And the Winners Are...

By Michael Totty

Computer systems are naturally faulty. They'll burn along just fine and then unaccountably slow down, freeze up or stop working altogether. Finding the cause of some unexplained problem is difficult and time-consuming, especially with complex systems in real-life settings.

Brian Crowther, a team of engineers at San Microsystems Inc., have devised a way to diagnose malfunctioning software quickly and while it's still doing its work. While traditional trouble-shooting programs can take several days of testing to locate a problem, the new technology, called Extrace, is able to track down problems quickly and relatively easily, even if the cause is buried deep in a complex computer system.

The Extrace trouble-shooting software from San was chosen as this year's Gold winner in the Wall Street Journal's 2004 Technology Innovation Awards contest, the second time in three years that a San entry has won the top award. The panel of judges, representing industry as well as research and academic institutions, selected Gold, Silver and Bronze award winners and cited one technology for an Honorable Mention.

For the award, now in its third year, judges considered novel technologies from around the world in several categories: robotics, vision and medical devices, wireless, security, consumer electronics, semiconductors and others.

Markus Wells, the Wall Street Journal's former technology writer, served on the judges panel. Extrace is a powerful tool for troubleshooting software problems, he notes. It is useful for software developers, as well as for software buyers.
How to Be a Smart Innovator
Nicholas Carr talks about the right way to be creative—and the wrong way