



COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY MYTHS

Computers and modern technology while dazzling to the eye and features to mesmerise the mind, can often frustrate and annoy us when they don't work as promised or create a whole range on unforeseen other problems and costs. I sympathise with many of these circumstances, as people in the technology industry seem to take advantage of people's naivety and lack of total understanding when promoting and selling their products. However I did want to clear up a lot of the myths perpetuating our industry, including some of the more amusing ones, to help make better decisions and have better understanding in regards to technology and computing.

One of the interesting technology issues relates to mobile phones on planes. While some tests suggest phone usage on a plane might cause minor instrument fluctuations, a pilot remarked there should be no conflict between mobiles and avionics. It seemed to him it had more to do with paying attention to flight attendants' safety instructions. A common myth is if you don't use a screen saver, you will ruin your computer monitor. This is another bit of advice that had some validity many years ago, but is just no longer true. It's virtually impossible with today's monitors to leave an image on the screen long enough for it to suffer from "phosphor burn-in". There's certainly no downside to using a screen saver, and many people find them fun to use as a way of "expressing themselves". If you believe you can secure your Windows 95/98/ME computer and keep unauthorized people out by using the Windows login screen, you are mistaken. The reality is that there is NO security in Windows 95/98/ME. When prompted for a login password, all you have to do is press the [Esc] key and you bypass that screen and have access to everything that is on that computer. Defragging a hard disk is now according to many experts a fruitless task, as the file technology and size of modern hard drives makes it redundant. One of the funnier scares was that Saddam Hussein was using Playstation 2 consoles and chips in Iraq's weapons program. From recent times and the lack of WMDs, this is either totally false or PS2s don't make good weapons.

Hollywood has caused the following myths; you can gain access to any information you want by simply typing "ACCESS ALL OF THE SECRET FILES" on any keyboard. Likewise, you can infect a computer with a destructive virus by simply typing "UPLOAD VIRUS" (i.e. "Independence Day"). All computers are connected and you can access the information on the villain's desktop computer, even if it's turned off!

I hope from this short list you might have a better understanding of some of the things that we as I.T. people have to clarify on a regular basis.

FAMOUS QUOTES PROVED WRONG

It is always funny when experts get it wrong. Here are some classic computer predictions. '*No one will need more than 637Kb of memory for a personal computer*' - Bill Gates (Currently new PCs use around 524288Kb). '*There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.*' - Ken Olson, 1977, Digital Equipment Corp. "*Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons.*" - Popular Mechanics, 1949. "*I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.*" - Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943. "*But what ... is it good for?*" (referring to microchip) - Engineer at IBM, 1968. "*[By 1985], machines will be capable of doing any work Man can do.*" - Nobel laureate, Herbert A. Simon. My personal favourite is "*Everything that can be invented has been invented.*" - Charles Duell, 1899, US Patent Office.

TECH JARGON

Plasma Screens - Monitors that make use of Gas plasma technology for creating characters and permit the design of flat screens that can, amongst other things, be wall-mounted. They do not have the same size limitations of traditional LCD displays. They use over 16 million colours, have a 160° viewing angle and there is no screen flicker. Plasmas screens look great and are coming down dramatically in price. However many experts say unless plasma displays can miraculously adapt and compete with the new LCD screens in terms of longevity, brightness, (true) contrast ratio, power consumption and burn-in, the technology is on its way out.

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