

Top 10 Ways to Get Better Small Business Computer Tech Support

By Joshua Feinberg

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Joshua Feinberg
jfeinber@hotmail.com

Smallbiztechtalk.com <http://www.smallbiztechtalk.com>

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Author: Joshua Feinberg

Web Site Address: <http://www.smallbiztechtalk.com>

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Top 10 Ways to Get Better Small Business Computer Tech Support

By Joshua Feinberg, Editor of Smallbiztechtalk.com <http://www.smallbiztechtalk.com>

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Do you often get the "run-around" or feel utterly frustrated when trying to get a small business computer issue resolved with a technical support group?

In this issue's "How To" Tips, you'll learn some "insider" secrets on how to become a more effective user of small business tech support.

1. Make sure the problem is reproducible.

Always reboot your PC and try to replicate the problem, at least once. Whether you're trying to explain the problem to a small business tech support person over the phone, or at your office demonstrating the problem to your small business computer consultant, it's crucial that you can reproduce the same results consistently.

That's not to say intermittent problems are not fixable --- they're just much more challenging. Even better, try to replicate the problem on another PC in your office, or at home, and then look for any similarities and differences.

2. Document the error message or problem.

Often the best way to make a permanent record of an error message is by taking a print screen. To capture the contents on a screen, press the Print Scrn key on your keyboard, open a blank document in Microsoft Word, and Paste (Edit, Paste) the picture into the document.

You can place multiple print screens in a single Microsoft Word document, which you should then save, both for your records and for an easy way to forward the error message onto a small business tech support group or small business computer consultant.

3. Write down the exact steps to reproduce the problem.

To get the small business computer support issue resolved, you're going to need to explain the problem to at least one person. So be sure to take some notes as you go along.

4. Inventory your hardware and software configuration.

Often before a small business tech support person can assist you, the tech support rep will want to know some specifics about your configuration.

For example: what operating system do you use, what application version is being utilized, and how much RAM is in your PC?

While the tools for gathering this information vary among operating systems, be sure you have a written record of 8 to 10 vital stats about your PC configuration before you pick up the phone.

5. Use a phone with a timer.

Often hold times can be just plain ridiculous. Other times, your emotional side could get the better of you when you're on hold waiting for tech support a mere three or four minutes. If your phone has a timer, be sure to log key call stats, like the time, date and duration of the call.

6. Log key details of every tech support call.

Think about what has more power...complaining that "this problem happens every month", or being able to pinpoint that this problem has happened nine times over the past six months.

Then you can add a powerful hook such as, "would you like me to list the dates and times of each call, as well as the rep who handled each call, and the call's outcome?" Quite simply, this shows you mean business.

7. Use a phone with a headset.

First, you'll be productive and get some work done while you're waiting on hold. Second, you'll be able to try various troubleshooting steps while on the phone with the small business tech support rep, without giving yourself massive neck or shoulder pain. And another tip: most small business tech support reps despise speakerphones.

If you must use a speakerphone for part of the call while you're performing troubleshooting steps, always ask "permission" (even if it's not sincere) to put your caller on speakerphone.

8. Don't get caught in the middle.

If someone in your office, or your small business computer consultant, could really contribute to solving the problem quicker, don't be afraid to conference them into your small business tech support call.

One of the most frustrating call outcomes is dealing with the "he said, she said" or finger-pointing type of conversations. Thwart these problems at the outset by suggesting and arranging a three-way call.

9. Escalate if needed.

Most small business tech support groups have their newest or "rookie" reps screen all problems.

This is known as Tier 1 support. This type of triage work is often very high-volume and can be

incredibly frustrating for new employees who are expected to know a little about everything.

If you sense that the tech support rep is, for lack of a better word, "clueless", don't be afraid to politely, but firmly request that your call be escalated to a more experienced, advanced small business tech support engineer, usually called level 2 or level 3 support rep or systems engineer.

10. Try to avoid calling during peak hours.

If the small business tech support auto attendant message tells you for example that Monday mornings are the worst time of the week to call, and it happens to be a Monday morning, unless it's an "emergency", you probably want to call back at another time.

Bonus tip

Try to avoid calling - period. Before you pick up the phone, take a few minutes and check out any included "readme" files, any Help wizards, or small business tech support resources on the vendor's web site.

I've also had great success looking for other online small business computer support resources by typing the error message into any one of the major search engines.

The Bottom Line

Calling for small business tech support doesn't have to be a nightmare. Use the list of small business computer support tips provided here to get better small business tech support and less frustration.

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Joshua Feinberg is an internationally recognized small business technology expert, consultant, columnist, author, keynote speaker, and trainer. He is a published Microsoft Press author, as well as the creator of and two-year veteran writer of the Microsoft Direct Access "VAPVoice: Notes From the Field" column. Learn what your highly paid computer consultant

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