

Radio Days – 2012-11-24

Tip of the Week – Installing a Printer

During the week I received a panic call from a client who had recently bought and installed a new printer. After a week this printer was still not working.

When I arrived at his office I realised that his new printer had been installed at least six times as there were six copies of the printer sitting in the printers section of his control panel. All of these six printers had unprinted (and unprintable) documents sitting and waiting for the printer to start working. This was not going to happen without some work. First I removed all the copies of the printer so was left with just the one remaining printer: I assume the first one to be installed. This, too, had an unprinted document waiting in its queue.

The first step was to remove the unprinted document from the queue, then to determine why the printer was not working. It soon became obvious that the computer thought that the printer was connected to the printer through a network while the printer thought that it was connected using a USB cable. This mismatch could never work.

The best way to fix this was to remove the USB connection and then restart the computer. After the restart I then replaced the USB cord and, immediately, the printer was found and installed. The next step was to try a test print: this worked, to my client's great surprise and pleasure.

Once we had a working printer I needed to remove the old copy of the printer then rename the new copy so that it appeared to be the original. Now my client had both a working printer and a smile on his face.

Speed Does Matter

During the week two things happened. The first was that my new internet connection came online so that I am no longer suffering from IWS (Internet Withdrawal Syndrome). The second was that a new client had problems with their old computer which needed to be fixed.

My new internet connection was the fastest that is available at the Maryborough exchange: ADSL 2. I had not realised, until then, just how fast ADSL 2 is. It enabled me to do a major update to Windows in much less time than I had expected: some 300 MB of data downloaded in under ten minutes. This was data downloading at the rate of some 33 MB each minute! To put it in perspective, this is four times faster than my previous internet connection, which was mostly fast enough to have kept me satisfied for some years now.

Not only did my internet connection become much faster after the pain of being without it for well over a week but it was much cheaper, too. High speed at low cost: what could be better?

In contrast, my new client also had to do a major update to Windows, again about 300 MB. This time the internet connection speed is one which nobody sells any more: 256 kbits/s. At this speed it took about two hours for the update to download, so no wonder that the update had not been done! Nobody likes to wait for a download of this size to take so long!

You Don't Know What You Are Missing

I remember back to the days when I was a reseller for an internet service provider (ISP). I was not allowed to resell ADSL until I had my own ADSL connection. At the time I thought that this was a nonsensical restriction.

It was not until I started using my ADSL internet connection that I saw just how much difference a faster connection could make. Dial-up connections took so much effort to lookup a telephone number on white pages, for instance. First you had to ensure nobody was using the telephone, then you had to dial your internet connection, then you had to open your web browser and start the telephone number lookup. This all took so much time and was such an inconvenience that it was easier to use the out-of-date directory rather than to do the lookup.

It was for this reason that I tended to wait until I had a number of things that I wanted to do on the internet before I went online. Then, once online, I would do as many of these tasks as I could before the four-hour cut-off occurred. This was because the telephone companies, at the time, did not want you to tie up a phone line on the internet without paying a new fee to connect at least once every day. Yes, they were greedy even in those long-ago days!

I was reminded of this recently when I was at a friend's house. We wanted to try a new restaurant but were not sure where it was or how to get there. It was a simple matter to open her web browser and get the restaurant's phone number from the white pages then get driving instructions using Google maps. I just did this without thinking but she was amazed that it was worth doing, or even possible to do, and was still wondering if going out was worth the effort to go out to for dinner when I had all the information that we needed and had booked a table at the restaurant without thinking.

Even a simple thing like being able to make a phone call while on the internet would have been impossible in the "good old days" of dial-up internet connection. Now, with a broadband connection, a simple lookup is just a few mouse clicks away, and my new fast connection is a real joy. Bring on the NBN and its high-speed connection.

You Do Not Have to Baby-Sit a Download

As I tried to explain to my client, you do not have to baby-sit a download. Your computer is quite able to continue a download while you do other things. These other things can include doing other work on the computer while the download continues in the background or even walking away and doing all the other tasks which you need to do.

Not only do you not have to baby-sit a download, you can do more than one thing at a time on a modern Windows computer. I have seen many clients close one program down so that they can start another program, then close that second program down and re-open the first program. As an example, while writing my notes for these radio programs I often refer to something on the internet. I need to ensure that what I write is as accurate as possible so I check whenever I feel that it is necessary.

To do this I will often have both my word processor and my web browser open at the same time. I can then check something on the internet by switching to my web browser, perhaps copy a reference or some other text to the clipboard, then switch back to my word processor to continue writing. All this is possible: the question that you might care to ask is *Can I do it?* Once you realise that a computer allows you to do more than one thing at a time, especially if you have a computer with the hardware resources (processor and RAM) then you may be able to do more in less time with this new way of working.

In Perspective

In the good old days, fifteen years ago, when I moved to Maryborough, dial-up internet was the only way to get online. In those days it was reasonable to expect that it would take about eight minutes to download a megabyte (MB) of data. While this speed was considered to be fast by the standards of the day, it was only three weeks ago that I could download eight MB in a minute. Now that I have my all-new all-dancing ADSL 2 connection to the internet I am able to download 33 MB in one minute: four times as fast.

While 33 MB is just a handful of data compared to playing an online game or downloading a DVD of the latest movie it is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to fast internet. The NBN, when it arrives later this decade, will bring these ultra-fast connection speeds to those who want them while allowing the snails amongst us to connect at a more reasonable speed.

Further Information

NBN www.nbnco.com.au