

Managing today's technology can be frustrating



John Deans

Dealing and dinking with computers all day long can be tedious at times and over the years I have developed a list of digital pet peeves. Basically this is a list of things in the technology world that really bug me and a few solutions for those problems.

I know it's going to be a rough day when I first sit at a computer to troubleshoot a problem and the wireless keyboard or mouse does not work. Not totally dysfunctional, but just messed up enough to miss characters I am typing or not move the mouse enough. At first I think, I can get through it and fix the original problem before I have to go look for AA batteries.

But most times I get too impatient and run out to the car to get a couple of batteries anyway figuring I may as well fix this initial annoying problem at the same time. Luckily the battery life of wireless keyboards and mice is much better than a couple of years ago so I see this issue less and less.

The main problem with wire-

less keyboards and mice are now due to the USB-based transmitter being too far from the wireless targets. Most times the problem is the transmitter has fallen off the desk and away from the area with the keyboard and mouse, so check that first.

The closer they are to each other the better they work.

Want to really get under my skin? Change the theme of your Windows desktop with funky fonts, dark colors, animated cursors, and completely different icons for the standard programs and utilities.

That drives me insane! I waste so much time at those highly customized workstations because I either cannot read the icon labels, fail to spot the normal icon for the My Computer utility, or can't even see where the tip of the cursor is so I can start up a critical program.

There have been numerous times I completely reset the user's Windows desktop theme back to the standard Windows XP layout without even asking just so I can be productive

and resolve their original computer problem. On the way out I ask them to leave the standard theme in place, but they usually change it back anyway.

One of my favorite clients has her seasonal themes and I have become used to it. Since she can be feisty and I dare not mess with Vaune's custom themes, I now deal with her fancy fonts, sounds and cursors.

Now that the state of Texas has joined the other nanny states by banning the use of cell phones while driving in certain areas like school zones, we all need to start using our headsets or leaving the phone in the console during those times.

It probably won't be long before the laws are made even more restrictive to where we are mandated to communicate with each other at the lowest common denominator of capabilities.

With all the technology in automobiles like GPS, touch screen music systems, and digital environmental controls, why stop at banning the use of handheld cellular phones? Basically, some people can multitask and some cannot.

There should be a single law stating that if you get into a wreck due to any type of in-car activity or distraction from technology, eating, talking to your spouse or fussing at your kid it would be a \$500 fine. That would cover it all.

Speaking of cell phones, you know what really chaps my tail? I get ulcers waiting for the long standard automated female voice that instructs you how to leave a message on someone's cell phone. For the love of Pete, anyone who does not know to wait for the beep by now should not even be let out of the house.

This standard outgoing voicemail greeting is implemented by default when lazy cell phone owners fail to record their own message or some wireless providers put it on in addition to the custom greeting. That really makes blood shoot out of my eyes when I have to listen to both, especially when the yahoo records an even longer message that says the same darn thing!

I pride myself by recording the shortest message possible so when my clients, friends or family call and I'm out, they have to listen to only 4.5 seconds of me yapping. Since AT&T was forced to disable the default greeting by the deal with Apple and the iPhone, when you call my cell phone all you will here is my short message and then the beep.

So I can keep my sanity, here are some instructions on disabling the redundant automated voicemail greeting message on some other wireless providers:

- For Verizon:
- Dial into your voicemail main menu:
 - Personal options
 - Administrative options

- General options
- Then you will have these three options:
- Auto Play On or Off
 - Call Back Number Prompt On or Off
 - Rapid Prompt or Standard Prompt
- From Sprint:
- Dial into your voicemail account
 - Select 3 for personal options
 - Select 2 for greetings
 - Select 1 for main greeting
 - Select 3 for add or remove caller instructions
 - Then press 2 for do not play instructions

For anyone calling a T-Mobile user you can just hit the "#" to skip the automated message.

Finally, my last fuss is about post-it notes all over the monitor. I see all sorts of stuff written and stuck to computer screens

with some looking like a home refrigerator decorated with colored paper. My favorites are the sticky notes with the password written on it.

Want to get me grumpy? Put a post-it note on the lower left hand of the monitor that covers up the Windows Start button. That little annoying critter gets quickly relocated every time accompanied with a muffled grunt from your happy computer guy.

Bottom line: Managing technology can be frustrating with nannies, artists, slobs and talkalots mucking up the works — but I love you all.

Next week's column: Carbonite.

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