Right click to Command Prompt

1. Computers are dumb.

Computers are only as smart as programmers and engineers make them. They are great at mathematics, but are poor decision makers and have to be told through the combination of code and hardware how to process the user's input and deliver in a timely manner the expected output. The programmer tries to anticipate every action a user might take when using software that they are creating. There are often tools we use everyday in the windows environment that we wish we could add more functionality or another feature the programmer didn't think about. One tool that comes to mind that I wanted to change was Windows Explorer (Explorer).

I spend a lot of time in Explorer. Looking at file dates and times, counting files, checking properties of files, copying, and deleting. This is where I discovered that based on information in the registry the pc will react differently to files with different extensions. One way to check this is to right click on files with different extensions. The menu often changes based on the file extension. Again, this information is kept in the registry.

While in Explorer, I often need to open the current folder or directory in the command prompt. As you may know, when you open the command prompt from the start menu it defaults to the directory where **cmd.exe** or **command.exe** are located on the pc or the user's profile folder. The fun now begins trying to remember dos commands you haven't used in a while to get to the directory where you needed to work. Let's change this and make it one click away.

2. Create a Registration Entries File.

Let's start by creating the required registration entries or .reg file. Open a blank notepad. Type in the first line as shown in **Figure 1**.

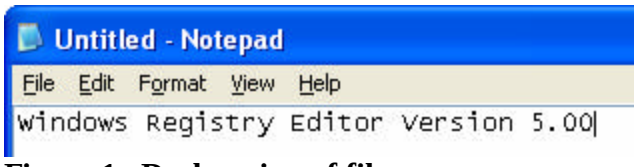

Figure 1. Declaration of file type.

This line tells windows what version of the Windows Registry Editor we want to use. Now add a blank line. To make an entry in the registry, we can either add a value to an existing key or create a new key and later add a value to it. We are going to create a new key in the Directory/shell section of the HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT. Add the following line to your notepad file. **Figure 2** shows the next line to be added.

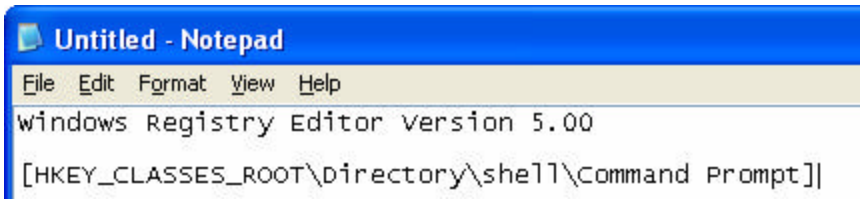

Figure 2. Registration file in work.

This will create a new key. This is also add an item to the popup menu that will come up when you right click on the folder in Explorer. Now let's add the last two lines of our registration entries file. They are:

```
[HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\Directory\shell\Command Prompt\command]
@="C:\\WINDOWS\\system32\\cmd.exe \"%1\""
```

These two lines add another key to the Command Prompt key we just created. The second line is the actual command that will execute when we click on 'Command Prompt' option on the popup menu. The complete file should look like **Figure 3**.

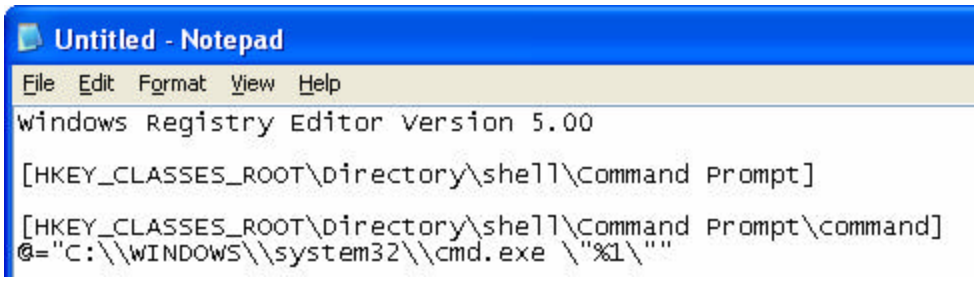

Figure 3. Completed registration entries file.

Save this file as 'c:\mytools.reg'. Make note of the extension. If you do not save this file correctly, it may not merge into the registration properly and you will not have an option to add this information into the registry.

3. Merge Information.

Locate the newly created registration entries file. Right click on the .reg file and choose Merge. An example of this is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. How to merge a registration file.

You will get a confirmation message like the one shown in Figure 5.

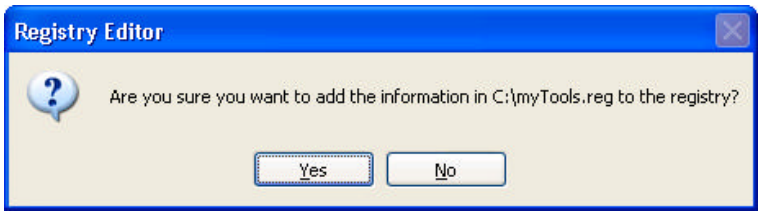

Figure 5. Confirmation prompt.

Click Yes. If the information contained in the c:\mytools.reg is correct, the information should merge with the registry and a message stating success should popup. This is shown in **Figure 6**.

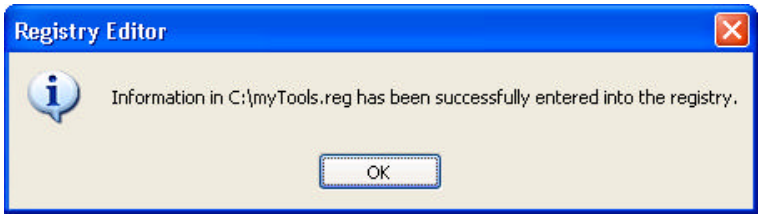

Figure 6. Successful merge of registry information.

4. Right click to command prompt.

Test the option you just added by right clicking on a folder in the left pane of Explorer. Choose the Command Prompt option as shown in **Figure 7**.

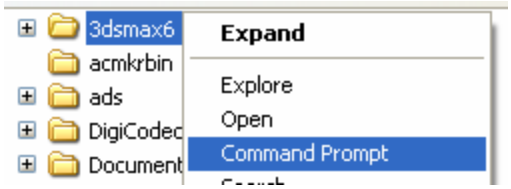

Figure 7. New option in Explorer.

If the command is successful the command prompt should open and open with the folder you right clicked on as the default directory as shown in **Figure 8**.

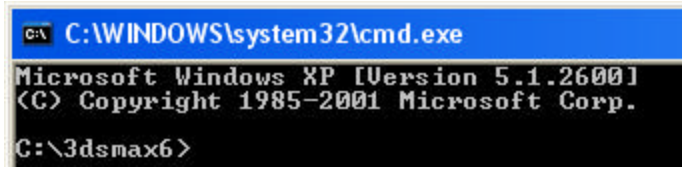

Figure 8. Command executed successfully.

If the command did not work, step back to item 2, Create a Registration Entries File and double check your lines in c:\mytools.reg file. If a change is needed, resave and remerge your file.

5. Wrap up.

The mytools.reg file can be stored away until the machine is rebuilt or you receive a new machine. Just remerge the information into the new registration file and your tools will be back again.

As I have shown, it is possible to add time saving shortcuts to programs that you use everyday. Work smarter, not harder.

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Date: June 17, 2004