



Craig Crossman

National Newspaper Computer Columnist

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WEB SITE HELPS SHOPPERS FIND BETTER VALUES

Most of us who use the Internet as an ideal way to shop know that you can find some of the best prices offered along with the added convenience of 24/7 availability. Plus you don't have to fight the crowds at the mall because you don't have to leave the comfort of your own home. Another advantage to shopping online is being able to find what you want and find it a lot more quickly than if you had to drive from place to place. It's even easier than letting your fingers do the walking. And now another online service makes your online shopping even simpler.

Unlike other shopping sites, PriceGrabber.com doesn't sell anything. You go to PriceGrabber.com to first find the item you want and then the site tells you what online places offer the product and then ranks them by price or rating. So at a glance, you can see who's offering what you want and who's offering it at the best value. PriceGrabber.com also lets their shoppers rate a product and company by using a 1 to 5 star rating system along with their comments. This proves to be especially valuable in that this kind of user feedback makes for a wonderful way to evaluate a product and the online store selling it before you buy. Currently PriceGrabber.com works with over 300 online shopping services and eight major product categories including books, computers, consumer electronics, music, software and toys. More sites and categories are in the planning.

I found their "BottomLinePrice" to be most useful. After locating the item of your desire, you enter your Zip Code. PriceGrabber.com then calculates applicable sales tax, shipping, rebates and then displays the final or bottom line price. And although you can use it anonymously, if you supply your email address, you can use the site's tracking ability to alert you to added bargains. For example, say you find a camera selling for \$199 but you only want to pay \$150. Just let PriceGrabber.com know and the site will automatically send you an email if and when the price falls to the level you set.

Whether you're an experienced online shopper or a novice, you're going to find this free service to be an invaluable one.

www.PriceGrabber.com

Program helps extend printer's ink life

We've come to accept that our cars run out of gas in the middle of nowhere, our pens run out of ink as we sign on the dotted line, the batteries die in our digital cameras just before we take that last perfect photo, the toilet paper runs out before we... well, you get the idea.

It seems that disposables expire just at the point when we need them the most, not to mention their cost always seems to increase every time we buy them. Nowhere in the world of computing is that felt more than with our printers. Doesn't it seem like it was only yesterday you put in that brand new inkjet cartridge? Well you might want to check out a new program that claims to extend the life of your printer's ink supply.

InkSaver is a clever little program that lets you control the amount of ink used when printing a document. But unlike other products that simply reduce the amount of ink, InkSaver's creator, Strydent Software claims that it uses sophisticated algorithms that optimize the printer data so that the printer uses less ink while still printing at its highest resolution. The company claims you can extend an ink cartridge by up to four times.

InkSaver's control panel gives you complete and separate controls over both the black and color cartridges. Using a vertical slider, you can adjust the savings from 0 to 75 percent. One of the nice features is that the panel displays an estimated dollar savings you will realize at the given savings setting.

InkSaver is compatible with most Hewlett-Packard, Epson and Canon color inkjet models and will work with any brand of ink cartridge or refill kit. I was surprised to learn that a typical user will spend somewhere around \$600 on ink alone during the life of a printer so the \$34.99 you spend in InkSaver should more than pay for itself after the first time you need to finally replace the cartridge.

Visit the InkSaver web site for more information and to use their ink savings estimator that lets you input what you pay for black and color inks as well as how many you use in a year. The estimator will show you how much you will save using this product. In a world where we helplessly stand by and watch our things running out at the wrong time, it's nice to be given some control back over the inevitable.

For Windows 98 and up.

www.inksaver.com

Craig Crossman is a Knight-Ridder syndicated newspaper columnist writing about computers and technology. He also hosts the nation's longest running radio talk show on computers and technology, Computer America, heard on the BusinessTalkRadio network weeknights at 11PM ET. In South Florida, you can hear a rebroadcast of three selected hours of Computer America Sunday evenings from 10PM to 1AM Monday on WBZT 1230 AM and WJNO 1290 AM.

This Craig Crossman article also appeared in:

- The Record (Stockton, CA)
- The Gazette (Cedar Rapids, IA)
- The Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA)