

Re: Moving Microfocus 3.1 to a better laptop

Source: <http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/Cobol/comp.lang.cobol/2008-09/msg00244.html>

- *From:* "Paul H" <NoSpamphobergNoSpam@xxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sat, 20 Sep 2008 02:54:04 -0500
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Hi Pete. Sounds like you know your way around this issue. Am I stuck? I've been using MicroFocus on PCs since it was COBOL2 in the early 80's. I recently ran across COBOL2 manuals in my garage – I finally threw them away. I'm responsible for hundreds of work stations running legal copies of WorkBench. More recently, as the applications have moved to newer versions of NetExpress, end users are now paying run time licenses. I've helped MicroFocus make many thousands of \$. Now that I'm retired and living frugally, they want me to buy a new copy – to bring my maintenance up-to-date would actually cost more. Maybe my only option is to communicate with someone at the VP level or higher. Any easier suggestions? TIA, Paul

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"Pete Dashwood" <dashwood@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message news:6jj5ltF3jh3vU1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Hi Jimmy,

I was so shocked and horrified by your experience (and it is a signal warning to PaulH to be very careful before trying to move stuff) that I'd really like to help. Some thoughts below...

"James J. Gavan" <jgavandelethis@xxxxxxx> wrote in message [news:WAHAK.13407\\$wr1.9652@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:WAHAK.13407$wr1.9652@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

phoberg@xxxxxxx wrote:

I own a copy of Microfocus 3.1 that I use for small personal projects. I want to move the license to a newer computer – it is on a very unstable old laptop now. I know there is/was a process that involved "revoking" the license on the old computer, then doing some 2nd step to activate that license on the new computer. I have installed 3.1 on the new computer, and can use the 30 day trial period – it works fine. I'm retired and living on socsec, so cannot afford to pay thousands of dollars to be on maintenance, just to move my compiler. I can move other products from one computer to another, windows for example, so I should be able to do the same with Microfocus 3.1 – I paid over \$4,000 for it, I think. Can someone tell me the 2nd step? TIA, Paul

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Do a google on Micro Focus Licensing, there are a number of entries. I assume you are referring to Net Express V 3.1 ?

The man pays \$4000 bucks then has to GOOGLE to find out how to move it...?! That really sucks.

Fujitsu, since Version 5 had a similar system. (It was one of the nails in their coffin as far as I'm concerned...).

You had to extract the key to a floppy, (quaint isn't it...do modern machines even HAVE floppies?...), then kill the licence on that machine. You installed to the new machine, then transferred the licence from your floppy disk to the new machine. They had a server that issued the keys (assuming it wasn't down...; to be fair, it never was in my experience...) I'm writing it in the past tense because they're history as far as I'm concerned, but I have no reason to believe the latest releases of their product don't use the same system. I think it is a fairly common system and may well be called CryptKey as HeyBub mentioned.

The whole stupidly complex process was designed to prevent the piracy that some bean counter had guesstimated must be costing them a fortune. It cost them a whole lot more in goodwill. The majority of the customer base were legitimate companies running honest enterprises. They weren't pirating the software, but they certainly needed more than one copy of it. Would you run a mission critical application that you had no backup of? Fujitsu's response was they could use the 30 day period to obtain another licence. (And here's the really funny part: Using today's technology you can circumvent the whole bullshit razzamataz in a heartbeat. Run it on as many machines as you like. No, I haven't done it, but I know exactly how to. Still, I'm a "small" (some would say "microscopic" :-)) business. I have one notebook that runs the COBOL compiler. The rest of my WLAN can compile remotely on it. (I wrote a simple Windows Script to do it). As you know, I have virtually moved away from COBOL anyway and I only keep it to support legacy (and other people who want help)).

In Fujitsu's defence, at least they fully documented the whole process and the (paper) documents were included with the version 6 CD.

As for MicroFocus...

Do you remember "dongles"? ...Ever wonder why they stopped using them? The top of the market (at least in the U.K. – not sure about the US) simply wouldn't buy dongled machines, so MF had to provide a non-dongled version of the software for corporates. As soon as it was realised there was a non-dongled version, NOBODY would buy a dongled one. It's not because people are instinctively criminal, it's because most of us just don't like restrictions.

Some corporates are not as careful as they should be with copyright software

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so yes, some employees probably obtained illegal copies. These people could not afford to buy the software and so would not have done so anyway. Hardly eroding MicroFocus' existing or potential customer base. So some programmer sits at home knocking out some COBOL. If they DID stumble upon a "killer application" they'd HAVE to buy the compiler to officially support their product. The difference is that now they CAN afford to and they can write it off tax :-)

The point of the above is that both MicroFocus and Fujitsu have come up with totally unwieldy (and unsuccessful) ways to protect their investment. Sure piracy is a problem, but it is a SMALL problem in this particular niche market. It would be far more important to build a friendly and supportive image in the COBOL community, and that means little guys as well as corporates. People talk. It seems insane to me that companies existing in what has to be a fragile market, would not be concerned about giving their customers grief.

They could GIVE you and Paul a new copy and a key and it wouldn't even make a blip on their profit line.

Firstly find the office for your local rep from the M/F site. Tell them what you want and specifically, (and the tricky bit), you want Service Pack 1 (updates) which you are entitled to with V 3.1. With no maintenance contract, when I switched from a Win 98 to Win XP machine, I was able to re-install on the Win XP, get a CD with the whole of SP1, plus I had assistance getting a new key for Net Express.

That sounds more like it. So what happened since?

Having spoken to your sales office, you will then have to go through the rigmarole of obtaining the license key – quite possibly your N/E might come up with a Merant Request Key dialog , (from the old Merant days), which they no longer accept; they'll bounce a message back telling you to use their new routine – using the Google search above, you will probably find the new form.

You've GOT to be joking!! They can't just direct you to it or email a link?

Currently you are in a better state than I am with my XP.

I recall this is a relatively new machine?

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– First the Keyboard didn't work, then the screen was blank. Having bought the XP from a Canadian dealer I was able to re-install Windows from the dealer's CD without erasing.

And that fixed the keyboard and screen problems? So it was a driver problem. Did they work when you bought it? Yes (or you probably wouldn't have bought it.:–)) Then they stopped. That means driver corruption. What causes driver corruption? Rogue programs (You DO bounds check your subscripts don't you, Jimmy...:–) sorry, just teasing...), viruses, trojans, backdoors, assorted malware.

It hasn't happened again since re-installing from the CD? See, the point about erasing before re-installing is to CLEAN any little nasties that might be lurking, but it is a pain, and not undertaken lightly. I've done it once for another person and can say it is best avoided.

So now you have a basic OEM version of XP installed. It needs to be updated. SP3 is just the ticket.

The net result I now have is that it automatically chugs away saying it's downloading Windows SP2 Security updates and then when it's finished, clears the screen and then a new Dialog says the update was unsuccessful. Even tried Windows SP3 – still no dice.

OK, you need to take some control here. Turn OFF Automatic Updates for a start. Then go to the Windows Update site:

<http://update.microsoft.com/microsoftupdate/v6/default.aspx?ln=en-us>

After making sure you have the ActiveX component needed to download properly, it will offer you "Express" or "Custom".

Select "Custom" ... It will offer you a list of updates. Check ONLY SP3... let it install, if it does. If it fails, it will give a reason code which you can chase, or, if you need help, mail me privately.

My concern is that reinstalling the drivers may not have solved the underlying problem. Whatever Malware protection you use, make sure it is updating properly. Try some of the on-line scans like Trend House Call: <http://housecall.trendmicro.com/>

If the system were clean, re-installing and updating should be no problem. I've done it many times without incident on various machines.

Contact me if you get stuck, I'll gladly help.

– Net Express – If I attempt to enter it – Merant dialog – 'Your Key has

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been corrupted'. So if I want to look at a xxx.cbl source from a zipfile – can't do it – up pops that bloody screen 'Key corrupted', so currently can't do anything with an expensive product.

Ouch! I'll try and get some info on how their process works.

Eventually generated a request which they acknowledged with a numbered Incident Report. Somebody phoned me; he was unfamiliar with the Merant Dialog – guess he was still in kindergarten when Merant was around. Phoned the States quoting the Incident Number – told a girl the situation and that I might have to reinstall every friggin thing on my machine and THEN install N/E and go the same route as you. Her solution "Oh I would do that first". End of story so far as she was concerned; haven't heard a dicky bird back from them since although I made a reference to the Incident in a message to their Forum.

You should definitely be copying this to their forum. Always give 'em a chance to respond before you beat 'em up :-)) (Sometimes, they may surprise you :-))

If I (a) zap the hard drive and re-install Windows etc.,, or (b) ignore all the other stuff in (a) and just re-install N/E – then I'm back to square one like you :-))

No, you're not at that point yet. Don't do either of those until you see what happens with a clean OS. It is possible that their key is tied to one of the several internal windows keys. Without knowing how their keys and licensing work, we can only speculate. You need to get your system into the same state it was in before the trouble started, but with updates applied.

Are you running system restore? It strikes me that at the time the keyboard stopped working that might have been an option. You can activate it from a script on a memory stick, but you'd need access to another computer to create the script of course.

I really, really like their key protection system – it's really great for the manufacturer but a pain in the ass for consumers !

No Jimmy, it is just a stupid senseless waste of time for all concerned. The sooner they pack it in the better. It is only a matter of time before someone leaks how to circumvent it to the NET, and that just renders all their time and "cleverness" futile.

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Pete.

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"I used to write COBOL... now I can do anything."

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