

Radio Days – 2012-10-27

Tip of the Week – Stay Connected

I saw a new client this week. They called me because their new internet connection would not work. I checked the installation of their new modem and found that they had used the wrong cable to attach their modem to their computer.

There are two types of connectors which have lugs on them to prevent the cord being removed from its socket. The first type is used on the standard telephone wire. This is used to connect telephone equipment to the wall socket and is the narrower of the two. The second type is the Ethernet connection which is used to connect computer equipment together. The Ethernet connection is the same width as the USB connector so I have seen many clients who have inserted a USB cord into an Ethernet connection and been surprised that it did not work!

My client had used a telephone wire to connect their new modem with their computer. This wire has a narrower connection so the wires in the female socket will not mate with the wires in the male connector. This meant that no signal could get from the modem to the computer. This was simple to see because the Ethernet light on the modem was blank. Replacing the wrong wire with the correct one made all the difference in the world.

They then asked me to check and see why their printer was not working. As usual, I printed a test page to see what happened. Precisely nothing! Then I checked the printer only to discover that it was not turned on. Next step? Turn the printer on.

Still nothing!

Next step? Check the printer to see what was going on. There was paper aplenty in the paper tray and a power light. Check the back of the printer only to see just one wire going to the printer: this was a power cord which explained why the printer was making noises as it warmed up.

There was no USB cable connecting the printer to the computer. A search of the premises found that the cord was AWOL so a quick trip to the store found a new USB printer cable. After installing this new cable the printer worked perfectly.

Keeping connected correctly can pay massive dividends!

Is Microsoft About to Die?

On Friday 26 October 2012 Microsoft released its latest version of Windows. The world is still waiting to see if it will be the latest in a recent series of Windows crashes or the version which will raise Microsoft to its rightful position as the most valuable company in the world. Time, of course, will tell but I believe that this is the version which will make people realise that, at last, Microsoft is vulnerable.

One major change with Windows 8 is that it is expected to work on all sorts of devices ranging in size from phones through tablets to laptop and desktop computers. This is a big gamble for Microsoft and, I suspect, one which it must win if the company is not to disappear. There are a number of reasons for me to suspect that this may be the end of Microsoft. The reasons for this are varied, but one telling statistic is that in 2007 Microsoft was 7 times as valuable as Apple. In 2012 Apple is over twice as valuable as Microsoft. This is a massive turn-around in these two companies' respective fortunes and, at least in part, reflects on the ability of the management of each company to stay focused on what is important to their users.

Apple appears to be winning this race, at least in the small device arena because, together with Android devices, the iPhone, iPod and iPad have taken the world by storm.

How can this have happened? How can this have happened in only five years?

Windows Versions

From the table below it is clear that Microsoft has a habit of taking a range of times between releasing each successive version of Windows. This is in marked contrast to Apple which has introduced a new version, with significant improvements, almost every year since 2001 when Windows XP came out. Since 2001 Apple has released 7 upgrades to its operating system, all of which have been successful. In that time Microsoft has released 3 upgrades to Windows.

Version	Date	Quality
Windows 95	August 1995	👍
Windows 98	June 1998	👍
Windows ME	September 2000	👎
Windows XP	August 2001	👍
Windows Vista	January 2007	👎
Windows 7	October 2009	👍
Windows 8	October 2012	? 👎
<i>Windows 9</i>	<i>October 2015</i>	?

Of these upgrades, Windows Vista is widely acknowledged to be a major mistake. During its development it was overly ambitious and most of the best parts were dropped from the final release. This made Windows Vista both very late and missing all the good bits, and also has made people more wary of new Windows releases, and many large companies will not upgrade to the latest version of Windows until it has been tested in the marketplace for at least a year.

Again, this is in contrast to Apple releases which are snapped up as soon as they are released. Another reason for Apple's success is that new versions of its operating system are priced at about \$200 instead of up to \$800 for Windows' versions.

Hardware Types

Windows 8 is attempting to be everything to everybody. This is in stark contrast to Apple's way of doing things where there are two versions of its operating systems: one for laptop and desktop computers (OS X) and another version (iOS) for smaller computers like iPhones, iPods and iPads with touch screens.

This is where I feel that Microsoft has made its biggest mistake. There is no doubt that people are happy touching the screen of small devices like smartphones and tablet computers. They are not, however, used to using touch for larger devices like laptop and desktop computers. Indeed, those who have tried touch on these devices says that it becomes very tiring very quickly.

This is because of the different ways that the two device types are held. When you hold a computer in your hand it is natural to touch it, and people who use smartphones are used to doing this. Also, people who use iPods, iPads and similar tablet computers like to touch the screen to control their computer.

This is in marked contrast to those people who use laptop and desktop computers: they are used to using a mouse and keyboard to control their computer. Windows 8 does its best to take this sort of control away from these users. A standard of Windows since Windows 95 has been the Start button. While this has changed size in Windows Vista and 7, it has always been in the bottom left-hand corner of the screen.

Windows 8 "fixes" all that! The Start button has now been removed, and with it the ability to control your computer easily with mouse and keyboard. There are a number of solutions to

this problem but they all seem to solve only part of the problem. Until Microsoft recognises that its “improvements” are, in fact, a retrograde step businesses will stay away from Windows 8 in droves.

Windows Updates

Windows 8 was released to the public only yesterday. It has, however, been available in beta form for some months for users to try and for software writers to check that their new software will work. In that time a number of patches has been released.

These software patches have been the cause of major problems for users. Many Windows 8 computers have become unusable because of the patches which have only been updated to 13%. The computers cannot be rolled back to an earlier position using System Restore. The only option has been to reinstall Windows 8 from scratch then ensure that new patches do not install automatically. All this is often too much for standard Windows users to manage, especially those who just want their computer to work.

Conclusion

I recommend that you do not buy a Windows 8 computer for at least a year, if ever. Microsoft seems to have made such a massive botch of this new release that I am recommending that you either keep your current computer for the next two or three years or that you get a Windows 7 computer within the next year. Microsoft has allowed computer resellers to sell Windows 7 computers (with an option to upgrade to Windows 8) for the next twelve months and to keep selling Windows 7 computers for a further twelve months after that if they have the Windows licences in stock.

Another option, rather more drastic, is to buy an Apple computer. This will involve a massive learning jump as well as the cost of new software for the Apple. Windows software does not work on Apple computers unless you get another program like Parallels. This is the sort of reason why I believe that Microsoft will take a massive hit to its income over the next few years.

All this because Microsoft does not think or listen to its users.

Further Information

None this week.