



The

Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

www.theBDR.net

... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

Tech Tip

Legacy Software Conflict with Win 10

By Barry Mishkind

[October 2019] Many of us have moved to Windows 10, for one of several reasons, whether we really wanted it or not. Unfortunately, little things pop up from time to time that remind us of the “good old days” with XP – well, at least when we felt we had more control over our systems. This is a short tip based on one of those things.

As each version of Windows comes along, some things change, occasionally “breaking” some legacy software – often software that is no longer updated, or, perhaps, even unavailable.

This is a major reason why some have tried to keep Windows 7 or XP going, even as support from Microsoft ends (ended). For many of us, XP essentially was stable and worked for a long time, with minimal problems. Even those we found could be worked around and most times, mission critical XP machines just worked.

Today, with Windows 10 changing our relationship with the operating system, including a constant stream of updates, it seems a lot harder to feel “comfortable” with some of those changes.

COM PORT DANCE

I thought you might find this experience worth filing in the back of your mind, in case something similar happens to you. It is an instance of how knowing what Windows 10 is doing is helpful in order to solve a problem.

This particular project was to re-commission a digital console for a Native American LPFM station.

The console was a few years old, sure, but their needs were simple: they wanted to get rid of the “cheap” console that they had been using, which was wearing out.

The problem was dealing with the software that was used to program the console. As with many broadcast applications, the software *required* Windows. Written and compiled anywhere from 5 to 10 years ago, it seemed determined to use COM PORT 3 to communicate with the audio engine.

CONFLICT!

The issue was that on the Windows 10, laptop being used, the system kept COM3 for a FAX/scan service which the legacy software could not change to accommodate.

OK, this is probably not very big a deal to you gurus. But for the rest of us, finding that COM3 was “in use” and the application offered no easy solution, sort of brought things to a halt.

The manufacturer was very generous with their time and suggestions but, of course, no one could have planned for Windows 10 when the console and software were put together.

THE SOLUTION

After some research, I eventually learned that in Windows 10 Device Manager you can “disable” or “uninstall” the FAX/modem, and the console software could then “take” COM3. (Alternatively, it may be possible to move the FAX/scan service to COM4.)

Once COM3 was cleared in Windows 10, the control software worked as designed – and the console played very nicely.

Like I said, this is not something you gurus do not know (and probably have had to work around before) but it was something that can save a lot of time and effort for the rest of us, once we have it in our "toolbox." The basic point is to stop trying to modify the legacy software and modify the Windows setting.

NO BLAME THERE

Again, the manufacturer had no way of knowing that years down the road, this sort of conflict would turn up.

Some would say “You should have been using *nix – and one of the emulators or other gimmicks that are available.” Others might criticize the re-commissioning of a digital system of that age.

Yet, the idea here is to share what, essentially, turned out to be fairly a simple solution to something that would stump many of us.

In the end, for the rather modest cost involved in acquiring the consoles, the small station got a well-designed console in great condition with more features than they will ever need or use. All it took was under-standing how to do the “work around” in Windows 10 in order to make it happen.

Would you like to see more Tech Tips like this one? You are invited to subscribe to the one-time-a-week BDR Newsletter. It is opt-in, but takes [just 30 seconds here](#).



Return to The BDR Menu