



Hanselminutes is a weekly audio talk show with noted web developer and technologist Scott Hanselman and hosted by Carl Franklin. Scott discusses utilities and tools, gives practical how-to advice, and discusses ASP.NET or Windows issues and workarounds.

**Text transcript of show # 15**

**April 25, 2006**

**Replacing Start|Run**

Scott talks about alternate ways to launch applications and tools for personal productivity

(Transcription services provided by [PWOP Productions](#))



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(Music)

**Lawrence Ryan:** From [hanselminutes.com](http://hanselminutes.com) it's 'Hanselminutes', a weekly discussion with web developer and technologist, Scott Hanselman, hosted by Carl Franklin. This is Lawrence Ryan announcing Show #15, recorded Tuesday, April 25th, 2006. Support for Hanselminutes is provided by [peterblum.com](http://peterblum.com) -- "Start with better controls, finish with better sites" online at [peterblum.com](http://peterblum.com). Support is also provided by .NET Developer's Journal -- "The World's leading .NET developer magazine", online at [www.sys-con.com](http://www.sys-con.com). In this episode, Scott discusses alternative ways to open applications and increasing personal productivity.

(Music)

**Carl Franklin:** Hi, this is Carl Franklin, and you are listening to Hanselminutes. I am here with Scott; it's going to be a quick show today. Scott we are talking about Start Run replacements. Start run.

**Scott Hanselman:** I am not launching files fast enough; I am not launching my programs fast enough. I go down to my Start Menu and I click all programs and I just -- I am sitting here waiting and I am waiting and okay, and here, my program files just popped up. I am running at about 1400 or 1600 resolution and my Start Menu fills my screen.

**Carl Franklin:** So, short of the computer reading your mind, what can we do about this?

**Scott Hanselman:** More and more people have been using the Windows shortcuts, trying to make things a little easier of course. Geoff Atwood's got the kind of canonical blog post on using Windows keys; we have talked about this before on this show, it's [shrinkster.com/ebm](http://shrinkster.com/ebm) and you can do things like "Windows key + R" and that will popup the Run Dialog Box. So, when you say, Start Run you can also type "Windows key + R" -- pop that up and then you can also remap your hotkeys if -- someone like me you are using an IBM or Lenovo Thinkpad that doesn't have a Window Key, you can remap that. So, I type "Right Alt R" but it's the same thing. At this point, a lot of people would rather type out notepad like, spell out the entire word or Calc, then go hunting for it.

**Carl Franklin:** Right.

**Scott Hanselman:** But I really wish I can get a faster experience than that. So, I have been kind of collecting applications that would help you do

that faster. Geoff talks about a few of them on his blog post there. Here is what I have found so far; there is the original and still a pretty good one Dave's Quick Search Taskbar.

**Carl Franklin:** I remember you talked about this the very first time I interviewed you on .NET Rocks!

**Scott Hanselman:** Yeah, it has been around for a very long time. This is an interesting one, you can see it at [shrinkster.com/ebn](http://shrinkster.com/ebn). This is a textbox that will sit down in your Windows taskbar and you can type in web addresses directly. It supports a number of hotkeys for things like adding "www." or ".com" to the end of a string to automatically -- you type in "CNN" you hit "Ctrl + Enter" and just like you are used to in the browser, it will add the appropriate prefixes; supports a history, you can drag text to the search bar, you can bind different kind of magic words to a particular application, so you could say that, 'A' for Amazon, 'g' for Google, its kind of, up to you. They have had a little trouble recently with Windows XP Service Pack 2 because Dave's Search Bar is largely implemented in Java Script. So, Service Pack 2's Local Machine Lockdown blocks Dave's Quick Search Taskbar from running on reboots. Take a look at the FAQ on Dave's site. But they are working actively on a rewrite of Dave's Search Bar that will let you run under Service Pack 2 but they continue to have trouble. There is a current beta that's out right now; it's a pretty flexible thing if you are a person who doesn't want an application to be right in your face you'd like it to be available all the time you are not too big in the hotkeys, it's pretty powerful. You can add specific websites and there is lots of information on the Dave's Forms, a lot of enthusiasts around Dave's Search Bars that have set up, speed shortcuts -- you can type in like, YH and then a word and check Yahoo or you can type in "define" and go straight to the dictionary.

**Carl Franklin:** Its kind of like code rush for your system, huh?

**Scott Hanselman:** Yeah, its kind of like code rush. Its really totally up to you -- you can write these extensions in Java Script, it can act as a calculator because its using Java Script for this kind of evaluation. It will sit down there; it will be a clock, it will be a calculator, and its always sitting there, because it is a toolbar that sits in the Windows taskbar.

**Carl Franklin:** Hey Scott do you remember at the beginning of the show you said, you like to use the Windows shortcut keys but the menus take



so long to come up. Did you know that you can change the delay for the menus and the default is like 400 milliseconds I think. If you go into regedit, go to "HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER - Control Panel - Desktop" -- scroll down the right panel and double click on the "MenuShowDelay". In the value data box, change default value from 400 to like, 1 and your menus will fly. And it takes some getting used to, because there is no delay when you hover over a menu. So, you really have to be a little more careful with your mouse but the cool part about that is, mouse, keyboard, whatever, the menus just fly.

**Scott Hanselman:** Totally, yeah. That's something you can get to from the TweakUI control panel as well, if you don't want to dig around in the registry.

**Carl Franklin:** Right.

**Scott Hanselman:** Little things like that can make a big difference in your general experience. It seems silly to say a couple of milliseconds will add up, but they really do. So, Dave's Quick Search -- it's down there on the taskbar, but the one that I use primarily -- find myself keep coming back to is, Bayden Systems SlickRun. This is at [shrinkster.com/ebo](http://shrinkster.com/ebo) and lots of people who read my blog are familiar with this tool because I have been pimping it furiously for a number of years. I like to run mine with a large font and I do it with a black background and comet green so it kind of, looks like a little floating terminal window, and I have bound it to the Window R key. If you go into slickrun.ne there is a option that's very deep in the documentation, says grab win R = 1 and you can bind it to Window R and this one is a similar kind of experience as the Dave's Quick Bar; you can add words, I have it setup for like word definitions, I say define fu and it will run up into the dictionary and define fu it will do Google searches but it also does auto completion of paths, so I can say c:/DOC and automatically go to Documents and Settings.

**Carl Franklin:** Excellent.

**Scott Hanselman:** You can also create macros; so I have a macro called "Morning" that will do all of the different things I want to do in the morning like launch up these websites, bring up outlook, run a backup program, run defrag -- whatever I want to do. I have also put together a couple other ones like "Stand by me" that will turn my machine on the Stand By mode, and things like that. Those are all called magic words -- and this application is really-really fast; that's the one thing I can say about SlickRun. Also the flexibility

that you have -- I run both Internet Explorer and Firefox although Firefox is in my -- it's my primary browser -- you can define that some of the SlickRun words will use IE and some will use Firefox by calling I-Explorer, Firefox yourself manually. So, some of the things that we use on our intranet, I prefer to have them launch I-Explorer's on my SharePoint sites, I want to automatically launch IE. I have also setup commands for loading Monad verses loading the DOS prompt, so I have got a magic word for MSH v/s for CMD.

**Carl Franklin:** Right.

**Scott Hanselman:** It's a pretty good -- do you use any of these, or you're just kind of a click, click kind of guy?

**Carl Franklin:** No, I haven't used SlickRun yet but that's because I haven't had a need to.

**Scott Hanselman:** If you are doing stuff with dozens of Windows open and lots of different programs, that are little tiny programs, you can run this, then jump back -- any kind of big time multitasking. If you spend most of your time on one application whether it be a sound application, or whether it be a coding application, you have less of a need for something like this.

**Carl Franklin:** Yeah, I do plan to check it out though, because I hear nothing but great stuff about it.

**Scott Hanselman:** Yeah, I think that this is really about deciding whether or not those seconds matter?

**Carl Franklin:** Right.

**Scott Hanselman:** I know that for a lot of people the fact that they can bring up Calc in 2 milliseconds v/s half a second is really silly and its kind of the badge of the geek, but for others that really do feel like, my brain has already had the thought, at this point I am just waiting from my fingers -- and I think for the real geeks out there, and I think that a lot of geeks happen to listen to this show, there is this sense that we are I/O bound that I am really waiting for the disk drive heads, and at this point the disk drive heads are my fingers. So, anything at all, I can get to speed that up. Now, another tool that is kind of like SlickRun is called Launchy -- launchy.net, this is at [shrinkster.com/ebi](http://shrinkster.com/ebi) -- this is actively being worked on. I have got this bound to "Alt + space" on my system, and this is an interesting little application that will popup kind of a transparent window; its very much known for its



skinning ability so people will skin it to match whatever theme they are using, for those that are into the whole Windows customization crowd. So, it indexes your Start Menu and all of your shortcuts; so if I hit "Alt + space" and type "IT" I see that it automatically knows I want to run iTunes because its automatically scanned and indexed my Start Menu. So, all you want is skinable program launcher that's wicked fast; you want to hit a hotkey and type "CA" and start running calc immediately without having to think about what those words are, then Launchy would be an application you might want to check out. Of course with all of these tools, you really can't go and say, "Gosh! This tool does that and not this other thing," because launching applications, we all know that we want auto completion; we won't be able to go and type something that's less than we would ordinarily type when we hit Start Run. So, with Launchy, its automatically suggesting -- so if I type 'CA' it says Picasa, I type "CAL" it says calc -- I hit enter and it launches. Now, something like SlickRun wouldn't know that I meant Calc when I type 'CA' but once I've run calc once and then I launch SlickRun again, and I type 'CA' it automatically suggests based on history that, "Oh you probably meant Calc you just did that."

**Carl Franklin:** Right.

**Scott Hanselman:** So SlickRun kind of learns as you do this.

**Carl Franklin:** That's pretty slick.

**Scott Hanselman:** It is pretty slick. So, Launchy is another application to check out, so check that out.

**Carl Franklin:** Okay.

**Scott Hanselman:** Launchy, SlickRun, and Dave's Quick Search, all kind of similar. I like to use SlickRun to have it follow my cursor; there is a follow -- Chase Cursor = 1 option, so wherever my cursor is, is where it will popup, and I like that, in the sense that I don't have to move my eyes too much. I don't have to go back down to a particular location and Launchy will come up automatically wherever it was left. Now, I have bound Launchy to "Alt + Space" that happens to be the default that Launchy likes to set itself up on. There is another tool written in .NET that people are talking about called AppRocket; this is at [shrinkster.com/ebp](http://shrinkster.com/ebp). So AppRocket is similar to Launchy. Launchy is a freeware application that you can get up on SourceForge, but AppRocket at [shrinkster.com/ebp](http://shrinkster.com/ebp), this is an application that you buy its written in .NET -- and rather than

floating around your screen, AppRocket docks at the top of your screen. Its almost like a title bar; its like a little toolbar, but its very-very small. And it indexes not only your programs, but it indexes all of your files as well. So, I have bound this to "Ctrl +Space"; so I have got Launchy to "Alt Space" and I have got AppRocket to "Ctrl +Space" -- and I can start typing -- like, I just wrote an application called "Console Application". I can just start typing console app, and then a dropdown pops down that shows me all of the applications -- code, files of any particular type that I have set up, that have that in the name. So, its almost like Google desktop search.

**Carl Franklin:** Right.

**Scott Hanselman:** But this is happening -- kind of in your Title Bar, as you type, these things are coming up. So, I am typing in MSDN and I see MSDN newsgroups that are coming out my web history, I see a CS file I had called MSDN.CS and I also see a web query; so I can type in MSDN Space, hit enter and then type in the query. So, I hit MSDN enter, system.xml enter, and it automatically launches up my browser.

**Carl Franklin:** Wow! Cool. One thing I should mention is, you got to be careful with too many utilities that index your hard drive because before you know it, those things have chewing up a lot of CPU space and a lot of disk access too. If you have got the Google toolbar and you've MSN Search and then you have got AppRocket you probably just want to pick one, right?

**Scott Hanselman:** You are right; you are 100% on target. I selected every single one of these in order to make sure that I could kind of review them completely...

**Carl Franklin:** All right sure.

**Scott Hanselman:** ...but right now I have SlickRun all the time; I use SlickRun everyday all the time, I love SlickRun. I don't think Launchy is going to be for me because I can do everything I can do with Launchy with SlickRun by setting up magic words. I am liking AppRocket more and more and its only \$18 to buy, which is not too bad. SlickRun is free, Quick Dave's Bar is free, Launchy is free; all of them allow you to do things like MSDN space whatever, or Google space whatever and look things up. I like AppRocket's look and feel; its very similar to an application on the MAC called Quicksilver at [shrinkster.com/ebp](http://shrinkster.com/ebp) -- although Quicksilver is largely considered to be the greatest hotkey based app launcher in the history of the universe.



**Carl Franklin:** Now, this Quicksilver is a Windows version or is this MAC only or what?

**Scott Hanselman:** No if there was a Windows version of Quicksilver, these guys would have a license to print money.

**Carl Franklin:** All right so there isn't...

**Scott Hanselman:** There is no hyperbolic -- there is nothing that can be said about how awesome Quicksilver is on the MAC...

**Carl Franklin:** Okay.

**Scott Hanselman:** ...once you have experienced it, because Quicksilver doesn't just take simple magic words like we are talking about, it takes combinations of nouns and verbs so you might say something like email to -- like, you might say like, open this file and email it to that person, all in one kind of composite -- it's almost like a graphical -- I was going to say graphical Monad but its -- its greatest strength is not the searching, it's the idea that you can take tasks and put them all together. So, you might say, there is a file on my hard drive called FOO, I want to email it to this guy. So, you are basically doing 3 actions, and you are linking them up. So, Quicksilver knows how to find the file, and it knows you have email, and it knows about the different contacts on your machine. So, it's the linking together of those verbs, and a lot of these applications have the simple notion of one verb -- I might want to "Open" this file, or I might want to "Print" that file, but they don't link them together.

**Carl Franklin:** I see.

**Scott Hanselman:** Now, there is another application that is a paid application, because we are kind of, going up the food chain here from free applications to applications that start doing a little bit more. This is called ActiveWords; this is at [shrinkster.com/ebq](http://shrinkster.com/ebq). Now the applications we have talked about so far have user interfaces, ActiveWords is interesting in that if you don't want to really see it, you don't have to.

**Carl Franklin:** See what?

**Scott Hanselman:** See the user interface.

**Carl Franklin:** Okay.

**Scott Hanselman:** If you don't want to know that this thing exists.

**Carl Franklin:** Oh I see.

**Scott Hanselman:** So, ActiveWords is actually listening to everything that you are listening -- it's watching every single thing that you type. So, if you just type the word "Word" in Notepad, or just at the Command Line, or just in Explorer -- and the keys aren't really going anywhere they are not being typed in anywhere, you can type in 'Word' and hit 'F8', or whatever function key you bound to it, and then Word launches. They have a toolbar that will monitor every single keystroke that you type. But you don't have to see that if you don't want to.

**Carl Franklin:** Wow!

**Scott Hanselman:** So, what's interesting about that is, imagine like "Autosuggest" -- like Word Autosuggest, where I am sure we are now, you have used Word long enough. If you type in Carl, it automatically assumes you are typing Carl Franklin.

**Carl Franklin:** Sure, right.

**Scott Hanselman:** So, you could type in the word 'Sig' and hit space, and then have, no matter you have typed it in Windows have ActiveWords automatically put in your email signature.

**Carl Franklin:** Nice.

**Scott Hanselman:** So, it's kind of a system wide text based keystroke logger watcher.

**Carl Franklin:** That is cool.

**Scott Hanselman:** It's pretty amazing; and they have got a Tablet PC version, so then you can just do the exact same thing except with Ink. So, you type in NYT and it launches the New York Times.

**Carl Franklin:** I love my tablet PC by the way. I love it, love it, love it.

**Scott Hanselman:** ActiveWords might be the thing that could take that to the next level.

Carl Franklin: I have to check that out.

**Scott Hanselman:** Being able to type in -- almost like, not quite gestures, but little shortcut words. So, there is a lot of interesting demos up at the ActiveWords website; its [activewords.com](http://activewords.com) or [shrinkster.com/ebq](http://shrinkster.com/ebq). They have got some screencasts where they are inside of Word, they type in the word 'Excel', and then launch Excel. So, it's watching everything that you do.



**Carl Franklin:** Right.

**Scott Hanselman:** Each of these applications has a zen to it; has a style, and you just have to buy into the one that makes you happy.

**Carl Franklin:** Right.

**Scott Hanselman:** Now interestingly, while I was in the middle of evaluating these tools, I noticed that the Google updater, the little tool that's just in the corner and tells you if any of your Google applications has been updated recently, notified me that a new version of Google Desktop was out, so I upgraded because I am an upgrade whore, I just upgrade anytime any application tells me there is a new version. And I am doing my thing, I haven't thought about any of the new features, and I accidentally bump Ctrl twice and this weird translucent white dialog box pops up with like a 20-point font that says Google -- says Google switch, Google Quick Search Box. So I almost sit here right now, I hit Ctrl, Ctrl and I type in Carl, and it says -- search web Carl, and then it says, Carl Franklin and it mentions some text files that I have got. I see an email here from you, I see you referenced on Google Groups -- this is all popping down just like you ordinarily see with AppRocket but its happening right in the middle of my desktop its popped up as a mode list dialog; I can still do other things. And then, I can just hit enter and see all of those results in my browser; so I am seeing Google autocomplete as a little application that's just kind of leapt out of my desktop. So, I think I am probably going to end up with a combination of SlickRun and the Google Desktop; I have tried Windows Desktop Search for a while, I like it, but I keep getting -- my index keeps getting corrupted. So, your point about having too many of these in your system is definitely true. Right now, Google, AppRocket, all fight, trying to index my hard drive really bad.

**Carl Franklin:** Especially if you try to do any recording or anything like that -- got to turn all that off.

**Scott Hanselman:** When I do a presentation, I always turn off Google Desktop and I just use SlickRun because it does not do any indexing at all.

**Carl Franklin:** By the way -- I don't know if you are into this, but if you do any sort of recording or you are recording with your PC; there is a XP tuning tips -- you know tuning XP for audio at [shrinkster.com/ebt](http://shrinkster.com/ebt) which I swear by, and I -- anybody who does any recording for me I send them to this page. And that's where I found the

trick to the "MenuShowDelay" Registry setting that you can turn down.

**Scott Hanselman:** Very Cool.

**Carl Franklin:** Yeah!

**Scott Hanselman:** So far we have talked about the standard "WinKeys" stuff and we saw Geoff Atwood's article at [shrinkster.com/ebm](http://shrinkster.com/ebm). We looked at Launchy, which is a freeware application that's -- you can get up at Source Forge...

**Carl Franklin:** Did you talk about WinKey?

**Scott Hanselman:** Well, WinKey is kind of, a complicated thing. WinKey used to be the thing that everyone would use to make up new Windows key combinations.

**Carl Franklin:** Right

**Scott Hanselman:** But if you go Googling around for WinKey, you'll find that the company that makes it, decided that it's -- was too free and as such was causing too much of a support burden on them..

**Carl Franklin:** Right

**Scott Hanselman:** So they got rid of it. And if you go to the WinKey site you'll find that we don't sell that, we don't give that, we don't let you have it anymore. So there is lots and lots of mirrors that you can find of this application, but it is currently deadended. It's stuck at whatever version was most recently released, which is very sad.

**Carl Franklin:** But there is a site on Coding Horror.

**Scott Hanselman:** So Coding Horror has a celebration of the Windows key with a list of all of the different Windows keys that you might want to use; the built-in stuff in Windows like 'Window D' for Desktop and 'Window E.'

**Carl Franklin:** Alright

**Scott Hanselman:** What I am talking about is a application that was called WinKey.

**Carl Franklin:** WinKey; yeah that's different.

**Scott Hanselman:** And WinKey was a really great application that let you take all the other 26 letters of the language and bind them to



whatever, so you could have "Windows 'whatever.'"

**Carl Franklin:** Yeah.

**Scott Hanselman:** But of course, that's gone now. So you're going to have to go hunting for it. And I think we actually talked about that a little bit ago on previous episode of Hanselminutes.

Carl Franklin: We did.

**Scott Hanselman:** Now, in the interest of productivity, one of the other things that I wanted to talk about, is this 'getting things done.' We have talked about that a little bit before; David Allen's 'getting things done.' The idea of getting your inbox down to zero items and stuff like that.

**Carl Franklin:** Yeah

**Scott Hanselman:** But there is this crazy application that I have been using, and I have actually set it up as my homepage. This is called tiddlywiki and this takes a little bit of time to get one's head around. This is a wiki run entirely in a single HTML page. It's not a server side thing. You go up to [tiddlywiki.com](http://tiddlywiki.com) or [shrinkster.com/ebs](http://shrinkster.com/ebs) and download it. It is like a 100K file and you run it and I have got it running on my Desktop. I set up my homepage as this particular file and it's a complete wiki, all done in AJAX, C, DHTML with animations that works in both browsers. And you can keep your notes in there; it is almost like One Note done entirely as a JavaScript application, totally editable as a wiki with all the formatting and the graphics and the nice stuff -- and what I am using is the GTD or Getting Things Done TiddlyWiki Plus that has the philosophy of getting things done; the idea of keeping track of all the different things in your life and all the different contacts and all the different "To Do's" and keeping them in one wiki.

**Carl Franklin:** Wow!

**Scott Hanselman:** So, rather than "To Do" list in Outlook or Text files, which is really what I have been doing for years, everyone has a Text file called 'ToDo.txt' on their Desktop.

**Carl Franklin:** Yeah that's right. ToDo.txt.

**Scott Hanselman:** So rather than doing 'ToDo.txt,' I wanted to give this a try and I used FolderShare to keep my files synchronized. So I have got a...

**Carl Franklin:** We talked about FolderShare? I think we might have.

**Scott Hanselman:** I'm not sure. We may have, but FolderShare at [foldershare.com](http://foldershare.com) has now been purchased by Microsoft. Of course, they are now WindowsLive beta service, and this is a feature that lets you -- it's not really sharing folders, as it is synchronizing folders seamlessly between systems behind firewalls. So, on my desktop I've created a file called -- a folder rather, called "Shared Desktop" -- and then I shared it to myself securely using the 'FolderShare' service. So now, if I put a file called "carl.txt" in my shared desktop, it will automatically show up on my Tablet, my Work PC, my Home PC and my Mac.

**Carl Franklin:** Yeah. So, FolderShare at [shrinkster.com/eby](http://shrinkster.com/eby).

**Scott Hanselman:** So, I've been using this to synchronize my ToDo.txt. But then I started thinking, I have got tiddlywiki and it's such a more rich way of looking at things, it works anywhere -- it works in any browser and gives me that kind of dynamic wiki feel without the concern of a database or any kind of files in the background. It automatically saves itself. So, I started using it as my home page on all of my machines...

**Carl Franklin:** Right

**Scott Hanselman:** ...automatically synchronized using FolderShare.

**Carl Franklin:** Wow!

**Scott Hanselman:** So, I have got things to blog...

**Carl Franklin:** Scott, it is server based or it is not server based?

**Scott Hanselman:** So, what it does is, because it's running on your local machine and it is using JavaScript it is storing everything in a JavaScript Array.

**Carl Franklin:** So it is not like a site that you have access to; that's why you have to use FolderShare to Sync it.

**Scott Hanselman:** Exactly. That's what is so brilliant about it You can actually use this for your home page. So, if you go to like [hanselman.com](http://hanselman.com), not [hanselman.com/blog](http://hanselman.com/blog) but just [hanselman.com](http://hanselman.com), my home page at the root of my domain is a tiddlywiki.

**Carl Franklin:** Okay.

**Scott Hanselman:** You know, what simpler way? It also has built in uploading where you can teach



it how to upload itself, so that you could use this to maintain an application or a personal home page.

**Carl Franklin:** Very cool.

**Scott Hanselman:** But I'm using it mostly for organization; for keeping track of my life. I keep trying to get into the whole One Note way of thinking, but it is just darn complicated. I am really finding that a wiki is what I needed. It is more free form and the fact that tiddlyWiki ran entirely in a browser had no service side, no components to install, it's just open a file up.

**Carl Franklin:** Very cool.

**Scott Hanselman:** Very cool stuff. That, alongside all of these different utilities to make a life a little faster is -- I don't know, I think I am reaching productivity Nirvana.

**Carl Franklin:** All right. Is that a show?

**Scott Hanselman:** I think that is

**Carl Franklin:** Alright Scott, thank you very much for sharing your list of stuff with us again this week and as for you dear listener, we will talk to you next week on Hanselminutes.