

Cause and effect of the technical world

Our parents teach us at a very young age the truths of cause and effect. If little Johnny touches a hot stove top it will burn him. Sometimes no matter how many times we try to mentor our youngsters they still insist on verifying that information for themselves and they get burned.

Some are just as hard headed as adults and they still touch the proverbial hot stove in different aspects of our lives. There are those who are told to be on time for work yet some come in late often enough to get fired. Everyone knows it is not right to run around on their spouse but people do which usually results in broken families.

Decades long campaigns have been active to persuade drinkers from driving drunk yet our jail houses numerous DWI offenders every weekend.

A less serious but still important area of life to respect cause and effect is the technical world. Over the past six and a half years I have written column after column about how to not get into a bind with data management. The integrity of the work most



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of us produce is represented in the bits and bytes stored on hard drives. Access to that data, whether it be local on the desktop or remotely via the Internet over a smart phone, can be critically important.

Let's begin with just having access to

our computers because without those technical tools in-hand we never get past the starting line. If you carry your laptop around in a case, satchel, or backpack, keep it hidden in the trunk of your car or buried and out of sight in your SUV or truck. Too many clients of mine have had their laptops stolen from their vehicles not just while visiting Houston but even around Brenham.

Loss of a laptop creates numerous problems like vulnerability of one's identity, loss of the laptop's value, and short term loss of access to the data on the laptop. Just like the officer says, "Park it, lock it, and hide it."

Same goes for your smart phones like iPhones, Blackberries and Droids. Do not leave them open and viewable in

parked cars since they have at least personal contact information on them if not more like mine does. That goes for even for the office by not leaving them laying around on desks and tables.

Women should be especially vigilant about this since us guys use belt holsters for our phones and gals have their phones either inside their purse or just laying out at the office somewhere.

Do you want to avoid paying a yahoo like me to come decontaminate your computer from spyware and malware? Number one for the idiot guys is to stay off porn sites since that is the fastest way to get infected with the worst malware, spyware and trojans.

For the college age know-it-all types, stop illegally downloading copyrighted music and movies from peer-to-peer media sharing sites. You lay down with dirty dogs on the web you will get up with digital fleas.

We all need to take better physical care of our desktops and laptops. I fix so many computers by just cleaning out the dirt and dust that accumulates inside desktop PCs. If you see any dust build up on the air intake vents at all then there will be ten times that amount inside the computer clogging the heat

sinks, fan vents, and other critical thermal components of the system.

If you computer it shutting down or getting noticeably slower and it is not related to malware infestations or hard drive health problems, you probably need to pop open the cover to the box and blow out the dust, dirt, cobwebs and even roach nests. Nothing beats dry high pressure air from commercial air compressor to thoroughly blow out months if not years of filth that is smothering the vital and sensitive components of your computer.

To keep laptops cool, for the love of Pete, do not eat over them. Crumbs and liquids are laptop killers since you cannot easily open up a laptop and blow it out. A spilled drink on a laptop keyboard is instant digital death.

The same thing is true for smart phones that must be kept dry at all times at all costs. One drop of rain that hits the small round hold that your hands-free device plugs into will destroy the phone.

That instant death of your iPhone or Blackberry is even quicker if it falls from your shirt pocket into the toilet — trust me on that one.

If you hear the hard drive

making any new noise that is bad. First verify your regular backups have been working and then get your IT professional to see if your hard drive needs to be replaced. It is far better to be proactive in an early clone and swap of your hard drive then being reactive after the failure has occurred then having to rebuilt your computer by reloading applications and restoring from backups.

Want to really burn yourself on a hot stove then forget about backing up your data. This drives me insane how at this day and age people still do not backup they data at home and sometimes even at work.

With all the easy and low cost solutions via high capacity external hard drives and remote online solutions like Carbonite.com and Mozy.com, users have no excuse to not backup their data.

For those 90 percent that have implemented sound data backup solutions, they still need to test and verify those procedures actually work. Do this by deleting

a non-critical file and attempt to reload that file from the latest backup. This way you will find out if there are any problems with the backup and restoration steps before any real major loss occurs.

Bottom line: Most of the time life is a direct result of our daily decisions, so make the right ones to insure that the digital cause and effect results are positive for your life of computing.

Final note: This will be my last column. I want to thank the readers and hope my technical tidbits have helped your computing experience over the past six and a half years. Thanks for putting up with my conservative political rhetoric that my friends on the right enjoyed but probably irked some lefties. By the way, how about that election this week!

Bye bye. John Deans.

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