



What would you do if someone offered you a free computer? Read on.

When Chris gave his talk about home networks he needed to show how things worked on Windows 7 computers and on those still running Windows XP. For this he needed two computers, one of which was a virtual computer installed as a free download from Microsoft.

Quite a few members are still reluctant to upgrade to Windows 7, some on the basis of cost and some because they don't want to lose their familiar programmes if Windows 7 will not run them.

Chris pointed out that this reluctance is much magnified for companies that have hundreds of computers to upgrade.

Companies might pay extra for Windows 7 Professional in order to get a feature called 'XP Mode' designed specifically to enable programmes written for XP to be used without difficulty.

For most personal users Windows 7 Home Premium Edition is perfectly adequate – except for running some applications written for XP. This is where a virtual PC comes in handy. It is a programme, not a physical computer. Your computer will not know the difference as it can understand only the figures 0 and 1. (It's dumb, but really, really fast!)

The programme can be installed and run just like any other. The trick is that it takes charge of some of the physical machine's memory and storage capacity and sees it and uses it as if it was a separate physical machine. Any operating system can be installed on it and run applications exactly as if it was a physical machine.

Bear in mind that the Virtual PC is free, but you will need a licence for the Operating System you put onto it. BUT - if you upgrade from Windows XP to Windows 7, then you already have a licence to cover XP on your virtual machine.

Chris went through the process of setting up a virtual PC. There are Wizards to take you through the various steps and to advise on how much memory and hard disk space to allocate. This is important because the allocations will not be available to your main machine while the virtual machine is running.

If your main machine is powerful enough there is nothing to stop you from setting up several virtual machines and even networking them.

A virtual machine can be erased and recreated so you are free to try out various configurations and scrap the virtual PC if things get too complicated and then start over.

A virtual machine can be set to store the files you create onto an area of the main machine's storage. The files will not be lost when the virtual machine is switched off.

The next meeting is on Tuesday 14th December at All Saints Lesser Hall, Victoria Square, Penarth 7.30 for 8.00pm .It will be a social evening with Chips and Chats after a fun quiz by Mike J. Visitors welcome. For more information ring Howard on 029 20708439.

In Brief

Computer Club

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