Z-DESK

The Active Wallpaper Program for Windows 95

A Desktop Control Application for Windows 95 that brings control over your computer to your desktop – full-screen, instantly available, non-intrusive.

Designed to resemble the computer displays shown in the TV programs Star Trek: The Next Generation and Star Trek: Voyager, Z-DESK is a program that runs as a full-screen window without borders or menu bars, effectively replacing both your desktop and wallpaper. It consists of a number of screens that enable the user to start programs, launch Desktop shortcuts, access Control Panel applets, establish Dial-Up and HyperTerminal connections and much more, all with a single mouse-click.

Z-DESK is ready for your command at all times through an icon in the system tray and it can just as easily be sent to the background, behind all other open programs or hidden completely.

REQUIREMENTS

Z-DESK is written to work with all versions of Windows 95 and later; although most functions should work with Windows NT, version 4.0 or later, no testing has been done under NT.

In addition to the files included in this archive, you need a copy of the Visual Basic 5 Virtual Machine, MSVBVM50.DLL – please see the Installation section below for further details.

To run Z-DESK in its default Random Color mode, a high- or true color display with a color depth of 16 bits (65536 colors) or better is recommended. Although the program will run with any display setting, the color dithering at lower color depths may not look very attractive. If you have to run at a lower color depth and have problems with the display of the colors, you can change the base colors and turn off the Random Color mode in the Options dialog.

For best visual results, a display resolution of 800 x 600 or better is recommended.

INSTALLATION

Z-DESK is written in MS Visual Basic 5 and requires one additional file, the VB 5 Virtual Machine, MSVBVM50.DLL. You can download this file from most Online Systems and BBS's. Once you have obtained a copy of the DLL, simply move it into your \windows\ system directory.

Important Note:
You may already have a copy of this file on your system; some versions of MS Office come with a copy of it. However, that version of the file is intended to run VBA (Visual Basic for Applications) programs and may not be compatible with compiled VB 5 programs. There are also several different version of MSVBVM50.DLL distributed with VB. This program was compiled with the Service Pack 2 Version and requires the file version 5.00.4319 (SP2) or later; it will not work with earlier versions. If you get error messages about Missing or

Invalid entry points in MSVBVM50.DLL when you try to start Z-DESK*, you will need to get a newer version of the file. In this case, save a copy of the file to a different directory or disk before replacing it. This will enable you to revert to your previous version if you run into problems with other programs after installing the new file.*

If you have problems finding the correct version of this file, you can download a zipped version by anonymous FTP from the following address:

ftp://ftp.omniflora.com/pub/software/msvbvm50.zip

To install Z-DESK, first unzip the contents of the archive to an empty directory. Open Explorer, go into this directory and double-click setup.exe to start the installation. You will be given a choice of where to install the program; the default is a directory named Z-DESK under your "Program Files" directory. You can change this location to any drive and/or directory you like. The Setup program will expand and copy the files to the specified directory and will create a shortcut to start Z-DESK in your Programs menu.

Z-DESK does not require any initial configuration; while it is highly configurable through a number of options, you can start using the program with all features immediately after installation.

UN-INSTALLATION

To uninstall Z-DESK open Control Panel and start the Add/Remove Programs applet. Browse the list of installed applications until you find entry for Z-DESK. Mark this entry and click the Uninstall button.

FIRST STEPS

To start Z-DESK, click its shortcut in the Programs menu. The program will appear on-screen. If this is the first time you use it, it will display its "Desktop" screen.

These elements are common among all screens:

- A colored frame on a black background. The frame color will also identify the currently active display.
- A title bar on top.
- A main menu in the right-hand side of the frame, where the different displays can be selected.
- A date and time display below the main screen menu (this can be turned off in the Options dialog if you prefer not to have the date and time permanently displayed).

Z-DESK will always adjust to the currently available display workspace, taking into account not only the display size but also any permanently visible taskbars on either side of the screen. If you change the display size or your taskbar arrangement, you can simply click on the title bar or make a new display selection; the program will automatically adjust to your new setup. You can also click on the title bar to instantly change the random colors used for the menu items.

By clicking the main menu items to the right, you can switch between displays. You will note that every time a selection is recognized, the selected item is briefly highlighted and a sound is played.

Selection is cued to the "MouseUp" event, so you can back off a selection by moving the mouse pointer away from a selection before releasing the button. Releasing the left mouse button over an item will select it; hence all items can be selected with a single click (no double clicks required anywhere).

The program always runs on the full screen – you cannot move or minimize it. You can, however, send it to the background by clicking with the right mouse button anywhere on it. That will display any and all open windows and bring Z-DESK to the back of the screen. In effect it behaves like a regular wallpaper, except that you can bring it to the foreground and do something useful with it. To get instant access to the "real" Windows desktop, you can also hide Z-DESK completely without exiting it. For more information on this, please refer to the "System Tray Icon" section below.

Depending on the fonts currently installed on your system, you may want to change the screen font that Z-DESK uses for its displays. Please refer to the chapter on font selections in the Options section below.

DTOP

This is the Desktop display, marked by a blue frame. This screen will read in the shortcuts you have installed on your desktop. You can launch any one of them with a single click here. This includes system items like "My Computer" or "Recycle Bin", any shortcut to programs or documents that you have created yourself as well as any folder or briefcase on your desktop.

In addition to the Desktop items, you will also find "Run" and "Find" items on the DTOP screen. Clicking these items will bring up the "Run Program" or "Find File" dialogs, just as if you had selected "Run" or "Find" from the Start-button menu.

You can add items to the Windows Desktop, and thus the DTOP screen, by drag-and-dropping them to Z-DESK. Please refer to the section "Adding new items" below.

As with the main menu, all items will be briefly highlighted and a sound will be played when you select them.

COMM

The Communications section, in yellow. The left column in this display lists all Dial-Up Networking connections defined on your system. Clicking one of them will initiate the connection. Please note that you will not be able to start a DUN Server session from here.

If the connection is saved with the login name and password and Dial-Up Networking is set to dial without prompting, a launched connection will instantly start to dial. Otherwise, the usual "Connect To" dialog will be displayed. In the OSR2 (4.0.950 B) or later versions of

Windows, you can start Explorer and go to the Dial-Up Networking folder to change this option for all defined connections. Select "Settings" from the "Connection" menu and unmark the option "Prompt for Information before dialing".

A second column to the right of the DUN connections lists all HyperTerminal connections (.ht files) found in your HyperTerminal folder. Clicking any one of these items will launch HyperTerminal with the selected connection.

CPNL

This is the Control Panel, in green. This display checks for a set of installed control panel applets (.cpl files) and displays those that it can find. These will include any standard applet delivered with Windows 95 plus the Tweak UI applet for Microsoft's "Power Toys". The CPNL display will not recognize third party control panel applets.

Similar to all other displays, clicking any of the displayed items will instantly launch the matching applet. Using this display, all system settings as well the "Fonts" and "Printers" folders are only one mouse-click away, no matter what you currently do.

FVRT

Colored in pink, this is the Favorites display. This screen will list, in one or two columns, the contents of your Favorites folder. You can use it to start your web browser and immediately go to any of the locations that you have saved as favorites, all with a single mouse click. This screen is available only if a Favorites folder is actually present and registered on your system.

PRGM

The Programs display, colored in gray. This screen lists all links in the top-level Programs folder. Click on any link to start the program.

The left side of the display frame will display all available Program subfolders. Click there to go deeper into the Program menu's structure. Once you go into the subfolders, the top item in this menu will be **"<<<".** You can click there to go back up one level. Unlike Window's start menu, this screen retains the currently selected folder during screen changes, so you can go to a different screen do to do something else and still have the subfolder selected when you return to PRGM.

You can add items to the currently open program folder by drag-and-dropping them to Z-DESK. Please refer to the section "Adding new items" below.

PSNL

Personal display, colored cyan. This display is a bit special. If you call it up, Z-DESK will check for a directory with the same name as the logged-in user, under the directory that Z-DESK is located in. If it does not find one, it will automatically create it. For example, if you have Z-DESK installed in the default directory "c:\program files\Z-DESK" and are logged

into Windows as user "XYZ", Z-DESK will create a directory named "c:\program files\Z-DESK\XYZ".

Using Explorer, You can copy or create any kind of shortcut, program or document into this directory. If there are different users on a system, each will have its own directory, so in theory everyone in the family or different workers can have their own links on this screen, provided they log in with different user names. User Profiles do not have to be enabled to use this feature. If the user is logged in with a blank username, Z-DESK will create and use a directory named "Unknown".

You cannot access any subdirectories created under your personal directory. You can, however, create shortcuts to other directories on your system or network. Clicking these items will then launch an Explorer Window to those directories.

As with the DTOP and PRGM screens, you can add items to your Personal folder by drag-and-dropping them to Z-DESK. Please refer to the section "Adding new items" below.

SYST

System information, in red. This screen will display the names of user and machine, the OS type, version and build, the processor, main memory size and usage, disk drives with sizes and available space and, on laptops, the power status. Note that the total disk space and percent free will **not** be displayed for floppies and CD-ROM drives.

The available disk drives are presented as clickable menu items – clicking on one of them will open an Explorer window opened to the root directory of that drive. This will work for any kind of drive, so you can have quick access not only to your local, but also to mapped network drives.

By default, the text on this screen is scrolling in instead of just popping up. This text scrolling can be adjusted for faster or slower speeds or turned off completely in the Options dialog.

> *Note:*
> *Early versions of Windows 95 had a fault in an API function used to retrieve the available disk space that can possibly lead to wrong sizes being reported for large disk volumes. OSR2 (OEM Service Release 2, version 950 B) as well as Windows NT version 4.0 introduced a new function that corrected this problem.* Z-DESK *will try to call the new function first; if this function call fails, it will call the old function. If your version of Windows 95 is an early one (950 or 950 A), the displayed disk size and/or reported percentage of free space may be wrong or, in cases where the function reports zero space, not be displayed at all.*

TSKL

The Task List display, in orange. This screen displays the currently active user tasks, similar to the "Close Program" dialog that you can call up with Ctrl-Alt-Del. Unlike that dialog, TSKL will not display system tasks and you also have no possibility to terminate a task from this screen. These capabilities have been omitted intentionally. You can use this screen to view the active programs and switch over to any running program; clicking on a task will bring that window to the foreground, restoring it first if it was minimized.

The Tasklist screen will update itself every 60 seconds to reflect the currently active tasks on your systems. You can change the refresh interval or disable the automatic update completely in the Options dialog.

The TSKL display has one advantage over Window's regular task switcher; it is able to display active dialogs like file property sheets or control panel applets and allows you to switch to these tasks as well.

Note that you may not be able to switch to all displayed tasks. User tasks that run only as a tray icon, such as the WinFax 8 Manager program, will be included in the task list, but clicking on such tasks has no effect.

OPTN

Although Z-DESK does not require any configuration to run, you can use the Options dialog to change a number of settings that will let you tune the display to your personal preferences.

Language

System-defined, English or German. System-defined will check your systems locale ID and switch to German if one of the German language locales is found or to English if a different locale is found. The other options fix the setting to either language, so that a user on a German language system can have the display in English or vice-versa. The default is "System Defined".

Font

This selection enables you to change the display font to any True Type font installed on your system.

My personal first choice for a display font is "Hattenschweiler", distributed as part of the additional font package on the Microsoft Office disks. It has the best resemblance to the display fonts seen on the TV programs Star Trek: The New Generation and Star Trek: Voyager. Second place would go to "Impact", also part of MS Office. Unfortunately, Monotype, the copyright holder of both fonts, declined to give me the permission to include one of these fonts with Z-DESK without paying license fees, based on the number of distributed, not registered, copies – which is impossible to trace for shareware applications.

While no specific font has been selected in the Options dialog, Z-DESK will scan your system for the presence of either Hattenschweiler or Impact and use them if it can find them. Failing that, Z-DESK will default to Arial – a decidedly unattractive choice for this purpose, but at least a reasonably safe one. You should try the different True Type fonts on your system; the Options dialog will display a sample of the selected font.

When selecting a font, make sure that it scales well. Z-DESK will adjust the point size of displayed text to the available space. Your font should display well in both large and small sizes. To maximize the size of the displayed text, select a font with a narrow width. Avoid fonts that are too thin and may be difficult to read; try the "bold" option of the font. If you catch yourself squinting at the screen to decipher the text, you should select a different font and see if it gets better results. Since Z-DESK will, in most cases, scale the text to accommodate the longest text in a list, you should also see if one item has a much longer

name than all others. In this case, you may want to shorten that name to improve the displayed text size.

Menu Colors

Two options: "Random Colors" will give all selectable menu choices a random color. The random colors are selected with a certain minimum brightness to ensure readability, but, depending on the display and monitor settings, may appear a bit dark. Increase your screen brightness if you have regular problems reading screen text.

"Base Colors" will keep the colors of menu choices between the two selected base colors of the screen, with a gradient color change down the menu. Select this option if the "Random Color" display is too colorful for you or if you prefer a more subdued display style. The default is Random Colors

Base Colors

The two base colors user for each screen, plus the color in which the main title is displayed, can be changed here. Just double-click any color field to pick a new color. Together with the "Menu colors" option, these settings enable you to make your screen display as colorful or conservative as you like.

SYST Display Speed

This setting will determine how quick or slow the scrolling text on the SYST screen will appear on-screen. You can adjust it to values between 0 and 10, 1 being the slowest, and 10 being the fastest. A value of 0 will turn off scrolling completely, so that the screen will displayed without any delay. The default value is 5.

Sounds

Two different sounds are supported, one that is played when a screen or program folder is selected and one that is played when any item of launched. By default, the two supplied .wav files (select.wav and launch.wav) are used, but you can change these to any other wave file on your system by clicking the Change buttons and selecting a file. If you prefer not to have any sounds at all, you can check the "Mute" option.

Display Interval

With this setting you can change to refresh interval of the Tasklist screen. By default, the Tasklist will be updated every 60 seconds, but you can change that interval to any number of seconds from 1 to 3600 (1 hour). Setting this value to "0" will disable the automatic update of the tasklist completely.

Date/Time

By unchecking this option, you can suppress the date & time display below the main menu on all screens.

Background

Activating this option will instruct Z-DESK to stay in the background as much as possible, more acting like a wallpaper. If this option is selected, the program will start up behind other already active applications. You can still bring it to the front by clicking on a visible part or on the tray icon and you can change active displays or program folders, but as soon as you select any item to be launched, Z-DESK will automatically send itself back to the bottom of the screen. Of course, Z-DESK will, as a program remain part of the list of active programs and may be brought to foreground by Windows itself.

EXIT

The Logoff display, in violet. Here you can end the program or shut down Windows, restart your system or logoff as a user and logon again. Neither of these choices will display the usual shutdown dialog of Windows. Instead, you will get a confirmation screen (similar in style) with a simple Yes/No choice. Select Yes and the selection is activated immediately.

ADDING NEW ITEMS

Shortcuts to programs or documents can be added to the DTOP, PRGM and PSNL screens by drag-and-dropping the files onto Z-DESK. Open My Computer or Explorer and locate the file that you want to create a shortcut for. Now move your mouse pointer over the file, click and hold the left mouse-button and drag the file over Z-DESK's screen. To add an item to your desktop, drag the file over the DTOP selection in the right-hand main menu and release the mouse-button. Z-DESK will ask for your confirmation to create a shortcut. You can cancel the operation by selecting "No". Selecting "Yes" will create a shortcut to your file in the \windows\desktop directory.

Similarly, you can add the file to your Personal folder by dragging it over the "PSNL" selection in the main menu or to the currently open program folder by dragging it to the "PRGM" selection.

If the screen that you want to add the item to is currently displayed, you can also drop the file anywhere on Z-DESK's screen, except over the main menu area. By selecting multiple files and dragging them into Z-DESK, several shortcuts can be created with only one operation.

The shortcuts that you create in this way will be named after the file that you are linking to, without the file path and, for executables, without the file extension. Note that file names that fit into the old MSDOS 8.3 naming convention (up to eight characters and no blanks or special characters) will result in shortcuts that are in all-uppercase. This behavior is caused by Window's standard naming conventions.

SYSTEM TRAY ICON

After starting Z-DESK, you will find a new icon in the system tray area of the taskbar. You can use this icon to bring the program back to the foreground by clicking on it with the left mouse button. Clicking on the icon with the right mouse button will hide Z-DESK completely, thus enabling you to quickly access the real Windows desktop; you can left-click the icon to make the program visible again.

If you are a keyboard fan like myself, you can also hit CTRL-H to hide Z-DESK or CTRL-B to send it to the background. You cannot use these keys to bring it back, though, since Z-DESK, once hidden or running in the background, will not receive your keystrokes anymore.

There is one possible workaround for this, though. If you define a system-global hotkey to start Z-DESK, you can also this hotkey to bring Z-DESK back to the foreground or make it visible again. Z-DESK is programmed not to allow multiple instances of itself; if you try to start Z-DESK and an instance of the program is already running, the new instance will activate the first one and then terminate itself. To allocate a hotkey, open Explorer and call up

the property sheet of the shortcut you use to start Z-DESK. Select the "Shortcut" tab and go the field "Shortcut Key"; press a valid hotkey combination, for example Ctrl-Alt-Z.

DISTRIBUTION

Z-DESK is a shareware program; you are welcome to distribute the file Z-DESK.ZIP containing the unregistered version freely. It may be copied individually or distributed through websites, FTP archives, BBS's or similar systems, provided that no files are changed, removed or added from or to the Zip archive. You may not pass on your registration password to others.

No charges beyond the cost of media and/or duplication may be raised for the distribution. Publishers of Shareware Collections, CD's etc. are requested to contact the author for written consent to use Z-DESK in their products.

LEGAL SECTION

This software is provided "as is". While it has been tested on several machines, the Author cannot make any warrantee that it will run with your particular system and software. The Author cannot be held liable for any damages resulting from the use of this program, including, but not limited to loss of data, time or functionality.

The User may install this software on more than one machine and make backup copies of it. However, concurrent use on more than one machine, individual or networked, requires a separate registration for each machine.

REGISTRATION

Z-DESK is distributed as shareware. While unregistered, it will display a small window on start-up and closing where a user name and password can be entered. This window will also appear as a nag screen at random intervals when doing selections. This is the only difference between the registered and unregistered versions – all functionality is there. Enter the assigned name and password into this window when it appears. Once a valid registration password has been recognized, the window will no longer appear. If, for any reason, you want to view or change the registration information, you can bring it up again by pressing CTRL-R when Z-DESK has the input focus. The registration window will also display the version and build number. Registration will also entitle you to use future upgrades without additional cost.

The registration fee for Z-DESK is US-$ 15.00 or DM 25.00.

To obtain your personal registration password, you can register either online through CompuServe or via the Internet, by Email or fax through ShareIt!.

To register through CompuServe

- Log onto CompuServe.
- Go to the software registration area (GO SWREG).

- Search for the program under the ID-# 16073
- Follow the onscreen instructions.

To register through ShareIt!

You can do the registration online on the Internet at

http://www.shareit.com/programs/100630.htm.

Alternatively, you can go to http://www.shareit.com and enter the program number there:

100630.

If you do not have access to the Internet, you can register via phone, fax or postal mail. Please print out the form at the end of this document and fax or mail it to:

Reimold & Schumann Internet Services
ShareIt!
Jahnstrasse 24
50676 Koeln
Germany

Phone: +49-221-2407279
Fax: +49-221-2407278
E-Mail: register@shareit.com

With either way of registration, your personal user ID and password will be sent to you by Email or whichever way of communication you have specified during registration.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions about, problems with or suggestions for Z-DESK, feel free to contact me:

by Email: gerd_ziran@msn.com
or: gkz@compuserve.com

or by snail-mail to the address listed above.

I hope Z-DESK will serve you well.

My Special Thanks go to Joyce for keeping up with my Beta releases and to Jacques for his detective work and for pushing me on. And on. And on … You're a pal, pal !

Gerhard K. Ziran
MS MVP-DTS *(Most Valuable Professional - Desktop Systems)*

Star Trek, Star Trek: The Next Generation and Star Trek: Voyager are Trademarks of Paramount Pictures.

ShareIt! Registration form for Z-Desk

Program No.: 100630

Last name: _____

First name: _____

Company: _____

Street and #: _____

City, State, postal code: _____

Country: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-Mail: _____

How would like to receive the registration key/full version?

e-mail – fax - postal mail

How would you like to pay the registration fee of $15:

credit card - wire transfer - EuroCheque - cash

Credit card information (if applicable)

Credit card: Visa - Eurocard/Mastercard - American Express - Diners Club

Card holder: _____

Card No.: _____

Date of Expiration : _____

Date / Signature _____