

Tech Experts Keeps The Sun Shining For Elektrik Beach

If the winter weather has you missing your tan, chances are you'd love visiting Elektrik Beach, Monroe and Toledo's premier chain of tanning salons.

Since we last profiled Elektrik Beach, the company has added two new locations in Toledo, and updated their computers at all four of their stores. Company president Dennis Asmar keeps his fingers on the pulse of the company's operations by using state of the art computer and network technology from Tech Experts.

"You can go into any of our four locations and tan," explained Dennis, "and our staff is able to review your account to make sure you receive the best service possible."

Being able to use any of Elektrik Beach's facilities is accomplished through the company's proprietary tanning management software. Using secure Internet connections, each store communicates with the central server, keeping each customer's account information up to date.

The company recently upgraded all of their servers and workstations to the latest high speed equipment available from IBM. The company's servers have super fast and highly redundant RAID 5 arrays, using



Elektrik Beach's new Laskey location features an ultra-chic design, the highest quality tanning equipment, and computers and servers from IBM and Tech Experts.

drives that operate at 10,000 rpms. The speed difference between the old system and the new is remarkable.

"Fifteen or twenty seconds doesn't sound like a lot of time to wait," continued Dennis, "but when you have several clients waiting, it can seem like an eternity. With our new systems from Tech Experts, our client wait time has gone way down, while our customer service has gone way up."

Downtime just isn't an option for Elektrik Beach, so Dennis opted for Tech Experts' "Experts Total Support" service for the salons. With Experts Total Support, all of

the servers, workstations and connectivity equipment are monitored for problems 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As soon as a problem is detected, a ticket is raised, and it is immediately checked.

"Before hiring Tech Experts, our network would sometimes go down, run slow, and we'd sometimes run into just weird problems we couldn't figure out," said Dennis. "Since signing up on their support plan, we haven't had any network problems. I'm VERY glad we hired these guys to support our systems."

Visit Elektrik Beach on the web at www.ElektrikBeach.com.



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E-Mail Trouble? Here Are Some Things To Check



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

Have you ever wondered whether someone got your email? You send a message, you wait to hear back, and...nothing. Did it arrive, or did it get lost along the way?

One of modern life's greatest conveniences and frustrations,

all in one, is email. When it works, it's near-instant communication. But when it doesn't, you're left hanging.

How is it possible for such an important form of business communication to be so unreliable? Sadly, spam is to blame - I long for the good old days of reliable e-mail! As companies work to combat junk e-mail, chances are your mail may have some problems getting delivered. Fortunately, a little knowledge will increase the odds that your message gets through.

Bad Address

A common problem is simply an out-dated or mistyped email address.

With hard-to-remember addresses, frequent job moves, and changing internet service providers, your contact list should be updated regularly.

If you send something to a bad address, you usually get an error message sent right back to you. This is called a "bounce-back message" because the email was sent ("bounced") right back without getting through.

Check for typos in the address line; if it looks right, pick up the phone

instead. Be sure to update your address book with the new email.

Blacklists

A more serious problem occurs if your address is added to a blacklist. These are lists managed by a variety of spam-prevention services that flag people, websites, and servers that are known spammers.

Many anti-spam programs rely on these lists to filter out bad email. If you are caught on one, you will undoubtedly have problems delivering your message. Since different email servers rely on different lists, you may find most email gets through and only a few people have problems. Get on a big enough list - or several lists - and the number of issues will increase.

Even the innocent get blacklisted. For example, a spammer may "spoof" your email, making it appear that you are a spammer even though messages come from a completely different source. If you start getting bounce-back messages as mentioned above, that make it appear you sent large batches of obscene or get-rich-quick emails to people you don't know, that's the most likely cause. There's no way to prevent this; wait a couple of days and it will usually subside.

Greylists

A less serious but equally frustrating list is the greylist. Many large organizations will use these to filter email from senders they haven't seen before.

As long as your message isn't spam, this will more likely delay your message than completely block it. However, if you need quick response and the email doesn't arrive for a full day, it creates a significant communications obstacle.

When the delay is a one-time occurrence and your next message gets through, there's no need to do anything. Keep in mind you may encounter delays with several recipients; it's only cause for concern if you run into multiple delays with the same person, or even the same company.

Other Spam Filters

There are a number of additional triggers that can flag your message as spam. Excessive use of the word "free," for example, is commonly associated with spam messages.

Google "spam checker" and you'll find a variety of tools (free!) that will scan your message and tell you how spammy it is. Use these tools when you have an email you plan to send to a large group.

Info Overload

Human error is also a factor. With the sheer volume of email coming into our computers each day, it's challenging to keep email organized.

If your message has been missed, it's always a good idea to follow up with a phone call. Perhaps it didn't arrive, but more likely it came in at a busy time and was accidentally overlooked.

A Convenient Excuse

If you take all these precautions and still your email doesn't get through, and there's no bounce-back message, you may be the victim of a convenient excuse.

If your email isn't rejected, isn't in any spam filter, and yet doesn't show up despite a "careful review"...and all your subsequent tests work just fine...well, let's just say technology may not be your problem.



Laptop Or Desktop? It Depends On Your Application



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

I have noticed an interesting trend lately in our service department at Tech Experts.

We have been seeing an increase in the number of laptop or notebook style computers in for service.

While this may be due to the holiday season and students returning home from school to visit family, I also feel that the falling prices have lead to laptops being much more affordable then in the past.

This got me to thinking about the comparison of laptops versus desktop and the advantages and disadvantages of both.

Many times I have been asked "Which one is better laptop or desktop?" The short answer is "It depends." It basically boils down to what you plan to do with the unit.

Laptops are obviously an advantage for students who must travel not only back home and to school, but they also travel between classes and dorm rooms and restaurants. This portability is also an advantage for business travelers and mobile offices. It is hard to carry a desktop with you in your travels.

And with the popularity of wireless "hotspots" in almost every public place, laptops will continue to grow in popularity.

Some of the disadvantages I have seen with laptops are the ease at which the power jack on the unit

can become loose and the power adapter cannot charge the battery, because the connector is broken and separates from the board - meaning no power is getting to the computer.

This is typically caused by applying some type of force to the plug when it is plugged into the jack. Tipping the laptop so the weight of the unit rests on the plug will cause this problem and care should always be taken not to do this.

While I am on the subject of power adapters, this is another disadvantage of a laptop. We had a call just the other day from a couple travelling from their home in Louisiana that forgot to pack their power adapter.

No power adapter means you cannot charge the battery which means a useless laptop after a few hours of operation. In this case the couple purchased a couple of extra adapters from EBay and discovered it still did not work. After coming into our service department it was quickly discovered that their power jack in the laptop had broken.

Another disadvantage to laptops is the ease at which careless operators can spill liquid onto the keyboard. If you do this on your desktop computer it is really not that big of a deal to purchase a new keyboard at the local computer shop, plug it

in and off you go.

Laptop keyboard replacement is much more difficult and can be a costly repair. You can't just rinse the liquid out. Often the liquid that is still in the keyboard will dry and cause the keys to stick. Care should always be taken to keep all liquids away from laptops.

Desktop computers, although they are not so portable seem to have longer lifespan then laptops. This is mainly due to the fact that they



We prefer IBM/Lenovo Thinkpad notebook computers, but also offer HP and Toshiba machines, depending on your company's needs. This picture of an IBM Thinkpad was taken aboard the space shuttle Endeavour on mission STS-126.

do not get moved very often. If you are going to move your desktop take extra care to treat it very gently as they do not take jolting and jarring well.

I have had people mention to me they don't like to type on a laptop. I prefer the feel of a laptop keyboard to a traditional keyboard, and all laptops can accept USB keyboards if you prefer.

So it "depends" on your situation and requirements for your computing needs. Call us at Tech Experts and we can provide you with the expert guidance needed to make the right decision.



Contact Information

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Simple Tips To Keep You Out Of Computer Trouble

As you can imagine, we see a lot of computer and network issues . Sometimes, they're pretty difficult to diagnose and repair, but in some cases, a simple fix is all you need. Here are some tips you can refer to the next time your computer goes a little crazy, and some advice to keep you out of trouble.

Reboot!

Nine times out of ten, rebooting your computer and connected equipment will solve the problem you're having. Do a full restart, which means go to your Start menu, shut down the computer, and power down your peripherals and computer. Then, restart it fresh.

We know what you did

A good computer consultant can tell if you've been bad or good on your computer, and usually pretty quickly. Tell us what you really did right before the computer crashed – this will save time and aggravation. Your consultant will figure it

out eventually – why not make the repair quicker?

There is no free lunch

Downloading free music, movies and games from the Internet can open holes in the security system of your computer, making it easy for other people to access your files. Be safe... Only use legitimate sites like iTunes and Netflix for your downloads.

Use strong passwords

We walk a fine line in recommending passwords. If they're really easy to remember, that means they're also really easy to guess. If we make the password very hard to guess, it's also going to be very hard to remember.

Here's a suggestion: Create a "main" password which you then modify for each site you use. A good main password would consist of numbers and letters (but not your birth date!).

Try using your first dog's name combined with the address of the first house you lived in, and then add to the password for each site. For example, buffy1944 could be a good base password. Then, you'd add AMZ at the end of your login to Amazon.com – buffy1944AMZ.

Update your antivirus

Hackers don't care that you're too busy to renew your antivirus and anti-spyware software – in fact, they hope you don't! Set your software to update at least once a day and run a full system scan at least once a week.

Public wi-fi is public

If you don't have an urgent need to check your online banking or private e-mail at the coffee house, don't do it. While you're on a public network, even if it is encrypted, a nearby hacker can capture your passwords and other personal information.

Tired Of Cell 411 Charges? Check Out Google's 411

If your cell phone bill keeps creeping higher and higher because of calls to directory assistance, we've got a time and money saver for you. Google's at it again. They are known for easy and free, and GOOG-411 is no exception.

This time they're eliminating those expensive cell phone calls to 411 directory assistance. Their free service helps you find what you need fast and easily, and they'll even connect your call or send you a map to the location.

It's completely voice-activated. Program 1-800-GOOG-411 into your cell phone favorites and you're ready to go. When you've found the business you want, say "text it" to send full details to your

phone, or say "map it" to get a mobile map (assuming your phone has mapping capabilities).

For full details, visit the 1-800-GOOG-411 Home Page at <http://www.google.com/goog411>. Or just program in that number and give it a try.

