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Hot Dog! Bapa's Owner Says Tech Experts Cures Their Computer Heart Burn

Elaine and Ed Widner, the owners of Café Classics, Bapa's Coney Island and Inga's Bake Shoppe in downtown Monroe, are typical business owners. They work hard to provide outstanding service to their customers, and they rely on their computer systems to manage their business.

Café Classics, the Widner's coffee house, opened in 2004. When they first opened the café, Elaine used a register that was basically a glorified calculator. "It would add things up, but mistakes were never corrected properly," explained Elaine, "which made closing the register at the end of the night difficult."

The Café installed a point of sale system, and hasn't looked back! "Now, I can punch a few buttons and see sales of any product," continued Elaine. "I know when our slow times are and can adjust hours of operation and staffing accordingly."

In June of this year, Ed and Elaine opened Bapa's Coney Island next to the Café. Working on a very tight two week deadline, they had an immense amount of work to do to get opened on time, including the setup of the new point of sale system for Bapa's.

"Tech Experts came in immediately to get the system up and running," said Elaine. "Three of Tech Experts employees were here running wire and phone lines and programming the computer. They made sure I was going to be open on time!"

Bapa's register system includes a front counter computer that is used for entering food orders, processing credit cards and cashing out customers. A printer is located at the counter for printing credit card receipts. A second printer in the kitchen prints orders for the cooks. The point of sale system lets the owners run reports showing food sales by hour, so they can make informed decisions about staffing.

Tech Experts also installed a wireless networking system to connect back office computers, letting Elaine work in her office at the back of Inga's Bake Shoppe, which the Widner's opened in September, right next door to Bapa's. Inga's sells a variety of baked goods, including bread, granola, muffins, cookies and cakes. But more importantly, all three businesses



Inga's Bake Shoppe serves delicious homemade baked goods like bread, muffins, cookies, cakes and pies.

are connected to one another, and work to help each other out. Inga's supplies bread and buns to Bapa's, and baked goods for Café Classics. This allows them to bring the freshest products to their customers.

When asked what she liked most about Tech Experts, Elaine said: "The fact that when I call with a problem, no matter how small, I am taken seriously. I am the least computer literate person you will find. Tech Experts staff is very patient with me and educates me on why a problem happened, and how to prevent future problems. They don't just fix it without explanation. I am involved and educated."

"Three of Tech Experts employees were here running wire and phone lines and programming the computer. They made sure I was going to be open on time!"

Elaine Widner,
Bapa's Coney Island



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Everyone's Talking... So What About The Economy?

"Difficult times are opportunities. Many will struggle, some will fail, but for those who are ready and execute - you can leverage these times to make up ground quickly.

*My advice: **Don't listen to the news. Follow your own plan and make things happen.**"*



Thomas Fox is president of Tech Experts, southeast Michigan's leading small business computer support company.

I'm coming off a marathon couple of weeks of travel... I've been to Council Bluffs, Iowa (near Omaha) for a peer group meeting and to Nashville, Tennessee for a marketing seminar. The one constant everywhere I visited was conversation about the economy. It's the main topic on every news cast, every news paper article, and every news radio program.

Economists are calling what we're experiencing a "precession" rather than a real recession. Activity is stalled because everyone's scared. This isn't to say that the economic pressures aren't real - I talk with clients every day who are experiencing slower sales and slowed collections.

In our business, we've not seen a significant decline in sales so much as we've seen clients slowing their payments. Companies that paid regularly within our net 10 terms are now paying in 30 days. Clients who paid in 30 days are paying at 45. I think everyone is hoarding their cash because they're scared and not sure where things are headed.

Whatever the terminology - slow-down, precession, recession, decline, etc. - that this is the perfect time to be working on our businesses to really take advantage of the situation. What do we need to do when times get a little tougher? Adapt and change! Here are a few thoughts for consideration.

Cash Is King

We need to evaluate how cash leaves and enters our company. Can we cut

some outgo or speed up some inflow? We need to watch cash because he who has it will win. Cash flow is a critical thing to take care of. Watch your A/R and keep it collected. Cut back where it makes sense. Evaluate how the money flows.

Reinvent!

In our business, technology, processes and procedures change constantly. We have to reinvent ourselves pretty regularly to survive. There is no better time than a difficult one to see what needs to be changed or improved in our companies. There are likely things that need to go, and new things that need to be added. Think carefully about your business and what should continue to be part of it.

Get Outside Your Box

Forget "But we've always done it that way." Don't let the norm be the norm - look outside your comfort zone and consider all options. You can't allow the rut to keep you on the wrong path. Creative thinking and planning will be key to coming out of this on the other side.

Plan Carefully!

Planning is always important but never more important than when times are tough. You need to make sure you have a solid plan and your team understands it. There is no money or time to waste, so your plan needs to keep everyone working toward the same goals.

Market Your Business!

We have a client, John Poniewozik from Iceberg's One Hour Heating and Air Conditioning, who has his business marketing down! His promotions are unusual and attention getting. Have you seen his penguin television ads or direct response letters? They're really great. You might think some of our marketing is unusual, and I admit that it is.

But I think that is the key to why it works! Doing the same old boring stuff that every other business with whom you compete is doing, makes your business blend into the background. There is no differentiation - if you market like everyone else, there's no way to tell why your business is better.

I have a friend who is a marketing consultant, and she often talks about how business owners fall into the habit of "ego based marketing." They think "my clients are different" or "my customers would never respond to that type of marketing." Baloney! Customers are craving something different. Use that to get their attention and get them to buy from you instead of your competition.

Execute

As business owners, I think we have a tendency toward perfection. We want everything our companies do to be 100%. I suffer from this myself, and it has been difficult for me to learn and accept that 95% is good enough 95% of the time. We get stuck sometimes in "paralysis by analysis" mode and keep "working on things" and never "getting things done."

Execute on your planning. Execute your marketing strategies. Execute your process improvement projects. There will be time to perfect them as you go along. But when your competitors finally get around to executing their "perfect" plans - you will be that many steps ahead of the game.

Difficult times are opportunities. Many will struggle, some will fail, but for those who are ready and execute - you can leverage these times to make up ground quickly.

My advice: Don't listen to the news. Follow your own plan and make things happen.

What Do You Think?

No doubt about it, turbulent times are ahead. E-mail me your thoughts on how to make the most of the opportunities we'll have to grow and improve our companies over the next year. Send me your comments at: tfox@MyTechExperts.com.





Technical Terms Confusing? Here's An Explanation!



Robert Saylor is a senior network technician and hardware specialist with Tech Experts.

As a technician for over 20 years, I have heard a variety of terms being thrown around and I am sure a lot of these are terms you have heard at one time or another and never knew the true meaning

of the word. I thought that a list of terms most people have heard along with the definitions would help to understand the variety of things that can happen to a computer, but hopefully not yours.

Hang: A totally unresponsive computer is said to be hung, or hanged. You could also use the term frozen, though hang is the accepted term used by computer nerds for generations.

This very thing happened to me just the other day. I was home on my personal PC and I needed to view a webinar on Windows Server 2008. I got ready for the webinar and when the webinar started my computer just froze. I checked with a co-worker to make sure there was nothing wrong with the website. I had to reboot my computer and when I did I was able to view the webinar. My computer had totally hung.

But once the PC came back up I discovered I had a glitch...

Glitch: Whenever the computer does something strange or unexpected or behaves in a manner inconsistent with normal operation, that's a glitch. Glitches happen to everyone.

In this case, my sound did not work. As far as I knew it was working. The sound may have not been working for weeks but you notice it missing only when you otherwise would expect it. Such is the agony of the glitch. When I asked my wife if she had any problems with the computer I got the classic "Oh yeah, I meant to tell you I think the sound is out." Often, you fail to notice a glitch unless it does something that directly affects what you're doing.

Bug: A bug is an error in a computer program. Despite the efforts of the best programmers, most computer software is riddled with bugs. Bugs are what cause computer glitches. Bad bugs can cause a computer to hang or crash.

Note that most of the worst bugs happen when you mix two programs together and they interact in some new and unexpected way.

The term comes from the early days of computing, when a real bug (a moth) got stuck in the circuitry.

Crash: Crash is another term for a dead computer — specifically, what happens to a hard drive when it ceases operation. A crash is typically more sensational than a hang.

Remember that a hang is a freeze. A crash is typically accompanied by spectacular warning messages or



weird behavior (and may indicate more than just a dying hard drive). In fact, a crashed computer may still be teasingly functional. Only the foolhardy continue to use a crashed computer.

If you have been experiencing any of the bugs, glitches, hangs or crashes make sure to visit a professional at Tech Experts as soon as possible so we can do our best to protect your vital information from disappearing forever. You can reach us at (734) 457-5000.

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How To Spot And Protect Yourself From An Infection



Corey Bogedain
is a network technician and web developer with Tech Experts.

Are you finding it harder and harder to protect yourself from malicious attacks from the internet?

To help protect yourself you should first start with how to identify them.

We will start with sorting them in basic categories.

Viruses – they attach themselves to any file so that when you start the program, you activate the virus. These viruses are usually sent through email or downloaded files from the internet.

Worms – worms are just like what they sound. They keep multiplying

and using up all the resources from the computer till the computer comes to a complete stop. These usually are spread through P2P programs and email. They can also be spread over your local network.

Trojans (a.k.a Spyware) – Trojans are the worst. They are used to steal information from the user. They are installed and used without permission and usually have some type of key logger to record what you are typing and send it back to the source so that they can collect credit card numbers and username/password to accounts. These are generally the hardest to find because they usually consists of multiple files.

The best way to protect from and prevent infections is to run the best antivirus/spyware software around. The number one common reason people get infected is not that they

accidentally download it but, that they do not keep track if their antivirus is installed and updated properly.

Just because you see in the bottom corner that your antivirus is running, does not mean its doing its job. Every day you should check to make sure that your antivirus is updating so that you are protected against the most recent infections. By doing that even if you download a virus the antivirus will scan the file and catch it before it gets too late.

If you do not have an antivirus program installed, I recommend installing one as soon as possible.

One of the best currently out right now is Computer Associates E-Trust Integrated Threat Manager and Antivirus. The program isn't free, but is a bargain compared to the cost of downtime and an infection.

How To Keep Hackers At Bay

No one wants to have their network "hacked," but what exactly can a hacker do? Plenty, and you are right to be afraid!

One common way for hackers to access your network is through spyware or viruses, which are malicious programs written to imbed themselves into your network to gather private information, steal financial data, access passwords, e-mail addresses, and spread themselves to other users. But one of the most common ways for hackers to access your system is through e-mail, or spam e-mail to be more specific.

Phishing is when a hacker sends you a legitimate looking e-mail from a trusted source — like PayPal, your bank, eBay, or any number of other legitimate business web sites. These e-mails will tell you that your account is expired or will be closed if you don't go to a designated web site and update or verify your account information.

Although you may have seen these e-mails before, be very careful! Hackers are brilliant

at making not only the e-mail seem legitimate, but also at making the web site you go to look like the real thing.

If you fall prey to their scam, the site will gather your private information and then use that to access your bank account or to charge your credit card. To protect yourself, install a spam filter and NEVER open or respond to any e-mail requesting account verification. Instead, call the company. If it is a legitimate request, you can verify that with them over the phone.



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