

TECH

Alison Brown, president of WuffIT, showed off a WuffIT Tracker recently at the Navsys building. The Tracker consists of small GPS device that, when attached to a pet's collar, can be paired with an Android cell phone system to provide a map of the pet's location.

ANTHONY SOUFFLE, THE GAZETTE



LOST DOGS SPARK INNOVATION

Students develop tracking system

BY WAYNE HELLMAN
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A team of University of Colorado at Colorado Springs students has helped develop a Global Positioning System-linked tracking device for tracking hunting dogs and other pets that become separated from their owners. Colorado Springs-based WuffIT began selling its WuffIT Tracker last month on the Web for \$299. It connects with smart phones using Google's Android operating system to display the pet's location as well as alert owners when the pet leaves a designated area.

While at least a dozen competitors produce pet-tracking systems, WuffIT says its system is the first to be sold as a prepaid service rather than a monthly fee.

Alison Brown, president and CEO of GPS engineering company Navsys, and her husband, Bruce Johnson, put up \$30,000 to start WuffIT and develop the pet-tracking system after their fox-hunting club, the Fort Carson Hounds, had problems finding lost hounds during hunts. She set up WuffIT as a nonprofit to use any proceeds from the venture to support pet-tracking and safety products as well as other

ONLINE >
WuffIT: www.wuffit.com
UCCS Bachelor of Innovation program: innovation.uccs.edu

the hounds because we hunt in large, open spaces and they don't stay under control," Brown said. "We spent more time looking for hounds than on the sport. When I looked into technology to track hounds, I found it challenging technology because radio collars don't have much range, so you need a bigger antenna, which would then get caught in the brush."

The UCCS student team, part of the school's Bachelor of Innovation program, grew out of discussions between Brown and Terry Boulton, a UCSS computer science professor and co-director of the program. The four-person team spent the past year developing the software and accounting systems and finding a vendor in Taiwan to produce the tracker.

"The students are the whole company; they are doing all the work," Brown

said. "I want to continue supporting the (Bachelor of Innovation) program through WuffIT by developing other products. We will look to the student organizations."

"We train the hounds to be obedient to horn signals, but it has been challenging training program."

Caban-Tomski said software development proved to be the biggest challenge for the team because "none of us had ever done software development on this scale."

The company's business plan has modest expectations for the first year — just 200 sales and less than \$100,000 in revenue — but Brown estimates WuffIT could generate more than \$1 million a year in revenue within two or three years.

"We are always looking for projects on which students in this program can work. This is one of the top five or 10 projects in this program," Boulton said.

Contact the writer at 636-0234.

FREE APPS SHOW MANY LIMITATIONS

Microsoft releases a Web version of Office software

BY PETER SVENSSON
The Associated Press

NEW YORK • A free version of Microsoft's flagship Office software recently became available online. In other news, hell just froze over.

The idea of Microsoft letting people use its software for free will take some getting used to. But rest assured, it makes sense: The new Office Live provides stripped-down versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote.

It's evident that Microsoft is positioning these free "Web applications," which run in a browser, as extensions of and supplements to its full Office suite, rather than as stand-alone replacements in the vein of Google's Docs, which has been available since 2006. That said, the free Microsoft programs can still prove valuable for those who don't want to buy the software. Microsoft is releasing its latest version, Office 2010, this week. The "Home and Student" package, which is the same four applications that are available on the Web, will cost \$149 for the full, packaged product, and \$119 for a download.

In particular, the Web Apps will be helpful for those who collaborate with people who have the full Office suite. You can open documents they send and modify text, spreadsheets and so forth. But the bulk of the formatting will still need to be done in the desktop app.

The Web apps can also be a standalone alternative to Google Docs. You can create, share and print new documents in the browser. Web-created Word documents may satisfy many users, while PowerPoint decks will be very crude.

The Web apps are most useful to those who also buy the software. You can shuttle documents back and forth between the desktop and Web versions. For instance, if you have Office on your work computer, you can now make changes from your home computer, even if it's a Macintosh or a puny netbook.

So how do you access the Web apps? If you have a Windows Live or Hotmail account, you will notice a link to "Office" at the top of the screen after you log in. Otherwise, sign up for an account. The files will live in a Web-based "SkyDrive" tied to the account.

A word about browsers: If your computer is on the old side, or a low-powered one like a netbook, you'll want to avoid using the Web apps with Internet Explorer. In my test on a PC that's seen four or five summers already, typing in the Word Web app using Internet Explorer 8 was painful. The text took too long to appear, and the sentence wavered up and down as if I were hammering on a mechanical typewriter. The app simply overloaded the PC's processor.

I didn't have the same problem with Explorer on a new, faster laptop, nor was it a problem when I used the Firefox browser on the old PC.

WORKPLACE

LOW SALARY OFFERS COMPLICATE JOB HUNT

Weigh lasting effects against current market

Market Watch

WASHINGTON • The job market may be slowly starting to recover, but some salary offers are still a few years behind.

Some hiring managers are offering salaries lower than what workers previously received. The question is: How low should workers go when it comes to accepting an offer?

Some job hunters leap too soon at low-paying jobs, while others may be too optimistic about how their skills translate into a current wage and hold out for too long, experts say. While financial hardship is a strong motivator to take a low-paying gig, job seekers should also be mindful that taking such a position can negatively affect their career — and their income — for years.

Since the labor market began picking up steam, companies hiring for entry-level or administrative spots with pay that would normally range from \$40,000 to \$50,000 have been offering workers \$28,000 to \$38,000, said Randy Miller, founder and chief executive of ReadyMinds, a Lyndhurst, N.J., provider of online career counseling and coaching.

For workers further up the food chain, an offer that might have been \$100,000 a few years ago is now coming in at \$85,000 or \$90,000, he said.

Hannah Riley Bowles, an associate professor at the Harvard Kennedy School who has studied the attainment of leadership positions, said lower pay has long-term effects. For one, raises are added to that lower base salary. Also, "think about putting aside some percentage of your

savings. You are putting away a smaller (amount)," Riley Bowles said.

Experts said workers can ask about educational and training opportunities. If you do accept a low offer, make sure you're gaining in other ways, such as valuable experience or access to a network that can advance your career.

"These may be things that companies are more willing to provide right now than salary," Riley Bowles said.

Job seekers who receive a low offer should compare that offer with what they can get elsewhere in the current market, rather than what they could have received before the recession began, Riley Bowles said.

"It would probably be unwise to walk away from an offer if it's competitive. They should keep focused on the current economy, and not be distracted by previous income," she said.

"But that is hard to do emotionally."

Question: I teach at an international school in Thailand that employs people from Europe, Asia and the Americas. I am from India. Despite our cultural differences, everyone works well together except for one teacher from Ireland. "Owen" likes to create friction and is especially rude to the Asian staff members.

Although Owen is just a teacher, he tries to boss us around because he is in charge of an important project. He refuses to let us take concerns about this project to our director and says that all information must go through him, which is a lie. If anyone tries to bypass him, Owen gets angry and starts yelling.

Some good teachers have left because of Owen, yet no action is taken against him. Our director dislikes conflict, so Owen takes advantage of his peaceful nature.

Whenever Owen goes back to Ireland, we are like one big happy family. But as soon as he returns, the tension starts again. What can we do?



CAREER COACH
MARIE MCINTYRE
COLUMNIST

Answer: Owen has no official management position, so there are only two ways for him to acquire power. The director can delegate authority to him or the staff can simply allow him to dominate.

To address this issue, you must first clarify how much formal authority Owen actually has. Since he can't legitimately block your communication with management, gather some well-respected colleagues and meet with your director as a group. Explain that you're confused about Owen's leadership role and that his behavior is alienating the staff.

For example: "We know that Owen is the official leader of the Literacy Project. However, many people find him difficult to work with because he is insulting and overbearing. He has also told us that we can't talk with you about project problems. We need to clearly understand Owen's level of responsibility."

After clarifying Owen's role, ask the director to speak with him about his inappropriate behavior. This might solve the problem.

But if Owen continues his domineering ways, then the staff needs to grow a collective spine. When you comply with Owen's demands and cover before his wrath, you are reinforcing his aggressive work style. So if he becomes insulting, tell him to stop. If he exceeds his authority, remind him of his

limits. If he starts to yell, ignore him and go about your business.

The best way to neutralize a bully is to stop being a wimp.

Q: In meetings, my supervisor touches her boss in front of everyone, and I don't mean just a light tap on the arm. She will actually pick stuff out of his hair. This makes me uncomfortable, but he doesn't stop her. Am I overreacting?

A: Well, that's just gross. But since these touchy-feely managers are your bosses, giving them feedback could be risky. Unless you have a way to convey your concerns anonymously, your best option may be to literally look the other way.

Marie G. McIntyre is a workplace coach and the author of "Secrets to Winning an Office Politics" contact her at www.yourofficecoach.com.

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