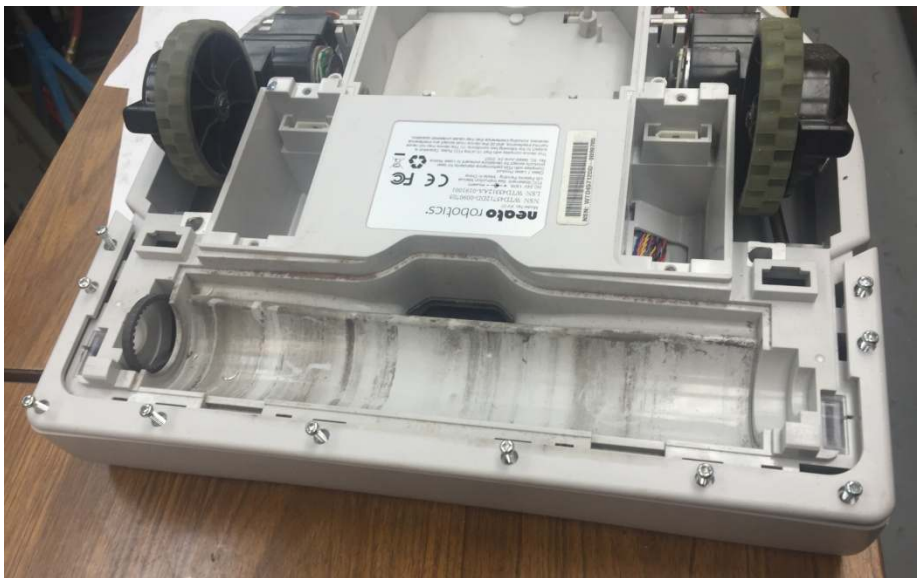
Taking Apart Complex Appliances So They can Go Back Together, Version 1.2

By R. G. Sparber

Notice: None of the following is earth shaking. Yet it took me a little while to figure out so I thought I would share it with the community.

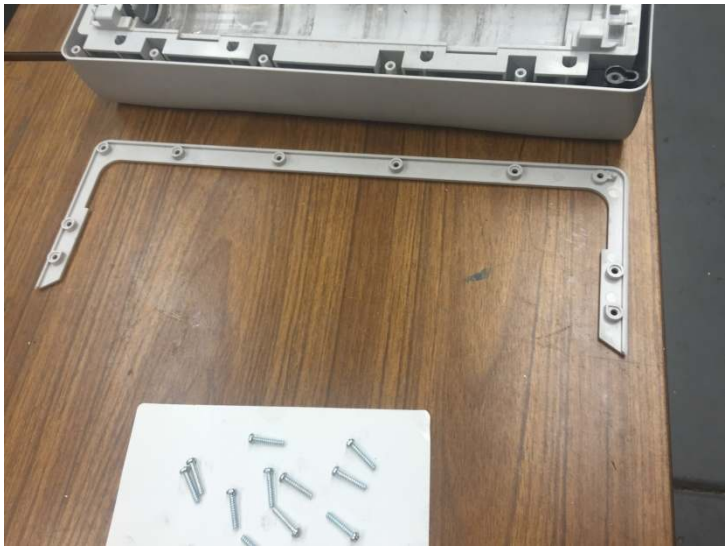


Recently my prized and very expensive robotic vacuum cleaner started to act funny. A search of the web turned up a possible fix. This fix involved accessing the circuit board buried deep inside "Rosie".

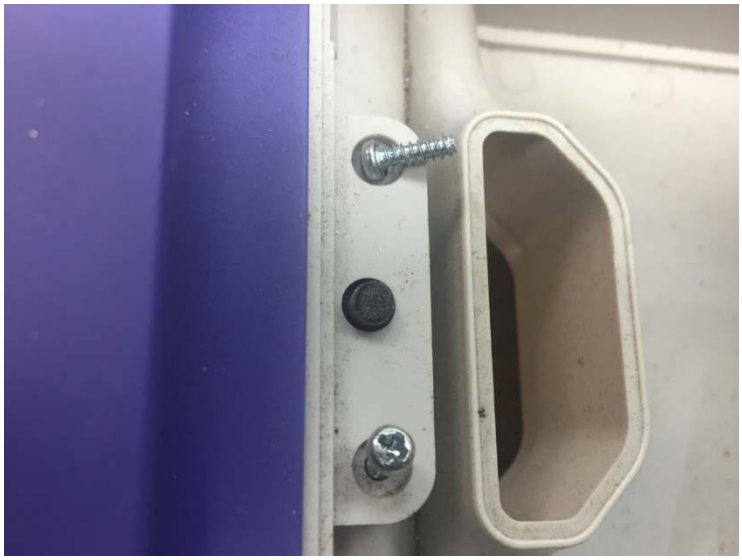
No big deal. Pulled out my electric screwdriver and started backing out screws. But wait… not all screws were the same length. Upon assembly, I had to worry about too long a screw breaking some plastic and too short a screw not holding well enough. Time to slow down a little and solve this problem.

I needed a solution that would not get in my way yet would keep the various sized screws separate and identified.

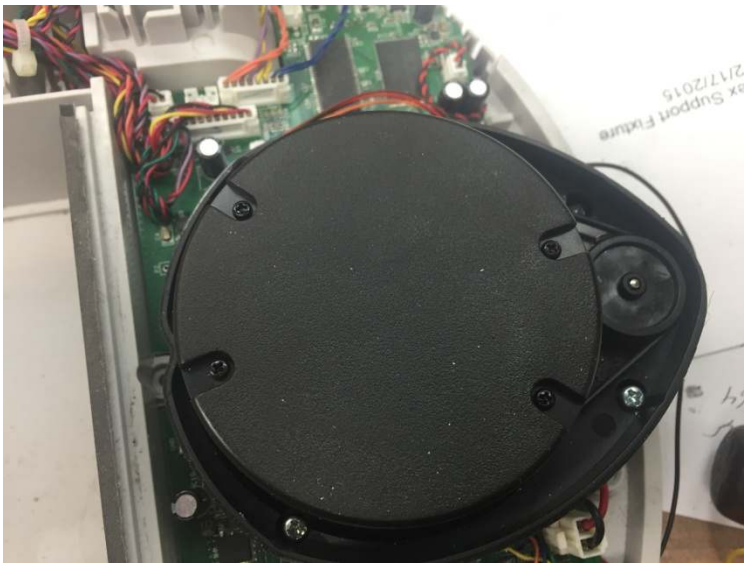
[1] You are free to distribute this article but not to change it.



To prevent screws from rolling away, I put down a large sticky shipping label. Then just dropped screws on it and they stayed put. I can even pick up the label and move it around without losing any screws.



I came across two screws that were shorter than the first batch. First I put a black tick mark at each hole and then put these screws on a new shipping label. Finally, I put a tick mark on that label.



These screws were of a third length. I wanted to put two tick marks next to each hole but my black marker would not be visible on the black plastic. So instead, I wrote a cryptic note on another shipping label and dropped these screws on it.

Reassembly was fast, error free, and easy.

Alternate Ideas from Readers

Chris Peterson wrote:

I train technicians (mechanics). One of the best methods I've seen is to take a piece of cardboard, draw a crude picture of the part you're removing with the screw holes noted, and shove the screws through the cardboard in the location from whence they were removed. Not only does it hold the screws but it also keeps them organized in the place where they were removed. A higher tech method would be to take a digital picture, print it out and tape or glue it to a piece of cardboard and shove the screws through the cardboard in the locations from where they were removed.

I've also used muffin/cupcake pans to organize parts/screws. All the screws from one board go in one muffin hole. All the screws from the next part go in the next hole, etc…

Peter Bready wrote:

I addressed this same problem from a different direction. Took a picture of the appliance [or the "layer" I had reached].Printed the shot. Pierced the print at each screw location etc. Pushed each screw through the guide hole, as I removed it from the appliance. It's not a brilliant method, but it gives some comfort.

Richard sent in:

My technique for keeping dozens of screws in order was to reinsert the screws back into the hole after the cover was removed. I would reinsert it by only a couple of threads. It took longer to get the job done that way but in my case it would take longer when I realized I had a screw left over after putting on all of the covers. It meant going back into the machine to remove all of the covers to find the hole for the extra screw.

I welcome your comments and questions.

If you wish to be contacted each time I publish an article, email me with just "Article Alias" in the subject line.

Rick Sparber
Rgsparber.ha@gmail.com
Rick.Sparber.org