

What IT guys should tell you



John Deans

that wanted to hide their intellectual skills inventory by not teaching, telling or revealing fix techniques, software shortcuts and troubleshooting rules of thumb.

In my not-so-humble opinion, if you are really good at IT

then you can help and teach not only your peers but your clients which benefits everyone. That is one of the reasons why I write these articles and wrote a book on how to do my job.

Telling others my "secrets" has generated a strong revenue stream from over 100 clients in Washington County. The Lord and hard work has blessed me.

First on the *Reader's Digest* list was to reboot the computer first before calling the IT guy. Well duh, that's the first thing I ask almost every day.

My clients often start the distress call with, "John, even after I restarted the PC it still..." Next was not to expect the IT guy to come running immediately when there is a problem.

Even though I hit a dozen sites a day, all clients need to feel that they are number one on my list. This is hard to do but is a great goal.

The article compares us to Santa because we know if you've been naughty or nice. When I get called into fix a severe spyware problem and I find out it was due to some yahoo surfing porn sites, I do deliver a scolding — especially at workers on company-owned computer systems.

The use of strong passwords is another default procedure that still too many people pass over. Thank goodness that Microsoft Server 2003 and 2008 force more complex passwords with a mix of letters, numbers and case changes.

The article's item on anti-virus and anti-spyware brings to light the most requested skill set and software expertise out there for several years now. Not a day goes by without installing, updating or fixing software to battle spyware, viruses and malware.

Their point on being "no free lunch" echoes with young people who still try to download free music and movies from the Internet. I have been preaching on this issue for years now and the lawsuits keep adding up.

There are thousands of parents getting hit with six-figure lawsuits because little Jimmy is upstairs on his bedroom computer downloading hundreds of stolen songs from peer-to-peer music sites.

Coming in at number seven the article reminds wireless users that public networks are indeed public. They are convenient but are also great places for hackers to take over your unprotected laptop and steal your data.

The big no-no here is not to ever do banking or online purchasing with your wireless laptop at a public wireless hotspot.

One major point I take issue with is they push turning off the computer to give it a rest and save energy. I still contend that computers last longer if left on continuously with weekly reboots to refresh memory and clear processes.

Since they only consume about the same amount of electricity as a 60-watt light bulb, leaving it on does not contribute to man-made global warming (scam of the century).

Calling your Internet provider before your IT guy as they suggested is after you have rebooted and done some other troubleshooting steps. This can save some frustrating phone time to ISP support staff and dollars to guys like me.

The article's claim that IT people shun Macs because they make less money could be valid, but I not only endorse Macintosh computers for the home but I love all Apple's products.

I got a kick out of their point on Internet hoaxes because they are flying around constantly. At least once a week I have to reply to an e-mail sent out by a client or friend touting some far out breaking news or Internet rumor.

I quickly send them the online documentation link from www.Snopes.com explaining how it is just a hoax.

The last two items are how some IT guys over use acronyms to explain problems and maybe intentionally glaze over the eyes of their customers. That has always been a weakness of numerous tech heads to use three character verbal shorthand to explain why it took them hours to fix a seemingly simple computer problem.

I catch myself accidentally acronyming my clients a bit too much.

Bottom line: Any IT person worth their salt should be very open and willing to share his (OK, or her) technical knowledge and not horde all those smarts.

One last thing: I am enjoying my new Honda Civic hybrid and have learned to manage the drive-by-wire electrical assist power train by watching the LED graphs to get around 42 miles per gallon around Brenham and up to 50 miles per gallon on U.S. 290.

Next week's column: Dangers of text messaging.

John Deans of DeansConsulting.com is a Brenham area computer networking consultant who can be reached at 289-2233 or John@DeansConsulting.com for questions and comments.

Next month will start my 28th year in the information technology (IT) industry and I think I have almost seen and heard it all. One thing for sure is I still do not know it all because learn something new every day.

Several times a week I end up scratching my head saying to myself, "Well what the heck is this about?" and have to run back to the lab for research, testing and more learning.

It is safe to say that since 1981 computers have gotten smaller, faster, cheaper, more useful and now are mission critical. They are in our cars, phones, offices and homes. Parents now have to yank there kids off of the home PCs and shove them outside to see sunlight.

Just this week a client of mine showed me an article in September issue of *Reader's Digest* and it had a short article titled "Thirteen Things Your Computer Person Won't Tell You." I would like to pick up on those points but take a different view on most of them since I have been saying the vast majority of those things to my clients.

I guess the overall tone of the article was to show how some IT guys (I say "guys" since 90 percent of IT support personal are male) keep quiet on some issues to protect their turf or billable support secrets.

Back in the 1990s, I did run into numerous of those types