XP, however many features that you use (like Scheduled Tasks) won’t be available. If you create a password and then put it on a Post-it note on the monitor, well, we won’t even go there. Fortunately XP has the ability to create a password reset disk that will (not can, but will) keep your keester out of the can. Go to *Start / Control Panel / User Accounts* and select the account name you need to make the password disk for (usually the administrator is the best and only one needed). Click on the button for *Prevent a forgotten password*. A wizard will guide you through the rest of the process. Store the disks in a safe unforgettable place, not where you (or your significant other) may grab it to put that report on because you need a disk now! Label it something like *XP recovery disk*.

**Cross Dressing Windows:** Some of you may have a computer that came with Windows XP (Pro or Home). In an effort to make the transition from Windows 98 to XP as easy as possible Microsoft has added features in XP to allow you to convert the display to look like 98. This theme for the display is referred to as “*Windows Classic*” style. Yes, this means that Windows is into cross dressing.

The following represents the steps needed to be followed in order to set up your PC to look like Windows 98. Keeping this page marked and referring to it in the future you can select to convert back to Windows XP style, one piece at a time until you feel comfortable enough to change your entire PC displays the “new” XP style screens.

Once you have turned your computer on and it has finished booting up.

In the bottom left corner of the monitors display is the *Start* button. Click one time on it. A menu will pop up with several icons (pictures) and names that they represent.

Click one time on the *Control Panel* text or icon.

Next one of two menus will appear. So look closely at your screen and follow the next step accordingly.

**Menu 1:** A new menu will appear. Centered will be *Pick a Category* with a list of icons and options under it. Choose *Appearance and Themes* by clicking one time on the text or icon.

Another new menu will appear with the heading *Appearance and Themes* in the upper left corner. Again a list of several choices appears here. The funny thing is that they all lead to the same place. Microsoft, in their attempt to make things easier sometimes duplicates steps.

Toward the bottom of the menu there is a *Display* icon and text. Click one time on it.

\* **Menu 2:** A menu will appear named *Control Panel* and a list with several icons will appear. Select the *Display* icon by double-clicking on it.

Yet another menu appears called *Display Properties*. Here is where the change begins.

There are several tabs just like in a file cabinet with multiple folders. Any time a menu with tabs appears the default one selected is almost always the tab on the far left. In this case it should be *Themes* if not go ahead and move the mouse over the word *Themes* and click on it one time. On the *Themes* page there are a few choices. For the purpose of this book we are only going to choose the most basic information and changes, however as you become more comfortable with your computer feel free to come back here to browse through the other choices available.

Under the *Themes* tab there is a theme and just under the word *Theme:* is some text in a block with what looks like a funny “v” to the right of the text. Actually that “v” is referred to as the down arrow. By clicking one time on the down arrow a list appears, this is what is referred to as a drop down list. Sometimes these list drop down, up or to the side, however they all still are considered drop down list. By clicking on the arrow several choices appeared. You will want to choose *Windows Classic*. You should notice that the picture in the themes box changes. This is just to give you an idea of how things are going to look.

Next you will want to select the *Appearance* tab. Again there is a picture of what things will look like. Here we want to be sure that several changes were made automatically when we selected the *Windows Classic* theme above. In the three drop down menus located in the lower left of the menu the selections should be *Windows Classic Style*, *Windows Standard*, and *Normal*. If not select the arrow for the one that is not correct and make the correct choice as listed above.

Now all you need to do is select *OK* at the bottom right of the menu. A screen will appear stating *Please Wait* then poof, your changes are made and the *Themes* menu disappears.

We have only one more step to do then you will be finished.

**If you had Menu 1:** On the *Appearance and Themes* menu you need to click on the *Taskbar and Start Menu* text or icon.

A new menu appears. Choose the *Start Menu* tab, and at the bottom of the menu click on the *Classic Start Menu* button. Select *OK* to finish.

Now close the *Appearance and Themes* menu by selecting the “X” in the upper right corner of the menu.

**If you had Menu 2:** On the *Control Panel* menu select the *Taskbar and Start Menu* text or icon.

A new menu appears. Choose the *Start Menu* tab, and at the bottom of the menu click on the *Classic Start Menu* button. Select *OK* to finish.

Now close the *Control Panel* menu by selecting the “X” in the upper right corner of the menu.

That is all there is to it. See now you are a cross dressing Windows expert, no what I mean is that you can now cross dress with Windows. Um, No that didn't come out right, you can now make Billy cross dress in his Windows. Well, you get the point. Now any time you want to make a change to these settings you simply need to select the "Start" button, and then select the "Settings" and next "Control Panel". Then simple refer back up to the "\*" on Menu 2.

Now that you better understand what is going on here is a quick step by step.

*Start / Control Panel / Appearance and Themes / Display / Themes / Theme: Windows Classic / Appearance / Windows Classic Style; Windows Standard; Normal / OK / Taskbar and Start Menu / Start Menu / Classic Start Menu / OK.*

Then close the *Appearance and Themes* by selecting the "X" in the upper right corner.

If you have the "Menu 2" option then you would follow these steps.

*Start / Control Panel / Display / Themes / Theme: Windows Classic / Appearance / Windows Classic Style; Windows Standard; Normal / OK / Taskbar and Start Menu / Start Menu / Classic Start Menu / OK.*

**NTFS and DOS file extensions:** If you have your hard drive formatted as NTFS then you can turn off the old DOS 8.3 file system. If you do not know what this is, the 8.3 file system allowed users to only have eight digits or characters for the file name, a period and then a three character extension. The NTFS file system duplicates every filename you have to maintain backward compatibility to DOS and Windows 9x computers. By now I know all your "other" computers are XP, Vista or Windows 7, so this old naming convention is simply not needed. The folder *Documents* is also saved as *docu~1* for backward compatibility. If you do not have any Windows 9x or DOS computers that you are networked to or if you are not on a network then you can disable this duplicating feature and free up not only some hard drive space but system resources like RAM and CPU time.

To make this change you will need to edit the registry again. To do so go to *Start / Run* and type in *regedit*.

**Watch out Capitan Picard, by improperly editing the registry you will bring on the interest of the Q. Last time this happened the turned back time, stopped human evolution and forced you to rebuild the entire software structure of your computer by creating FDISK and format havoc. So call Lieutenant Data to be sure that your important data files and registry are backed up.**

Once in the registry navigate the left column by clicking on the plus (+) signs next to *HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE / System / CurrentControlSet / Control* in the left window click one time on *FileSystem* There should be several lines of data now in the right hand window, double-click on *NtfsDisable8dot3NameCreation* and change the value in the box to 1 (the number one) and then select *OK*. Close the registry and restart the computer.

Another issue that seems to plague XP is a lack of using the **secondary cache** on your processor. Every processor has built on memory referred to as cache (pronounces *cash* as in money). Level one (L1), Level two (L2) and a few have Level three (L3). The CPU accesses this memory for different reason. L1 cache stores processor and program information, while L2 cache stores data that the processor thinks you will ask for next.

L1 is the fastest and is always built on the processor, L2 is slower than L1 but still extremely fast when compared to RAM and is currently built onto all processors, however most Pentium 1 and

Pentium Pro processors did not have L2 built in, instead they accessed it from another “stick” of RAM that was separate from the system memory.

To make matters difficult some processors access the L2 cache at the full front side bus speed and others at one half of that speed. So just because two different processors have the same amount of cache FSB and processor speed does not mean that they have the performance.

Several processors have had L3 cache. Until recently they were mainly designed for server environments but now more are being enabled for high end workstations.

To see if the L2 cache is being properly used you need to once again edit the registry. Navigate to *HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE / System / CurrentControlSet / Control / Session Manager / Memory Management*. On the right side look for *SecondaryLevelDataCache* its value should be a *decimal* and the same as the L2 cache on your processor. Below is a chart of many processors and their cache. If you don't see your processor listed, Google it and look at the manufacturers site such as [www.intel.com](http://www.intel.com)

Processor	L1	L2	L3	FSB
AMD Thunderbird/Athlon	128kb	<b>256kb</b>	None	133/266
AMD Duron	64kb	<b>128kb</b>	None	200/266
AMD XP1500 to 2800	128kb	<b>256kb</b>	None	266
AMD XP 2500 to 3200 <b>Barton</b>	128kb	<b>512kb</b>	None	333
AMD FX-51 or 64 (Opteron)	128kb	<b>1024kb</b>	None	
AMD K6-III Mobile		<b>256kb</b>	1024kb	
Pentium 4 Willamette	8kb	<b>256kb</b>	None	400
Pentium 4 Northwood	8kb	<b>512kb</b>	None	400/533
Pentium 4 Hyper Thread	8kb	<b>512kb</b>	None	533/800
Pentium 4 Prescott	16kb	<b>1024kb</b>	None	800
Pentium 4E (Extreme Edition)	8kb	<b>512kb</b>	2048kb	800
Pentium Xeon	8kb	<b>512kb</b>	2048kb	400/533
Pentium Itanium 2	32kb	<b>256kb</b>	1.5-6mb	400
Pentium 4 (socket 423)		<b>512kb</b>	None	400
Celeron 2			None	133/266
Celeron	32kb	<b>128kb</b>	None	100
Pentium III (to 1.1GHz)	32kb	<b>256kb</b>	None	100
Pentium III (to 1.4GHz)	32kb	<b>512kb</b>	None	133

While you are editing the registry you should go ahead and set the **Prefetch Settings** for the cache. Navigate to *HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE / System / CurrentControlSet / Control / Session Manager / Memory Management / PrefetchParameters*. Change *EnablePrefetcher* to 3 (the number three) as a hexadecimal value. Zero (0) is disabled, one (1) is for Applications only and two (2) is for boot performance while three (3) is both one and two.

While on the subject of *Prefetch* open *My Computer* then double-click on *C:* then *Windows* (you may need to select *Show Contents of this folder*) and finally select the *Prefetch* folder and delete all of the files there. To select all of the files left-click one time on any one of the files, once it is highlighted press and hold the *Ctrl* key and then press the *A* key and immediately release them both at the same time. Now all files in the folder should be highlighted. While holding down the

*Shift* key press and release the *Delete* key on your keyboard and the *OK* to accept the changes and “poof” they are gone!

### **Network sharing delay**

One thing that XP does that I cannot understand is check other computers for scheduled tasks on a computer that it is trying to connect to. For instance, if you have a small home network (or large corporate one for that matter) every time you connect to another computer to copy, backup or move a file (actually anytime you connect to another computer for any reason – like a networked/mapped drive) XP checked that computer it is connecting to for scheduled tasks. Why does my XP machine need to know if or when my Windows ME (or any version of Windows including XP) computer has a *Disk Cleanup* scheduled? I don't have the foggiest idea.

To get rid of this delay you will need to edit the registry again.

**Just as the Lone Ranger had a faithful companion, Tonto, to assist when things went bad, you too have a friend that is always there, the registries *Export* utility, like the great fighter for law and order in the west, use your resources, after all the Lone Ranger creed reminds up, “That God put the firewood there but that every man must gather and light it himself.”**

Navigate the left hand column down *HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE* / *Software* / *Microsoft* / *Windows* / *CurrentVersion* / *Explorer* / *RemoteComputer* / *NameSpace*.

Still looking in the left column under *NameSpace*, delete the *{D6277990-4C6A-8D87-00AA0060F5BF}* key (it looks like a folder) and reboot. The next time you try to access the shared files on a remote computer, you will notice your computer gets there a little faster depending on the number of scheduled tasks on the machine being connected to. In my small LAN I tested this from one XP machine to my various other computers which had Windows operating systems ranging from Windows 95 to XP Pro. The best performance came from the machine that had only four scheduled tasks (*Disk Cleanup*, *Disk Defragmenter*, *Scan Disk* and *Weekly Back*) the connection time/delay from the time I clicked on the computer until shared folders were shown went from between 24 and 26 seconds to instantaneous. The only machine that showed little performance was when connecting to a computer that had no scheduled tasks and the delay was about one second and now is also instantaneous.