

Technotes



TECHNOTE : *Inside Macintosh: Processes:* Time Manager Addenda

Technote 1063
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This Note highlights the usage of two fields -- `tmReserved` and `tmWakeUp` -- that might be unclear after reading the chapter "Time Manager" in [Inside Macintosh: Processes](#) .

This Note is intended for all developers who want to do time measurement using the Time Manager routines.

Setting Up `tmReserved`

On page 3-8 of [Inside Macintosh: Processes](#) , it clearly states that both `tmWakeUp` and `tmReserved` should be set to 0 prior to the first call to `InsXTime` when using the extended Time Manager:

```
theTMTask.tmWakeUp = theTMTask.tmReserved = 0;
InsXTime((QElemPtr)&theTMTask);
PrimeTime((QElemPtr)&theTMTask, 2000);
```

If you do want to do some time measurement, then you have to call `RmvTime` to get the current value of `tmCount`, which leads later to a new call to `InsXTime`, and a call to `PrimeTime` with a 0 delay which has a special meaning in that case. Although it appears, after much reading, rather clear that you leave the current value of `tmWakeUp` untouched in the `TMTask` structure, you can't be sure what to do about the value of `tmReserved`.

The truth is that prior to October, 1992 (System Software 7.1), you didn't care, but it's more of a concern now, since Apple slightly modified the behavior of the Time Manager to deal with performance issues.

If you leave `tmReserved` untouched, then, after 127 calls to the following code:

```
RmvTime((QElemPtr)&theTMTask);
remaining = theTMTask.tmCount;
InsXTime((QElemPtr)&theTMTask);
PrimeTime((QElemPtr)&theTMTask, 0);
```

for some good but can't-be-disclosed reason, your extended time task is converted into a non-extended time task which, being waked up with a 0 delay `PrimeTime` (which has no special meaning for a non-extended time task), will suddenly be called and called again -- more frequently than it should be.

So, if you perform that kind of time measurement, be sure to write instead:

```
RmvTime((QElemPtr)&theTMTask);
remaining = theTMTask.tmCount;
theTMTask.tmReserved = 0;
InsXTime((QElemPtr)&theTMTask);
PrimeTime((QElemPtr)&theTMTask, 0);
```

Since the Time Manager, prior to System Software 7.1, doesn't care about `tmReserved`, then you can set `tmReserved` to 0 before each call to `InsXTime` without checking the system version. You still have, of course, to ensure that the Time Manager you're using is the extended one (`gestaltTimeMgrVersion 'tmgr'`, answering `gestaltExtendedTimeMgr (= 3)`), and, at this point, there is no way to tell what's going to happen under Mac OS 8.

About `tmWakeUp`

The following sentence, also on page 3-8 in *Inside Macintosh: Processes*, is incorrect: "The `tmWakeUp` field contains the time at which the Time Manager task specified by `tmAddr` was last executed (or 0 if it has not yet been executed)." It should say: "The `tmWakeUp` field contains the time at which the Time Manager task specified by `tmAddr` is scheduled to be executed (or 0 if it has not yet been executed)."

Warning:

Since the format of that field is undocumented and used internally by the Time Manager, developers are strongly discouraged anyway from performing any kind of calculation or comparison on the value of this field, since that format could change in the future.

Undeferred Time Manager Tasks

This section describes an optimization that you might want to employ when using the Time Manager in the presence of virtual memory (VM). Most developers will not be interested in this; however, all users of the Time Manager should heed the following warning.

Important

Because there is an *extremely remote* possibility that the memory you've allocated for your Time Manager task contains the special value listed below, if you want to ensure the behavior defined in [Inside Macintosh: Memory](#), you should always clear the `qLink` field in the `TMTask` before installing it.

As described in [Inside Macintosh: Memory](#), Time Manager tasks are automatically deferred by the Virtual Memory (VM) system to avoid double page faults. This was done for backward compatibility with existing applications that use the Time Manager, but it can seriously increase the latency between when the timer expires and when your Time Manager task executes.

For more information about interactions between the Time Manager and VM, see [Technote 1094, "Virtual Memory Application Compatibility"](#).

For example, if you set a Time Manager task to execute at time X and, at time $(X - \delta)$ some process takes a page fault, your Time Manager task will not be called until time $(X + Y - \delta)$, where Y is the time required to field a page fault. If the page fault causes the hard disk to seek, Y could be as great as the hard disk's average seek time, approximately 10ms. If you are trying to use the Time Manager to measure time in *microseconds*, this could be a problem.

There is a way you can install Time Manager tasks so the callback is not deferred by VM; however, before using this technique, you should be aware of the dangers. Because VM does not defer these special Time Manager tasks, it is possible for them to fire when paging is not safe. To avoid fatal page faults, you must ensure:

- The `TMTask` record is held for the entire time the Time Manager task is installed. You can do that using the following code:

```
HoldMemory(&theTask, sizeof(TMTask));
```

- The code for the timer task and any data it references is held. If the code for your timer task is stored in a code resource, you can use the following snippet to make sure it is held. If your timer task code is not in a code resource, it's very difficult to ensure that it and its data are held.

```
// Ensure the code doesn't move in logical memory
HLock(ttaskCodeHandle);
// Ensure the code is held in physical memory and cannot be paged to disk
HoldMemory(*ttaskCodeHandle, GetResourceSizeOnDisk(ttaskCodeHandle));
```

- You timer task code only calls system routines that are guaranteed to meet the above requirement -- this typically means only that routines that are known to be interrupt-safe.

Important

If you fail to meet these requirements, you will cause a fatal page fault and crash the system.

If you call `InsTime` or `InsXTime` with the `qLink` field set to \$65616461, the VM patch on the Time Manager will recognize your special requirements and execute your timer task as soon as it fires, regardless of whether paging is safe or not.

Another Way to Perform Time Measurement

Another way to perform time measurement would be to use the `Microseconds` call, which is much easier to use and less likely to change in the future:

```
pascal void Microseconds(UnsignedWide *microseconds);
```

Warning:

Currently, even with the most recent system software (7.5.3 revision 2) on a PCI Power Macintosh, both the Time Manager calls and the `Microseconds` call are still in 68K code and thus are executed by the emulator. If you call them from PowerPC code, you'll get a switch from PowerPC code to the 68K emulator, so the values returned are incorrect by a few tenths of a microsecond. This means that you have to be careful when using either of them to do time measurement. If you do use `Microseconds`, then your time measurement is done by the difference of the 2 values returned by `Microseconds` before and after the code you measure, and since the latency induced by the switches is the same in both case, then your time measurement is correct. If you do use the Time Manager way of performing time measurement, however, the `tmCount` field may be off by a few tenths of a microsecond.

Summary

The following points explain what you should and should not do in working with the Time Manager:

- Always set `tmReserved` to 0 before calling `InsXTime`.
- Set `tmWakeUp` to 0 before the first call to `InsXTime`, never look at it or modify it (except to set it to 0 in some cases, no other value is acceptable) afterwards.
- `tmCount` is only valid after a call to `RmvTime`.
- Always clear `qLink` before calling `InsXTime`.
- `Microseconds` might be a good alternate way.

Further Reference

- [Inside Macintosh: Processes](#) , Chapter 3, The Time Manager
- [Denis G. Pelli's Web page](#)