

Radio Days – 2012-08-11

Tip of the Week – Which Mobile Phone Network?

During the week I was asked which was the best mobile phone network. For obvious reasons I could not answer this question. There are a number of reasons for not being able to answer a question like *Which is the best ...?*. The reasons may vary, but here are some of them:

- What criterion or criteria are you using to determine what is good and what is not?
- What tools or other equipment do you need to check each of your criteria?
- How should the results of the tests be weighted?
- Are there any absolute must-haves which override everything else?
- Why are you asking this particular question?
- Why do you need me to answer a question which you can answer yourself?

I asked my caller some of these questions, but he was unable to answer any of them so I am left with the belief that he really did not know what he wanted to know. Because all this was so vague I made the following suggestions so that he could work out the answers himself:

- Write down all the questions that he wanted answered
- Rank the questions and their answers in order of importance.

Then, for each of the networks that he wanted to evaluate:

- Buy a SIM for that network
- Buy some time for that SIM then travel to all the places that he wanted to check.
- Write down the answers to all his questions.

Then, at the end, evaluate the answers for each of the networks then, finally, choose the best network *for his purposes*.

One of the problems with answering a *What is the best ... ?* question is that there is no best of anything. This is why we have so much choice in this world. Some people would say that the fast-food industry is the worst thing to hit our streets in decades; there are others who believe that the definition of a balanced diet is a different fast-food serving at every meal.

I will probably stick with my current mobile phone provider because the devil you know is better than the devil you don't.

What do you think?

Free Clean-up Programs

Every day there seems to be a new program which will offer to clean your computer of many different types of junk which are not needed. Often these programs are ones which you have downloaded without thinking and installed because there was a button which said *Click here*. When you see this sort of suggestion (or even command) I would like it, if you could for just one moment, engage the suspicion button in your mind. There are all sorts of problems which you can cause for yourself if you click on the wrong button.

This was brought to my attention during the week by a client who was downloading a program as we were speaking on the phone. His computer was doing some unexpected things so I asked him to run a complete scan using his anti-virus program. He was using AVG Free and, from the front page, started a complete scan to see if there were any viruses still present. There were none.

After all this, because I was worried that there were still some problems with his computer, I asked him to download Malwarebytes to perform another check for any malware. There are two versions of Malwarebytes: the free version is what I wanted and it too did not discover any problems with his computer. This seems to suggest that his computer is completely free of any viruses or other sorts of malware. This is an excellent state for a computer!

He opened AVG to do one last check. There he saw a button called *PC Analyser*. He clicked on this to start a check of the computer for problems. He ran its four checks:

- Registry errors
- Junk files
- Fragmentation
- Broken shortcuts.

This showed that there were errors which needed fixing. He downloaded the free one-time fix program and ran the scan then completed the recommended fixes. After running these fixes he discovered that his computer was unstable. This meant that it would freeze at odd moments and that a number of things just seemed not to work.

The only way that I know how to fix these errors is to take the computer to a repair shop where the people who work there know how to fix errors in Windows. Fixing this sort of error is a skill which I do not possess, so outsourcing the problem is the only effective way to get a computer working.

AVG is an anti-virus program. It is a useful one, but I prefer Microsoft Security Essentials. There are a number of reasons for this:

- It does not need updating every year
- It is free
- It seems to have an excellent detection rate
- It seems to have a very low false positive rate

There are two websites which do independent reviews of anti-virus programs:

- AV Test
- AV Comparatives

Both of these sites show many anti-virus programs and their rankings. The rankings change with each test, so it is impossible to state that there is one best anti-virus program. The only statement that I can make is that MSE is an excellent program for people who are not very interested in the internals of their computer. It is also the program that I have now been using for more than a year.

Cleaning Your Computer

The problem with so many of the available clean-up programs is that they are either too lax or too vicious in their cleaning. The clean-up programs which are too lax just do not really do anything except provide you with a warm fuzzy feeling. The clean-up programs which are too vicious do far too much and usually make your computer unusable because they have done so much. Both of these options are dangerous and I advise you not to use them.

If important files are removed then you may not be able to use your computer after turning it off then back on. I remember one client who rang me after she had removed some fonts which looked wrong. Her computer worked for the rest of the day so she turned it off and went to bed. The next day her computer would not start. It was then that she rang me. I was able to determine that she had removed all the fonts which Windows relies on for its internal workings: if you have removed these fonts then you cannot run Windows. It's as simple as that! When you have caused this sort of problem through your actions it is easier to accept than if the problems are caused by a program which you believed would make your computer faster.

The only solution was to replace these missing fonts by doing a repair install of Windows.

There are a few programs which actually perform an effective clean-up of your computer and achieve what you want without damaging any of your important files or settings. There is a smaller number of programs which will clean your computer without doing any damage. The only one which I can recommend is CCleaner.

CCleaner

CCleaner is the only cleaning program which I recommend wholeheartedly. This is because it will clean your computer effectively without removing files which are needed for Windows and your programs to work.

There are many other programs which purport to do this job effectively but I have seen too many instances where people have cleaned their computer to the stage where it will no longer start. This usually means one or more of these problems:

- A file needed to run Windows has been removed.
- A file needed to run Windows has been replaced with one which does not work.
- Windows' Registry has been corrupted.
- Windows' Registry has had an essential entry removed.
- Windows' Registry has had a new entry created which is invalid.

CCleaner is the most effective cleaning program that I know. I have been using it on my computers without any problems for more years than I can remember. During this time I have also been recommending it to all my clients. Unfortunately, not everybody is using it: I still see people who have used another cleaning program and ended up with an unusable computer.

Please check before you start using a clean-up program: it may not do just what you want!

Further Information

AVG Free	www.avgfree.com.au
AVG Full	www.avg.com.au
Malwarebytes	www.malwarebytes.org
Microsoft Security Essentials	www.microsoft.com/mse
AV Test	www.av-test.org
AV Comparatives	www.av-comparatives.org
CCleaner	www.piriform.com