

Network Beverage Selector

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The Network Beverage Selector solves the never ending problem of whose turn it is to get the coffees in. NBS selects a victim and keeps track of how many drinks each participant has bought and how many they have drunk. It uses this information to bias the next selection towards those who haven't bought their fair share.

System Requirements

Networked PC's running Microsoft Windows 95 or Microsoft Windows NT (Intel x86 or DEC Alpha)

NBS is designed to be run from a shared directory on a server.

Setting Up

The program is distributed in ZIP format using the dos version of PKZIP. Some of the program files have file names longer than 8.3 that are munged by PKZIP. After unzipping, run LFN.BAT to restore the long filenames.

Enter the names of the participants in the file NBS.INI. You may also set other parameters in this file (described later). **All participants must use the same shared copy of NBS.INI and it must reside in the same directory as the NBS.EXE executable.** Copy all the files to your network server and you are ready to go!

(To reduce network overhead, .WAV files may be stored locally to each PC, see the description of WavPath below)

Command Line Switches

The following switches can be used in any combination (leave spaces between them!)

NBS /NAME:"TONY IMBIERSKI"

Starts NBS using the given round member's name. This bypasses the startup dialog. Note the name must be enclosed in double quotes, but capitalisation is not important. If the name given is not present in NBS.INI then the program will not start.

NBS /WAVPATH:C:\NBS

If your wav files are kept in a different directory to the one specified in NBS.INI then use this switch to override.

NBS /RESET

NBS will detect if it is already running and will refuse to start a second instance on the same machine. However if for any reason NBS terminates abnormally it may refuse to restart, saying that it thinks it is already running. If this happens, start NBS with the above switch to override.

NBS.INI settings

You should only modify entries in the sections [NAMES] and [GENERAL].

[NAMES]

NAME0=Drinker1

NAME1=Drinker2

NAME2=Drinker3

NAME3=Drinker4

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NAME9=Drinker9

Enter the names of your participants. Spaces are allowed, so you can use FIRSTNAME LASTNAME or whatever combination you like.

[GENERAL]

Beverage=Tea

This is the name of the drink you have.

Round=Tea Selector

This is the name of your round. If multiple groups use the program on the same network, the program uses the setting of Round to distinguish one from another.

PauseTime=350

This controls the time the program takes to select a victim. If you want the program to finish faster, make this value smaller.

PointsToWin=30

This controls how long the selection process lasts. If you want the program to finish faster, make this value smaller.

SelectionWaitTime=10

When someone proposes a round, the program waits this number of seconds to allow people to join or leave the round before it starts.

MessagePopup=1

When a text message is sent the program restores itself if it was minimised and comes to the front of the screen (in front of any other applications). If you don't want this, set this value to 0. However, you may then miss messages from other drinkers if the application is covered by windows.

CountdownPopup=1

Similar to the above, the program will force itself to the front during countdown to a round unless this value is set to 0. This is to ensure that everyone in your round knows it is taking place.

StatusTime=30000

Computers running NBS verify their status with each other every so many milliseconds according to this parameter. 30000 = 30 seconds.

DisconnectTimeout=3

If a computer hasn't verified it's status within this number of StatusTime periods, it is assumed to have gone away and is disconnected from the round. Eg if StatusTime is 30000 (30 sec) and DisconnectTimeout is 3, computers are timed out after 90 seconds. Disconnected users are marked as "Timeout" on the main screen.

DisconnectReset=6

After being timed out, if this number of StatusTime periods passes with still no update the computer is marked "offline".

RandomFactor=8

This sets a base level for the bias of each round. The higher it is the more truly random a selection will be. The lower it is the more the selection will be biased against people who haven't bought their fair share.

Sound=1

1=play sounds, 0=don't. The program looks for wav files with the same name (including any spaces) as your participants. Eg if Name1=Tony Imbierski then the program looks to play "Tony Imbierski.wav" whenever Tony Imbierski is selected as victim. You will need to record wav files with the names of your participants.

Commentary=0

1=running commentary, 0=no commentary

WavPath=.

Normally the program looks for wav files in the same directory as the NBS.EXE executable, which is normally on a network server. However, since some of the wav files may be large, you can copy them to a local directory on each computer and set the WavPath to this directory. This saves the network bandwidth of all your participants loading the wav file from the server every time the program wants to play a wav. Beware, though, that since everyone must read the same copy of NBS.INI, the wav path must be the same for all users (eg C:\NBS). If this is not possible, individual computers can override this setting using the command line switch /WAVPATH.

SoundMode=RANDOM

During selection, the program will play any wav file matching the name PROGRES.WAV. This is done in one of two ways according to the setting of this parameter:*

RANDOM: Play any one of the proges.wav files randomly.*

BIAS: Play a specific wav file according to the round member with the highest bias. Eg if round member 3 has the highest bias, the 3rd wav file (in alphabetical order) will be played.

The other sections of NBS.INI are used to store running totals for each round, so you must keep the same copy of NBS.INI to preserve this information between rounds. Also, all users must have write access to this file in order to update the round statistics after each round.

If the program detects that two computers are using different copies of NBS.INI, it will not allow them to communicate. Thus if you find you cannot see your fellow round members as ONLINE, check that you are all running the same shared NBS.INI.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Does the program run on Windows 3.1 or 3.11?

A: No