

Consumer Awareness Guide To Choosing An Honest, Reliable, and Competent Computer Repair Technician

Don't Trust Your Computer or The Irreplaceable Files On It To Just Anyone!

Hiring the wrong computer repair guy can not only be incredibly frustrating and expensive, but you could end up losing ALL of your irreplaceable files, photos, music, e-mails, and other important documents!

Read this guide and you'll discover:

- ✓ Computer scams and rip-offs that you MUST be aware of.
- ✓ 5 Costly misconceptions about computer maintenance and repair.
- ✓ Viruses, worms, spyware, and hackers: what you need to know to protect yourself.
- ✓ 7 Questions you need to ask before buying any computer equipment.
- ✓ 5 Critical characteristics you should demand from your computer repair technician.
- ✓ Why you need to avoid “cheap” or “bargain” computer repair shops.
- ✓ The one surefire sign that you should run – not walk – out of a computer repair shop.

Provided as an educational service by:

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From The Desk of:
Bart Uguccione
Geek-In-Charge
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Dear Fellow Computer User,

There are no shortages of horror stories about fly-by-night computer repair shops causing problems as a result of their unethical or incompetent behavior. I'm sure if you talk to your own friends and family you will get an ear-full of the unfortunate experiences they have encountered in this area.

You see, the computer industry, along with a lot of other industries, has its own share of unethical businesses who will always try to take advantage of uneducated buyers in their greed for easy money. Fortunately, businesses like these are the minority, but we know they exist because we have had a number of customers come to us to clean up the disasters they have caused.

Another big problem of the computer industry is that it is not regulated like many other industries. Automotive repair shops, electricians, plumbers, lawyers, realtors, dentists, doctors, accountants, and even restaurants (to name a few) are heavily regulated to protect the consumer from receiving substandard work or getting ripped off. However, the computer industry is still very new and there aren't any laws in existence to protect the consumer.

Anyone who can turn a computer on can market themselves as a computer repair technician or shop. Even if they are honestly trying to do a good job for you, their inexperience can cost you dearly in your machine's performance or in lost or corrupt data files. That is why we decided to offer this report.

The information in this Guide is provided to help raise standards within the computer repair and support industry, and to give YOU useful information to help you guard against the unethical or incompetence of some companies and technicians.

The Five Most Costly Misconceptions About Computer Maintenance and Repair

#1: If your computer is working fine right now, it does not need any maintenance.

This is probably one of the biggest and most deadly misconceptions that most computer users fall victim to. Computers are just like cars. If you don't change the oil, change the filter, rotate the tires, flush the transmission, and perform other regular maintenance on your car, it will eventually break down and cost you FAR MORE to repair than the cost of the basic maintenance.

There are certain maintenance checks that need to be done daily (like virus updates and spam filtering), weekly (like system backups), and monthly or quarterly (like checking for and installing security patches and updates, disk defrag, spyware detection and removal, checking the surge suppressor and the integrity of the hard drive, and so on). Your computer repair technician should be adamant that you have regular maintenance done on your machine and should offer to set up automatic virus definition updates, spam filtering (to avoid viruses), and automatic system backups OFF-SITE.

If your technician does not press you to let him do this for you, then RUN – don't walk – out of their office. Lack of system maintenance is the NUMBER ONE reason most people end up losing valuable files and incurring heavy computer repair bills. If your technician isn't offering you these services, you need to find someone else to support your computer or network for two reasons:

1. Either they don't know enough to make this recommendation, which is a sure sign they are horribly inexperienced, *OR*
2. They recognize that they are *profiting* from your computer problems and don't want to recommend steps towards preventing you from needing their help on an ongoing basis.

Either reason is a good one to get as far away from that person as possible!

#2: The maintenance tools provided in the Microsoft Operating System and software are all the maintenance you need.

Again, this is a terrible misconception. Microsoft does NOT include ALL of the security features to protect your data from viruses, hackers, and data loss or prevent your PC from running slowly.

Additionally, Microsoft (and other software vendors for that matter) are constantly providing critical patches and updates to their software to protect you from viruses and hackers. However, if you don't know to look for them, or if you don't know how to install them properly, you could easily end up getting burned.

#3: My nephew / neighbor's kid / brother-in-law knows this computer stuff and can help me solve my problems.

If only this were true. Obviously, not all technicians are created equal. Just because a person is good with computer applications (what we call a power user) does NOT mean they know how to install a critical security patch, detect and extract a deadly virus, or upgrade your machine.

Most people look for a part time “guru” to help them save money, but this often comes back to haunt them. Every day we get new customers who walk into our shop needing us to clean up a mess that was caused by an inexperienced neighbor, friend, or relative who was just trying to help. If the person you have working on your machine does not do computer repair and support for a living, there is a good chance they won’t have the knowledge or experience to truly help you. Technology advances at lightening speed and it takes constant learning and practice to master it. If your part-time technician is not working on PCs and networks every day, they probably only know enough to be dangerous.

#4: You can always get a better deal on computer software, equipment, or services by shopping online.

The key word here is “deal”. Sure you can always find a cheaper price if you shop online, but you might actually end up getting the short end of the stick. As with anything in life, you get what you pay for. Companies simply cannot give you dirt cheap prices AND champagne service.

If you are getting a cheap bargain, chances are you will get very little if NO service after the sale. If something goes wrong, or if you just have a question, you might find out that the customer service line only goes to a voice mail box that never gets checked, or that you have to submit questions via e-mail that takes DAYS to return.

Before you buy ANY computer equipment, make sure you know the answers to these questions:

1. How long have they been in business? The last thing you want to do is buy a lemon of a computer from a fly-by-night organization. Thanks to the Internet, ANYONE can set up a website and start selling computer equipment, parts, and software. That is why you want to look for a company that has been in business for 5 years or more.
2. What is their guarantee or warranty on the equipment or services you are buying? As a standard rule, they should offer one year replacement warranty on all parts at a minimum.
3. How do they handle returns and exchanges? Do you have to ship the defective item back to them on your dime or do they arrange to have it picked up? Do they send the replacement first? What is the guaranteed turnaround time for an item? This is why many people prefer to buy all equipment from a local vendor. If something goes wrong, you can drive to the store, speak to a real person, and get an instant replacement in most cases.
4. What type of help desk support do you offer? If you are like me, you want to speak directly to a knowledgeable technician when you need help. However,

many companies only offer e-mail and web-based support, and charge a hefty fee for anything outside of that. Which brings me to the next question...

5. Is your support free or charged by the minute? Make sure you are very clear on what support is free and what is fee-based.
6. Where is their help desk and customer service office located? Many of the big vendors are shipping their help desk support overseas to save money. While this works out great for them, it can be incredibly frustrating when you are trying to communicate with their customer support representatives.
7. Do YOU really know how to install, configure and troubleshoot this new device? If not, you may want to consider hiring a qualified technician to install it. Quite often, drivers and software can conflict and cause problems and unless YOU have installed this device before, it might be worth the small fee to get someone else to do it for you.

#5: All computer repair shops are created equal. Your best option will be the one who offers the lowest price.

As we stated a moment ago, you get what you pay for. A cheap price usually means a cheap job. Really good technicians do NOT work cheap because they are in high demand. The only technicians that will work cheap are those that are just starting and or are grossly inexperienced.

With your valuable data, precious family photos, favorite music files, and other irreplaceable documents at stake, do you REALLY want the cheapest technician working on your machine?

We take the view that most people want value for money and simply want the job done right. You will find that we are not the cheapest and we do not apologize for that. You will also find that we are not the most expensive. We simply feel that we should offer a good service at a fair price. That's why we have been able to stay in business for over 7 solid years.

5 Critical Characteristics You Should Demand From Your Computer Repair Guy or Shop

- 1. Demand that they have multiple technicians on staff.** If you rely on a "one-man-band" operation, you might find yourself without any help when they go on vacation, get sick, or when they are simply too busy servicing other customers. Having multiple technicians on staff is not a guarantee of fast, reliable service, but you are far more likely to have someone to talk to when you have a problem.

Another reason you want a shop that has multiple technicians is because no one

computer guy – no matter how good – has infinite knowledge about every type of software, hardware, and platform. Multiple technicians mean multiple skill sets and a higher likelihood that your computer problem will get resolved faster.

2. **Demand someone who has a long-standing reputation.** Let's face it; there are a lot of other computer repair technicians out there, but many of them are new or just getting started. You want to make sure you avoid hiring a fly-by-night technician between jobs that sets up shop one day, and is out of business within a month or a year. Only deal with computer technicians and repair shops that have a proven track record in your area A2 Computers has been servicing customers in the Ann Arbor and surrounding counties for over 7 years now.
3. **Demand that they have specific knowledge or expertise on solving your particular problem.** Do NOT let someone practice on your machine. If they have not worked on your problem before, they should TELL you that in advance. There is too much risk involved financially and in your data and equipment.
4. **Demand that your technician backs up your system BEFORE working on it.** This is just common sense. Don't let them touch your machine before your entire system is securely backed up just in case something goes wrong.

Demand that your machine comes back with the same settings, look, preferences, and applications that you had on it prior to the work. There are a lot of second-rate shops with inexperienced technicians who will end up causing you more problems than you bargained for. Very frequently, these inexperienced technicians will recommend that you wipe out your hard drive and re-install Windows to fix a problem. This means you lose all of your settings and preferences, as well as losing all of the software programs you have installed. This should ONLY be done as a last resort.

WARNING: In addition to wiping out your hard drive, some of these shops will put illegal software on your machine using a stolen license. Not only is this illegal and putting you in a position to get fined, but most illegal software (especially Microsoft's) is locked, which means you cannot download and update critical security patches. This leaves you unable to update your machine and protect it from deadly viruses, worms, and hackers.

**Don't just take our word for it...
"google" computer rip off!**

PC World Article

PC Repair Rip-Off! PC World went undercover to see how well four big national computer chains diagnose and repair simple problems. We discovered a couple of standout stores - and a shocking degree of incompetence.

People have been grouching about how much it costs to fix their PCs since the first Altair rolled out of a storefront in Albuquerque, New Mexico, more than 20 years ago. Misleading estimates, rude and occasionally dishonest technicians, and big repair bills seem to be alarmingly typical these days. But are the horror stories just isolated cases? To find out, PC World conducted a detailed investigation of service stores. Posing as unsophisticated customers, PC World reporters in six cities tested 20 branches of four giant computer chains. After reading this article, you'll never view computer service the same way again.

Best Buy, CompUSA, Computer City, and RadioShack all have bold slogans: "You Have Questions, We Have Answers," trumpets RadioShack. "World Class Customer Service," boasts Computer City. The others are similarly self-assured.

Do they live up to their billing? The answer affects a lot of you: These four chains are the biggest companies that repair a wide range of major-brand PCs. Each of them has a strong national presence, repairs computers not purchased in its own stores, and advertises widely. In short, each represents a primary choice for most consumers. According to the trade magazine Computer Retail Week, these chains collectively account for more than one-third of the \$29 billion earned last year by the top 100 computer retailers.

And the big four provided a far greater percentage of repair services because many of the top retailers are direct-mail companies (such as Micro Warehouse) or discount houses (such as Costco) that do not repair the machines they sell.

That turns out to be bad news for consumers. Take RadioShack. In our tests, it properly fixed only two PCs in five tries; one store took 25 days to complete work and even then didn't detect the source of the problem. Because RadioShack offers no phone support--for free or fee--perhaps it should change its slogan to the more apt "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

(read the entire article at http://www.pcworld.com/article/3764/pc_repair_ripoff.html)

The A2 Computer's Customer Bill Of Rights

We challenge you to find another Computer Service Center in the greater Ann Arbor area that would **dare make these promises:**

- 1. We'll Respond Within 60-Minutes or Less - Guaranteed.**
When you call us with a computer problem, we guarantee that your phone call will be either answered immediately or returned within 60 minutes by an experienced technician who can assist you with your computer problem.

2. **Lightning Fast Repairs.** You should not have to wait for days or weeks to get your computer repaired. We understand how important your computer is to you, so we guarantee service by the close of the next business day - or it's free.

Our guarantee to our valued customers is that we will perform complete, accurate and comprehensive testing of your PC or Laptop, diagnose the exact cause of your computer's problem and present you with a detailed written estimate before the close of next Business day.... *or The Diagnostic Charge is FREE!*

You should not have to pay extra for Lightning Fast Repairs!

3. **No Geek Speak.** You deserve to get answers to your questions in PLAIN ENGLISH. Our technicians will not talk down to you or make you feel stupid because you don't understand their "geek speak".
4. **100% Unconditional Satisfaction Guarantee.** We are here for your convenience, and will make whatever adjustments necessary to accommodate you. You deserve complete satisfaction with our products and services. We will do whatever it takes to make you happy. No hassles, no problems.
5. **No Unpleasant Or Unexpected Surprises.** You should EXPECT that no damage will be done to your computer or network. Before we start working on your computer or network, we will evaluate your problem and alert you to any potential risks involved in servicing your computer or network. If there are any risks, they will be explained in full, and your authorization and consent will be obtained before any work begins. You can also choose to have your data backed up before we start any work on your machine.
6. **All Projects Completed On Time and On Budget - Guaranteed.** When you hire us to complete a project, we won't nickel and dime you with "unforeseen" or "unexpected" charges. Some incompetent or unethical technicians will do this because they haven't properly planned or researched the project, OR they use it as a way to extract more money from you. Either way, we don't feel that is correct or

ethical. That's why we guarantee all projects to be done ON TIME with no excuses.

7. **Accurate Billing - Guaranteed.** Every bill you receive from us is guaranteed to be accurate and detailed. You'll know exactly what you are paying for, and ALL charges will be pre-approved by you. No more one-line "mystery" bills that don't outline what you are paying for.

A large proportion of our business comes from referrals from happy, satisfied customers. We want you to recommend us and we know that you will only do this if you are happy with the services we provide.

That is the reason why we work so hard and go above and beyond the call of duty.

Don't Take Our Word For It; Just Listen To What Our Customers Have To Say...

Thank you all for your data rescue. I have pretty much everything except for my iTunes music, but most of that is still on my iPod. I should be able to transfer that back.

I am so relieved - you guys are awesome!!!

(I have new back-up procedures now! - My documents are going on DVDs as well as my WD drive!!!)

*Thanks again
Patty Potter*

Hi Bart,

I just wanted to let you know that I brought in my computer last Friday, picked it up on Saturday and Ryan was a great at getting it together for me and very helpful. Nice kid. Once again I am recommending your service to my co-workers and friends. Sincerely, Lynn

*Lynn Holland
UMHSCCC
Assistant Director*

FREE Problem Prevention Audit for All New Customers

As a prospective customer, we would like to offer you a \$297 Problem Prevention Audit of your computer for FREE.

During this audit we will do a comprehensive 27-point audit of your computer to look for potential problems, security loopholes, spyware, and other computer problems that will cause your computer to run slow, act funny, crash, and lose data.

We will:

- ✓ Scan for hidden spyware, malware, and viruses that MOST anti-virus tools and software can't detect or won't remove
- ✓ Check for security updates
- ✓ Review your firewall and security settings
- ✓ Check the integrity of your hard drive
- ✓ Audit your virus definitions and protection
- ✓ Review your system backup and restore
- ✓ Remove unwanted programs and ad-ware that slow down your PC

All you have to do is contact us for ANY computer repair or service and we'll do this comprehensive audit for FREE!

How To Request Your FREE Problem Prevention Audit:

Simply call us at (734) 717-9898

Or visit our website

www.a2computers.com/free_audit.htm