

Secret Order of the Mac

Rock-Hard Computing Power

Frustrated by the geological pace of computing on his PC, a stone vendor takes decisive action.

As the owner of Montana Stone Gallery, Torin Dixon is a busy man. Not only does he oversee the granite and marble distributor's headquarters in Missoula, Montana; a showroom 300 miles away in Billings; and a warehouse in Spokane, Washington; he's also the company's primary buyer. Dixon jets around the globe several times a year to meet with stone vendors. "If I had 50 hours in a day, I'd use them," Dixon says. "So when I waste time in front of my computer waiting for software to launch, that just drives me crazy."

Dixon had been a PC user since the early 1980s. "I'm willing to pay for performance," he says, and the machines he chose had the speed and power to handle his day-to-day needs. That is, until June 2008, when he bought a notebook preloaded with the infamously buggy Microsoft Windows Vista. When Dixon tabulated the time it took to boot the operating system and to launch the various applications he needed throughout the day, he discovered he was wasting a total of two hours in a single day. Add in regular freezes that required either a restart or full battery removal, and Dixon couldn't take it any longer. "There were times I just wanted to throw it out the window."

Six months after buying the Windows laptop, Dixon headed over to Best Buy to research

Apple's line of computers. An hour later, he walked out with a MacBook Pro. It didn't take long to experience the benefits of making the switch. The system itself ran much faster, programs launched quickly, and he was able to connect to Wi-Fi networks without a hitch.

"It's like comparing a Pinto to a Ferrari," he says. "The Mac always connects, it's fast, and I never have to deal with reliability issues."

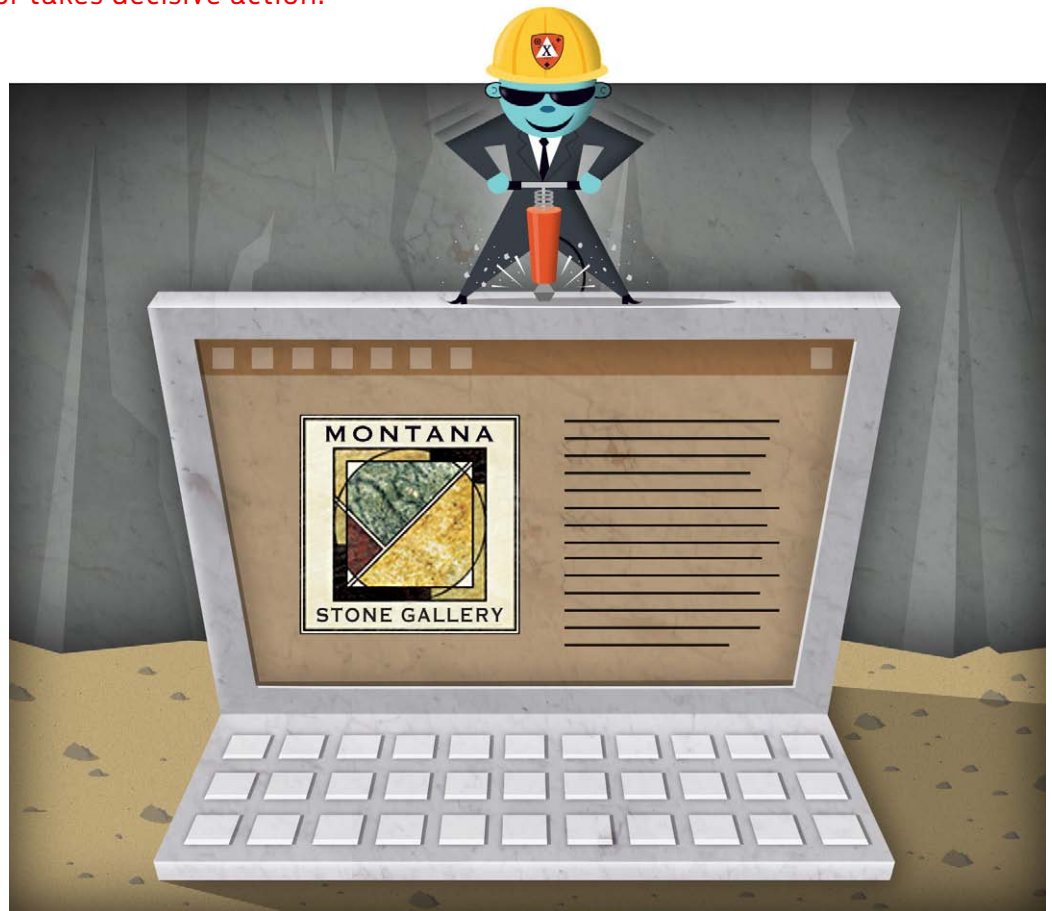
At Montana Stone Gallery's three locations, the company's 16 to 20 employees (depending on the season) work on PCs. Dixon hopes to replace them,

but for now only he and his product manager, Greg Zarewski, work on Macs. Zarewski uses his MacBook Pro to run a proprietary Web-based program that keeps track of the company's supplies of granite and marble.

Dixon, on the other hand, spends quite a bit of time reviewing high-resolution photos of stone slabs. "I receive 40 to 50 e-mails of images from vendors located around the world a day," he says. The Mac's Mail program renders the images quickly and cleanly, and he can quickly find photos and other files stored in various places on

his hard drive using Mac OS X's Spotlight search feature.

When he's not looking at photos arriving via e-mail, Dixon is snapping his own pictures. During the year, he travels to Brazil, China, Spain, Italy, and India to meet with vendors. He has yet to encounter a problem logging onto a Wi-Fi network, as he frequently did with his various PCs. He archives his photos in iPhoto, which he also uses to edit and e-mail the images to clients. "My frustration level has completely disappeared," he says. And now he has an extra two hours a day to get his work done. ■



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