FACTORY INSTALLING DESKTOP COMPONENTS FOR AN ACTIVE DESKTOP

BACKGROUND

Field

This field relates to software, and more particularly for software to customize an operating system upon a first execution by a user and improvements in the manufacturing process of computer systems by utilizing such improvements.

Description

Computer systems in general and International Business Machines (IBM) compatible personal computer systems, in particular, have attained widespread use for providing computer power to many segments of today's modern society. A personal computer system can usually be defined as a desk top, floor standing, or portable microcomputer that includes a system unit having a system processor and associated volatile and non-volatile memory, a display monitor, a keyboard, one or more diskette drives, a fixed disk storage device and an optional printer. One of the distinguishing characteristics of these systems is the use of a system board to electrically connect these components together. These personal computer systems are information handling systems which are designed primarily to give independent computing power to a single user (or a group of users in the case of personal computers which serve as computer server systems) and are inexpensively priced for purchase by individuals or small businesses. A personal computer system may also include one or a plurality of I/O devices (i.e. peripheral devices) which are coupled to the system processor and which perform specialized functions. Examples of I/O devices include modems, sound and video devices or specialized communication devices. Mass storage devices

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such as hard disks, CD-ROM drives and magneto-optical drives are also considered to be peripheral devices.

Manufacturers of personal computers often pre-install an operating system, such as the Microsoft Windows 95™ operating system, the Microsoft Windows NT™ operating system, or the IBM OS/2™ operating system. These modern operating systems are increasingly large in term of both complexity and storage requirements, often requiring several megabytes of hard drive space. When a manufacturer installs an operating system, the manufacturer often uses another computer to copy an image of the operating system from a separate hard drive onto the target hard drive being created for the customer using a specialized software program.

Copying an image of a hard drive, rather than installing the operating system on each customer system, saves considerable time. However, once the image is created, it is quite difficult to customize the customer's system without either creating and copying a new image or turning on the customer's machine and providing the customizations.

Creating multiple images and copying the image most suited to the customer's request is helpful when installing standard applications, such as the Microsoft Office™ suite of applications, which are requested for multiple customers. Multiple images increases the complexity of the manufacturing process as well as increasing the computer requirements for making the images available to the installation process. Furthermore, the manufacturer may wish to make small customizations to help the user get acquainted with the new computer and to help build brand identity and loyalty for the manufacturer. In addition, some large corporate customers may request a particular customization, such as an application to display the corporate PC usage guidelines to the customer's employee.

SUMMARY

A computer system and method for modifying a graphical user interface of the present invention allows customization of the graphical user interface, such as a windows type operating system. When invoked, the system reads one or more configuration files related to the operating system which invokes an installation program to install the custom desktop components. These configuration files may include a registry The custom desktop component includes graphical images added to the graphical user interface during such first invocation. The graphical image is related to an application or Active Desktop component which will be executed when the user selects the graphical image from the desktop layout. The computer system and method may also allow for several users to use the same computer system with a separate profile and desktop layout for each user. In such multiple user systems, the modification occurs for each of the several users. Following the execution of the application or Active Desktop component, the system may remove the graphical image associated with such application or Active Desktop component from the graphical user interface.

A manufacturing process of the present invention is useful in manufacturing systems with graphical user interfaces that are modified upon a first invocation by the user. The manufacturing process includes copying the operating system, configuration files, application programs, graphical image files, and installation programs onto the computer systems nonvolatile storage device. The configuration files are set to trigger the installation programs to execute upon the first invocation of the operating system by the user. The installation programs have been customized to perform modifications to the graphical user interface as described above.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention may be better understood, and its numerous objects, features, and advantages made apparent to those skilled in the art by referencing the accompanying drawings.

FIGURE 1 is a block diagram showing a manufacturing process according to the present invention.

FIGURE 2 is a block diagram showing the installation of the operating system and customizations according to the present invention.

FIGURE 3 is a block diagram showing the first execution of the operating system according to the present invention.

FIGURE 4 is a block diagram showing the execution of a customized application according to the present invention.

FIGURE 5 is a flow chart showing the modification of the end user's desktop upon a first execution of a single-user operating system.

FIGURE 6 is a flow chart showing modification of the end user's desktop upon a first execution for each user a multiple-user operating system.

FIGURE 7 is a block diagram showing a generic installation program and operating system installed to a nonvolatile storage device during manufacturing.

FIGURE 8 is a block diagram showing custom installation files installed to a nonvolatile storage device during manufacturing.

FIGURE 9 is a block diagram depicting usage of installed files by the end user's computer system during a first invocation of the operating system.

The use of the same reference symbols in different drawings indicates similar or identical items.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT(S)

A personal computer manufacturing process is shown in FIGURE 1. Computer system 100 is first assembled at hardware manufacture section 102 with various hardware components including a power supply 115 a system board with a processor 120, a nonvolatile storage device 125, and memory 130. Additional components 135

may also be installed and may include items such as a tape drive, a compact disk read-only-memory (CD-ROM), as well as other components that may have been ordered by the customer. Nonvolatile storage device **125** may be a hard disk drive or any device that holds information when the computer system is powered off.

After the hardware of computer system **100** is installed, computer system **100** is transferred to software installation section **104**. During software installation section **104**, a standard operating system and applications are installed by manufacturing computer system **150**. Manufacturing computer system **150** reads disk images **155**. Disk images **155** are stored onto a nonvolatile storage device by various means known by those skilled in the art. Manufacturing computer system **150** may also install selected components from software products to further customize computer system **100**. Software packages and suites, such as Microsoft Office™, contain several software applications. In the case of Microsoft Office™, the suite contains a word processor (Microsoft Word™), a spreadsheet (Microsoft Excel™), a database (Microsoft Access™), a presentation application (Microsoft Powerpoint™), and a personal information manager (Microsoft Outlook™). Customers may request that any one or more of such applications from the suite be installed onto computer system **100**. Manufacturing computer system can also be used to install such applications onto computer system **100**. Computer system **100** is powered up and assists in the installation process and may also execute installation programs to install applications onto nonvolatile storage device **125**. One method of creating a disk image is to manually create a model computer system configuration and use specialized software to copy an image of the disk from the model computer system. The operator of manufacturing computer system **150** may be a person or an automated program which determines which disk image should be installed to the nonvolatile storage device **125** previously installed in computer system **100**.

To assist in the customization of computer system **100**, a generic installation program and modified configuration files may be included in disk image **155** stored on and loaded onto the nonvolatile storage device **125** previously installed in computer system **100**. The modified configuration files could contain instructions for

the operating system to execute the generic installation program on the first invocation of the operating system by the end user, as is further described below.

Following software installation section **104** computer system **100** is in a condition which would allow it to be used by an end user. However, no customization has been performed at this point so the user could not be given special instructions or provided with customized information. At this point, computer system **100** is transferred to customization section **106**. During customization section **106**, computer system **100** may be customized by storing customized installation programs, applications and graphic files (collectively, "custom components") to nonvolatile storage device **125**. Custom installation system **170** is used to transfer custom components **175** from a nonvolatile storage device connected to custom installation system **170**. As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, manufacturing system **150** and custom installation system **170** may be the same system. In addition, disk images **155** and custom components **175** may be stored on the same nonvolatile storage device. In addition, a local area network (LAN) may be used to connect manufacturing system **150** and custom installation system **170** to nonvolatile storage devices containing disk images **155** and custom components **175**.

Configuration files used by the operating system installed on computer system **100** may to be modified to instruct the operating system to call the customized installation program upon the first invocation of the operating system by the end user. The customized installation program could be programmed to search for other customized components **175**. As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, the installation program could use several methods to search for other custom components **175**, including providing a data file providing installation details about the customized components which is read and processed by the installation program. The customized installation program could also be used to remove standard icons or programs that normally are included with the operating system that the purchaser does not want users to use. These may include games or Internet browser programs (i.e., Microsoft Internet Explorer™, Netscape Navigator™) or any other application included with the operating system that the purchaser does not want employees using. In addition, the

installation program could be programmed to handle errors encountered when searching for custom components 175 so that the end user would not see error messages if custom components 175 were not installed on computer system 100. This would allow a generic installation program to be placed on every computer system 100 from disk images 155 regardless of whether custom components 175 were loaded onto the nonvolatile storage device 125 of computer system 100.

The notification of the operating system can take place in several ways, two of which are disclosed below. First, the configuration files are modified prior to creating disk image 155 so that subsequent installations of the operating system would already contain the modified configuration file. A second method for modifying the configuration file occurs during the installation of custom components 175 by custom installation system 170. A manufacturer may choose to not provide custom components on every computer the manufacturer ships to customer at step 190. The first method advantageously increases speed as the installation file and modified configuration files are copied to the nonvolatile storage device 125 of computer system 100 prior to the copying of custom components 175 onto the nonvolatile storage device 125 of computer system 100. The second method advantageously avoids modifying the configuration files and placing the installation program onto the nonvolatile storage device 125 of computer system 100 unless custom components 175 are loaded by custom installation system 170. Following the loading of custom components 175, computer system 100 is ready for shipment to a customer at step 190.

FIGURE 2 shows the software installation section 104 and customization section 106 process from the perspective of computer system 100. Files loaded onto the nonvolatile storage device 125 of computer system 100 include files for displaying a desktop layout 210 and configuration files 220. In some operating system, such as Windows 95™ and Windows NT™, the configuration files form a registry for storing configuration information. In Windows 95™, configuration information is stored in system files named `system.dat` and `user.dat`. The registry is divided into six sections containing "keys" and "subkeys." A utility called a "registry editor"

(`regedit.exe`) is included with Windows 95™ for viewing the keys and subkeys. One of the keys provided by Windows 95™ is called a "run once" key which, as its name implies, only runs the program associated with the key one time. A key of this nature is useful when the end user is installing software purchased by the end user. The software installation program may load software onto the users hard drive, modify the system settings, and need to re-boot the system in order to execute the software. Configuration files **220**, such as the registry are used in a novel way to customize the operating system display upon a first invocation of the operating system by the user and provide the customization and manufacturing advantages as discussed above. During configuration section **106**, configuration files **220** are modified to correspond with desktop components **230** so that desktop components **230** are installed upon the first invocation of the operating system by the user.

FIGURE 3 shows generally a first execution of operating system **300** by an end user. Upon first execution of operating system **300**, the operating system **300** reads configuration data from configuration files **220**. The stored configuration files **220** within operating system **300** instruct operating system **300** to execute installation program **320** to install customized desktop components **230**. Installation program **320** reads desktop component information **230** which includes one or more graphical images **380** associated with the desktop components **230**. The installation program **320** then modifies the desktop layout **210** used by operating system **300** to display a new desktop layout **350** to the end user. The new desktop layout **350** includes graphical portions of desktop components **230**.

A delay may be present between operating system **300** reading the configuration files **220** at step **305** and presenting the desktop layout at step **355**. Ideally, the modification of the desktop layout **210** would complete prior to the operating system's display of the desktop layout at step **355**. However, due to the nature of some operating systems, namely multiprocessing and threading of parallel processes, graphical objects, including the installed graphical image **380**, may continue to appear for a short while after desktop layout **350** is displayed to the end user on his or her display device **370**.

For some applications, it may be desirous to display graphical image 380 larger than other icons and graphics located on desktop layout 350 to draw user attention and encourage the end user to select graphical image 380. Information conveyed to the end user through selection of graphical image 380 may be introductory information, policy statements, marketing information from the manufacturer, or other types of information to be reviewed by the user once but the graphic image does not have to remain prominently displayed on the user's screen. Active Desktop components may also be placed on desktop layout 350. Active Desktop components allow placement of embedded objects, such as Internet Web pages and the like, onto desktop layout 350. This allows placement of a link to an Internet Web page from the users address so that the contents of the Web Page may periodically change without changing desktop layout 350.

FIGURE 4 shows a method by which a customized desktop component 230 application may remove its associated graphical image 380 following execution of the customized desktop components 230. When the user selects graphical image 380 from user display 370, using a mouse or other input device, operating system 300 executes application program 410. Upon execution of application 410, desktop component files including associated graphical image 380 are removed from desktop layout 350 resulting in new desktop layout 440. New desktop layout 440 may be much like the original desktop layout 210 shown in FIGURE 3. As an alternative, application 410 could modify desktop layout 350 by removing the larger graphic image 380 with a smaller icon-sized image (not shown) for incorporation with new desktop layout 440. When the application program is completed, user display 370 no longer includes graphical image 380, although, as described above, it may contain a smaller icon-sized image instead (not shown).

FIGURE 5 shows a flowchart depicting, in general, how single computer system 500 uses a run once key under Windows 95™ to modify the desktop. When the user switches the computer system power on for the first time, the operating system 510 is initialized as installed by the manufacturer. As part of normal processing, read configuration files step 520 reads the configuration files 220 for a variety of system

settings. As part of the manufacturer's installation process previously described, if run once key 530 is set, operating system performs customization functions on flow 535. These functions include desktop component installation information reading step 540 and desktop modifying step 550. Display desktop step 560 then displays the custom modifications from flow 535 to the user.

It is important that the customization functions are performed once but only once. Performing customization functions on flow 535 multiple times (i.e., upon each invocation of the operating system) could cause multiple graphic files to be written to desktop display 560 clutter the desktop display, cause unnecessary delays in booting the operating system, and could ultimately cause performance degradation of the computer system. In Windows 95™, a run once key runs a process one time and then removes the entry from the registry. In other operating systems, configuration files 220 may be used which would need to be modified by the installation program during its first invocation. In this manner, a subsequent invocation of operating system 510 by a single user would read the registry 520 and not find the run once key 530 that was originally set by the manufacturer. In this case, flow 555 would execute and the desktop display 560 would be shown to the user without performing customization functions on flow 535.

Some operating systems, including Microsoft Windows NT™, can support multiple user configurations. FIGURE 6 shows a flow diagram for handling multiple user operating system. In multiple user system 600 more than one end user can be registered to use the computer system. Each of the users in a multiple user system have a desktop layout 210 which may be customized so that each user can have his or her own unique desktop layout 210. In order to initialize the operating system, the user must enter his or her username and password. This information identifies the user uniquely to the operating system. Configuration files 220, the registry in Windows NT™, keeps track of the particular user using the operating system. The configuration files 220 maintain a profile for each user which includes the details of the desktop layout 210 for the particular user. When operating system is invoked for the first time at step 610, the registry containing the user profile is read along with a

run once key. The user would have entered their user name and password upon invoking the operating system identifying the user to the operating system. Windows NT™ version 4.0 or 5.0 does not contain a "run once for every user" key so some amount of computation must be performed to determine whether flow 645 has been previously executed for this user to read the desktop component 650 and modify this user's desktop 660. One way decision 640 could be undertaken would be a simple file with a list of the registered users from the registry and a flag for whether the particular user has performed flow 645 (i.e., read the customized desktop component 650 and modified the user's desktop layout 660). For every user who has not had their desktop layout customized, flow 645 would be executed before the operating system would display the user's desktop 670. On the other hand, if the flag was set, then decision 640 would be positive (yes) and the operating system would follow flow 665 and display the user's desktop 640 without executing flow 645.

Turning now to FIGURE 7, the disk image 155 is copied by manufacturing system onto nonvolatile storage device 125 of the computer system 100 (not shown), as shown above (see, e.g., FIGURE 1). FIGURE 7 shows more particularly the files contained in disk image 155 and copied to nonvolatile storage device 125 to enable generic installation of custom components. Following the copying of disk image 155, nonvolatile storage device 125 includes the operating system 700 as provided by the operating system manufacturer, desktop layout 210, also as provided by the operating system manufacturer. In addition, generic installation program 720 is included in disk image 155 and copied to nonvolatile storage device 125. Configuration files 220, i.e., registry files, are modified to include instructions to execute generic installation program 720 upon the operating systems next invocation. The standard files 750 copied to nonvolatile storage device 125, includes operating system 700, configuration files 220, desktop layout 210, and generic installation program 720.

To create disk image 155 to contain the aforementioned files, the operating system would be installed onto a new hard disk drive, the generic installation program would be copied to the same hard drive, and the configuration files 220 would be modified so that the operating system would be instructed to invoke the generic

installation program upon the operating system's next invocation (i.e., in Windows 95™ modifying a "run once" registry key to add the name of the generic installation program). At this point, an image of the hard disk (as modified) would be taken to create disk image **155**.

FIGURE 8 shows the custom components that are copied using custom installation system **170** from nonvolatile storage device **125** containing custom components **175** to nonvolatile storage device **125** of computer system **100** (not shown). Standard files **750** were previously installed onto nonvolatile storage device **125** as described above. Custom installation system **170** copies customization files onto nonvolatile storage device **125** to customize computer system **100** for the end user. Decisions related to the type and quantity of customized files, and therefore the customization performed, on the end user's computer depends on the manufacturer's intention and customizations which may have been requested by the customer (i.e., a corporation may wish to have certain customizations installed on every personal computer it orders for its employees). Custom installation program **810** is copied to nonvolatile storage device **125** along with a corresponding entry written to generic installation file **820** which identifies the name of custom installation program **810**. Generic installation file **820** has a specific name or handle so that generic install program **720** can read entries from generic installation file **820** and invoke those custom installation programs listed in generic installation file **820**. Having modified configuration files **220** to reference generic installation program **720** which acts upon generic installation file **820** allows the system to perform custom modifications upon the user's first invocation of the operating system without changing the operating system files during manufacture of each custom system. Also included in custom components **175** are graphic files **830** and applications **840** which are used by custom installation program **810** as explained below.

FIGURE 9 shows the program calls and functions during first execution **900** by the end user following the setup procedures described above. Upon first execution **900**, operating system initialization **910** begins initialization of the operating system by reading configuration files **220**. At least one entry in configuration files **220**

references causes the operating system to invoke generic installation program 720. Generic installation program 720 determines which, if any, custom installation programs 810 need to be invoked to customize the operating system for the end user. If no entries exist in generic installation file 820 (i.e., no customization was prepared by the manufacturer), then generic installation program 720 exits and graphical interface display 930 is performed by the operating system by reading the desktop layout 210 and displaying the graphical interface display 930 to the end user.

If entries do exist in generic installation file 820, then custom installation programs 810 relating to the entries are called and executed by the operating system. Any number of these custom install programs may modify desktop layout 210 with graphics previously stored in graphics files 830 during the custom installation process described above. Custom installation program 810 modifies desktop layout 210 using data from custom graphic file 830 forming custom graphic 920 on desktop layout 210. Following the termination of the last custom installation program 812, control is returned to generic installation program 720 which in turn exits returning control to operating system initialization 910. Upon completion of operating system initialization 910, graphical interface display 930 is displayed to user. Graphical interface display 930 reads files comprising the desktop layout including original desktop layout 210 and custom graphic image 920.

When the end user view the desktop for the first time, the standard graphics along with the custom graphics are visible. The end user can now select custom graphic 920 using a pointing device (i.e., trackball or mouse) or keyboard. When custom graphic 920 is selected by the end user, the operating system invokes custom application 850 associated with custom graphic 920. In many graphical based operating systems, including those referenced above, the association between custom graphic 920 and custom application 850 is through properties assigned to custom graphic 920 that were set during the foregoing custom graphic installation process.

The description of the invention set forth herein is illustrative and not intended to limit the scope of the invention as set forth in the following claims. Variations and

modifications of the embodiments disclosed herein may be made based on the descriptions set forth herein, without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention as set forth in the following claims.



WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for modifying a graphical user interface controlled by an operating system, comprising:

reading a configuration file related to the operating system;

invoking an installation program in response to the reading; and

adding a graphical image to the graphical user interface during a first invocation of the operating system by a user, the graphical image being related to an application program; the adding resulting from the invoking of the installation program and the graphical image appearing in a first display of the graphical user interface to the user.

2. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the configuration file includes a registry and wherein the invoking results from reading a run once key of the registry.

3. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the operating system is a windows type operating system.

4. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the user is one of a plurality of users and wherein the method is performed upon a first invocation of the operating system by each of the plurality of users.

5. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the method further comprises:

invoking the application program related to the graphical image upon a selection of the graphical image by the user.

6. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the method further comprises removing the graphical image from the graphical user interface following a first invocation of the application program by the user.

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7. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the adding further comprises determining that an invocation of the operating system is the first invocation of the operating system.

8. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the graphical image is related to an Active Desktop component.

9. A computer system comprising:

a processor;

a memory coupled to the processor;

a nonvolatile storage device;

a display device;

a desktop component stored on the nonvolatile storage device, the desktop component including a graphical image for display on the display device and one or more software objects;

an operating system stored on the nonvolatile storage device, the operating system including a graphical user interface displayed on the display device, a data file handling system, and one or more configuration files, wherein the graphical user interface has a first configuration wherein the graphical image is not included;

a software installation object stored on the nonvolatile storage device responsive to a first invocation of the operating system by a user, the software installation object generating a second configuration of the graphical user interface by adding the graphical image to the first configuration of the graphical user interface upon execution of the software installation object.

10. The computer system as recited in claim 9, wherein the one or more configuration files includes a registry.

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11. The computer system as recited in claim 9, wherein the operating system is a windows type operating system.

12. The computer system as recited in claim 9, wherein the user comprises a plurality of users and wherein the second configuration of the graphical user interface is created for each of the plurality of users.

13. The computer system as recited in claim 9, wherein one of the one or more software objects is responsive to a user selection of the graphical image.

14. The method as recited in claim 9, wherein the graphical image is related to an Active Desktop component.

15. A method of manufacturing a computer system for shipment to a user, the computer system including a processor, memory coupled to the processor, and a nonvolatile storage device, the method comprising:

copying an operating system including a graphical user interface and one or more configuration files onto the nonvolatile storage device;

copying an application program onto the nonvolatile storage device;

copying a graphical image file onto the nonvolatile storage device, wherein the graphical image file includes one or more graphical images and wherein one of the one or more graphical images is representative of the application program;

copying an installation program onto the nonvolatile storage device, wherein the installation program contains a plurality of instructions for adding the graphical image to the graphical user interface;

configuring one of the one or more configuration files to instruct the operating system to execute the installation program upon a first invocation of the operating system by the user.

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16. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein the one or more configuration files includes a registry and wherein the invoking results from reading a run once key of the registry.

17. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein the operating system is a windows type operating system.

18. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein the user comprises a plurality of users and wherein the method is performed upon a first invocation of the operating system by each of the plurality of users.

19. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein the method further comprises:

invoking the application program related to the graphical image upon a selection of the graphical image by the user.

20. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein the method further comprises removing the graphical image from the graphical user interface following a first invocation of the application program by the user.

21. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein the nonvolatile storage device is a hard disk drive.

22. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein the configuring further includes instructions for determining that an invocation of the operating system is the first invocation of the operating system.

23. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein the graphical image is related to an Active Desktop component.

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24. A method for modifying a graphical user interface controlled by an operating system, comprising:

reading a configuration file related to the operating system;

invoking a customization program in response to the reading during a first invocation of the operating system by a user; and

modifying the graphical user interface in response to the invoking the customization program, the modifying relating to a graphical representation of an application program, wherein the modifying changes the appearance of the graphical user interface.

25. The method as recited in claim 24, wherein the modifying removes the graphical representation from the graphical user interface.

26. The method as recited in claim 24, wherein the modifying adds the graphical representation to the graphical user interface.

27. The method as recited in claim 24, wherein the modifying hides the graphical representation on the graphical user interface.

28. The method as recited in claim 24, wherein the modifying adds the graphical representation to the graphical user interface, wherein the added graphical representation is visible during a subsequent invocation of the operating system.

29. The method as recited in claim 24, wherein the user is one of a plurality of users and wherein the method is performed upon a first invocation of the operating system by each of the plurality of users.

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