DEALING WITH TECH SUPPORT

A Seminar Presented by Harry Doyle
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TECHNICAL SUPPORT ALTERNATIVES

The time/value relationship in resolving a computer issue is dramatically improved by using every resource at your disposal before contacting technical support. Why? Quite simply, even if you are so fortunate not to be placed on extended hold or cut off, your results are based totally on the knowledge and experience of the technician answering your call. Few are experienced and it is the "luck of the draw" as to the abilities of the technician who answers.

So, let's look at a few alternatives that may enable you to solve your problem without the possible time and stress involved in calling tech support.

1**. Self Educate**

> Tutorials (may be included with your software or hardware)
>
> Seminars
>
> Classes
>
> Books (Amazon.com has excellent prices; free shipping (orders $25+)
>
> Internet (type your problem in Google, click search)
>
> Video Professor (www.videoprofessor.com) 800-525-7763
>
> Contact a computer "geek" friend

2. Microsoft VISTA Operating System

If are you switching from XP to Vista, try the excellent, FREE, built-in support.

> a. Click Start, Welcome Center, Getting Started With Windows, Show All Items, Open Windows Vista Demos
>
> b. Click Start, Help and Support (Tutorials, troubleshooting & many other questions)

Also try **www.vista4beginners.com/tutorials**

> **http://www.howtogeek.com/tag/windows-vista/**
>
> **http://www.windows-vista-basics.classes.cnet.com**

3. Computer User Groups (see www.scscc.com/smnr) ($20/yr)

> a. Attend seminars, hands-on classes, SIGs, Kaffee Klatches, BKK, & monthly meetings.
>
> b. Review library of handouts and books.

4. Computer Hardware or Software web sites

> Search the "support" section before calling technical support

5. Computer Consultant (Local Fee Based Individuals or Companies)

Chuck Strickland (www.chuckstr89134.com), free newsletter

Retailers (Best Buy "Geek Squad", Circuit City "Fire Dog", tend to be expensive)

Steve Ward, Friendly Computers   888-723-7436, 800-656-3115

6441 N. Durango Drive, Las Vegas, NV (Headquarters)

702 656-2780   140 franchises

(www.friendlycomputers.com) $88/Hour

6. Web Sites & Newsletters (Subscribe whether fee or free)

Worldstart (www.worldstart.com)

800-915-2088   M-F, 9-5, EST

Free newsletter

Star Tribune Newspaper (www.startribune.com)

Smart Computing Magazine (www.smartcomputing.com)

Customer Service 800-733-2809   M-F, 8 AM-8 PM, CST

Customer Support 800-368-8304 $29/yr (including tech support)

Google (www.google.com), Search

Kim Komando (www.komando.com)

Sat. radio (720) program, 7-10 AM

Newsletter

Data Doctor (www.datadr.com)

Sat. radio show (Internet)

Free newsletter

Walt Mossberg http://walt.allthingsd.com/

Computer Hope (free computer hope for everyone)

http://www.computerhope.com/

CyberTechHelp (computer help community), free

http://www.cybertechhelp.com/

IYOGI ($99.99 annual fee)

http://www.iyogi.net/ 800-237-3901

PC Mech

www.pcmech.com

If you have tried all these resources and still find it necessary to call tech support, see "The ABC's of Dealing with Technical Support".

Note: See the Computer Phone Directory to locate a phone number or web site for the hardware or software company you wish to contact.

The ABC's of DEALING with TECHNICAL SUPPORT,

Prior to call

Write down the problem. Notate any error message. See if you can replicate it.

Identification

Determine (for each company) the minimum checklist of information needed to identify you then be prepared to provide it. (This varies by company.)

Technician's Questions

Clearly identify yourself and succinctly present your problem and the situation in which it occurred. Recite any error messages. (I repeat. Write this down before you place the call.) Since most of this support is outsourced, probably to a country with significantly lower costs, you may need some assistance with accents. (I suggest you have a NATO phonetic alphabet chart handy, especially if the call is answered from India.)

Caller's questions

Then, reverse your role and request the spelling of the name of the tech and what city/country they are located. Ask for an identifier (phone extension, ID number, etc.) Ask for a case/ticket number assigned to the call. This will enable you to report whom you were talking with after the mysterious extended hold or dropped phone line occurs.

Qualify the technician

See if you can get them to disclose how long they have been in the job. Ask if they are a level/tier one or two tech or a supervisor. Ask if they have ever handled this question prior your call.

Control length of call

Give them a chance to answer your question but do not agree more than once "to have a few moments" because that is a sign they will need "your time" to learn the answer to your question and then, most likely, it may not be correct. Ask what their steps are going to be to correct the problem. DO NOT HOLD FOR MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES, unless they have come back on the phone to provide an update.

Status Quo or no progress, (the callback)

If you have been placed on hold for an extended period of time or cut off and had to call back-necessitating another queue-indicate the necessity to talk to a level/tier two tech or supervisor. Do this immediately upon completing the identification process stating this has no reflection on the tech but a prior investment in time without resolution. You will be told the call cannot be escalated because no one is available. If the tech persists in attempting to read your case to resolve your issue, thank them for their time and tell them you are going to terminate the call. Then, call back.

<u>Experiences quantified in notes/case numbers</u> (keep a notebook)

After some experience, you will begin to learn that the tech who continues to ask identifier questions and/or speaks slowly requiring every letter of word be verified using the NATO phonetic alphabet (such as "t as in tango") or continually restates your question is likely new to the job and will take a great deal of your time with questionable results. On the other hand, a tech that speaks quickly and comprehends your question is likely on the way to a quick resolution.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Dealing with tech support is a bit like being a "riverboat gambler", as you never know the experience of whoever answers your call.

<u>Resources</u>

"Smart Computing",

Feb. 2008, "Tales from the Trenches", (a technical support survey)

Jan. 2, 2008 "PC Vendors? Tech Support Showdown

Feb. 4, 2008 "Tales from the Trenches"

"PC World"

2/25/04 "Consumer Watch: When Help Is Half A World Away"

3/24/07 "When Companies Outsource Support_ _ To Mars!"

Many articles

http://www.pcworld.com/search?col=hh&qt=tech

"PC Magazine" Many articles

http://www.pcmag.com/search_results/0%2C1208%2C%2C00.asp?qry=tech+support&site=3

COMPUTER PHONE DIRECTORY

1. www.smartcomputing.com,   (40 pages)

Click on Tech Support Center link, Manufacturer Tech Support Index

(company, address, phone, web site)

Scroll to bottom (Page 40) for links to:

2. Microsoft

Microsoft Hardware and Software Vendor Contact Information (A-K)

Microsoft Hardware and Software Vendor Contact Information (L-P)

Microsoft Hardware and Software Vendor Contact Information (Q-Z)

or

http://support.microsoft.com/kb/65416/EN-US/

3. Computer Manufacturer Directory (Best Buy) (15 Pages)

http://www.bestbuy.com/site/olspage.jsp?id=cat12098&entryURLType=&categoryId=cat10001&type=page&entryURLID=&contentId=1043363607945

4. Computer Manufacturer Directory

http://www.bestbuy.com/site/olspage.jsp?id=cat12098&entryURLType=&categoryId=cat10001&type=page&entryURLID=&contentId=1043363607945

NATO Phonetic Alphabet

A - Alpha	**K** - Kilo	**U** - Uniform	**0** - Zero
B - Bravo	**L** - Lima	**V** - Victor	**1** - Wun (One)
C - Charlie	**M** - Mike	**W** - Whiskey	**2** - Two
D - Delta	**N** - November	**X** - X-ray	**3** - Tree (Three)
E - Echo	**O** - Oscar	**Y** - Yankee	**4** - Fower (Four)
F - Foxtrot	**P** - Papa	**Z** - Zulu	**5** - Fife (Five)
G - Golf	**Q** - Quebec		**6** - Six
H - Hotel	**R** - Romeo	**.** - decimal (point)	**7** - Seven
I - India	**S** - Sierra	**.** - (full) stop	**8** - Ait (Eight)
J - Juliet	**T** - Tango		**9** - Niner (Nine)

http://www.dynamoo.com/technical/phonetic.htm