



LEWA Line Drops

A monthly publication for the Solidworks Users in the Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Midwest Area



Shortcuts: How to get from A to B without using a wormhole

OK, I admit, I'm giving away my geekiness by using the word "wormhole" in the title. I've just come off a seven hour marathon of ST:TNG (that's Star Trek: The Next Generation for you non-geeks) which is chock-full of wormholes and people trying to get from one place to another place faster. Then after my sixth Dr. Pepper and second bag of Doritos (yes, I'm using gratuitous product plugs to pay the bills here) it hit me. SolidWorks users are always trying to get from point A to point B without having to go through all the steps in between, or create a wormhole, just ask a SolidWorks user, we can probably draw one, we just can't make it, besides that's what the R&D shop is for. That and all the home projects the wife wants done. But I digress,

where was I again, ah yes shortcuts. That wonderful piece of machinery sitting before you, you know the one that catches all your crumbs from the morning donut, all your coffee spills, the hair that falls out from the tight deadlines (or wife's projects) yes, the keyboard is where your land of shortcuts awaits. SolidWorks comes with plenty of them, you can create your own



"SolidWorks users are always trying to get from point A to point B without having to go through all the steps in between..."

too! It's almost magical, until the "A" sticks from the coffee and crumbs and that presentation you've been working on has 80 pages of single spaced A's on it. But again, I digress.

Shortcuts, or "hotkeys" to some are speedy little commands you can type on the keyboard the allows you to not have to click through menus or search through lists of commands to make the software do something you want. It eliminates keystrokes and mouse-clicks and makes your life easier. That is, if you use them. I have to admit, I'm an Old School user of Solidworks. I tend to use the mouse, run through all the menu's looking for the commands, become frustrated when I realize SolidWorks switched where it was located in the last (cont'd page 2)

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Special points of interest:

- Got something to contribute, want to write an article, upset with what's in here, SPEAK UP!
- What do you want to see in LEWA Line drops. Drop us a line (pardon the pun)
- We still need ideas for our usergroup meetings, no idea too crazy, no subject off limits. Send us your ideas!

SolidWorks Standardization: Part 2 Automation

Welcome to the second installment of the Solidworks standardization series. Today I'll talk about automating SolidWorks functions to make your life easier, or so you might think. Automation of SolidWorks functions is a topic spoken in

whispers around the water cooler, a SolidWorks user's Holy Grail, creating the "Do My Job" button. Long dreamed of, sought by many, attempted by even more. Everyone is looking to have a "Do My Job" button, for the sake of space

and my lousy typing we'll call it the DMJ button. Where this whole thing starts is that my company is right now in the middle to restructuring how we use SolidWorks. Most of our users now have at least (con't page 2)



Wormholes...

(...cont'd from page 1)

version of the software and it is now hiding from me in some other menu that I don't have shown. This is where I should use shortcuts. There are quite a few of them and they are handy. I'll point two out right now Ctrl-C, or the copy function and Ctrl-V, the paste function. Don't laugh, a lot of people don't realize that these two even exist. I've had many a dumb-founded people stare at me like I've create cold fusion in a beer bottle when I pull those little doozies out. Teach everyone these two shortcuts!!! You can even create your own if Solidworks doesn't have them for you. It's as simple as going



into tools...customize with a drawing or part open. Then click on the keyboard tab and scroll thru what options can have a shortcut. Highlight that option and type in what key or leys you want to use for the shortcut. Click OK and it's done. Next here are a list of the one's currently created in SolidWorks. Use them well, and remember... choose wisely... (A free pop to anyone who tells me what movie that quote is from!)

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Automation con't...

(...cont'd from page 1)

4-5 years of SolidWorks experience, we all have done enough that we now know when we aren't doing things right, or we could be doing things better. We created a SolidWorks Standardization Committee (talked about last article) to re-organize and re-structure the way we did things and used SolidWorks. One of the many requests brought up by our users was automating repetitive tasks. Sounds like a good idea, sounds easy, right. WRONG! Digging deeper into what we thought would be a fairly simple, straight-forward process has now turned into a very muddy murky deal. Reminiscent of Dagobah's swamp from The Empire Strikes Back. Macros, VBA, API, database calls, linking linked databases, programmers, visual basic, visual basic.net, AAAARRRRGGGGG! All we want is a button that will do our job. Let you guys in on a little secret, there ain't no such thing! All this automation requires man-hours, programming skills, permission from the IT Dept to let you do this. OK from the Dept manager to spend the money to get it done if

"...spoken in whispers around the water cooler, a SolidWorks user's Holy Grail, creating the "Do My Job" button."

you can't do it in-house. Man hours from someone within the Dept to try and do this if you are doing it in-house. A VAR you can sucker into giving you free help when you can't figure out why it won't work. Being Old School, I sometimes wonder... Wouldn't it just be faster to do the 5 button clicks than spending four days and countless hours trying to create a macro or a VBA program to do the same thing? This is the Cad manager's and Dept Manager's razors edge to walk. What is reasonable for creating an automated task, what is achievable? What will this gain? By creating a macro that automatically creates a drawing and puts all the right call-outs, blocks and other drawing details in it, do you have to spend the same amount of time specially drawing a part so this will all happen. Where are the time savings? If we automate some-

thing so thoroughly, do we put our own jobs in danger because now they can have a monkey do it? The DMJ button strikes back! Right now our Dept is taking down a list of all the different DMJ buttons that everyone wants. We are ranking them for the top ten most wanted and then evaluating them for ease of creation, time savings and overall value to users. Not an easy task, everyone thinks theirs should be at the top of the list. How do you say no to someone, or politely tell them that they should just do their job, remember how to do the four button clicks instead of insisting on a DMJ button. Not easy, and not fun. But hey, who said this job is fun?

Now that we've got our top ten, what to do now? First, figure out if someone in the Dept. can create these. Some simple macros we can accomplish without much time spent on the task. For harder tasks, involving VBA apps or programming we lean on our Company's IT and Programming Dept. It's what they know and do for a living. We can meet with them, discuss what we want, set up a timeline and get a

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Wormholes...

		ctrl	shift	alt
a	toggle line/arc	make assy from part		
b		rebuild		
c	collapse tree	copy		
d		make drw from part		
e	select edges			
f	zoom to fit			
n		new		
o		open		
p		print		
q		forced reblid		
r		redraw		
s		save		
v	select vertices	paste		
w		open from web folder		
x		cut		
y		redo		
z	zoom out	undo	zoom in	
Spacebar	view orientation			
1		front		
2		back		
3		left		
4		right		
5		top		
6		bottom		
7		isometric		
8		normal to		
F1			what's this?	
F5	selection filter toolbar			
F6	selection filter			
arrow	rotate	pan	rotate 90 deg	rotate sc cntr

Automation con't...

(...con't from page 2)

project started. Downfalls to this, just like you, they are busy, you are sometimes not their number one customer, lack of knowledge with the software can lead to frustrating results with the programs that they've written. Currently we are sending someone within our Dept. to API courses to try and relieve some of the pressure off of our Pro-

gramming Dept and make our own more self reliant. We'll see how that goes.

It's a tough choice between making your job easier and spending a lot of time and effort to do so. Where's that fine line or payback when chasing after the DMJ button? Time saved versus time spent. The pay-offs can be enormous along with the pitfalls.

Next months article...Service Packs, or...If it's not broke should I fix it?



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Quote of the day:

“J.T. Walsh (Sgt. Maj. Dickerson): Do you see anything on this uniform indicating an officer?! What does three up and three down mean to you?!

Robin Williams

(Cronauer): End of an inning?”

-Good Morning Vietnam



The LEWA User group is a non-profit organization of Wisconsin and Minnesota area Solidworks professionals and VARs that meets 4 times a year to discuss and enlighten each other of the use of the Solidworks modeling software. During these meetings we have presentations by our local VARs and users on a multitude of Solidworks topics. Topics have ranged from API training to Photoworks, sheetmetal, and other interesting topics that cover the many facets of Solidworks. Our membership is also as varied as our topics. We have a wide membership area covering cities as far North as Rice Lake to South of the Winona area and as far west as Rochester. Our group's area covers almost two states and we have people who drive several hours to attend our meetings. Anyone and everyone are welcome! Come take in the food, prizes and fun atmosphere.

SolidWorks Tips & Tricks of the month

Tip of the month: SolidWorks stability and Outlook

Many of our area users are probably using both Microsoft Outlook and SolidWorks at the same time. Little known to everyone is that sometimes when SolidWorks starts to go flaky or seems to lock up without any explanation, this is being caused by Outlook (especially if your company has it set up over a network) Several reasons can be if you are a person who creates a personal folder within Outlook (.pst file) and this file starts reaching over 1Gig in size, this can cause stability problems not only in Outlook but also in SolidWorks. Another reason is if you are using SolidWorks or a PDM solution that is network based and your Outlook is network based, because the computer must check links out on the network for both programs, one program tends to come out on the short end of the stick, you guessed it, SolidWorks. So the next time SolidWorks is giving you grief, locked up or not responding, try shutting off your Outlook and give your Solidworks a couple of minutes to recover. Remember, it's better to wait a couple of minutes and save all the information then restart SolidWorks and redraw a couple hours worth of work.

Member Close-up: A LEWA profile

This is Brenda Halama, and I was born and raised in Arcadia, WI as one of 6 children. I attended UW-Stout for a degree in Packaging. While going to school, I completed a 7 month internship at Ashley Furniture, where I began using (SolidWorks, that is). I graduated with a BS degree last December, and started my first “real job” in January as a Packaging Engineer at Styrene Products, near Wausau. I am currently the only Packaging Engineer at the company, and take part in designing, customer service, sales, and most recently, creating the cut programs for our CNC hot-wire machines. I am one of two SolidWorks users at

Styrene Products.

In February of last year, my then fiancé and I purchased a building that would become the gym for Halama's Martial Arts. In the past year, we got hitched, bought a house in Rothschild, and adopted a doggie! (Obviously, that doesn't leave much room in the budget for any kids yet!) Projects on our 95 year old house tie up most of our weekends, and I take part in taekwondo classes during the week. I can't wait for summer, which will bring (hopefully) lots of camping and water skiing, as well as re-doing some of the flower gardens in our backyard!!



Brenda Halama: As beautiful as she is deadly. Be careful she can probably beat you up!

LEWA Member Survey:

Taking a break for this month on the surveys. More to come next month!

