

Consumer Awareness Guide To Choosing An Honest, Reliable, and Competent Computer Repair Technician

Don't Trust Your Computer or The Irreplaceable Files On It To Just Anyone!

Hiring the wrong computer repair guy can not only be incredibly frustrating and expensive, but you could end up losing ALL of your irreplaceable files, photos, music, e-mails, and other important documents!

Read this guide and you'll discover:

- ✓ Computer scams and rip-offs that you MUST be aware of.
- ✓ 5 Costly misconceptions about computer maintenance and repair.
- ✓ Viruses, worms, spyware, and hackers: what you need to know to protect yourself.
- ✓ 7 Questions you need to ask before buying any computer equipment.
- ✓ 5 Critical characteristics you should demand from your computer repair technician.
- ✓ Why you need to avoid “cheap” or “bargain” computer repair shops.
- ✓ The one surefire sign that you should run – not walk – out of a computer repair shop.

Provided as an educational service by:

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From The Desk of: James Readnower
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Dear Fellow Computer User,

There are no shortages of horror stories about fly-by-night computer repair shops causing problems as a result of their unethical or incompetent behavior. I'm sure if you talk to your own friends and family you will get an ear-full of the unfortunate experiences they have encountered in this area.

You see, the computer industry, along with a lot of other industries, has its own share of unethical businesses who will always try to take advantage of uneducated buyers in their greed for easy money. Fortunately, businesses like these are the minority, but we know they exist because we have had a number of customers come to us to clean up the disasters they have caused.

Another big problem of the computer industry is that it is not regulated like many other industries. Automotive repair shops, electricians, plumbers, lawyers, realtors, dentists, doctors, accountants, and even restaurants (to name a few) are heavily regulated to protect the consumer from receiving substandard work or getting ripped off. However, the computer industry is still very new and there aren't any laws in existence to protect the consumer.

Anyone who can turn a computer on can market themselves as a computer repair technician or shop. Even if they are honestly trying to do a good job for you, their inexperience can cost you dearly in your machine's performance or in lost or corrupt data files. That is why we decided to offer this report.

The information in this Guide is provided to help raise standards within the computer repair and support industry, and to give YOU useful information to help you guard against the unethical or incompetence of some companies and technicians.

The Five Most Costly Misconceptions About Computer Maintenance and Repair

#1: If your computer is working fine right now, it does not need any maintenance.

This is probably one of the biggest and most deadly misconceptions that most computer users fall victim to. Computers are just like cars. If you don't change the oil, change the filter, rotate the tires, flush the transmission, and perform other regular maintenance on your car, it will eventually break down and cost you FAR MORE to repair than the cost of the basic maintenance.

There are certain maintenance checks that need to be done daily (like virus updates and spam filtering), weekly (like system backups), and monthly or quarterly (like checking for and installing security patches and updates, disk defrag, spyware detection and removal, checking the surge suppressor and the integrity of the hard drive, and so on). Your computer repair technician should be adamant that you have regular maintenance done on your machine and should offer to set up automatic virus definition updates, spam filtering (to avoid viruses), and automatic system backups OFF-SITE.

If your technician does not press you to let him do this for you, then RUN – don't walk – out of their office. Lack of system maintenance is the NUMBER ONE reason most people end up losing valuable files and incurring heavy computer repair bills. If your technician isn't offering you these services, you need to find someone else to support your computer or network for two reasons:

1. Either they don't know enough to make this recommendation, which is a sure sign they are horribly inexperienced, *OR*
2. They recognize that they are *profiting* from your computer problems and don't want to recommend steps towards preventing you from needing their help on an ongoing basis.

Either reason is a good one to get as far away from that person as possible!

#2: The maintenance tools provided in the Microsoft Operating System and software are all the maintenance you need.

Again, this is a terrible misconception. Microsoft does NOT include ALL of the security features to protect your data from viruses, hackers, and data loss or prevent your PC from running slowly.

Additionally, Microsoft (and other software vendors for that matter) are constantly providing critical patches and updates to their software to protect you from viruses and hackers. However, if you don't know to look for them, or if you don't know how to install them properly, you could easily end up getting burned.

#3: My nephew/neighbor's kid/brother-in-law knows this computer stuff and can help me solve my problems.

If only this were true. Obviously, not all technicians are created equal. Just because a person is good with computer applications (what we call a power user) does NOT mean they know how to install a critical security patch, detect and extract a deadly virus, or upgrade your machine.

Most people look for a part time “guru” to help them save money, but this often comes back to haunt them. Every day we get new customers who call needing us to clean up a mess that was caused by an inexperienced neighbor, friend, or relative who was just trying to help. If the person you have working on your machine does not do computer repair and support for a living, there is a good chance they won’t have the knowledge or experience to truly help you. Technology advances at lightening speed and it takes constant learning and practice to master it. If your part-time technician is not working on PCs and networks every day, they probably only know enough to be dangerous.

#4: You can always get a better deal on computer software, equipment, or services by shopping online.

The key word here is “deal”. Sure you can always find a cheaper price if you shop online, but you might actually end up getting the short end of the stick. As with anything in life, you get what you pay for. Companies simply cannot give you dirt cheap prices AND champagne service.

If you are getting a cheap bargain, chances are you will get very little if NO service after the sale. If something goes wrong, or if you just have a question, you might find out that the customer service line only goes to a voice mail box that never gets checked, or that you have to submit questions via e-mail that takes DAYS to return.

Before you buy ANY computer equipment, make sure you know the answers to these questions:

1. How long have they been in business? The last thing you want to do is buy a lemon of a computer from a fly-by-night organization. Thanks to the Internet, ANYONE can set up a website and start selling computer equipment, parts, services, and software. That is why you want to look for a company that has been in business for five years or more.
2. What is their guarantee or warranty on the equipment or services you are buying? As a standard rule, they should offer one year replacement warranty on all parts at a minimum.
3. How do they handle returns and exchanges? Do you have to ship the defective item back to them on your dime or do they arrange to have it picked up? Do they send the replacement first? What is the guaranteed turnaround time for an item? This is why many people prefer to buy all equipment from a local vendor. If something goes wrong, you can drive to the store, speak to a real person, and get an instant replacement in most cases.
4. What type of help desk support do you offer? If you are like me, you want to speak directly to a knowledgeable technician when you need help. However,

many companies only offer e-mail and web-based support, and charge a hefty fee for anything outside of that. Which brings me to the next question...

5. Is your support free or charged by the minute? Make sure you are very clear on what support is free and what is fee-based.
6. Where is their help desk and customer service office located? Many of the big vendors are shipping their help desk support overseas to save money. While this works out great for them, it can be incredibly frustrating when you are trying to communicate with their customer support representatives.
7. Do YOU really know how to install, configure and troubleshoot this new device? If not, you may want to consider hiring a qualified technician to install it. Quite often, drivers and software can conflict and cause problems and unless YOU have installed this device before, it might be worth the small fee to get someone else to do it for you.

#5: All computer repair shops are created equal. Your best option will be the one who offers the lowest price.

As we stated a moment ago, you get what you pay for. A cheap price usually means a cheap job. Really good technicians do NOT work cheap because they are in high demand. The only technicians that will work cheap are those that are just starting and they are grossly inexperienced.

With your valuable data, precious family photos, favorite music files, and other irreplaceable documents at stake, do you REALLY want the cheapest technician working on your machine?

We take the view that most people want value for money and simply want the job done right. You will find that we are not the cheapest and we do not apologize for that. You will also find that we are not the most expensive. We simply feel that we should offer a good service at a fair price. That's why we have been able to stay in business for over thirteen solid years.

5 Critical Characteristics You Should Demand From Your Computer Repair Guy or Shop

1. **Demand that they have remote access support.** If you rely on a shop or business that can only support you when they are onsite then you may find you are paying for a slow response time waiting for someone to show up when you have an issue that could just as easily be fixed by having a tech remote into your PC.

2. **Demand someone who has a long-standing reputation.** Let's face it; there are a lot of other computer repair technicians out there, but most are new or just getting started. You want to make sure you avoid hiring a fly-by-night technician between jobs that sets up shop one day, and is out of business within a month or a year. Only deal with computer technicians and repair shops that have a proven track record in your area. A & C Direct has been servicing customers in Medina, Cuyahoga, Summit and Wayne and surrounding counties for over thirteen years now.
3. **Demand that they have specific knowledge or expertise on solving your particular problem.** Do NOT let someone practice on your machine. If they have not worked on your problem before, they should TELL you that in advance. There is too much risk involved financially and in your data and equipment.
4. **Demand that your technician backs up your system BEFORE working on it.** This is just common sense. Don't let them touch your machine before your entire system is securely backed up just in case something goes wrong.
5. **Demand that your machine comes back with the same settings, look, preferences, and applications that you had on it prior to the work.** There are a lot of second-rate shops with inexperienced technicians who will end up causing you more problems than you bargained for. Very frequently, these inexperienced technicians will recommend that you wipe out your hard drive and re-install Windows to fix a problem. This means you lose all of your settings and preferences, as well as losing all of the software programs you have installed. This should ONLY be done as a last resort.

WARNING: In addition to wiping out your hard drive, some of these shops will put illegal software on your machine using a stolen license. Not only is this illegal and putting you in a position to get fined, but most illegal software (especially Microsoft's) is locked, which means you cannot download and update critical security patches. This leaves you unable to update your machine and protect it from deadly viruses, worms, and hackers.