xp advisor

XP networks come home

The nuclear family may be a thing of the past, but for Windows XP PCs the benefits of togetherness – connecting work to home – are better than ever

Forget the two-car family, the two (or more) PC household is the demographic of the future. Already many home users now own more than one PC. It's increasingly common for the kids to have their own systems, while their parents use another. Or maybe there's a home desktop PC and an office laptop that's used for both work and for leisure pursuits as it travels between buildings. Whatever your setup, linking your machines together makes a lot of sense.

Networked PCs can share multiuser applications, devices and even an internet connection. Plus, if you choose the wireless route supported by Windows XP you can get all the benefits of a network without having to put up with a mass of extra cabling.

XP makes networking so easy it's practically child's play. It's no coincidence, either, that the latest release of Windows untangles a great deal of the mystery which traditionally surrounds this branch of IT. And, having conquered the rather more insular desktop environment, Microsoft has taken the battle online – the company's .Net strategy hangs on us all sporting one of its so-called Passports, docking MSN as our home page, chatting in real-time via Messenger and downloading music to play via its Media Player application. All via a broadband connection, naturally.

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Windows XP takes this a step further, making it easier than ever to set up a network and communicate with others from your PC. Don't let the word 'network' put you off. It's really just about linking bases, no matter whether they're of the desktop or laptop variety, and regardless of where they're located. Because, the omnipresence of a certain giant software corporation aside, it's impossible to ignore the fact that we are becoming an ever-more connected world. ■

Quick-and-dirty photo printing

Every now and then during a working day, another handy XP feature is brought to our attention. This month, we show you XP's natty Photo Printing Wizard.

↑ Open the folder which contains the images you want to print and click Print pictures from the Picture taskpane

↑ The Photo Printing Wizard asks you to select the pictures you want to print – just tick the boxes of your chosen snaps

↑ Finally choose the layout you want – one pic to a page or several on one sheet to save paper. There's even a contact sheet option for thumbnails