# An OPCUG Product Review

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Computer Cleanup with PC Manager
by Alan German

At the Q&A session on November 2, 2022 (https://opcug.ca/qa_recordings/20221102_PowerPoint.pdf), Chris Taylor presented a review of the features of Microsoft's PC Manager.   Interestingly, one of Microsoft's promotional messages was that this software would provide a "one-click speed boost".   So, when I was thinking about the possibilities of cleaning up – and perhaps speeding up – an old desktop computer, I decided to apply the tools available in the current version of PC Manager to see what might be achieved.

One thing to note is that, while PC Manager is free to download and install (https://pcmanager.microsoft.com), the program is still positioned as a beta release.   This doesn't seem to affect the functionality of the software, but it does mean that there is little to no documentation of the various program features.   There is no help menu and, consequently, users must rely on the names of the various menu items, and whatever brief textual descriptions are provided on screen.
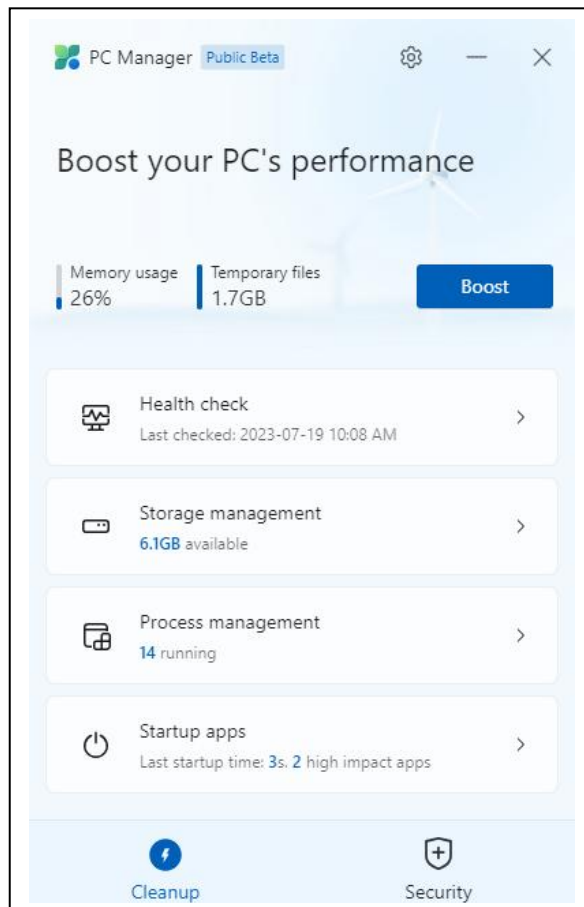
Running the program brings up the main window which, in my case, indicates that there is 1.7 GB taken up by temporary files, the implication being that these files can be removed to free up disk space.   Further, intuitively, it would appear that clicking on the big, blue *Boost* button would be the method by which this action could be accomplished.   And, indeed, pressing this button results in messages indicating "Cleaned 1.7 GB of temporary files" and "Temporary files 0 KB".

However, the clean-up process took less than two seconds which seems overly optimistic for the deletion of 1.7 GB of files, especially considering that nothing ended up in the recycle bin.   Nevertheless, viewing the properties of Drive C:, both before and after the cleanup process, showed an additional 1 GB of free space.   In contrast, disk space that could be recovered using the Disk Cleanup utility went down by only 10 MB, with 76 MB is regular files, and 221 MB in system files, still nominally available for cleanup.

So, the actual modifications made by the boost process are unclear; however, there are several other options for the recovery of disk space.   To see these we need to dive deeper into PC Manager's menu options.   Note that there are categories for *Health check*, *Storage management*, *Process management*, and *Startup apps*. The two icons for *Cleanup* and *Security* are actually tabs

where *Cleanup* loads the main program menu shown in the screenshot, and *Security* provides access to a second window with further options.

The *Health check* option displays disk space items that can be cleaned up by categories, e.g. Windows and browser caches, temporary files, etc. while *Storage management* offers a similar process, with a *Deep cleanup* option providing even more categories.   Both of these options free up some space on the system disk but running Disk Cleanup is still necessary to recover the disk space available from this separate utility.   The storage management screen also offers a *Manage large files* option to locate files of 10 MB to 1+ GB and display these in File Explorer for review and possible deletion.

Health check also performs some form of system scan and displays information on viruses, "potential issues", and a list of startup apps with the option of disabling any that are deemed unnecessary.   On my system, nothing was identified in the categories of viruses and potential issues so I have no idea what comprises the latter category.

Many of the remaining features of PC Manager are also available through other aspects of Windows itself. For example, *Storage management* has options for *Manage apps* that loads *Settings – Apps & features*, and *Storage sense* that loads *Settings – Storage – Configure Storage Sense*.   Reviewing installed applications can be useful to identify software that is no longer required and so can be uninstalled to recover addition disk space. And, for some users, the ability of Storage Sense to monitor disk space, and automatically delete temporary files, subject to user-defined rules, can be a useful strategy.

The *Process management* menu option lists "unused" processes that can be ended to "make your system run faster".   Review and use this list with caution as not all the entries are necessarily unused.   For example, on my system, PC Manager listed both GlassWire and Microsoft Word as possibilities to be shutdown.   Neither of these actions was advisable in my view.   GlassWire is a software firewall providing real-time system protection, and closing Word would have prevented me from completing this article.   (Of course, some readers might agree with PC Manager in the latter regard!)

The final option on the main menu is *Startup apps*.   This is a strange option given that, on face value, it should be a repetition of the *Startup apps to disable* from the *Health check* menu.   However, even stranger, there are some differences in the apps listed by the two options.   It is not clear why this should be so.

The *Security* tab provides a new window with a number of additional options.   A Scan button implements an immediate disk scan, using Windows Defender, over a range of locations, and reports the results (hopefully as "No threat found".)   *Windows Update* provides an opportunity to conduct an instant system update with a list of items that can be updated.

Default Browser settings offers to "Prevent other programs from modifying the default browser".   The *Change* menu offers to change the default browser to either Edge or Firefox so, if you are intent on using any other browser, this option is of no use.   A similar option offers *Taskbar Repair* which can enable News & interests, Edge, and Microsoft Store on the taskbar.   If, like me, you don't use any of these items, and have knowingly disabled them, the option to reinstate the icons on the taskbar is not really welcome.

Finally, there is a *Pop-up Management* option that says it will "Block pop-up windows in apps".   Since the only pop-ups that concern me are those that appear in my web browser, and I already have a blocker in place to prevent these, I didn't experiment with this PC Manager option.   There are no details of what the option does other than the note on the menu screen.

So, my conclusions with regard to the beta version of PC Manager are that one can remove multiple files to free up disk space but it is still necessary to run Disk Cleanup to recover additional space.   The option to locate large files,   possibly buried deep in the file system, and forgotten about (my case!), can be very useful. Similarly, reviewing startup apps, and installed apps in general, can identify software that either doesn't need

to be loaded on bootup, or that is no longer used and can be deleted in order to recover more disk space.   The links to Windows Defender and Windows Update are essentially redundant for most users who will have these packages running automatically.   Similarly,   the ability to retain Edge as the default browser, "repair" the taskbar, and block pop-ups may also be less than useful for many of us.

My bottom line was that by applying the various options to delete temporary files, and remove files and applications that were no longer required, recovered a total of 8 GB of disk space on my Windows system drive.   In addition, the boot time on my 12-year-old desktop decreased from 27 to 19 seconds providing a 30% boost.   So, while I could presumably have obtained the same results through the use of multiple operations, PC Manager provided a convenient mechanism for cleaning up my disk drive.

Bottom Line

PC Manager (Freeware)
Public Beta Version
Microsoft Corporation
https://pcmanager.microsoft.com