

Computer Troubles? Turn it off!

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“Turn it off, turn it on, call Microsoft.” That is the refrain I have heard since January 13th, a day that will live in infamy. Although that day surely did not have the global repercussions that September 11th had, it affected me far more personally and dramatically. It is the day that my life and my business came to a crashing halt. It is the day I developed computer problems!

The previous week, my DSL connection worked only sporadically. I was bumped off the internet on more than one occasion and each time my computer froze up. The mouse would not respond, the programs remained inoperable. I did the obvious: I shut the system down and re-booted. At first, that seemed to work, but then the problem recurred hourly and a simple restart was no longer effective.

I called Pacific Bell to determine if they had line or server problems, but was assured that all was in working order. I should instead “turn everything off, turn everything on again and then call Microsoft” if I still had problems. I did. Eventually, I called PacBell back which now said that they would check my line. More calls and endless beeping on a very confusing telephone tree, I finally cajoled PacBell into verifying that my line was okay. And again, they assured me that they were not experiencing equipment problems.

I was told to turn off my computer, turn it back on, and call Microsoft. Reluctant to follow this useless piece of advice, I persisted with Technical Support. And went up two levels of management. Next, they decided that it must be a software issue. They would promptly send out a new CD-ROM with an updated Ethernet program. Ten (!) days later it arrived. I installed it. It didn't work.

Tech Support now suggested that I turn off my computer, turn it back on, and call Microsoft. I engaged my own computer consultants who quickly came to the conclusion that I had hardware issues as well as software conflicts. It seems that PacBell's upgrade corrupted the reg files. Heck if I know what that means, except that I could no longer function. In fact, no matter what key I pressed, Microsoft Network (MSN) popped up. That sounded like a Bill Gates glitch, so I called MSN.

They told me to turn off my computer, turn it back on and call PacBell.