

Your computer has feelings, too

Being a touchy-feely guy always driven by my heart and feelings ... no wait, that was a bad dream.

Logic, math, history, and facts are what help me shoulder our tyrannical world and navigate through this complex rollercoaster we call life.

With 28 years in the computer industry, working in a digital world and going through its accelerated changes has enabled me earn a living and see things in black and white. In the early years I was a programmer using the computer languages Basic and Fortran to run financial systems and petroleum applications.

Every problem had a cause and a solution. No mystery, no magic, and no ghosts were ever in the machine.

Over my nearly three decades working with computers had I never seen something that could not be explained with logic, reason or mathematics.

This digital life experience helped cement my conservative outlook and see things without shades of grey. The bit is either set or clear. Good must be secured and evil must be defeated.

The computer crashed for a reason that must be learned, the software aborted due to a bug that can be fixed, things are running slow due to one or more specific causes that I can resolve — with enough time and money.

My hero was Spock on "Star Trek" because he always thought with logic rather than emotion. He used facts and reason compared to emotion and impulse. My motto has always been "be like Spock."

That said, I have developed a sixth sense for computers and their "feelings." You're probably thinking, "Deans has really lost it now." Think of it as when a car mechanic listens to an engine or feels a vibration and instantly knows what the problem could be.

Today we are going to blur the world of logic and emotion to get in touch with your computer's feelings which can help you



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troubleshoot problems or better yet, head off disasters before they occur.

To sense problems with our computers we need to use the same senses as we do to avoid problems with our spouses. Those included listening rather than

hearing, feeling compared to touching, sensing aroma and not just smelling odors, and seeing contrasted to staring.

Let's take the vision perspective first. If your computer's old CRT monitor is looking dim and blurry, it's time to dump the antique and buy a new LCD flat screen monitor. I now use ridicule to convince my clients to replace their old glass monitors with larger yet space saving LCD screens. Get with it, people!

Watch for that hard drive activity LED light on your desktop or laptop for abnormally high and extended blinking time. Just after reboot it may steadily blink for a minute or two, but if it is still going after five minutes then something is wrong and the IO (Input/Output) level is way too high.

The sound of your computer is important to monitor just as the tone of your wife's response on your announced plans on buying that new expensive gun. Both need to be resolved before things get out of hand.

When your hard drive is starting to make noise out of the ordinary, there usually is a big problem brewing. If you wait to hear the clicking sound of a computer's hard drive before you either back up your data or swap it out then will be too late.

Cooling fans for the computer box itself, CPU, power supply, or even the graphics card should not be heard. If you can hear it on an increasing basis, then you need to fix the small problem before it becomes a big problem. Same thing with wives, resolve their request for a bathroom fix before it becomes a remodeling job.

If you hear the CDROM continuously spinning up and down then odds are you left a CD or DVD in the drive which is being

re-sampled over and over hurting computer's performance. Remove any CDs or DVDs when not actively using the optical drive.

Put your ear on your laptop and listen to the inner operations when it is working normally. Get a baseline of what it sounds like so you will know when things sound funny or abnormal. Listen to the exhaust fan, the CPU fan, the hard drive and the overall audible mood of your computer.

Remember, like us guys need not just to hear but to listen to our wives, we also need to listen to the health waves of our computers to be proactive in their digital well being.

Next you need to use your sense of smell. Luckily I married a great cook, but still, every time I come home and smell dinner cooking I complement it by saying "something smells great!" Use those same olfactory senses that keep you out of the doghouse and apply them to keeping your computer healthy.

Numerous times I have walked into a client site or server room and smelled something wrong. Burning or electrical odors coming from computers or complex electrical equipment is usually bad.

Sniff it out and track it down to discover and then eliminate the problem before it becomes a catastrophe.

Now let's really get in touch with our feelings and learn how to feel our computers. I am dead serious here. With my laptop on my thighs I can tell by the warmth of the laptop if it is getting overheated the instant I lay it on my lap.

I just figured out a problem we have with the ottomans next to our leather chairs that have caused problems with our laptops.

When we stand up from our chairs to get something we have been placing our running laptops on the ottomans. Since they are smooth leather and quite soft the contouring surface had been blocking the bottom exhaust vent which then overheated and constantly crashed both our laptops.

I discovered this by monitoring the heat sensations on my bare thighs after moving the lap-

top from the ottoman back onto my lap. All we had to do was change the location of laying the laptop down which included exposing the rear left lower fan to free flowing air rather than the contouring and constrictive leather surface of the ottoman.

Bottom line: Make life choices based on truth and logic, but use those feelings and senses to help you monitor and prevent computer problems.

Next week's column: Travel Tech.

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