Auto shutdown

Andrew Ward thinks he may have finally found the closing down product he's been searching for.

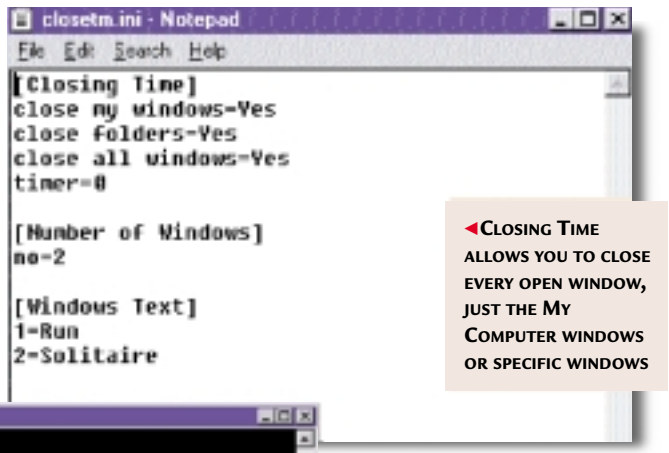
I've complained in the past about the lack of any software product that can automatically close down all running programs – without actually logging the user off. Such a program would mean that a scheduled backup job, for example, could continue without hitting errors or failing to back up any files left open.

Now I've discovered why there are so many utilities that will close all programs and then log off, shut down or restart, but not simply close all programs and leave the user logged on. The Shutdown command that comes with the resource kit is one such example. It's because there is a built-in operating system library call to perform this function. Closing all windows would involve real programming work.

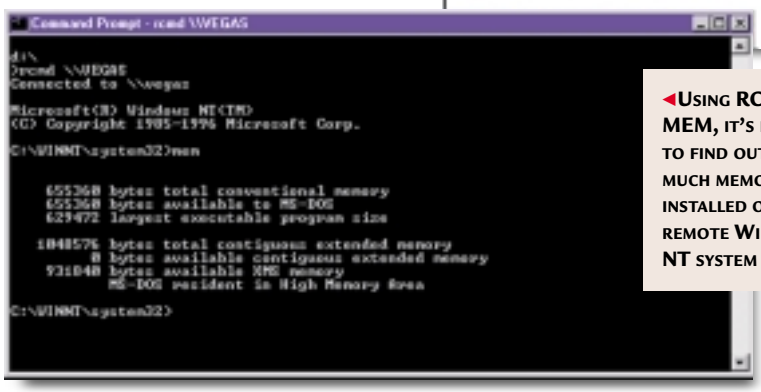
Lior Ostrowsky has undertaken this work and come up with Closing Time, which is a freeware program you can download from http://members.tripod.com/~leeos.

The program allows you to close every open window, just the My Computer windows, or specific named windows. In theory, it only closes actual windows, but in practice it also closes various things such as the Task Manager, LanSafe III UPS monitoring software and the Palm HotSync Manager, which hide themselves in the task tray. Unfortunately, even logging off and on again doesn't restore these particular utilities, so you have to restart the system to get them back.

Closing Time doesn't close programs aggressively, so you are given a chance to save Word documents, for example. In the particular case of Word, this doesn't cause a problem with backup software since Word doesn't hold the document file open while it's being edited.



◀ **Closing Time** allows you to close every open window, just the My Computer windows or specific windows



◀ **Using RCMD and MEM, it's possible to find out how much memory is installed on a remote Windows NT system**

However, because Microsoft Outlook has its windows forced shut, if you have opened up folders in different windows these won't reappear next time you run Outlook.

For example, I keep separate windows open for tasks, calendar and contacts in addition to the standard inbox, and it's quite a fiddle to set all these back to the appropriate sizes and screen positions.

Closing Time doesn't have a user interface, but is driven from an initialisation file. When you run Closing Time, it either takes action immediately or after a delay which you can specify within the file.

Closing Time doesn't have a user interface, but is driven from an initialisation file

Memories

Paul McCormack opens a potential can of worms by asking if there's any way to find out how much memory remote PCs have across an NT network. In theory, WINMSD will do this, assuming that the other PCs on the network are also running NT.

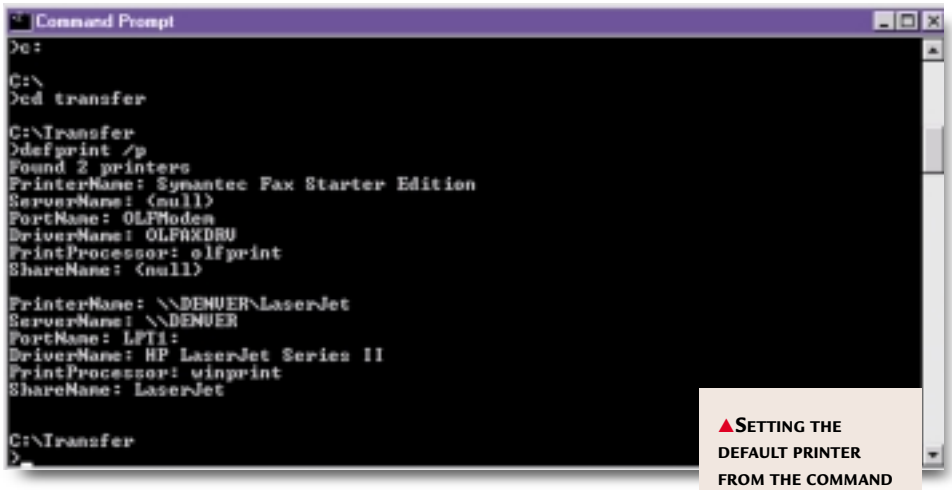
However, when you run WINMSD to a remote computer – by using the menu option File / Select Computer – one of the tabs that doesn't appear is the Memory tab, the very one that we want.

Other utilities that work across the network, such as the Performance Monitor and the Process Viewer tell you everything you could possibly want to know about memory configuration and performance except for the physical memory size. Similarly, resource kit tools such as SRVINFO show you all manner of details, but not memory size.

Of course, remote system management products such as Tivoli will perform a hardware and software inventory of remote systems, but Tivoli is a bit of an overkill just to find out how much memory is fitted to a system.

Microsoft's own SMS (Systems Management Server) will perform a similar task, but requires that you have a domain and hence a domain controller, rather than just a workgroup.

Many servers now ship with remote management tools already included, especially those that come from the larger vendors such as Compaq, IBM and Hewlett-Packard, and these allow you to ascertain memory sizes of remote systems.



▲SETTING THE DEFAULT PRINTER FROM THE COMMAND LINE IS POSSIBLE USING DEFPRINT

The answer lies in a much simpler method. If you go to a command prompt and type MEM, you're immediately told how much memory the system has. If you cast your mind back to last March's issue, I explained how it is possible to run commands on a remote system.

For those of you who missed it, probably the easiest way is to use RCMD. This will only work if the command you want to run uses STDIN, STDERR and STDOUT for input and output, but fortunately the MEM command does.

▼SMALL BUT BEAUTIFUL – PUT YOUR FAVOURITE APPS IN QUICK LAUNCH

First, you'll need INSTSRV.EXE and RCMDSVC.EXE copied onto the target machines. You'll then need to use the following command to install the RCMD service:

```
instsrv rcmd "c:\program ↙
files\reskit\rcmdsvc.exe"
```

(Key: ↙ code string continues)

Note that you do need to specify the full path to RCMDSVC.EXE. Then, proceed to the Services control panel and find the RCMD service. Set up the startup and logon options as required. You'll now be able to use RCMD to connect to the system from other machines across the network. RCMD is reasonably secure, since only users with logon privileges on the remote machine can access it via RCMD. To use RCMD, simply type RCMD followed by the UNC path to the target machine:

```
rcmd    \\VEGAS
```

This then gives you a command prompt where you can type in any command just as if you were sitting at the remote machine. Typing exit returns you to your local command window. If you wish, you can include the command to be executed on the same command line as RCMD:

```
rcmd    \\VEGAS        mem
```

Printing defaults

Graham Willet asks if there is any way to set the default printer under Windows NT to belong to the system rather than to the user. Normally, when you add a printer, it then is associated with that user – indeed, the registry key to specify the default printer is part of the current user's hive:

```
HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software↙
\Microsoft\Windows NT\↙
CurrentVersion\Windows↙
\Device
```

There is thus no obvious way to associate a particular printer with a machine. Graham would like to do this for the obvious reason that users move from machine to machine, and do not really want to print to a remote printer. The problem is worse in Graham's case because it's a school environment and, clearly, children aren't always using PCs in exactly the same location. As with so many deficiencies in Microsoft products, this comes about because the software is written to suit the way that Microsoft employees work – presumably, they are chained to their desks, or don't print very much, or possibly both.

Many servers now ship with remote management tools already included

Fortunately, someone's written a very convenient utility that allows you to set the default printer from a command line prompt. It's called defprint, and is available at the following location: www.tardis.ed.ac.uk/~sda/defprint.

The problem with defprint is that although you can specify the default printer, you have to give either the port name or the share name. If you have a local printer physically connected to every machine, then you can run a login script that sets the default printer to LPT1:, for example:

```
defprint -d LPT1:
```

This doesn't help in the case where the printers are not local to the machine, and neither does specifying the share name, since that would always connect you to the same printer wherever you log on.

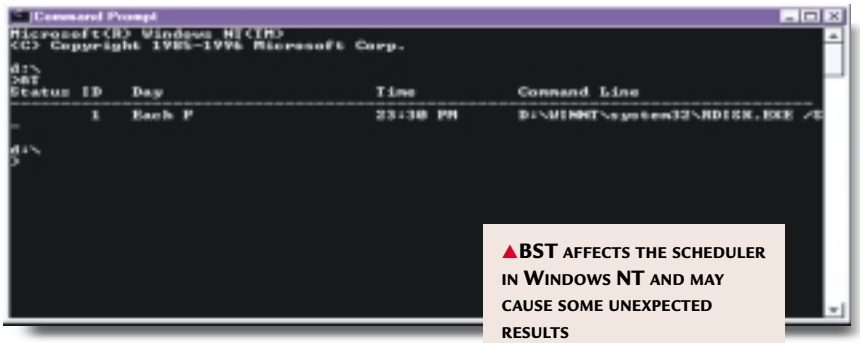
The trick is to make the login script run another batch file from a local drive (or a network drive that is machine-specific) that sets the default printer. For each system in a given room, the batch file would be set up to specify the printer in that room.

Defprint can be used to solve another problem that I have, which is that my default printer isn't remembered when I log off. I've made a batch file containing defprint with the -d option to set the default printer upon startup.

Office shortcuts

Jim Symington writes to say that he too doesn't like the Office Shortcut toolbar, and like me he prefers to use the Quick Launch bar instead. You get the Quick Launch bar if you install the desktop update that comes with Internet Explorer 4 and 5, and you can put the shortcuts to your favourite applications here either by dragging and dropping or manipulating the contents directly.

If you do choose to delve into the folder itself, you can find it at the following location:



▲BST AFFECTS THE SCHEDULER IN WINDOWS NT AND MAY CAUSE SOME UNEXPECTED RESULTS

```
D:\WINNT\Profiles\username↙
\Application Data\Microsoft↙
\Internet Explorer↙
\Quick Launch
```

In fact, I launch programs from here instead of from the desktop, since by definition the desktop is always obscured by the various programs that I have open. The only drawback is, as you'll see from the illustration, that many icons are not designed to be reduced to this size and result in a fuzzy display.

Unsettled Outlook

Roaming and mandatory profiles in Windows NT4 are of considerable help when users move between PCs, but there's a lot of software that hasn't been written with them in mind.

Thomas Shirley writes in from another educational establishment with a similar problem. On this occasion, users are attempting to use Outlook 98 with Microsoft Exchange Server 5.5 SP2, but they roam between machines.

Of course, they need their personal settings for Outlook to be automatically configured for them each time they log on. Thomas has set up user accounts to use Windows NT4 mandatory profiles.

But he complains that his establishment is not alone in having to use the following procedure each time users log on.

Someone has to stand in front of each class that needs email access, and talk the users through renaming user.man to user.dat, reconfiguring Outlook, logging off, logging back on and checking the new settings, then finally renaming user.dat back to user.man.

With Outlook 98, there are several files normally located in the default Windows directory. These are views.dat, outlprnt, <profile name>.fav and <profile name>.rtf.

These can be copied to a generic location, such as a folder located on a drive letter that is always mapped to the user's private home directory, and then the registry needs to be modified accordingly.

However, a bug in versions of Outlook prior to version 8.03 means the last of those four files – which stores user signature information – doesn't successfully travel with a roaming user.

For further information, see Microsoft's Knowledge Base article Q167397.

However, the problem doesn't stop there. When used with Microsoft Exchange, Outlook user profiles also need to be modified to point to the correct personal address book (mailbox.pab) file.

With Outlook 2000, the problem is solved completely. All user-specific data is stored in the user's profile directory, and all user-specific settings are stored within the HKEY_CURRENT_USER subtree of the registry. Thus, since the user portion of the registry is also stored in the profile directory when using mandatory profiles, everything is automatically copied to whichever PC the user logs on at.

In any case, Outlook 98 is to all intents and purposes a discontinued product

The easiest route for many sites may be to upgrade to Outlook 2000. In any case, Outlook 98 is to all intents and purposes a discontinued product – it was really an early release of Outlook 2000.

There are various tools provided by Microsoft to alleviate the problem with Outlook 97 and 98, including Profgen and NewProf. Using them is complex but they can certainly solve the problem in many cases.

Fortunately, there is a third-party utility called olclient from Redfox Communications that is not only easier to use, but also more likely to work.

This is similar to the Microsoft tool profgen in that it modifies a template Outlook profile to match the appropriate user and network settings, and then calls on Microsoft's NewProf utility to install the resulting file as the default Outlook profile.

Any shortcuts that are currently used to start Outlook should be modified to point to olclient.exe instead. Olclient works as follows: First, establish the Login Name of current user; create a profile in User's share if one does not exist. Then check and adjust the Outlook registry settings for user; call NewProf to install the user's profile as the default; finally, load Outlook once NewProf has completed.

For more information on Profgen and NewProf, check http://support.Microsoft.com. For more information on olclient, see www.redfox.co.uk/olclient For Office 2000, consult your software reseller.

Back in time

A long time ago (in fact, it was last January) Gary Powell raised a question about how the shift into British Summer Time affects the scheduler in NT. Marc Blake has very kindly written in with a detailed reply, in plenty of time for the next clock change at the end of April.

Unfortunately, the answer is not good news. According to Marc, when the clocks go forward in April, the system clock changes from 0159 to 0300. Any tasks scheduled for between 0200 and 0259 are lost.

At the end of the October, when the clocks go back, the opposite happens. The system clock changes from 0259 to 0200, resulting in any jobs that are scheduled for between 0200 and 0259 being executed twice.

The exception, of course, is for any jobs that are scheduled only to run once, since these are deleted after being run.

PCW CONTACTS

Andrew Ward welcomes your comments on the Windows NT column. Contact him via the PCW editorial office or email NT@pcw.co.uk