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Soft options

Picking a flavour of XP used to be clear-cut: if you need business networking features, choose Pro; if you don't, go for Home. Now, though, the decision isn't so straightforward

Microsoft did a very annoying thing when it created XP Home: it left out some of the good bits of the Professional edition. And we don't mean the high-end network/administration features. The trouble is, the company's costlier Windows package is fast becoming the only option if you want to try the latest technologies and give yourself some sort of assurance of future-proofing.

Granted, it's a reasonably sane idea to have a cheaper, less feature-packed version of the operating system available for those who don't need the fancy stuff. But with only about £70 difference between the full versions of the consumer and business editions, it's almost a false economy to try and save a few quid.

Here's a good example of this lack of forethought: XP Home doesn't include the

Windows Backup Utility. XP Pro does and Windows 98 had it, so why not XP Home? Backup is important, but Microsoft is forcing Home users to find alternative means of performing scheduled archives.

Access your work PC while you're at Starbucks or stuck at home waiting for the gas man

This month we're taking an in-depth look at another XP Pro-only feature, Remote Desktop, which allows you to access your work PC while you're having a coffee at Starbucks or stuck at home waiting for the gas man.

Not only are you able to see the files on your office-based PC, you can also use the applications on that system. So even if you don't have PowerPoint on your laptop you will still be able to view

the presentation your boss has sent you.

This kind of distant working is becoming a theme and not just with Microsoft. The problem for those running XP Home is that the technologies developing around it – tablet PCs, smart displays et al – use Windows XP Professional Edition. ■

Rename multiple files instantly

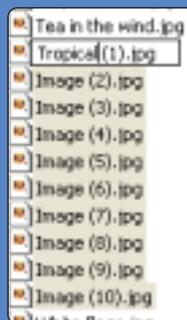
Images copied straight from a digital camera are automatically saved on your PC as 'Image (1)', 'Image (2)' and so on. When you've got a lot of files you don't want to have to rename them individually, so XP lets you perform batch name changes.



1 Drag-select a block of files or hold Ctrl to click those you want to rename. The selected files' names must have a number in brackets, as designated by your camera



2 Right-click the first file in the list and choose rename



3 Rename the first file and press Return to instantly rename all the selected images

