

# Navel-Gazing

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## 20 Tech Things About Me

Rules: Once you've been tagged, you are supposed to write a note with 20 tech-related things, facts, habits or ideas about yourself. At the end, you will tag no one, since you should have forsworn chain letters years ago. However, if you want to share your tech idiosyncrasies, you can reach me at [agarcia@eweek.com](mailto:agarcia@eweek.com) or leave a comment below.

1. Come July, I will probably ditch my iPhone. Not because of the device itself, but because AT&T's network gives lousy coverage in my house, in my office and along my commute route--even though I live in the heart of technology country. Those 4,490 available rollover minutes say it all.
2. I used to be a zealous advocate of building one's own PC. Now it seems like a lot of trouble, and maybe not such a great way to save money.
3. I built a telephone conference server to use at work out of old PCs, open-source software and a bunch of analog lines off our corporate PBX. The building and testing were infinitely more interesting than the meetings.
4. At home, I've been steadily digitizing all my media, mostly because I hate all the shelf space it takes up. I still can't cut the cord to physical media, though, as I like having it around. This is an annoying conundrum for me.
5. I am as baffled as anyone by Microsoft's phalanx of **Windows 7** versions. I'd prefer to see two versions--Home and Corporate--with software add-on packs (for media, security and management). Unfortunately, I suspect this would make things harder for everyone somehow.
6. Despite my years of experience with wireless technology, I still can't make 1080p video stream consistently well without throwing thousands of dollars at the cause.
7. I hate running anti-virus software, and until last year, I never did on my personal systems. The rise of drive-by Web threats secreted on normally trusted sites really freaks me out, though.
8. I use Windows XP, Vista, Seven and CentOS Linux on a regular basis. None of them have changed my life. Perspective, people.
9. I pretty much never back up my personal data.
10. I got my start in IT because I kept accidentally cracking into a Unix server at work. I like to think the IT director saw something in me, but really, I think she just wanted to keep an eye on me.
11. During my first server crisis as an IT staffer, I spent the night on the floor next to the server with a bunch of manuals and Chinese food. The next morning, when everything was working properly, I thought that maybe, just maybe, I could do this for a living. The problem was something like, "Novell 3.12, when running on a server with an EISA bus, loads all memory-resident programs under 640K, no matter how much memory you have." Adding the OS2 namespace had pushed me over the limit. Or something like that--it's kind of a blur now.

12. My first PC was a Texas Instruments TI-99/4a, the second an IBM PC Jr. To keep my parents from using the systems, I wrote an authentication program that, when wrong credentials were entered, would match the onscreen text color to the background, then reboot the machine.

13. I got my first e-mail account in 1991, accessing it using Pine. Seven years later, when they forced everyone on the server to start using POP3, I lost interest in that account.

14. I find helping someone buy a smartphone is much harder than helping them choose a PC. It's simply too personal a preference to impose your will on. I ask three questions: "What carrier do you want to use?" "Can you type on a touch-screen?" "What three things do you want most to do with it?" I point in the right direction, then I get out of the way.

15. My personal domain name is an obscure Simpsons reference. It's not as cool as it once was. Or, it was never cool.

16. I use many VOIP services--mostly **Skype, GrandCentral** and **Raketu**. I still have a land line, although I never use it.

17. I loved the hands-on expertise and great customer service of my **old DSL ISP**, but I love even more the lower price and fast pipes provided by the local cable conglomerate. This makes me very sad.

18. While I suspect that I could easily replace my cable subscription with over-the-air HD, Netflix Watch Now, Hulu and Amazon.com services, I am not quite ready to make that leap.

19. On many occasions, I have stood in a Best Buy or Fry's looking for geek inspiration. More often than not, I will pull out my iPhone and order whatever inspires me online (usually at Amazon.com) while still standing in the store.

20. I think everyone should learn how to do bare-metal virtualization. Find instructions online on how to load **VMware's ESXi** on a **USB stick**, plug it into a computer with a lot of RAM and give it a shot. It will be worth the effort. Bonus points if you make an **iSCSI server** to use with it.