

RUN_PM

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The Problem

If you use Program Manager as your Windows shell you have a problem. Try this: start Windows and open the About.. window in Program Manager. Make a note of free memory and percentage resource space. Then open and immediately close all of your program groups, one at a time. Now open the About.. box again. Your free memory should be about the same, but check that resource number. If you have a lot of icons in your groups you might be shocked to find how low the resource percentage has dropped.

What's A Resource?

Windows allocates a 64k area of memory for resources: icons, pens (line drawing tools), brushes (area filling tools), etc. Applications normally recycle this memory: if you switch from a blue line drawing tool to a red line drawing tool the blue tool will normally be removed from the resource space. Icons are removed from the resource area when you close an application. So putting a 64k limit on resource space may not have been particularly forward thinking on Microsoft's part, but it is a renewable resource and usually isn't particularly limiting. Except when you use Program Manager.

The Bug

Program Manager has a serious bug. When you close a group window Program Manager doesn't free the resource space used by the icons in that group. This means while you use Program Manager, opening and closing groups as you run different applications, your resource space dips lower and lower. You may eventually reach a point where you can't open a new application because the resource space is too low, even with megabytes of free memory. And the more icons you have the more serious your problems becomes. Microsoft is aware of this bug, and hopefully will fix it in version 3.1. But what can you do in the meantime?

The Solution

Program Manager will free it's resource space when you close it. But if you are using Program Manager as your shell, that means exiting and restarting Windows. You can get some shareware software such as WinStart that will restart Windows automatically. Or you can use another program as your shell, such as the File Manager or (ugh!) the Windows Executive, or purchase some other shell program. But what you really need is some way to close and re-open the Program Manager without exiting Windows. And Run_PM lets you do exactly that.

Run_PM

Run_PM is a very simple shell program. It does three things: executes any RUN= or LOAD= lines in your WIN.INI file, loads (and reloads) the Program Manager, and terminates Windows when you close it.

To install Run_PM you need to copy the RUN_PM.EXE file to your Windows subdirectory. Then use SysEdit or Notepad to edit your SYSTEM.INI file. Find the line which reads SHELL=PROGMAN.EXE. Replace this with the line SHELL=RUN_PM.EXE. Save this change, and then exit Windows. When you restart Windows your workspace should have one new addition: a RUN_PM icon added to your icon bar (the lower part of the desktop).

Now try the same exercise mentioned above. Open and close your Program Manager groups one at a time. Check the resource space by opening the About.. box. Is it too low? Now close the Program Manager by selecting Close from the system menu or pressing ALT F4. Don't use the Exit Windows option in the File Menu. I'll explain why in a moment.

Even with Program Manager closed your Windows session won't be over. Now double-click on the Run_PM icon. Program Manager will pop back up. Look at the resource percentage in the About.. box. It should be back up to a reasonable figure.

You can use this procedure whenever your resource percentage drops too low. Just close the Program Manager window, and double-click the Run_PM icon to re-open it. You can also click the Run_PM icon once and select Run ProgMan from the system menu, or press ALT SPACE and then ALT R if you are using the keyboard.

Bug Infested

You may have already noticed a peculiarity when you closed the Program Manager window. What happened to the Close Program Manager dialog box with the Save Changes option that used to pop up when you closed the Program Manager? Unfortunately your guess is as good as mine. For some reason when Program Manager is not the shell this box does not appear. Another bug in the good ol' PM. When you close the Program Manager it will default to the last save changes state in the PROGMAN.INI file. You can check what this is with Notepad. Open PROGMAN.INI and look for a SAVESETTINGS= line. If this value is set to 0 (zero) Program Manager does not save settings when it closes. If it is set to 1 (one) it does. Now for the other bug: when you select the Exit Windows option from the File menu Program Manager sets this option to 1 every time. To set it back to zero you'll have to use Notepad and change the line yourself. I normally leave it set to zero because I don't like the time it takes for Program Manager to save all its groups, and I don't like the way it scrambles the group icon order after a save (I have a GROUPMAN utility to solve the scrambling problem. Coming soon to a BBS near you).

When Program Manager Isn't PROGMAN.EXE

If your Program Manager isn't called PROGMAN.EXE you can still use Run_PM. Create a file called RUN_PM.INI in your Windows directory with two lines in it: a [Run_PM] header line followed by a SHELL= line with the file name of your Program Manager.

You only need to do this if you renamed PROGMAN.EXE. As an example I have a Program Manager named PROGMAN2.EXE in which I have replaced some of the boring Microsoft icons with something a little more colorful. My RUN_PM.INI file looks like this:

```
[RUN_PM]
Shell=ProgMan2.exe
```

Registration

Here's the part where I get rich. You can use this software for a trial period of 14 days. If after that time you continue to use it you must register by sending your name and address and \$1.00 to:

Chris E. Snell
Box 2549
Huntsville, ON
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In return you will be notified of any updates made to this software. If you would like a catalog of other software I have written send a self-addressed, stamped envelope along with your registration, or enough extra cash to pay for the envelope and first-class postage.

A friend told me to charge more than one dollar, because he thought that you (the buyer) would otherwise perceive this software as being almost without value. I thought I would leave it up to you to decide whether it was valuable or not. I find it useful, and I hope you do too.

Besides, I'm looking for fame, not fortune. I encourage you to distribute this software to anyone you know who uses Microsoft Windows. You can make as many copies as you like as long as you do not change the program or its documentation and you include the documentation with the program. Now let's see, 4 million plus Windows users, and say half of them still use the Program Manager as their shell, and only half of those register, that would add up to...

Warranty

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An Open Letter To Microsoft

Come on Microsoft, I'm tired of limits.

A lot of us purchased Windows to get around the DOS 640k limit. We've spent our money on Windows applications and Megabytes of memory. We believe in the Graphical User Interface. And now you hand us another limit, one which restricts the size and number of applications we run, and penalizes us for using the icons that you sold us on in the first place.

Get rid of the 64k resource limit. If you can't allow Windows to dynamically resize the resource space then make it a configurable option, either from the Control Panel or the Windows Setup routine.

Do not limit me to a single resource segment just because it is easier to code!

Signed

A Concerned User