



Christmas gift ideas for the office geeks

Looking for that gift to make your fellow employees giggle with delight at the office Christmas party? Here are some great 'geek' gifts that are functional and might look great around the office.

Many of these gifts work off your computer's USB port, so you might want to think about picking up a USB hub. You can buy USB hubs at local stores, but be sure to get a self-powered one so it doesn't pull juice from your computer.

A few good companies to look for in USB hubs are D-Link Systems, Inc., Linksys, Belkin Components and Kensington. These companies have been around for a while, so you can trust their products. USB hubs generally run from \$20 to \$30 and are worth every penny.

Good little gifts for photographers are card readers and extra cards for their cameras.

New keyboards and mice are inexpensive gifts that can increase the work speed of those who use them. And as we all know, there's nothing worse than a bad keyboard.

For those who work in dark offices, a full spectrum light is a gift possibility. Not only are they space efficient, but they also can reduce eye strain from trying to read six-point type. They come in all shapes and designs. If you have to read at your desk, check out a full spectrum light at:

www.firststreetonline.com

How about some good how-to books on Adobe Photoshop or Indesign? Reference books are wonderful for new employees to use if they have questions. You can find books on older software on-line. Another good source is:

www.amazon.com

Think you need a new keyboard? Perhaps your old one would work better if you just cleaned out all the dust and dirt.

This duck-shaped vacuum cleaner, at just \$21, is a valuable tool in the fight against dust. The power source is your USB port (or hub). Simply plug the vacuum in and let the cleaning begin. The duck's bill is the suction mechanism. Check it out at:

<http://www.himeyashop.com>

Get your office in the Christmas spirit by decorating your workspace with a USB Christmas Decoration Kit. At only \$18, the kit contains a string of colorful LED lights, a cute Christmas hat and a mouse pad. Just plug the string of lights into your USB port (or hub) and your workspace is ready for the holidays. Available at:

<http://usb.brandoo.com.hk>



by WILMA MELOT

computer notes
from the road

This next gift is my boss's personal favorite. At \$39.99, I-FISH plugs up to your iPod to play music through its built-in speakers. I-FISH dances, emits sounds and flashes lights in rhythm to your music.



This fishie also works with your headphones. Three "AA" batteries are

required. Available from Hasbro at:
<http://www.hasbro.com>

For any one with a small, hand-held camera, the Gorillapod's flexible digital camera tripod would be a great gift at only \$21.97.

Its weird, robot-like hands grip any pole to hold your camera steady. Gorillapod's 30 adjustable joints grip trees, fences or posts to provide a steady and secure platform for your small camera. Check it out at:
www.x-tremegeek.com

If computer or server crashes are a common problem for you or any of your prospective gift-receivers, a jump drive is a gift option. Used to back up your work, jump drives can store quite a bit of information by plugging into your USB port (or hub). Just remember to back your work up by saving to the drive often.

One jump drive in particular is the T.One, which stores 8 gigabytes of data on a USB hard drive enclosure the size of a matchbook. It also features a pivoting USB connector that folds into the body for easy transport and storage. The T.One retails for \$129.

<http://www.x-tremegeek.com>

The next item is software for your workplace that is simultaneously fun and improves productivity.

For a quality clip art service your ad designers are sure to love, check out *Art Explosion 750,000*.

At \$315, this software is a bit pricey. However, not having to visit any online clip art services for the next few years, this software will soon pay for itself.

With 750,000 images, you can find the perfect image for just about any project from creating ads to designing specialty pages with this large collection of professionally illustrated images.

This software's variety is vast, as it includes 34,000 photographs, 3,000 backgrounds, Web graphics and animations.

Everything you need is contained in one box. Art Explosion comes on 48 CD-ROMs with two image catalogs (1,800 pages in book form). The 750,000 images are royalty-free and more than 80 percent are in color and 65 percent are vector clip art (EPS), scalable to any size.

The images come in EPS, TIFF, JPEG and GIF file formats. These formats are compatible with all popular programs and printers.

Need fonts? Art Explosion 750,000 contains 1,800 high-quality fonts that include TrueType and PostScript fonts. Serif and sans-serif, script, decorative and novelty typefaces are also included.

System requirements for Art Explosion 750,000 is any PowerPC-based Macintosh computer, System 7.5 or later, and a CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive.

The new OSX on-screen image viewer requires System 10.2 or greater. Image viewer for Mac OS System 7.5-9.2 is also included.

Art Explosion works with all word processing, desktop publishing and graphics programs like Adobe InDesign, Pagemaker, Photoshop, Quark and Microsoft Word.

For Windows users, try Art Explosion 800,000. System requirements are Windows 95/98/2000/Me/XP running Pentium 133 Mhz or faster with 32MB RAM. Obviously, the software requires a CD-ROM drive. The image browser software requires Windows 98 or later. This software retails for \$149.

For those of you who are considering full-page pagination for 2007, a large external firewire hard drive could be a great Christmas present.

Basically, this allows you to store all art in one place so everyone in the office has easy access. As always, don't forget to back up.

Just think of all your Internet art, CD art, photos, ads and banners used in your newspaper available on one drive that's accessible to everyone in the office. Sweet.

Another benefit to using a large external firewire hard drive for images comes when making PDFs. With all art in one place, the PDFs you make have good links to files, meaning less errors and, thus, less time you have to spend re-linking the images to the file.

If you have geeks you're shopping for, hopefully your Christmas gift hunting is now a little easier. That is my Christmas gift to you.

Have a Merry Christmas!



Little Program Wishes

Check out Default Folder X, from St. Clair Software, at www.stclairsoft.com.

This software makes file navigation much easier on Mac operating systems. Things like saving and opening your files on Mac OS X becomes much easier with Default Folder X. Among other things, this software allows you to program custom keyboard shortcuts and put your favorite and recent folders at your fingertips. Pop-up menus let you navigate your folders and open finder windows. Some of the fastest people I see working use Default Folder X to customize their finder folder systems. It's worth a "look see" if it can speed up your work process. And at \$34.95, it's not going to break your piggy bank.

For an inexpensive font utility that's a step up from the Font Book, go to <http://www.linotype.com/2631/free-download.html>.

This program gives you access to the Linotype font store, FontExplorer X from Linotype, the German-based font foundry. It's being released as freeware and features a simple iTunes-like interface and auto-activation. The buzz going around right now is that this is the best font manager for OS X, specifically if you have thousands of fonts. Is there at last a worthy successor to ATM Deluxe? Possibly.

Fonts are organized like your media files using a library, folders, tags and even smart sets. Need direct access to all typefaces from a certain foundry or all italics? How about all fonts tagged with a certain keyword? FontExplorer X makes these things easier.

All fonts and formats are recognized automatically and can be managed in a comfortable way. This software is built to be as unobtrusive as possible.

Photo Viewer For Windows

For Windows users, check out this little photo browser, IrfanView.

You can use this software to crop graphics and change from one format to another. IrfanView is useful when putting one image with another when the document is larger than can be scanned at one time.

IrfanView, freeware that you download, works with Windows 9x/ME/NT/2000/XP/2003/Vista. After downloading software of any kind from the Internet, it's a good idea to copy that to a CD for back-up purposes.

Check it out at www.irfanview.com.

