

From Behind the Service Counter

Updated from original issue in 2010

So when I take my computer in for service, what do I actually get? If you're not sure then you're pretty much at the service tech's mercy. Well let's change that right now.

First off, I'd like to pass on some service tips;

- a) Not all problems can be solved instantly. The more difficult ones can take up to a week to fully resolve.
- b) Some problems are not worth fixing and a replacement or fresh software load is the most efficient fix. The key word here is *efficient*. Quite often a client wants to save some rare software program and there is no choice but to do a complete cleanout. You need to determine the value of your data and programs and which fix is best for you.
- c) A software fix cannot really be "guaranteed" because software changes as soon as the customer uses the computer, but most reputable companies will take recent work they've done into consideration if the same problem resurfaces.
- d) Trying every (free) method to cure a problem tends to make your system a mess and a subsequent professional repair more expensive. Save some aggravation and get professional help right away.
- e) Time is worth money, both at my Service Counter and at your office. How much time are you willing to spend trying to fix a problem when a small investment at your neighborhood repair depot can get you back in business in far less time.

Typically the offer of a free diagnostic should be held suspect. No one really works for nothing and a free diagnostic usually has a "make-up" charge tagged on once you agree to have work done. We charge \$50 for our diagnostic and hence have no vested interest in bagging you for more money. If you have a real problem, we're going to really tell you.

If in doubt, always ask for an explanation of the work done and how the diagnosis was determined. All name brand hard drives have specific manufacturer's recertification software and power supplies can be instantly tested at the service counter with a special plug-in tester.

Motherboard, CPU and RAM problems can be verified by testing the components on a test bench system. Reputable stores can do this in front of you. Any store that hides their service dept. in a back room probably has good reason to hide.

To zero in on a hardware problem requires a battery of feedback tests. Testing a mainboard, CPU or RAM can take up to 2 to 4 hours of actual time. Most repair depots flat rate the service charge as the system doesn't need to be constantly attended once the tests are set in motion.

Software issues are more difficult to track and resolve. With adware, spyware and more sophisticated viruses, we now have a whole new raft of problems that have to be treated. It's not unusual for a series of scans and manual registry adjustments to take 2-3 days to thoroughly clean a system if it's really badly whacked.

We work on a first-come, first-served basis so the earlier you get in, the earlier you get back to work. And we open at 8:00am during the week to accept systems for service. Instead of fighting with your computer or waiting for your friend, why not see us today.

BTW, if you want to see the dark side of PC service and just how important finding a service depot you can trust is, check out some excellent work done by the CBC at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDOKGbiUUZI>

Happy Computing,
Harley Bloom