Managing Tech Support

People come first

By Steve Gibbs

If we can make our people happy and our computers invisible, our problems are almost over.

-- me

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Misery loves company

Raise your hand if any of the following statements fit your school…

Our technicians understand computers much better than they understand people

Our process for receiving support is more complicated than the problem

We use the Mom and Pop approach: site by site, dept by dept, word of mouth, casual, decentralized, semi-skilled

Long waits compel teachers to create alternative lesson plans that exclude technology

Security interferes with system maintenance

District and sites have control issues, philosophical differences

Make People Happy from the top down

- Parent, school board and administrator advocates – email them with tech news!

- Competent, approachable **district technology leader** with a public presence (our psychologist?)

- On-site **system and curriculum people** with quick response times, strong skills, a willingness to learn, and access to tools and training

- On-site staff with access to tools, training and speedy repairs

- Students who are part of the tech support team in a meaningful way

Tech support must be divided into

- System support

- Curricular support

The medium and the message

System support and curricular support should be run by separate people

- System and **curricular** support both require tremendous dedication
- It would take years to achieve prominence in either one
- One person cannot dedicate enough time to both fields to do them justice
- This presentation focuses on **System Support**

System Support Topics

- Assessment
- One person clearinghouse
- Simple forms
- Budget
- Necessary supplies on-hand
- Spoken requests
- The paper trail
- Online FAQ
- Protect people's files
- Balance between security and system maintenance
- Involve students in a meaningful way
- PEBCAK errors

Get yourself an ISTE Profile

- Want an objective evaluation and professional recommendations for your school?

- The International Society for Technology in Education has a Technology Profile

- tsi.iste.org/profile/

One Person who knows what's going on

- Have one person on-site who takes all the calls, knows of all pending and finished work requests; be sure all faculty members know to contact this person (VP, secretary, system technician, helpdesk person)

- Provide several easy sources of contact: Paper Form, Online Form, emergency phone and email

- This one person must make available records that can be understood by anybody

About simple forms

- Keep the form simple
- Keep required questions to a minimum
- Make any trend data gathering optional
- Technician can gather trend data after the problem is fixed
- Make fixing the problem paramount to finishing the paper trail

A CLUTTERED FORM

- Date _____ Time _____
- Name _____
- Room _____
- Phone _____
- Email _____
- Cell _____
- Fax _____
- Dept _____
- Seniority _____
- Date problem surfaced _____

What were you doing at the time of the problem? _____

Were you doing something for school or for yourself? _____

Computer model and serial numbers _____

How often has this problem occurred? _____

What have you done to try and fix it yourself? _____

Did you Reboot? _____

Have you tried Safe Mode? _____

Did you try Ctl+Alt+Del? _____

- Circle Type(s) of problem(s)

Hardware – disk, memory, CMOS, RAM, Power Supply

Software – DLL, application, utility, OS, browser

What do you think the problem is?

Please allow 2 weeks for processing

A quick, easy form

Technician Service Call Request

Name _____   Room # _____   Phone extension _____   Date _____
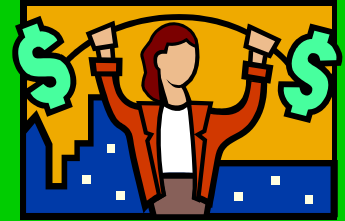
Describe your problem/need:

Time Preference: t Any   t 6th Period   t Other _____

Budget Wisely!!

- Always consider the **TCO**

- # Total Cost of Ownership
  - "Taking TCO to the Classroom" is a report full of cost- analysis guidelines for public schools developed by the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)
 - www.cosn.org/

Some TCO facts

- Software and online subscriptions could average 26-percent of a school lab's annual budget

- 20-30-percent of tech budget should go to training

- Minimum of 5 days training per year per teacher

- Be wary of donations

- Retire computers after five years, or experience an increase in servicing and upgrading components

- 39.6 percent of districts surveyed frequently used teachers to provide support

- Keeping all systems identical saves time and money

© www.classroomtco.org/checklist/

Budget sources
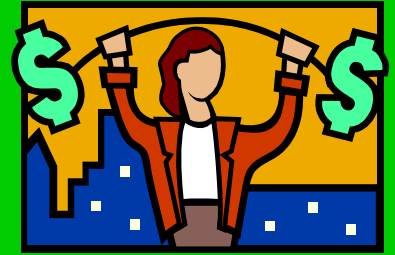
- www.ed.gov/Technology

- www.netc.org/grants

- www.schoolgrants.org

- California:

- www.cde.ca.gov/digitalhigh

- www.cde.ca.gov/digitalhigh/tsst.htm

- learning.kern.org/ctap/

Get StarOffice free from Sun Microsystems

TCO: Have necessary supplies on-hand

- Drive images on the server or burned to CD
- Copies of all software and drivers on CD
- Diagnostic hardware and software
- Extra drives, RAM, audio, video, network cards and cable
- Several working computers ready to go online
- Broken computers need to be either fixed, dismantled into parts, or discarded
- Keep a lock on necessary tools and testing devices
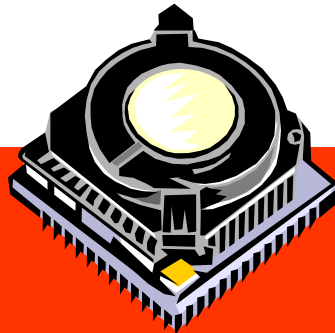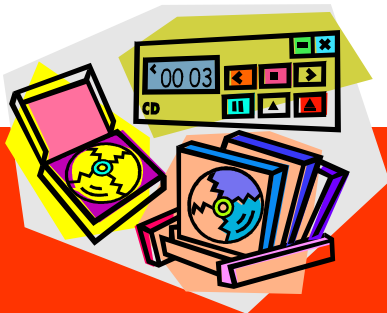
Spoken work requests
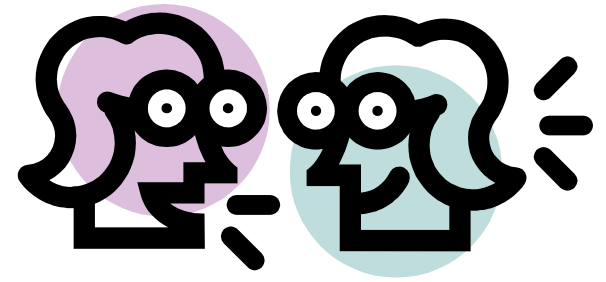
- Spoken requests and promises tend to fade from memory. Either respond immediately to spoken requests, or insist they be written to an official Work Request Form

- If you promise and forget, your customer will become disgruntled

- Document spoken requests at the end of the day, if you remember…

Keep a happy paper trail…

- Paper and online forms must merge
- All site records, be they paper or digital, should be kept in the same room or on the same hard drive, with duplicates and backups sent elsewhere
- Trend data can be useful; collect it and hang onto it
- Inventories of hardware and software must stay refreshed
- Create a database if you can find someone to dedicate to the task
- Some use MS Access, believe it or not.
- There are plenty of specialized database titles to chose from; just be sure to save in a format that is understandable, exportable, and sharable

http://www.asksam.com/brochure.asp
www.dbandsons.com/products.htm
www.deksoftware.com/hdm/index.html
www.helpdeskpro.net/
www.opinionpower.com

Benicia High
Trend Data
tracked online

FAQ

- Provide a FAQ sheet or handbook for teacher classrooms

- Provide an online FAQ
  - Describe basic system and network use
  - List the most basic troubleshooting first steps
  - List some advanced steps
  - Share tips and tricks
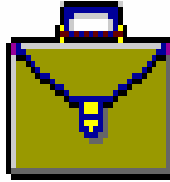 - Link to additional resources

Protect People's Files

- Usually when a teacher loses his grades the first words out of his mouth are, "I hate technology."

- It does no good to discuss options for backup after-the-fact

Options for Backup

- Maxim: **Store in MORE THAN ONE PLACE**
- Store files on a server that is protected, backed up, and accessible across campus
- Store files to a Zip disk or burn them to CD

- Best of all: **Free Internet storage!!**

- **Do you** YAHOO!

YAHOO! Briefcase

Yahoo! Briefcase

Your Briefcase address: http://briefcase.yahoo.com/sgibbz

File Folders

📁 My Documents   Add

📁 Public   Add

Using 13.58 of 30.00 MB (45%)
of your Photos/Briefcase quota

Need More Space?
Buy More Storage

Add Files

Import/Upload your files to the Web...

Share with Friends

Share your files with friends and family...

Announcements

Yahoo! Briefcase is still the easiest way to put yo
online and share them with friends or co-workers

- Get 30 MB of space, absolutely free
- Get an additional 50 MB for only $29.95
- Access your important files from anywhere
- Save Yahoo! Mail attachments directly to yo
  Yahoo! Briefcase

yahoo.com/bc/sgibbz/nbc_do_bub_action?.action=share&.src=bc

Balance Security and Maintenance

Here is what I see too often: computer labs with huge backlogs of updates pending and no administrative password available

Often teachers are denied install privileges for security reasons – to protect against illegal, destructive or intrusive installations

Restricting rights to install software, however, also restricts teachers from running updates

If a school insists on restricting teachers' install rights, they must provide a method for keeping systems updated on a regular basis

Balance Security and Maintenance

Computers can be updated in batches from the server if images exist for all the various configurations and the operating systems and hardware support RIS (Remote Install Service)

Computers can be Ghosted from a central system or CD to restore a crash

However, it is overkill to reinstall an entire hard drive image simply to run a Microsoft update patch

Balance Security and Maintenance

Give teachers two logins – one restricted on the campus domain, one local administrator

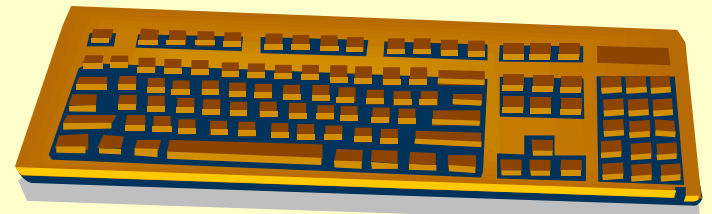Or give teachers install privileges during prep times (this can cause a problem if install in process)

Or give teachers install privileges all the time, trust them to follow the rules, and buy a system management program to track installed software

Involve students in a meaningful way

- Freshman Orientation
- School newspaper How-To; Online FAQ for students
- A+ Certification Class at the high school
  - Core function: maintain campus/district equipment
  - Send 2nd Year High school tech students to the middle and elementary schools
  - Send 2nd Year on independent study as a lab aid TA
  - Grant advanced privileges to chosen few who sign a contract
  - Provide time-limited privileges to others with contract

Have a codename and a contingency plan for PEBCAK Errors

Problem Exists Between Chair and Keyboard

End