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*Save Time... Save Money... Save Your Sanity*

# **7 Things You Must Know About Computers**

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## Introduction

The personal computer has been a part of all of our home, business and school lives since the early 1980s. Most young business professionals today have never known life without the PC. But despite growing up with the personal computer many of us are still puzzled by this essential tool we use everyday at work and in our homes.

I am writing this report to help make the personal computer and the devices it uses easier to understand.

This report will cover important things you need to know. If you follow these 7 Things you will be on the road to solving some of the most *common computers problems* yourself or you will be better prepared to discuss your computer problems with a computer service technician. You will be able to jump start troubleshooting your computer by calling on the computer self help desk.

Who will benefit from this report? Small businesses, home business owners, traveling sales people, seniors or anyone that uses a computer. This report is not intended for IT professionals, computer geeks, or anyone seeking a career in computer science. Of course, those folks are more than welcome to read this report, but you may find that you will be a little disturbed by the lack of computer lingo or geek speak.

## **The Big Secret of the Geeks**

Knowing this will SAVE YOU A TON OF CASH!!

Computer Geeks really don't want to spend a whole lot of time fixing what they consider small problems. They are annoyed by you and your lack of knowledge.

They think you are an idiot... I'm not kidding they do.

I have heard this many times over my career when working on the helpdesk. The computer geek gets off the phone with the customer who is having a simple problem that is resulting in personal and emotional melt down.

The customer is put on hold...

AND...

The Geek then announces to the rest of the crew that I've got a code ID 10 T.

Thats right...

Put the code ID + 10 + T together... they just called you and IDIOT!

Cha Ching!!!

Get out your wallet....

They are ready to charge you Big Time and the only problem is a dead battery in your wireless mouse. The computer shark is getting ready to swim and take advantage of you!

If the customer that the Geek Desk just called an "IT10T" had a few basic troubleshooting skills they would have avoided their stress and replaced the

battery rather than opening themselves up for a sales opportunity for a new computer.

So here is the BIG SECRET!

Although the Computer Geeks on the nerd squad you called are annoyed by you and your lack of understanding, they see your small computer problems as...

A BIG SALES OPPORTUNITY!!

A 50-cent problem with a wireless mouse or a loose power cord gets the Nerd Squad in the door with an opportunity to give you a sales pitch.

[Watch this investigative video](#) by the Canadian Broadcasting Company where the computer sharks are swimming around the bait.

This is where I need to discuss the term geek. The term geek has both positive and negative connotations. It seems that marketing people today are trying to upgrade the image of the geek. There is an effort underway to give the term a more positive spin as more and more computer service companies have attached themselves to the term geek in the names of their company. And to a degree it is working. Instead of a nerdy loser, the public perception is changing to see a geek as someone who has some kind of super knowledge of all things electronic.

Well there is a grain of truth to that...

However, for the most part this a marketing technique to make consumers trust what the technician/sales person is telling them.

Well... OK Robb what about you?

I am not a computer geek. I am a computer technician or consultant. I do not try to cultivate the image of a geek nor do I participate in their culture. I do

not isolate myself from my customers who use computer technology in their business. My goal is serving people who use technology not to the technology. There is a huge distinction between a computer geek and a computer technician who is a consultant. The geek relates to the technology more where as the technician who is a consultant relates to the user of the technology.

Do I dislike geeks?

No. I know plenty of them and most are fine honest people.

There is a marketing image of a computer geek who works for one of those big boxes stores. This image of the computer geek has him dressing up like one of the blues brothers and driving around in a cute little car. He may know something about computes but he has another mission.

His mission is to earn a commission.

## Computer Attitude

In 1995 I went to work for a temp agency. My objective at the time was to take a temporary job doing data entry while I looked for corporate sales job.

At the time I had just left my job as a PE teacher. I held a teaching degree and spent several unsatisfying years as a public school teacher. However, the teaching profession and my dad introduced me to the PC.

I was first introduced to the personal computer by my dad who gave me a Commodore VIC 20 for my birthday in the early 80's. Around the same time I was given an apple computer to use in my classroom with some software to keep track of student grades, create tests and allow students to play educational games. The basic computer and word processing skills I learned eventually helped me get an assignment with the temp agency at a large data publishing company in Denver, Colorado.

I was like most people when I was teaching. If the software froze up, the floppy drive wouldn't work or the computer would not start... I just cursed the miserable thing and asked my boss, the principal, to get the thing repaired. Then several weeks later some overworked technician from the school district would show up and push the power cord in tighter at the back of the computer and stomp out with a few curse words under his breath and aggravated expression on his face.

So because of my *I don't know anything about computers attitude* there I sat with no computer for a month and all it needed was the power cord pushed into the back of the computer. Something I could have fixed myself if I hadn't had an *I don't know anything attitude* toward the computer.

How many times have I heard that phrase in my career as a computer support technician. Many more times than I can count. And of course, just like the school district computer geek that would come to my classroom, I am now the one to walk-a-way uttering a few choice curse words under my breath.

I worked on a corporate help desk for many years and I can tell you that simple common computer problems like loose power cords account for the vast majority of help desk calls. And the vast majority of customer service calls I make as an independent computer consultant are also for simple common computer problems.

If you run a business you need to understand that changing *I don't know anything about computers* attitude is essential for saving time and money and reducing productivity losses. You must change this attitude for yourself and your employees to get the Time=Money equation to add up dollars saved on your bottom line.

## Google It

This is one of the biggest secrets computer geeks would like to keep to themselves. Your computer geek does not know everything about computers and the problems you are having with your computers and related equipment. Most geeks don't want to admit, even to themselves, how often they go to Google to resolve computer issues even apparently simple ones.

So what makes them so different from you that it allows them to charge you a nice chunk of change for problems you could find solutions to yourself? The answer once again is found in attitude. Most computer geeks are cocky little b@\$%#!

They think they know everything there is to know about computers. Therefore, they have no fear of them and they are willing to try and do whatever is necessary to get them fixed. Some how, some way, they will find an answer no matter how difficult or how simple the problem. They love computers more than they love their own mother.

Revealing this will probably cause me to have my computer “Geek License” revoked. But I really don't care because your business is losing time and money to your professional computer geek by letting them do what you could do for yourself.

Sure you do need them on occasion, but not for the simple stuff...

That you can do yourself.

So, the next time you get some error message pop up on your computer start the troubleshooting process and Google It!

## **Buying the Right Computer**

Many computer computer problems start when you buy your computer. I have responded to countless computer repair requests where the problem started from the moment the computer was pulled out of the box, the user or another computer tech has configure the operating system and installed the software. Right off the computer is running slow and the software applications take forever to open.

Now certainly there may be some fine tuning we can do to the computer to speed things up, but when we look closely at the specifications for some of the software that has been installed, we discover that the installed memory or the speed of the processor does not meet the minimum requirements of the software manufacture. Or there just isn't enough hard drive space to store all of your documents, photos, music, videos and run your software.

It is important to take some time to look over the installation guide for the software you you own or are planning to install on the computer you are considering. This will allow you to purchase the correct computer and avoid several calls to the help desk.

You must know the specific requirements of software that you will install before you purchase a computer. You can find your software's specifications in the manual or documentation that came with the software installation disk(s).

But if you are like most people, you have misplaced those documents or thrown them away. If that is the case look at the software CD and you will usually find a website for the manufacture where you will be able to located the software specifications.

If you have an IT consultant call them and pay them for an hour of phone consulting before purchasing any new equipment. I charge may of my clients by the hour. My clients have a thicker wallets at the end of the day if they bring me in for short consultation to assist them with buying their new PC or

Laptop. Unfortunately many clients bring me in after they have purchased the wrong equipment and I have to spend more hours troubleshooting problems because they have the wrong computer for their needs.

## **How You Can Be Virus Free**

In addition to simple problems, viruses issues are also close to the top of the list of most computer services calls. For some computer technicians, it may be ranked as the number one generator of customer service calls. And the computer sharks use this to their advantage and your disadvantage.

Have you ever wondered why you have had your technician install a firewall, anti-virus software, anti-ad-ware programs and you still have had some or all of your computers become sick with a virus?

I'll start my answer to this question by telling you that I have not had a virus infect any of my personal or work computers under my control for more than 10 years at the writing of this report in 2008. As long as I am the only one logging on to the computer, configuring the computer and using the computer I am virus Free.

The user of a computer is the one that is most likely to open the door to the virus. When a computer is set up with the anti-virus software, a firewall and ad-ware tools it is still vulnerable to a virus attack by the actions of the user.

Too many users feel the anti-virus tools alone gives them all of protection they need.

Then what's the problem? Why do some viruses sneak through? There a few of answers to these questions. Anti-Virus software is only as good as the latest virus definition created by the manufacture of the anti-virus software you have installed. If your anti-virus software is out of date by even a day a virus can get through.

Another issue is that the actions taken by some computer users is out of the control of the anti-virus software. In many cases a virus is launched on you computer when a SPAMMER tricks you into clicking on a link on a web page or email that invites the virus onto your computer.

Sometimes your anti-viruses software will warn you that something is about to be installed on your machine...

However a clever SPAMMER will trick you by making it appear that the attachment was sent to you from someone you know. Most users have been warned. Many IT consultants or help desk personnel have warned computer users to only open attachments from people they know, but they have not done a very good job of educating us about the tricks SPAMMERS and hackers use to deceive you.

Why haven't your IT pros educated you better about viruses? Are they just evil and don't mind a few viruses taking over your computer so they can run up some nice service charges removing the viruses? No I don't think so. I am an IT pro myself, I do not know of any professionals that would allow this to happen.

The reality is most computer geeks are not very good communicators or teachers. They tend to move the user aside, fix the problem then move on to the next client or project with very little explanation of what happened or why. Unfortunately not educating you continues to leave you vulnerable.

You must look at every email and every web page with a critical eye and then make sure that you have all of the anti-virus, anti-phishing and firewall tools configured and up-to-date.

It is also very critical that you control who uses your computers and how they use them. This is especially true if you have children at home. And I beg you to heed this warning. Never... ever... ever let your children use any computer in your home that you use for your business. You can't afford to have a computer that puts money in your pocket put out of commission because junior unknowingly clicked on a cute little picture of a butterfly that launches a huge computer nasty.

## **Computer Shark Replant - Learn to Speak Some Geek**

It is essential that you know some basic computer terminology and skills. This will help you communicate with computer technicians when you need to resolve problems and also save you money when dealing with the computer sharks. Computer sharks are computer repair companies consultants and others who will sell you unnecessary computer equipment and services.

OK...

I'm not trying to be a sexist here, but I'm going to use an example from my own life to illustrate why you must know how to speak just a little geek. When it comes to car repairs in our house, my wife and daughter insist that I take in the family cars in for service and repairs. Or if they take the car in for services they always call me to verify with shop what services will be performed on our vehicle. Do men have some special genetic make up that allows them to understand cars better than women.

NO!!!

It is just that traditionally as boys grow up they tend to be more fascinated by cars and spend a lot more time learning the language of cars and basic automotive mechanical skills. My dad and I spent hours together changing the oil, rebuilding engines and doing tune-ups. I can speak the language of cars and it is easier for me to determine if we are being sold parts and services for our cars that we really don't need.

It is no different with computers...

If you know some of the basics it is much less likely that computer sharks will take advantage of you. If you have a technician come to your home or business and they start saying things like “the processor is fried” or its “DOA.” ... better phrased as DOMA dead on my arrival now get out your

check book! You can start questioning the technician when you know a few basics.

When you talk a bit of the language you can ask for more details about motherboards and power supplies?

Start speaking basic geek and the technician is not in the same position of power and must start looking at the actual problem rather than jumping right into a sales pitch for a new computer. You will save a ton of cash just asking a couple of simple questions based on your knowledge of a few basic terms.

A bad power supply costs around 35 to 75-dollars for a typical PC. A motherboard runs around the same price and a new computer will cost you \$600 or \$700 dollars. As you can see knowing the right question to ask can save you a ton of cash.

## Who Should Do Your Data Recovery?

Do you know what happens to recovered data on your computers. Here is the scenario...

You are getting the blue screen of death when you start your computer. This is the point when you go into a bit of a panic because all of your important data for your business is stored on the computer. You may have everything from your business tax files to your kid's 1st birthday pictures stored on you PC.

At this point your heart is in your stomach. So you call you computer consultant let and him/her know about the computer problem. They are on the way to help and recover the data. Here is a question you must ask yourself before they arrive. Do I trust my computer consultant and even if I do what happens with the data they are going to recover from my computer?

Once the technician arrives, they may determine that the operating system has failed and can't be recovered, so your data must be recovered from the hard drive for safe keeping until the operating system repair is completed. The data will be transfered back if necessary to the hard drive once the Windows operating system is re-installed. You must understand that when data is recovered from a hard drive it will be copied to the computer technicians computer or their portable hard drive.

Quiz your computer technician before they start to do the repair about how he plans to recover the data and what will happed to the data once the data is restored to your computer. A reputable computer repair company will have a privacy policy and written assurances that they will not retain any recovered data. Make sure you get the data recovery policy in writing from the tech before any work begins as sensitive data like bank account numbers will be copied to the technicians equipment.

If you are a bit paranoid, like me, you may want to consider learning how to

back up and restore your critical data yourself. For time sake you may want the computer service company to re-install the operating system and then you can restore the data after they are done.

You will probably want to use one of the online data backup services such as Mozy. There is a built in back-up utility for Windows XP or Vista that can be used to backup your data regularly to a USB external hard drive or another computer. What ever backup method you chose to run yourself you can leave the re-installation or repair of the operating system to the computer service company and keep you private data private.