

By: ~~March 12, 2008~~, Editor, Software Reviews

## Quick Start Your Applications

### *Automatically start any group of apps*

Time is precious nowadays and the saying that "Time is money" has never been more present, so launching multiple applications at once sure comes in as a life saver in some cases. The days of opening the software you needed one at a time are long gone and now most power users launch groups of programs at once, with the minimum effort. Sure, all this is achieved through additional software that needs to be configured to open certain groups at specific user commands. As complicated as this may sound, the procedure is actually very simple. With Windows startup feature, all processes present in the folder will be opened the moment the operating system loads completely. However, this would pose another problem as load time increases exponentially. Luckily, there are solutions for setting a delay time for launching specific startup items ( [WinPatrol](#) is an expert at this). With Hydrogen: Quick Start, just like the name suggests, launching the apps you need can be a simple matter of creating groups and launching them automatically from a file on your hard drive. The application is specifically designed for this kind of job and brings some other features on the side, as well. Its price tag reads \$20, but you get the chance to evaluate it almost at its fullest (there are some limitations we are going to mention down the road). The interface is bells and whistles free, so the user can easily concentrate on the functional side of the application. Before starting working with Hydrogen: Quick Start, keep in mind that there is no Help file available, so your judgment and experience is all you have. On the upside, it does not take too long to make an idea on how it works. Hydrogen: Quick Start comes in very handy when you want to work with groups of applications rather than individual programs. The groups can be saved on your computer under QPS format and, once launched, all items included will respond according to the different configuration applied. So, it mostly resumes to creating a group and populate it with as many apps as you want, as well as making some customization on the way they start. By creating a new group and saving it on the hard disk, you are one step closer to adding the applications to be launched. Editing an entry is not at all a tough job, as Hydrogen: Quick Start provides simple to manage fields together with useful options. Thus, you can name the entry whatever you want, add the command (which is nothing but the path to the executable to be launched), add some arguments and set up the conditions. **Creating Tasks** Setting a bunch of applications to launch at once on your computer may bring your system to a crawl and for this Hydrogen: Quick Start makes available time delay options that permit holding their launch for a while. You get to set the number of days, hours, minutes, seconds and even milliseconds to pass before setting them in motion, giving the system a break to breathe. For making sure that the path is the right one, you can test the launch of the application on the spot. Additional conditions involve CPU state that can also be a trigger for the item. Regardless of the CPU condition you impose, mind that time delay condition will always have priority and the second condition depends on it. Related to CPU state condition, Quick Start can be configured to check the CPU at a specific time interval (999 milliseconds is the top limit) and to timeout at maximum 59 minutes. On the downside to setting up tasks in Hydrogen: Quick Start is the fact that, in order to activate OK button at the bottom of the screen, you will have to set all time delay options to zero. Leaving them blank will block all chances of getting the job done. So, if you want to set a time delay of just 3 seconds for some task, you will have to set Days, Hours, Minutes and Milliseconds to zero. **Additional functionality** Besides the group creation options, Hydrogen: Quick Start makes available a set of shortcuts for different utilities in Windows. Under System menu, you will find a quick way to access System Restore, Windows Update applet, Disk Tools (Disk Cleanup, Defragmenter and Disk Management), Internet Tools (Clear IE Branding, IE properties and Organize Favorites), Startup location access, System Configuration, Details and Monitoring. Unfortunately, not all these features work under Vista because Hydrogen: Quick Start needs an absolute path to get to them, and this is set for XP. Additional options included in the application permit the user to employ the Hibernation function under Windows XP with absolutely no problem as well as to lock the computer, log off the current user, reboot the computer or shut it down. The truth is that all these can be accessed directly from Windows, but having them all under a single menu surely makes things easier. For keeping a good tab on the disk, CPU, memory and network activity, the software puts at your disposal specific monitors recording

the aforementioned processes. The windows can be moved anywhere on the desktop and by default they are set to stay on top of all windows. As for the details presented, you will definitely have a clearer look on the CPU percentage currently in use, the amount of data read and written to disk, the physical and virtual memory available on the system, or the input/output of data through network activity. A very helpful option is the Quick Start menu, which is nothing more than a very fast way to launch an installed application. It is nothing fancy, but its functionality certainly is great. Once started, it is sufficient to type in the name of the application and you will be provided with a set of results and the complete path to the executable. The feature resembles Vista's search very much, with one dissimilarity: only apps available in Start menu are available for launching, and this includes everything present in there, meaning that Hydrogen: Quick Start does not segregate executables from help or readme files. Regarding the limitations of the trial version of the software, these will not let you deploy startup scripts to multiple Windows start locations (only Current User section is active), and you will not be able to deploy the script silently (completely automatic) or use the import function to add programs from Program Startup or Registry Run section. Probably one of the least important restrictions is the automatic updates function. All in all, the application makes for a very good program group launcher, but there are plenty of issues to correct. Registration reminder will constantly pop up when you least expect and on Vista it moved quite slow, not to mention that some system tools could not be accessed from the software (System Restore, Windows Update, Disk Defragmenter, Index Service). In addition, activating OK button under task editing window requires providing a value for all time delay options. **The Good** The application provides a fast way of launching groups of programs with little effort as well as individual software installed on the computer via Quick Start option. Adding the tasks is not a complicated job and you can also add arguments and set them a delayed launch. The list of additional options is extensive and configuring the program is a breeze. **The Bad** There is plenty to fix, especially for making it run smoothly on Vista as well. Adding a task in the group requires defining a value for all Time Delay options, otherwise OK button will remain inactive. Evaluation version comes with several important limitations and even if there is no time restriction for using it, registration screen pop up makes it extremely hard to use on a regular basis, especially with it popping up even if the app is minimized to system tray. Quick Start feature indexes all elements available in Windows Start menu, regardless of their extension. It would be much better if only application launching elements would be available. **The Truth** Hydrogen: Quick Start is a nice program launcher, but still there is room for improvement. Creating projects containing groups of programs is a walk in the park, but falls short in some areas. In Vista environment, it fails to load all the tools it provides shortcuts to and there are some important restrictions in the evaluation version. On the other hand, the application supports time delay for launching the group of software, which is an extraordinary feature. Bottom line is that Hydrogen: Quick Start needs some brushing up in order to rise to its price and run smoothly on both Vista and XP. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*