

Tech Support Calling? It's Probably A Scam Or Hacker



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

For business computer users, the threat of a security breach is a constant worry.

The thing is, many systems are secure enough from

outside attacks, and many scammers know this.

As a result, scammers have switched tactics and have taken to pretending to be Windows technicians, hoping to get users to give up their credit card information.

This isn't a new scam. Despite news reports and emailed reminders, some people still fall for the ruse.

Social engineering

These social engineering tricks generally follow the same formula: A person calls you pretending to be from the Windows technical team at Microsoft.

The scammer usually tells you that you need to renew your software protection licenses to keep your computer running.

Most of the time, these scammers spread the conversation out over a number of phone calls and emails, the goal being to gain the trust of the user.

Once trust is established, or the user seems interested enough, the crook will offer a seeming sweet deal: They offer a service that makes your computer run like new, usually for a reasonable price.

The scammer will then use remote PC support software to show you 'problems' your computer is having.

They will usually show you the Windows Event Viewer – a part of the OS that shows errors, usually harmless, that your computer has generated.

The scammer will then convince the user that these errors are harmful, and if you have paid, they will make it look like they are cleaning your computer.

If you give them your credit card number, you will likely see ridiculous charges, or even have people trying to access your accounts.

What's being done?

Governments are aware of this increasingly common trick, and some organizations, like the FTC,

have taken measures to shut down scammers.

What can we do?

While action is being taken, these scammers are working hard to steal your credit card and other personal information. To ensure you don't fall prey to this trickery, these five tips should help you identify when an attempted scam is at play:

- Microsoft doesn't call people.
- Windows Event Manager is a log of errors for ALL programs.
- Microsoft employees will never ask for your passwords.
- Most of these scammers operate out of call centers in India, but bill from the US.
- Microsoft employees won't usually ask you to install software that's not made by Microsoft.

As a rule of thumb: If you get an unsolicited call about your computers and IT security, it's likely not genuine. If these criminals provide you with a website, do a quick Google search to see if there have been any scam reports.

If you're concerned your credit card or other information may have been compromised, please call us right away for a complimentary security assessment.

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The Importance Of Planning Your Computer Upgrades

by *Jeremy Miller, Technician*

When considering upgrades to your computer or network, planning is a very important part of the process. Planning can save you a lot of wasted time and money.

When planning your upgrades you will want to think about what all is involved and attempt to address any issues prior to installation to prevent down time as much as possible.

First you will need to understand what you need to upgrade. Can you upgrade your current setup or will you have to purchase entirely new equipment to upgrade? There are many components of an upgrade that may not work together with older technology.

You can find this a lot if you upgrade to a new workstation and some of your software is not compatible with the new operating system on the computer.

You will also find that older hardware sometimes cannot be upgraded with new hardware without replacing the motherboards or the whole computer.

Hardware and software both have limits on how much other software and hardware that they support.

A good example of this is: If you bought a good computer about 8 years ago the maximum amount of RAM you could use was about 4 gigabytes. It is now common to have

4 gigabytes to be the minimum amount of RAM installed.

Some software out there will not even run well unless it is over 4 gigabytes of RAM. The old computer cannot be upgraded with more RAM so you would need to purchase a new computer in order to get more RAM.

If you were to buy the RAM to up-

grade the computer you may have just wasted time and money. This is why planning is so important.

out of any device whether it is a desktop, laptop, printer or other device. If your equipment is that old or older it is usually better to replace the equipment.

There are many reasons for upgrading versus updating. The biggest reason is that it is time to replace. Usually five years after you purchase your computer there is software and hardware that will make it very easy to upgrade.

If you wait much longer then your existing equipment will not be easily upgraded to the newer computers.

When you plan to upgrade your computers you can save money by getting deals or specials. This is because when you plan, you know what you will need and you can wait for sales or promotions.

If you do not plan then more than likely you will be upgrading when your computers start causing issues. This is not a good practice. You will end up having more down time due to low-performing computers and the time it will take to get the faulty computers fixed or replaced can easily end up costing more than the cost of replacing your workstations regularly.

We are always consulting clients and helping with upgrades and migrations, if you have any questions feel free to contact us. We are more than happy to help you with any sort of computer or network upgrades.



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Why Third-Party Monitoring And Managed Services?

As technology advance and organizations face increasing demands for efficiency in their business, their IT infrastructures have become increasingly complex. Applications are far more interdependent than ever before, and their business tools, whether hardware or software, are making up a diverse web of systems from a wide range of vendors.

The challenges of dealing with this complexity are something that businesses have to deal with on a daily basis. In a recent study, nearly 50% of global business leaders have called “increased reliance on technology” the No. 1 risk to their organizations. Another 37% said the “business complexity of the organization” is their top risk.

All the same, businesses need to deliver high performance and high availability, typically without accompanying increase in budgets to accomplish these goals.

So how can companies cope with the dual challenges of managing an increasingly complex infrastructure, while remaining focused on achieving business goals and delivering high quality products and services to their clients?

Organizations are increasingly turning to third party providers that delivers advanced monitoring and resolution services for your IT assets.

If you work with a knowledgeable vendor—one that is familiar with your infrastructure—there are big advantages to taking this approach, including:

- Lower total cost of ownership
- Higher availability of applications
- Reduced downtime, (planned

or unplanned)

- Reduced workload on your own people to deal with IT issues
- Improved application performance
- Ability to proactively monitor and thereby mitigating issues as they arise, as opposed to after it's too late

An advanced monitoring and resolution service should consist of 24/7 secure remote monitoring and resolution delivered by skilled engineers using proven practices.

The service should offer rigorous security certifications to ensure remote experts safely deliver proactive monitoring and administration of internal applications and hardware systems.

Don't think of it simply as an outsourcing solution. Rather, think of it as a team of experts supplementing your own team, providing a number of products and solutions that it would be next to impossible to maintain in-house.

Because of the complexity of today's systems, it is often difficult to identify exactly where and why systems fail. This can result in dissatisfied customers and less productive workers.

These problems can be severe enough to put the organization at risk. With proactive monitoring and advanced support, however, the organization will be made aware when (and why) vulnerabilities occur.

An advanced monitoring service means looking after performance or availability of all your critical systems and applications. This monitoring can extend through your

entire infrastructure—applications, databases, servers, storage, networks and backup. Problems, can be addressed using best practices for incident, change and problem management.

As a client, you can choose to deploy the services according to your own needs, from full remote services to full onsite solutions or some combination.

The process of monitoring and remediating problems within your IT, you will learn a lot about your risks and vulnerabilities. Are there peak usage times that are impacting application slowing down the performance of mission-critical applications? The key is to continuously improve performance and availability.

You should meet regularly with your professional services team to review processes and set strategies for continual performance improvement. You should also have a plan that includes regular hardware and software health checks.

Your company gets the revenue as well as interacts with your customers through your applications. When performance slows down, the entire business suffers and is put at risk for lost revenues, lost profits, lost customers and general damage to your brand.

Advanced monitoring and resolution services lets you keep track of application performance at all times. Monitoring agents create alerts when systems or applications are under-performing, so you can fix issues before they impact the company further.

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Contact Information

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Why Third-Party Monitoring And Managed Services, Continued From Page 3

End-user monitoring takes the service a step further, whereby you can collect, process and present details — even going so far as to track user requests and follow them through to resolutions.

You can collect information on the length of time it takes to complete a business transaction and the length of time it takes to search, select and pay for a specific product. You can easily see how you can improve revenue and profits.

Predictive incident management diagnostics lets your vendor partner identify issues with configurations and performance before they become full-scale problems.

For example, advanced monitoring lets a service provider leverage complex algorithmic models and thereby identify potential issues with individual transactions within the database.

Advanced monitoring and resolution delivers significant improvements in IT support. You

can measure the performance in meeting service requests, including trends on how long it takes for repairs to be performed, response by incident type, and reporting and measure performance against standards on all systems, including backup, emergency storage and system uptime.

A third-party supplier will have access to tools, methodologies and best practices your organization may not even be aware of.

Advanced monitoring and resolution is what they do every day, so your organization is always taking advantage of the experience the vendor has gained from working with other businesses, as well as the latest in diagnostic and recovery tools.

They often employ thorough diagnostic tool sets that cover all your systems. By using these tools, they are able to identify and qualify new incidents, automatically compare new incidents with a knowledge base of past incidents, and use

the past experiences as the basis to quickly and effectively resolve issues.

Clearly you will want advanced monitoring and resolution to deliver 24/7 support for all your systems, databases and mission-critical applications. But some vendors can also offer more specialized services, such as end-user monitoring; firewall and VPN management; continuous risk assessment application management; and intrusion detection systems to mention but a few.

Because IT has grown in complexity, it is difficult and costly to hire and retain all the in-house expertise required to manage everything.

The other problem comes with internal politics, often resulting in finger-pointing than actual problem solving. An outside vendor gives you not only access to a team of service professionals with deep expertise. They are focused on fixing your problems, and not assigning blame.

Enhance Your B2B Digital Strategy

The word digital is still a bit of a taboo in the B2B world with most companies still having not fully integrated digital strategies into their marketing efforts.

Many B2B executives remain unconvinced that digital marketing will really assist them to take their company to new levels. They believe their services or products are too niche to work on social media, yet this notion fails to hold water when the efforts of similar entities are taken into account.

One good tip for B2B companies that have yet or are just starting to

enter the digital age is to embrace inbound marketing.

Search engines are used by around 93% of all B2B buyers when they start the process of purchasing. This makes search engine advertising a potentially huge tool, allowing the customer to discover the company on their own without the need for cold calling, direct mail or TV and radio ads.

Showing that you are a trusted advisor is the key to making this technique work. Once the prospect contacts you, it is crucial

to talk to a client in the manner of a normal conversation rather than a hard sell.



Back Seat Pilots: another reason to make cockpits inaccessible to passengers.