

Radio Days – 2012-05-26

Tip of the Week – Festina Lente II

For those who cannot remember back a few short weeks I repeat that this Latin tag means *Hasten Slowly*. It can also mean *More Haste, Less Speed*.

The importance of this was brought home to me twice during this last week. The first time was when a client could not get onto the internet. She tried to get on by opening her browser, which did not work. She then opened another copy of her browser and again got the same result. After repeating this a few more times she rang me.

I asked her to close all these windows so that she could see her desktop. This, of course, led to the obvious question: *What is my desktop?* I explained that your desktop is the screen which you see when you first start your computer.

She then saw her desktop and realised that the reason that she had not been able to get onto the internet was that she had not connected to the internet! She then realised that, because she had a wireless internet connection using the mobile phone network, she had to click on *Connect* each time that she wanted to use the internet. Also, because she had a Hotmail email account, this meant that she could not access her emails until she had connected to the internet.

A similar thing happened with another client. She, too, was unable to get onto the internet. In her case the connection was broadband so there was no need to connect to a wireless internet connection. Still, she could not get onto the internet. I tried to repeat the problem to no avail. My client was mystified. To find out just what was happening I turned her computer off then asked her to start it up.

Everything went as she had described: her internet did not work! I then realised that she was starting her browser before Windows had completed its boot process. This meant that the processes which were needed to access the internet had not started so her web browser could not work. To solve the problem I asked her to close her computer down then start it up again. This time I asked her to count to one hundred before starting the internet. All was well.

Please remember the old adage: *The Hurrieder I Go The Behinder I Get*.

Keep Up To Date

Again, this week's admonition to keep up to date is yet another reminder of the perils of falling too far behind the technology curve. I have spoken in the past of the problems faced by a client who was using Windows 98 and the year 2000 version of QuickBooks. This client had great difficulty in a number of areas:

- Finding a way to copy her QuickBooks data file off her old hard disc. This difficulty was caused by a number of factors which came together to make Murphy's Law look like a walk in the park. The first problem was that Windows 98 came out before the USB port so no USB device would work on her computer unless it was a very old one which came with its own CD with a driver. She did have a CD burner but no CD burning program and I could not find a free download from the internet which would work on Windows 98. Eventually I found an old external hard disc with a CD which we could use to copy her old QuickBooks data file.
- The new versions of QuickBooks which were needed to upgrade her data file would not work under Windows 98: for that we needed a Windows XP computer. Fortunately I had one of those so I went away to do the upgrade on my computer.
- The final insult was that her new computer used Windows 7. This had a completely new interface and she was having great difficulty in adapting to the new ways of this new operating system.

I was reminded of all this when I had to copy all the data from a client's old computer and install their new computer in its place. All went well until it came time to unplug all the wires from the back of their old computer. There was a phone cord plugged into an old analogue modem which looked as though it had been used for dial-up internet access in the dark ages before broadband.

This turned out to be the wrong assumption.

The following day I got a call asking for urgent help as they could not pay their employees. We had a few hours before the banking deadline so I checked with all the local computer suppliers if they had an analogue modem. It had be one which would attach using the USB port because their old modem was not compatible with their new computer. There were no people who used analogue modems so none of the computer shops had any modem which would work.

This was yet another example of the dreaded Murphy in action!

As the old computer had replaced another employee's computer it was still available. However (and isn't there always a *however*?) this appeared not to be able to connect to the bank's computer despite having connected to the bank's computer just a few hours before so the whole matter was a mystery. After some immoderate swearing a very helpful person from the bank's support desk was able to pinpoint the problem: I had changed the computer's name and the bank's program was unable to cope. One little change to a configuration file and all was well: the employees were paid and the world did not end on that occasion. There were a number of employees who were sweating on the results of this whole exercise: some were not sure if they would be paid and some were not sure what the others would do to them if the pays had not gone through!

All of this highlights the need to keep within cooe of the technology curve as it disappears over the horizon in front of you.

The solution to this particular problem is simple: the bank has an online banking system for businesses which my client is able to use. It will take some weeks to switch over to the new system so, in the meantime, they will have to use this week's kludge to keep making online payments but, as soon as the new system is in place, the old system can be retired to the graveyard for outdated technology.

The solution to the more general problem of not keeping up with technology as it disappears relentlessly over the horizon is in your hands: do not let yourself, or your business, get too far behind the curve as playing catch-up is not nearly as easy as it appears in the movies. But then, nothing is as easy as it appears in the movies!

Aren't you glad that you are keeping up with the latest in technology?

Further Information

Nothing this week