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Presto – a great device for less technically inclined

posted @ Monday, February 02, 2009 8:50 PM | 5 Comments

I'm sure I'm not unlike most people who have more "experienced in years" relatives. Sadly it seems that generation has been slow(er) to adopt current technology advancements. I think this issue is exasperated, for me at least, when those relatives are not in close proximity so that you can ~~force~~ help them move into that age of technology. Just recently my father asked me how easy it was to set up a webcam so that he could talk/see my nephew and sister who live in Denver, Colorado. This is a good step in the right direction for family who is dispersed all over.

My relatives in New York, however, have less geeky grandsons/nephews to count on nearby :-). But luckily my aunt and uncle are trying to solve some of this. In the past my grandmother has had WebTV to use. I remember seeing it last time I was there last May. It looked a bit dusty. I asked her if she used it and she said it seemed to take a while, and she didn't really understand it a bunch. Hence, it didn't work as a reliable way to communicate online with my grandmother. One of my other relatives has a Mailstation device, which can only send/receive text-based mail. It totally works for her though and she's good about checking it and using it. But you still have to *check it*.



My uncle sent me a note the other day saying he equipped my grandmother's home with a new gadget. A [Presto](#) device. He provided the new email address and said we could send notes and pictures to grandma. Intrigued, as I've never heard of this, I researched. Turns out this is a one-way device. I initially thought this would suck, but I think for the usage scenario of my grandmother, this would be great...albeit a bit analog.

It's basically a pseudo fax machine/printer. The device is wired to a phone line and can receive "Presto Mail" which is mail sent through it's network. When an email is received, it will print it out, in full color, with picture attachments printed out as well. My grandmother doesn't do anything. The account apparently can be configured to dial out and retrieve the batch of messages for the device. This removes the task of requiring her to be proactive about "email" and rather wait for messages to come to her.

Still skeptical, I tried the Presto preview option they had on their site. You could send an email to their test account and they will show you exactly how it will be printed out for a user. I tried with several lengths of messages, and several types of pictures and sizes. It seemed to work as advertised. You could also "template" your message by adding a special subject moniker to your message, like *[Presto Squiggle]* which would apply a pre-defined template called *Squiggle* to the message. The templates are different types of borders/fonts/colors that will be applied to your email. They have generic templates as well as occasion templates like birthdays, anniversary, holidays, etc.



That night I decided to gather my kids and send a message to "GG" from her great grandkids. I told my daughter Zoe to draw a picture for GG that we could send it to her. I then took pictures of her holding the picture, my son Zane and me, and also scanned the

Me 



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picture itself (so GG could actually see the detail). I sent a quick note in email and attached 4 pictures. The next morning I received a message from Presto that my message was delivered and it also included a link for me, the sender, to view the resulting format. Cool. A week later I got a letter from my grandma, in the old-school postal service kind of way, thanking her for the pictures and note and that she added Zoe's picture to her photo album. It worked! Grandma loved the pictures/note, didn't have to check anything as it just prints out to her home, and I get to use my chosen medium (digital) to communicate. Sure, the "reply stream isn't there, but for grandma, this is okay.

I know there are other mechanisms, like photo frames, but I think those require a bit more work for that generation. We had thought about a photo frame before, but unless connected to broadband it wouldn't get updated that frequently and we'd have to send updated memory cards and felt that just might confuse people (i.e., *why can't i see the old pictures plus the new ones you sent?*). I'm sure there are better frames out there that allow for ease of storage, etc. but I still think it is a more-than-no-touch support gift.

For my grandmother, I think the Presto system will work well keeping in touch more frequently with me at least (I'm a horrible sibling/son/grandkid with regard to keeping in touch with family). If you have relatives further away, you may want to consider this as well. I was really impressed so far with the use. Thanks Uncle Frank for setting it up!

tags: [presto mail](#), [presto](#), [mailstation](#)

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Comments



Woody
Pewitt

2/2/2009 9:09 PM | # re: Presto – a great device for less technically inclined

Tim, Great find I will have to get a few of these devices. Sam was just giving me crap about not staying in-touch with some of the "experienced in years" parts of the family.

Name (required)

Subject

E-Mail (will not be published)

Website

Remember Me?

Please add 4 and 6 and type the answer here:

[great person... would ...](#): by Jared
[Thanks Tim. This is a nice resource for aspiring ...](#): by Michael Palermo
[Tim, I have a couple of questions:Have you met web...:](#) by web developer
[Hi Tim, I don't know why this cross-domain error a...:](#) by GL
[Thanks Tim, great job konteyner...:](#) by konteyner

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