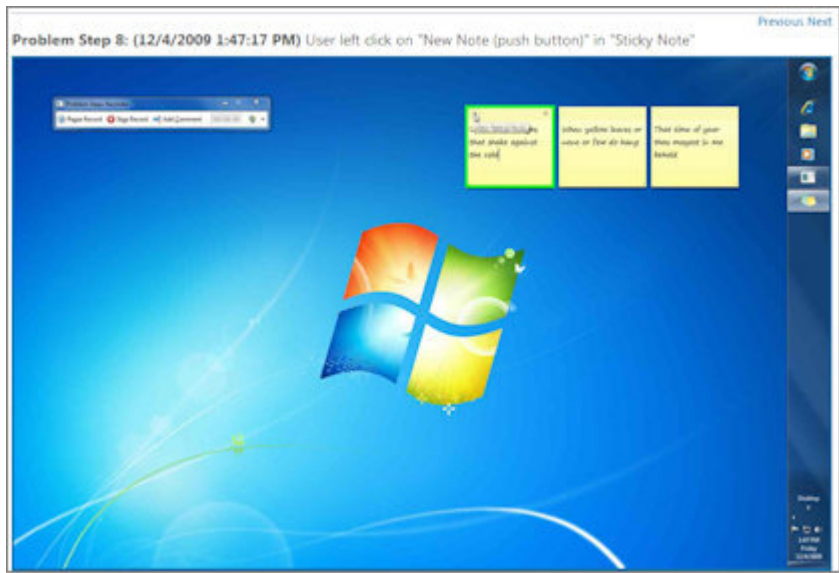**Win7's troubleshooter is a boon to tech support**

By By Michael Lasky

One of Win7's handiest new tools is the Problem Steps Recorder, a sort of help-desk aphrodisiac. When something goes haywire with your PC, tech-support staff will usually ask you to reproduce the specific sequence of actions that led to the problem. But trying to explain what happened — and when it happened — can be difficult.

Problem Steps Recorder to the rescue! To launch the utility, press the Windows key, type **psr,** and press Enter. Click Start Recorder and redo the steps that led to the problem. PSR records every mouse click and key press. It also creates screen shots and zips the lot into an MHTML file you can send as an e-mail attachment to tech support. (See Figure 1.)
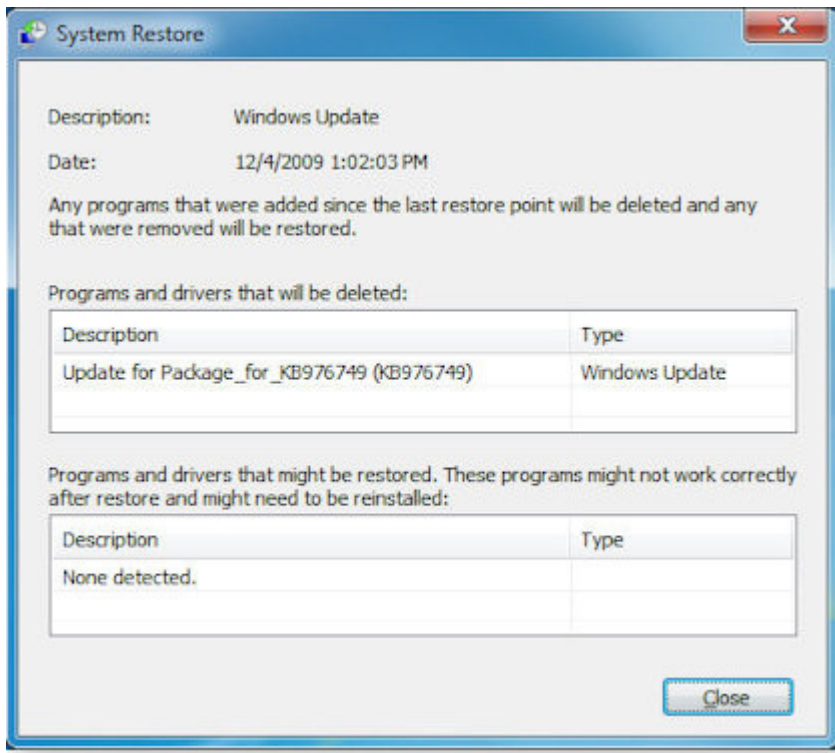
Figure 1. Windows 7's Problem Steps Recorder allows support staff to review the actions causing a PC glitch.

After the techs open the MHTML file, they can determine exactly what's going on with your system.

Preview the changes before restoring your PC

The venerable System Restore app gets a welcome makeover in Win7. The XP and Vista versions of System Restore let you pick a restore point but give no indication of the apps, drivers, and settings that would be affected by the restoration's changes. By contrast, Windows 7's System Restore adds a new index reader that lets you see exactly what will be changed if you revert to a specific restore point.

To use this feature, press the Windows key, type **system restore,** and press Enter. When the applet opens, select a restore point and click **Scan for affected programs.** A list of the files that will be deleted, added, or changed by the action will be displayed for you to review before committing to that particular restore point. (See Figure 2; note that in this example, the restore point would affect no files or programs.)

Figure 2. Prior to applying a restore point, preview the changes that System Restore will make to files and programs.