ICONICS – Troubleshooting Issues Using MS Problem Steps Recorder

APPLICATIONS NOTE

April 2010

Description: Guide to using the Problem Steps Recorder to quickly identify problems and reduce time spent with technical support.
OS Requirement: Windows 7
General Requirement: N/A

Introduction

Solving problems for a remote user can be very difficult since you can't actually see what's happening on the remote system. The Problem Steps Recorder (PSR) in the Windows 7 operating system is a feature that enables users to record their interactions with an application and provide a detailed screen-by-screen view with accompanying information. This tool can help technical support address your issues quickly and more accurately.

In short, PSR is a recording application you can use to record any input you make to your Windows 7 machine (mouse clicks and keyboard presses) along with screenshots of every step. After recording the steps, PSR generates an HTML slideshow of all your actions complete with a description of the steps taken. It actually is an XML page documenting each step of the user's actions complete with a screenshot with the item highlighted. You can view the report as is, as a slideshow, or even dig into the raw XML to expose greater detail like the coordinates of the mouse during a particular step.

This tool is great for developers and technical support so they can see what an end-user is doing without requiring them to be present during the event.

Using the Windows 7 Problem Steps Recorder

To open the Problems Steps Recorder, follow the steps below:

1. Click on the "Start" button
2. In the search dialog type "psr" and press "Enter". This will open a new toolbar that appears on the desktop as shown in Figure 1.

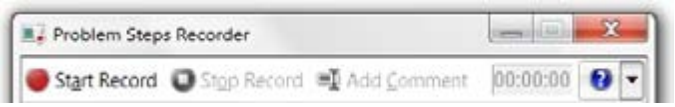

Figure 1 - Problem Steps Recorder

3. Click "Start Record" to begin recording, then walk through the steps to reproduce the issue or behavior you want to report.
4. During the recording you can click on the "Add Comment" button to focus attention on something. Screenshots are only taken when mouse clicks occur or when using this "Add Comment" feature, therefore, use the "Add Comment" button when you want to take a picture of something that doesn't necessarily need a mouse click.
5. When you are done reproducing the issue, click the "Stop Record" button on the toolbar.
6. You will be asked to pick a name and a location for a zip file. This is the file that contains the steps and screenshots that you took while recording.

   NOTE: ICONICS blocks zip files attached to emails. If you want to email the zip file, please change the extension to .zzz.

7. Email the output file to technical support or whoever is helping you with your problem.

   NOTE: Sometimes the files generated by PSR are too large to email. If this is the case you can ask technical support for instructions on using the FTP site.

8. By default, PSR will record only 25 screenshots, but this can be changed. Click on the small down-arrow next to the help icon, and then select Settings

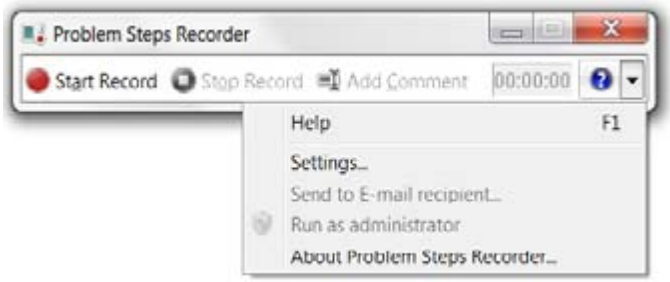

Figure 2 - Problem Step Recorder Settings Option

9. In the Settings dialog, you can change the "Number of recent screen capture to store" as you wish.

Figure 3 - Problem Steps Recorder Settings