

Learn to better communicate with tech support and get problems solved faster



The Problem

Over the years I, like many technical people, have taken a large number of technical support phone calls. It has occurred to me that there often seems to be a communication problem between technicians and the people they are trying to help. Here is a short list of terms and phrases people use that confuse technicians and prolong resolution to their problem.

1. “My internet isn’t working.” There is a big difference between “internet” and the services that run on the internet. Think of “the internet” as the computer equivalent of the phone system. If you were having trouble sending faxes over the phone network, you wouldn’t assume the phone system was down, the problem may be with the fax machine itself. If you’re having trouble with one of the services running on the internet like email, the internet itself may be fine and there is a problem with your email. If you’re having trouble sending or receiving email, telling a tech “my internet doesn’t work,” will send the tech in the wrong troubleshooting direction. If you’re having trouble with email, tell the technician that. If you can’t load a web page, tell them that. If you’re in an office and you’re experiencing some sort of networking/internet issue it would not hurt to ask around if anyone else is having the same issue. That information is useful to a tech because it tells him/her whether or not the problem is on one computer or the entire network.
2. “I can’t log in.” To a technician this can mean a lot of different things. Callers need to be more specific like, “I can’t log in to Quickbooks.” or “I can’t log in to my computer.” Knowing which thing the user is having trouble logging in to will greatly reduce the time it takes to fix the problem.



Cybernut Solutions provides outsourced IT support from a wealth of knowledgeable technicians and system administrators certified in their respective fields. We are committed to providing you with technology solutions that help you achieve your business goals by improving productivity, profitability and efficiency across the board. Discover what a strategic IT solution and the support you need to back it up can do for your organization today!

3. "I get an error when I..." Knowing what the error says is the real clue. There are 100,000's of potential errors. If we don't know what the error is, we simply don't know where to start.
4. Email delivery failure. Sometimes you send an email and it comes back with some sort of delivery failure message. When this happens we are typically told by the client "emails keep coming back or not getting delivered." Every time an email can't be delivered

and a delivery failure notice gets send back, there is a message in that email that explains why it got sent back. That information will tell the tech what went wrong. Common reasons are:

- a. the email address was typed in wrong
- b. There may have been an attachment that was too big or denied
- c. You email server inbox it full ("mailbox size exceeded")
- d. IP, domain or email address is being "blacklisted." This is a serious situation and that information needs to be relayed quickly to the tech in order to avoid a very expensive, time-consuming fix
- e. Your email looked like spam (see my whitepaper on "Five Reasons you don't want spam on your network")

Other things about their computer include:

- a. What a web browser is
- b. What your desktop is
- c. What are tray icons
- d. The difference between antivirus software and antispyware
- e. What is an email client (Outlook for example)
- f. How you normally retrieve email (Many get their email through a web browser. For example, to get to your gmail, you open a web browser and navigate to your gmail account.)

Here is a typical problem. A user calls and reports that they cannot get email. Turns out they are using gmail access it through their Mozilla web browser. The problem is not with their email but either the browser program or the internet service itself. We once had a user complaining that “they could not receive email.” We asked them how they normally access their email and that question confused them. “I don’t know, I just double-click the icon and I see my email.” We asked which program opens when they double-click their email? They responded as if we were complete idiots “MY EMAIL PROGRAM!” We finally had to send a tech out.

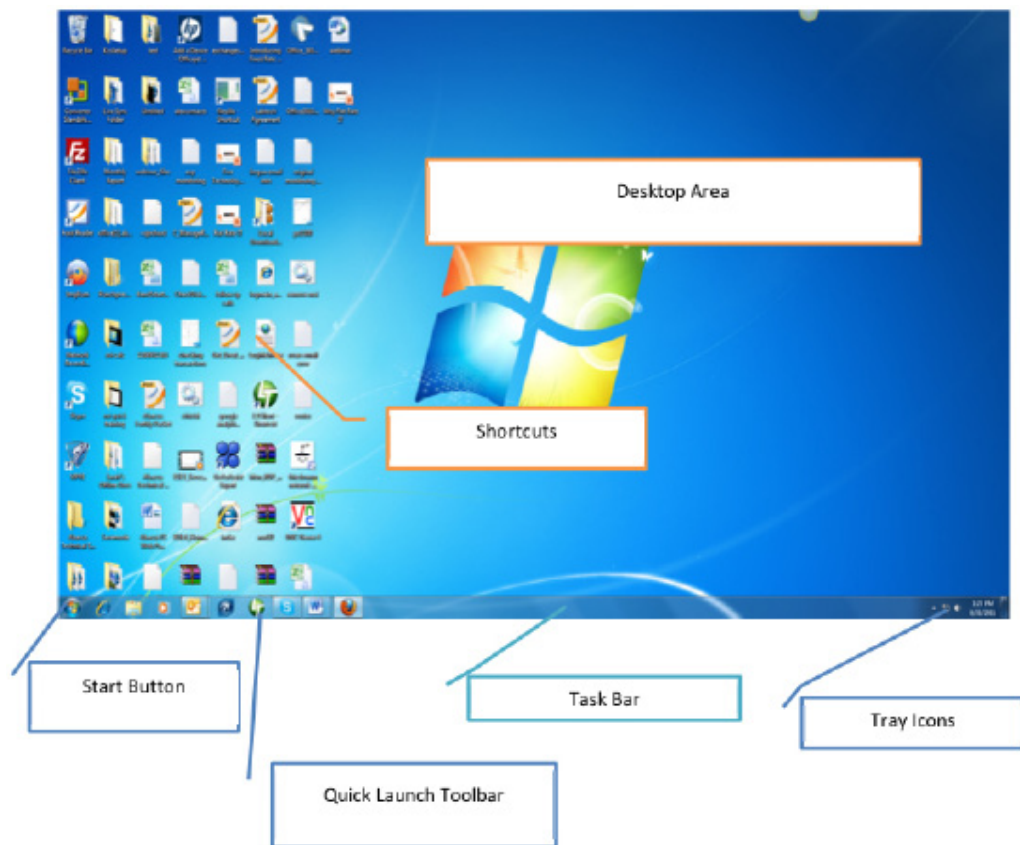
Turns out they had neglected to pay their internet service provider’s bill and their internet was no longer working. Better communication between tech support and the client could have resolved this issue much faster if the user had been a little more knowledgeable with regards to their computer.

This lack of basic computer knowledge is costing your business money. Users whom are more proficient on their computers, network and internet will get more done in less time with fewer mistakes. Contact us if you would like a survey/quiz that you can administer to your staff to determine their computer savvy.

The solution: Basic computer terminology and knowledge (Windows users)

When you first turn on your computer it goes through what is known as the “Boot process.” This is when the computer wakes up, discovers what kind of hardware it has, where the Windows operating system resides and begins to start Windows.

Once Windows is loaded, the user may or may not need to log in depending on the configuration of their computer. Once logged on to the computer, the user is looking at what is called the desktop. The desktop consists of open space where the user can place files, shortcuts to files/folders/network locations and programs. It also contains the task bar. On the task bar is the Start Button, quick launch toolbar and the tray icons.



Other terms you should know to speak computerese.

1. Web browser – this is the software you will use to access web sites. Windows comes with a built-browser call Internet Explorer. The highest version of this you can install on your Windows XP computer is version 8 (not recommended, 7 is better for XP). The highest version you can install on a Windows 7 computer is version 9. Other browsers you can download for free include Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome and Safari. If you're having problems loading web pages and you're sure the internet is working, try using an alternate browser.
2. Tray Icons – The illustration above shows where to find the tray icons. These are often placed in the “tray” by the software manufacturer so the user can see that a program is running and can access some of the program features by clicking or right-clicking them.

3. Click – hover the mouse arrow on the screen over something you wish to interact with. Using your index finger on the mouse, click the left button.
4. Double-click – Clicking the left mouse button twice fairly quickly (about 1 second for both clicks)
5. Right-Click – Same as clicking only using the right mouse button. Often brings up a context menu for whatever the mouse pointer is hovering over when you right-click it.
6. Wheel-Click – If you have a wheel mouse, you can actually click the wheel down. This will often bring up a directional arrow and you can scroll around the screen using mouse movements instead of the scroll bars.
7. Click and drag – If an onscreen window or object is movable, you hover the mouse pointer over that object, click and hold the left mouse button down and use the mouse to move that object around.
8. Minimize – You can minimize a windows so that it is still open but not completely visible.
9. Maximize – You can have a windows take up the whole screen by maximizing it.
10. Scroll – Move the content of a window up and down and side to side.
11. Scroll Bar – You can click and drag the content around using the scroll bar.
12. Email Client – Microsoft Outlook is a good example of an email client. You may also be getting your email by logging in to your email through your web browser. This is called web mail.
13. When having trouble with your email, make sure you understand how you access your email so you can communicate that to whomever is trying to assist you with your problem.

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