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Sunday, May 14, 2006

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# Making the switch from Windows to MacIntosh

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One of the trade secrets for writing a newspaper column is: all life experiences are fodder for potential topics. Thus: how to switch to a Mac.

My current dabbling with Apple started largely to research a column, and went beyond dabbling when over time I found Macs really were less annoying to use than Windows PC. And so this spring, an iMac became my primary computer. Judging by Apple's quarterly financial reports, I am not the only one making the move. Apple's market share has been growing for more than a year (although bear in mind that with a starting point around 5 percent, we aren't exactly talking world dominance here).

Making the change wasn't very hard. Apple has a series of "Mac 101" lessons on its Web site to guide you through it. I will focus here on some of the things you don't read in the standard how-tos. Because of space limits here, you may go to my blog ([www.algordon.com/techblog.html](http://www.algordon.com/techblog.html)) where I will be posting an expanded version.

First of all, you need to get your data from your PC onto your Mac. Apple is largely correct that this a piece of cake. Most PC files — including document, spreadsheet, and multimedia — just simply need to be moved from one machine to the other via a network or removable media such as CDs.

But there is one huge exception: if you use Microsoft Outlook, all its mail, contacts, calendar items, and so on, cannot be directly transferred to a Mac, leaving you bereft of crucial information. Fortunately, you can remedy that for \$10 with O2M (formerly

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"Outlook2Mac") from Little Machines. Install it on your PC and it will convert your Outlook data into files that can be imported into the Mail, iCal, and Address Book applications that come with Mac and also with Microsoft Entourage, the Mac counterpart of Outlook.

The second point on switching to a Mac is that you are going to need new software. Windows programs won't run on a Mac. (Well, that's no longer entirely true, but let me leave that to the blog.) The good news is that most of your familiar programs from Windows exist on the Mac — or the Mac has better alternatives. The bad news is that there are no "trade-in" deals; you will be buying new software. The cost of replacing your software may be the biggest practical obstacle to making a move from Windows to a Mac.

Apple's iLife suite, included on Macs, provides the iTunes music software, plus video, photo, DVD, and Web tools that cover most of your multimedia needs. For the writing and numbers crunching tools provided by Microsoft Office in Windows, your Mac option is — d'oh! — Microsoft Office, which on the Mac consists of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and the aforementioned Entourage.

Among other key commercial software products: Toast is Roxio's Mac version of its DVD/CD burning software. Adobe's Photoshop Elements comes in a Mac version that integrates with iLife. Allume Systems' Stuffit, another cross-platform product, is the leading Mac archiving and compression program. Fetch is a very nifty Mac-specific FTP program (for uploading and downloading to Web sites, among other things). A cool Mac-only program is Mariner Software's MacJournal — which lets you organize notes and multimedia, and supports blogging and podcasting.

There also is a rich variety of shareware and freeware programs for the Mac, which will greatly ease the financial drain of switching. For example, Stunt Software's On the Job handles the always-critical job timing and billing function for a budget-friendly \$25. HairerSoft's \$30 Amadeus II is a great value for audio editing with features that match software costing three times as much. WireTap Pro from Ambrosia Software will capture audio from any source that plays on your Mac and is a valuable tool for recording from a Mac's built-in microphone. Utilities for the iPod are a huge segment in themselves; the latest and greatest is PodUtil, which is available for Mac and Windows. There is even rich fodder for geeks like me. Naratt Software, for instance, offers multiple tools for beefing up a Mac's right-clicking options — the one place where Apple's interface lags behind Windows.

Lastly, AppleScript offers users a vast array of ways to add custom functions to your applications. Good sources to check: MacScripter (<http://scriptbuilders.net/>) and, for iPod tools, Doug's Scripts (<http://www.dougscripsts.com/itunes/>). Plus, check in with Apple's own software catalog (<http://www.apple.com/software/>).

There may not be as much software for Macs as for Windows PCs, but not so you would notice. Your biggest challenge in making a switch is more likely to be limiting your software purchases to suit your budget.

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