

Introduction

This edition is a reflection on the kinds of jobs I have done in the last twelve months, and what that analysis implies for you.

Kinds of Jobs

Most people get in touch with me when:

- their computer has broken down/stopped working/not working as it should;
- they have caught a computer virus.

But there is also another quite common reason - customers contact me because their PC is unacceptably slow.

I suspect that in more prosperous times, people would have decided to get a new PC with the latest operating system, as a way of getting a faster computer. Perhaps it is a sign of the times that more people are turning to someone like me to improve their current model's performance, to keep it going just that bit longer.

What do we mean by the computer's speed?

When we talk about a computer's "speed", we are referring to a combination of factors:

- the speed of the processor (the PC's "beating heart");
- the amount of RAM installed (the PC's short-term, working memory);
- the spin speed of the hard drive (bound to get slower as the hard drive ages);
- the amount of "clutter" on the hard drive left over by Windows;
- how fragmented the files and programs are on the hard drive.

Then we have to factor in the internet connection speed, because many of you tell me that the computer "...is so slow getting on the internet."

Again, there are multiple factors that affect internet connection speed:

- the speed you are paying for - the more you pay, the faster the connection;
- the time of day - early mornings and late afternoon can be slower;
- whether you connect via wireless or on a wire;
- the amount of RAM and the speed of the processor.

So, it's not easy to pinpoint one clear cause for a slow computer - I wish it were, as I'd make a fortune very quickly!

But that does not mean that nothing can be done. Far from it.

I can confidently say that in 99.9% of cases, a Full Service will result in a noticeable gain in speed.

"Speed" here means the time it takes for the PC to wake up, load programs, get on the internet, and shut down.

The aim of a Full Service is to make the machine work faster - and I want you to notice that.

A Full Service - the Key Features

First, we have to get rid of space-hogging clutter. Windows is deliberately slow to shut down because it is saving lots of information about how your computer is set up. Then, next time it is switched on, it will return to how it was when you switched off.

That's brilliant, of course, but what's not so good is that much of that information is not removed after it has been used.

Plus, when you go on the internet, the computer again stores lots of information that it expects to use next time you go to a particular website – temporary internet files.

Windows does have some in-built programs to clean clutter, but I use software that is more rigorous, thus freeing up more space.

After that, a defragment is necessary, to make best use of the available hard disk space. As a result, programs are accessed more smoothly, and files are loaded more quickly.

Upgrades

OK, so a new PC is not possible. But you do not have to put up with the (less than satisfactory) current performance.

Adding more RAM can make a noticeable difference, especially in laptops. It's a cost-effective way of improving your computer's performance as well as extending its useful life.

Another way of giving your PC a new lease of life is to upgrade the operating system, i.e., Windows.

If you are running a version of Windows before XP, I'm afraid it is time to get a new PC. Versions before XP are no longer "supported", which means there are no more updates, which means they are vulnerable to malware attacks.

In two years' time, Windows XP will be in the same category. You will still be able to use XP, but it will increasingly become a security risk.

My advice is that by 2014 you should either upgrade to the latest version of Windows (the current version is Windows 7), or buy a new PC (which will have the latest Windows already loaded).

Some PCs running XP or Vista can be upgraded to Windows 7, but not all. If you let me know, I'll include **a Windows 7 Readiness Evaluation** as part of my next service for you, complete with print-out – for free!

Conclusion

With a modest outlay, you can look forward to improved PC performance. A regular TLC service will make sure your PC's health is checked as well as keeping its performance up to scratch. I now have a number of customers who I contact every six months for a service. It gives them peace of mind, whether they are home users or business users.

For lots of very good reasons we rely on these machines, for communication, storage of precious memories and documents, carrying out business, fun and games – there are lots of very valid purposes for using a PC.

If I don't already contact you every 6 months, let me know and I'll put you in the diary – **peace of mind at an affordable price**. (I think I'll use that as my new business "strap-line"!)

I look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, enjoy your computer!

All good wishes,

Chris

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