

PC

MAGAZINE

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[14th Annual Utility Superguide]

SPEED! POWER! LOOKS! FUN!

Oddly enough, no one has come up with the perfect PC with the perfect operating system and the perfect applications that make everyone happy all the time. Crazy world.

That's why we turn to utilities, from the little ones that show you the weather forecast and keep you from making common e-mail faux pas to the far bigger ones that search your system at the speed of thought and back up your hard drive. And as the pace of major software development slows—yes, it really has been five years since Windows XP shipped, and three since Microsoft Office 2003 arrived—familiarity begins to breed contempt. Imperfections are magnified, and we search out better ways to get things done.

At *PC Magazine*, we're lucky to have an expert group of editors, writers, analysts, and contributors who are constantly

searching for a better way, both at work and at home. For this year's Utility Guide, we asked them to share their discoveries, reviewing and presenting their favorite utilities. We also spoke with three utility developers: Mark Thompson, founder of the free utility site AnalogX; Steve Gibson of Gibson Research, which produces some of the best online network security test utilities; and Mark Russinovich, cofounder of Sysinternals, which brought us Filemon and Regmon. We also sneak a peek inside the system trays of other utility creators and users. Whose is the biggest? Well, correcting for screen resolution and blatant tray-padding . . . it's *PC Magazine* editor Lance Ulanoff, who boldly predicted the outcome from the get-go.—*Sarah Pike*

Our Experts Pick the Best

FOR HOME NETWORKERS

Nearly every *PC Magazine* reader has a broadband Internet connection, and most have a local area network at home. But are you getting the most out of your home network? Are you sharing resources between multiple computers? Is your network safe from outside intruders? Is your connection as fast as it's supposed to be? Here are some of our favorite utilities that will let you proudly say, "I'm a network admin!"

BY CRAIG ELLISON

Though GFI's **LANGUARD NETWORK SECURITY SCANNER 7.0** (free for ten days for up to 25 IP addresses) is primarily intended for corporate networks, running it on your home network could prove eye-opening. Languard N.S.S. 7.0 will scan your entire local network for hundreds of known vulnerabilities and produce a comprehensive report for each computer or device it discovers. It shows missing patches (with references to Bugtraq reports), open ports, and any security vulnerabilities it finds.

After the ten-day trial the price is quite a bit steeper, starting at \$495 for up to 32 IPs. (GFI Software Ltd, www.gfi.com. ●●●●○)

Craig Ellison is a real networking kind of guy. He's been designing networks for years, and has had networks in his home for over 20 years. He loves inexpensive (and free) utilities to help him manage networks at home and at work.

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