WAMUG

Apple News

Steve Jobs is taking a medical leave of absence from Apple until June 2009, while staying involved in "major strategic decisions," according to a letter sent to company employees, posted on Apple's Web site, and distributed as a media advisory. "During the past week," Jobs writes, "I have learned that my health-related issues are more complex than I originally thought." Chief Operating Officer Tim Cook, often cited as a likely successor to Jobs, will handle day-to-day company operations.

The Keynote speech at Macworld didn't have any breakthrough announcements. The MacBook Pro 17" was updated, as was iLife and iWork. This is Apple's last time participating at Macworld and it causes one to wonder if Macworld can survive.

iTunes Store Changes–Apple will now sell music with no copy protection on it. This makes it readable by virtually all music players, not just an iPod or iTunes. Also, songs will be sold for 69 cents, 99 cents or $1.29. Previously they were only sold for 99 cents.

Google has released a public beta version of Picasa for Mac at Macworld Expo this week. Previously, Mac users were limited to the Picasa Web Albums uploader and an iPhoto plugin, but now they have access to the full version of the photo editing and organizing software. It is free, but you need and Intel based Mac to run it. http://picasa.google.com/mac/

iWork '09 Adds Features

by Tonya Engst TidBITS.com

Apple's iWork '09 announcements at Macworld Expo brought some worthwhile improvements to the presentation, word processing, and spreadsheet suite, along with a new Keynote Remote

Control app for the iPhone and iPod touch. Oh, and there's also a beta of a new online service, iWork.com. But, particularly with Pages and Numbers, the new features sound awfully reminiscent of things we've been accustomed to having in Microsoft Word and Excel for years.

Keynote -- Keynote '09 picks up some visual enhancements, fancier transitions, and the capability to perform object-level transitions that animate the graphics or text between slides. There are also new themes and snazzier chart types and animations, but the main addition is actually a $0.99 Keynote Remote app for the iPhone and iPod touch. It enables you to drive a Keynote presentation, complete with speaker's notes and a preview of the next slide. The functionality isn't new though, since apps like StageHand and Remote Buddy have been offering similar features for some time. We'll be curious to see if Apple tosses these competing programs out of the App Store for treading on Keynote Remote's new turf, or if they'll settle for undercutting them.

Pages -- The most important changes in Pages '09 made us think that Apple has finally gotten serious about competing with Microsoft Word, if not producing a word processor for the 21st century. These new features include mail merging with Numbers, an outliner that enables you to move items around in a hierarchy and have those movements reflected in the styling of your document (much like the Heading styles in Microsoft Word), and support for MathType and EndNote. Also, a new full-screen view takes over the entire monitor, obscuring even the menu bar unless you hover the cursor over it, enabling you to focus on the task at hand instead of all the other stuff happening on your Mac (see "Minimize Desktop Distractions", 2008-12-04).

Numbers -- Changes in Numbers '09 look like solid updates, but are nothing groundbreaking. There's a new feature that improves the re-organizing of tables, added formulas and an enhanced interface for entering them, and new chart types and visuals. Happily, we've heard that Numbers '09 does offer the capability to freeze a column, locking it in place as you scroll through other columns. Finally!

iWork '09 also now features dynamic linking, which enables you to create charts in Numbers and then link them into Keynote and Pages, such that when the chart changes in Numbers it automatically changes in all locations. If you're thinking this sounds like Microsoft's OLE or Apple's own Publish and Subscribe, from the early 1990s, well, you're right.

iWork.com -- Phil Schiller also announced a beta version of a new Web site called iWork.com, which gives users of iWork '09 a way to share files online and perform limited collaboration. To share an iWork document, you click a button in the toolbar and enter the email address of someone to whom you want to give access. That person can then click a link in the resulting email message to view the document in their favorite Mac or Windows Web browser, with what looked like excellent fidelity to the appearance of the original document.

The iWork.com site enables users to add comments (which appear as sticky notes) and maintain an ongoing chat-style conversation

with each other; the interface looks similar to the iWork applications and can display any Pages, Numbers, or Keynote document. Users can also download files in their original formats, as PDF documents, or as Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, or PowerPoint) files. Although the service is brand new and still in beta, our take is that it's going to have an uphill climb in order to compete with the far more useful Google Docs and other online collaboration services.

That's largely because there's no round-trip support, and it supports only iWork documents. If, for instance, you're working on a project with an editor, your editor needs to download your files, make changes, and give them back to you. That's not possible, nor is working with any file types - Photoshop, InDesign, etc. - that are commonplace in the real world.

Details -- iWork.com is now available to purchasers of iWork '09, with free access during the beta test period. Apple said that the service would require a fee in the future, but did not state how much it would cost or when free access would end. This approach feels haphazard - we'd like to see iWork.com merged with MobileMe, so users won't have to work in multiple sites or pay separate bills.

iWork '09 requires Mac OS X Tiger 10.4.11 or later, and at least a 500 MHz G4 processor. It costs $49 with the purchase of a new Macintosh, or it can be purchased separately for $79 or $99 for a family pack. iWork '09 is available now, and it will be available in late January 2009 in the Mac Box Set, which will cost $169 and include Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard, the new iLife '09, and iWork '09

MacPro Tip
Super–Clean Screenshots

In Mac OS X Leopard, you can capture an image of your entire screen by typing Command-Shift-3. Typing Command-Shift-4 lets you choose a specific part of your screen to save as a screenshot: Click and hold to place the small cross-hair cursor at one edge of the area you want to capture, then drag horizontally and/or vertically to select. When you release the cursor, the screenshot is saved to your desktop.

But creating screenshots this way often means you need to crop or clean up the edges of the image later. That's especially true if you're planning to use it as a graphic element in a document or presentation. Fortunately, Mac OS X Leopard offers a way to save clean screenshots of individual elements on your desktop — such as Finder windows, menus, icons, or the visible portion of an open document — without capturing anything else in the background. Hold down the Command, Shift, and 4 keys, then press the Spacebar. Instead of a cross-hair cursor, a small camera icon appears. When you move this camera icon over the element you'd like

to capture, that element is highlighted. Click your mouse or trackpad, and you've captured a screenshot of just that element — no further cleanup required.

Mac 911

by Christopher Breen

Customizing the login screen

Trendy reader Paul Mauro would like to tattoo his Mac's login screen. He writes:

A couple years ago you published a tip on putting a personal note on the login screen. I implemented this on two machines as an SOS in case I lost my computer and a kind soul found it. It said the computer was mine and how to contact me. But I have upgraded to OS X 10.5 and I can't get it work now. Could you check it on 10.5 and tell me what I should do now?

I have and I will. Although you could use Terminal and a hunk of text to do the job, why bother when you can simply download Titanium Software's free OnyX?

OnyX performs any number of tricks, including checking the viability of your hard drive, sweeping out old log files and caches, and customizing the Mac's interface in ways not possible without some stern Terminal twiddling. One of these customization options allows you to place a personal message in the Mac's login window.

Just launch OnyX, let it do its startup things--checking the S.M.A.R.T status of your hard

drive and verifying that drive--enter your Admin password when prompted, and then click the Parameters icon. Click the Login tab within the window that appears and enable the Show Message in the Login Window option. Now just type a custom message in the field below--Property of Paul Mauro, pmauro@..., 555-555-1212, for instance--quit OnyX, and log out of your account. When the login screen appears you'll find that custom message near the top of the login window.

Senior Editor Christopher Breen is the author of Secrets of the iPod and iTunes, fifth edition, and The iPod and iTunes Pocket Guide (both Peachpit Press, 2005).

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