

The Ultimate Troubleshooter*AnswersThatWork.com...\$20*

Imagine what you could do with a single piece of software that would tell you everything that runs on your PC at startup, every task and service you are running, and whether you *should* be running them. Imagine a program that clearly, simply and directly tells you what a task or service is for, what it does or does not do, what problems it has been known to cause, and whether you should disable it. Imagine a program that would give you a one-touch look at all the hardware you are running and that would let you easily delete temporary Internet files, Documents and Run histories, and other potential elements that can hog space or slow down your computing. You have just imagined *The Ultimate Troubleshooter*.

This marvelous \$20 utility, currently in version 2.37, is a must-have for all PC users except brand-new ones (they would benefit, too, but would likely be put off by some of the jargon and the fairly cluttered interface). *The Ultimate Troubleshooter* gives you a snapshot of what your PC is doing, tells you what you should keep and what you should dispose of, and makes it easy for you to implement its recommendations. This has nothing to do with viruses or spyware; this program excels at evaluating perfectly legitimate software that you simply do not need but that resides on your computer, potentially slowing it down, making it unstable, or using up memory. The color coding of the analyses is excellent: red for items labeled "not OK," yellow for "user's choice," blue for "multiple possibilities," green for "OK," and white for "unknown." For each item identified, the program gives status, manufacturer, discussion, views and recommendation, all in well-thought-out, well-presented form. Implementing a recommendation is easy, and *The Ultimate Troubleshooter* links quickly to Control Panel, Add/Remove Programs, and the Windows registry editor if you need any of them. There is some bias in the analyses; for instance, Norton System Doctor is labeled "not OK" for being "heavy on resources in our opinion," with a recommendation not to run it at startup -- a fairly harsh judgment that there may be perfectly legitimate reasons to ignore. But users do not *have* to do what the program suggests, and all its recommendations are clearly explained. The folks at AnswersThatWork.com -- a site filled with interesting information, lots of which is free -- really know their stuff, and *The Ultimate Troubleshooter* shares much of their knowledge in a handy, easy-to-use form. This is definitely not for novices, but it's a superb tool for everyone else, and a real bargain as well.

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