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Untangling Cable Spaghetti

#devlive #watercooler #productivity #hardware

As there are few posts on hardware, let's talk about cable spaghetti, cable tangle, or "cable salad" ([Kabelsalat](#)) as it is known in German.

"Cable Salad"

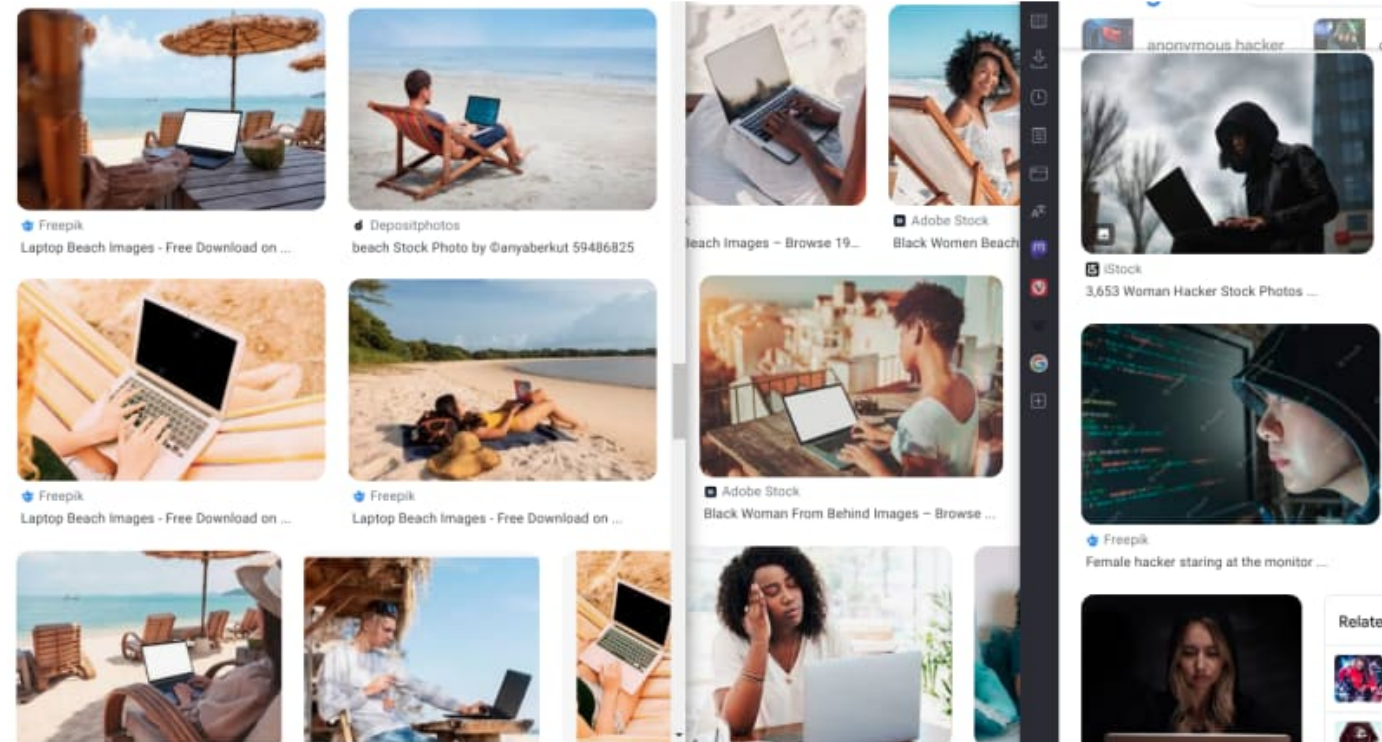
Cables getting tangled around each other is a fascinating physical phenomenon, maybe related to [entropy](#)?

Some people prefer a desktop setup with multiple monitors and fixed installations, not to be touched unless a piece of hardware needs an upgrade.

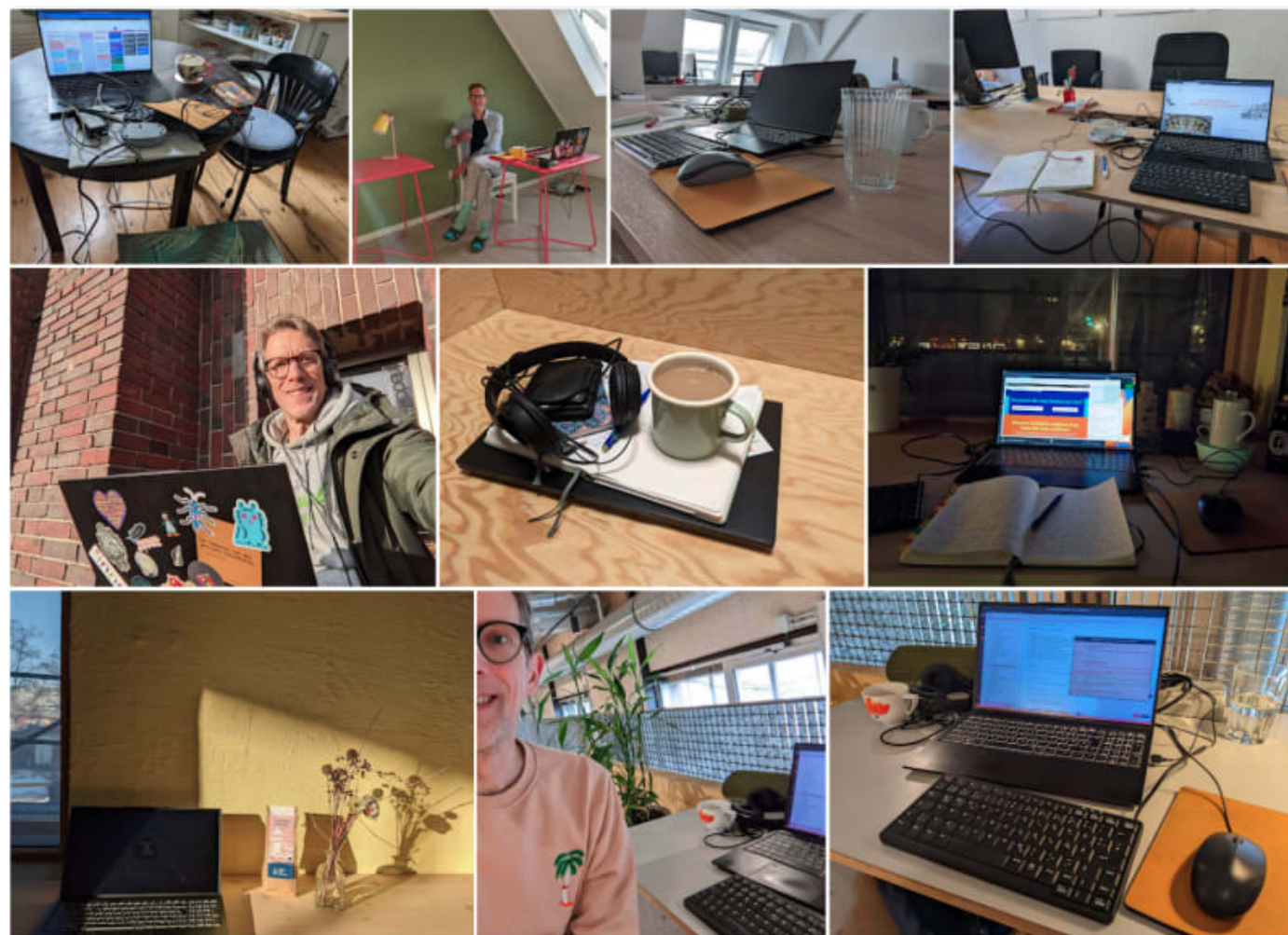
But I am a freelancer travelling and moving to different places. I love coworking, changing desks, working in trains and cafés, so I have a laptop and rarely use a second monitor anymore.

Remote Work, Cliché vs. Reality

So you might picture me as the remote work cliché hipster on a beach with a MacBook, depicted in unrealistic stock imagery as an antipole to the hooded hacker in a dark room.



My reality looks more like this:



Well, there is one palm tree at least on my pink sweater.

Indispensable Wired Mechanical Keyboard

Despite dispensing with a large monitor, at least I have a mouse and external keyboard to prevent dorsal problems due to an otherwise bent posture. I tried wireless devices, but somehow I had bad luck with batteries, and I like to avoid additional unnecessary radio traffic and electronic waste anyway.

So on a typical working day I have

- a wired keyboard,
- a wired mouse,
- the wired charging device (which is really indispensable in the long run),
- another charger for my mobile phone,
- and my wired headphones,

all connected to my laptop, and when I am out and about, all packed in my backpack.

Beloved Ritual of Untangling my Cables

I have got a neoprene cover to avoid damage to my computer, and my auxiliary devices are quite robust, so I don't need to be perfectly sorted when packing my back. But then I have to take care when unpacking. This might sound like a source of frustration, but I have come to embrace it as a beloved ritual. Setting up my temporary workplace reminds me of a classic musician carefully getting ready before actually making music.

Last but not least, to add some actual value to this post, let me share two alternative strategies for taming the cable chaos.

Two Strategies of Cable Spaghetti Disentanglement

I will either begin with the thinnest cable of the most lightweight device, which is the mouse, followed by the headphones, their delicate cables creeping around the thicker ones like gossamer threads around stems of trees in a garden.

The contrary approach seems more promising, starting with the most heavyweight devices and their cables which are easier to pick as there is only one, and it can even be disassembled: the charger and its hefty power cable.



Elegant and Minimal Front-End Analogy

Once I have untangled everything, I proceed to plug in, and finally tuck overlong cable parts behind my monitor, so that everything looks quite elegant and minimal on the front side.

This ritual is a perfect analogy to front-end development:

Make a mess in my backpack and allow some room for the unordered, just like there should always be some time left for inspiration and exploration, but don't let entropy defy the necessary order needed for deliberate design and achievements either.

Conclusion

You don't need wireless devices when working with a laptop. Untangling cable spaghetti can be a helpful ritual to get into the right mindset for development.
