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Tech Stuff

By Craig Vogel, Chief Technologist @ myComputerGuy, inc.

Welcome to “tech stuff”, a new column that provides some guidance and advice to help you manage some of the issues we all face in our technology-crazed society. For my first column, I thought I would provide a few quick “how to” instructions for common tech problems as well as some news making headlines in the tech industry.

HOW TO

Force your computer to restart – What do you do when your desktop or laptop computer completely locks up and you can’t reboot it or turn it off normally? Pull the power cord out? Remove the battery? No and no. Simply press AND HOLD the power button until the machine turns off. This usually takes somewhere between five and ten seconds. Then you can turn your machine back on.

Troubleshooting your printer – Even though some of us are starting to be more paperless, printing is a necessary evil of modern computing. Sometimes you just need to have it on paper. So what do you do when you hit that “print” button and nothing happens? Presuming you’ve checked that you’re not out of paper, ink or have a paper jam, follow these simple steps (retry printing after each one): (1) turn off your printer and turn it back on; (2) reboot your computer; (3) if your printer is networked (wired or wireless), turn your router off and back on. 90% of the time, this will get printing happening again.

Verify urban legends – You know those email you get from friends or friends of friends: READ IMMEDIATELY...VERY IMPORTANT, with content like “you will LOSE EVERYTHING IN YOUR PC” or “Microsoft will send you money” or “I’m overseas and I got mugged so could you send me some money”? Please don’t forward those to everyone you know and start a chain reaction of wasted time and Internet traffic. These false claims, hoaxes and scams can all be checked at a great website called <http://www.snopes.com>. The couple who started this site almost twenty years ago have done all the research for you to determine if there’s even a shred of proof behind any of these stories. The vast majority of the time they are completely false. So please check Snopes before you hit “forward” and select your friends and family distribution list (if you have one).

NEWS

Trends: Software subscriptions – Microsoft started it last year with Office 365 but wasn’t draconian about it – they still allowed you to buy the software if you wanted to. Adobe took the hard line approach this year – they’re no longer selling software licenses. All Adobe software products – that’s right Photoshop, Illustrator, Dreamweaver, etc. – are available for rent ONLY (aka subscription). You pay \$50 a month for access to ALL Adobe products, not just a suite of tools like in previous versions (\$30 a month for just Photoshop).

Free, perpetual updates and use on two computers are the best perks of this arrangement, with overall cost being the biggest negative. For more information go here:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/creativecloud/faq.html>

Buying Advice: New Intel Processors – The biggest deficiency in any mobile device, except maybe the iPad with its 10 hours of runtime, is how long will the battery last before needing to be recharged. Well Intel has released a new generation of CPUs that do such an amazing job of managing power in laptops, that the utopia of a laptop that runs all day on one charge is finally here. These 4th generation Core series chips (code named “Haswell”) are providing up to 12 hours of battery life in the new 13” MacBook Air, according to Apple. So if you’re in the market for a laptop, make sure it has one of these next generation chips in it. At this time only Sony and Apple have Haswell systems for sale but by the holiday season, other major vendors like Dell and Lenovo should also have products on the market.

I hope you find these tips and information valuable. As you know, tech is constantly changing and there are many topics of interest I can share with you. Please email me at craig@mycomputerguy-inc.com if you have something specific you would like me to address. To be continued...

Craig Vogel is President and Chief Technologist of myComputerGuy, inc., a small business and consumer IT consulting firm based in Irvington. Since 2002, Craig and myComputerGuy have been making IT simple, providing 25 years of experience and expertise to clients in the river towns, Westchester and Manhattan.