

## Technology, Friend or Foe? – How to cope

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Technology, the what, the where and the now! It is every place you go and involves just about everything we do. From the moment we wake up to the moment we close our eyes for the night, we are constantly bombarded by technological advancements. Technology not only has altered the way we perform our daily tasks, but it controls our every moment, regardless of where we are in the world. Technology is constantly evolving to become bigger, better, faster, and more efficient. This seems to be the quest of the world we know today! More more more!!!

In such a demanding environment, where change is always taking place, there is a great need for understanding if one is going to avoid definite "failure" in the "real world" as we know it. Ok, so let's open text books and study constantly. Well this may be a starting point, it does not present an accurate representation of what to expect once entering the work force.



So, the question remains...how do I.?

Being a teacher in a small private school with just a few staff, many of the duties are shared, something I'm sure most of you are familiar with. Because I have had the most experience with computers at our school, I was naturally the one for the job! Up until that time I thought I knew a lot about computers and technology. I mean I could type a paper in Word, make a presentation in Power Point, I could program my V.C. R., I had overhead projection under control, and by all means could even work the toaster at home! What more was there? I figured I was doing well. But then came the pleas and cries from colleagues, "HELP". For the majority of you computer personnel, I'm sure that most usage and software questions are easily answered. But what happens when the technology simply isn't performing to its purposed level? QUICK CALL A TECHNICIAN, ya I suppose in dreamland, where money and time aren't an issue. So now it's up to you.

Here are your choices. You can either dig into the problem, or let the terminal sit there collecting dust. For those of you who have tried the latter, you will note that all too soon the cries come again! "Why isn't this working, I need to use it" leaving DIG IN as your only option. This is how I began to learn about computers. I don't highly recommend this approach to everyone, but when there are no more options, you do what you have to. The old saying "sink or swim" rings loud and clear.

"Now what do I do? Where do I start? What if I ruin it completely?" Have you ever asked these questions? I'm sure you have on more than one occasion. This can be a terrifying situation. Helpless is often the best word to describe how you may feel. From experience I will tell you a few things I've learned, (some the easy way, and some the hard way) to help you avoid headaches and problems.

The most important thing I've learned through the many hours I've labored over technology, is expect to spend many hours instead of fewer. If you get done early, then you are laughing! However, on the flip side, you will become very stressed thinking of how behind you are, and all the things you planned to do, but can't now. Also, If you are stressed out, your performance and your thinking will be compromised.

You will always do better when you are relaxed and focused.

I've also realized not to be intimidated by technology. If you can overcome the fear, you are well underway! With computers, most people are scared that they will completely damage the machine if they take it apart or change settings. Really though, it wasn't working when you started to fix it, so if you still can't get it working, then (most of the time), it will be no worse than before, and you may learn something. Use every opportunity as an educational experience. Even if you make a mistake that renders the machine useless, you still learned something. (Don't do that again). If you start by checking the most logical things first, by process of elimination (troubleshooting), you will come to a conclusion about what needs to be done. If the computer doesn't come on, check the power cable. As silly as this may seem as an example, I've seen this a number of times. Always test the most logical items first. Most people won't because of intimidation. They simply place their hands up in the air and give up!

When a problem persists, and you've done all you can, I recommend using one of your lifelines, "phone a friend." (The audience usually won't know, and the 50/50 isn't any better.) Start picking the brains of other people who are in the field. You will fast appreciate those who can lend you a helping hand from time to time. Be sure to let them know that! (Thanks a lot Harry.) Sometimes a quick question is all you need to ask and you will be well on your way again. You will also learn many things chatting to people who know more! Don't be afraid to ask. However, remember these people are not here solely for you and your work, so use them sparingly. (I will call only as a last resort, and typically after spending time testing first).

If the dive in method is not for you, then perhaps check with your local universities and colleges for programs to help you become more efficient and effective. There are courses that are short and sweet, and show how to diagnose and repair. In addition you will find more people you can collaborate with in the future! Remember you may be able to help them too! This is one of the best ways to learn.

Lastly, do your best to spend just a few minutes each day checking your computers. If you familiarize yourself daily with each computer, you will recall when everything worked last. This can help you know where to start troubleshooting, and perhaps even the last people who used the computer (you may need to ask them what they were doing when the problem occurred). It also helps to eliminate problems that continue to build up as a result of something small that could have been fixed easily! By starting fresh everyday, you will ultimately save yourself a lot of problems in the long run.

To conclude, whether it is a computer, television, VCR, or any other type of technology you may have problems with, remember to always plan, prepare, dive in, and use each opportunity as just that, a chance to learn and help your school run a program with as little down time as possible.

Good luck in all your challenges!