

ASK THE COMPUTER SURGEON

You're never too old to catch up with technology

Be willing to step outside your comfort zone and never feel intimidated

A reader comments, "...I am lost when I read your column. I love reading the articles. I just wish I could understand this stuff. I guess I'm too old."

A reader from Wadsworth has made a common observation. "... I contacted technical support five evenings in a row. I bet I've spent at least ten hours on the phone and still do not have an answer. I am so frustrated. What are my options?"

Barbara from Wadsworth has a quiet laptop now. "...I went into the control panel, clicked on sounds & Audio Devices, Sounds, Sound scheme and put No Sounds. It was on Windows Default. I have checked the control panel on my regular PC and the windows default is applied but I don't have that beeping when I need to hit enter. It is strange."

I am always upset when I receive feedback from older folks that technology is beyond their understanding. I believe that there are two main hindrances. First, we who work with technology every day can accidentally intimidate casual users and scare them into believing that they are not capable. Second, some people are not willing to step outside their comfort zone.

With respect to the first point, we who work with technology must remember that others need instruction and encouragement from us. You who are uncomfortable with technology need to seek out people to assist you with learning. I often make an analogy using skilled trades. Clearly someone who is just starting out in most of the skilled professions needs help. Can you imagine letting an entry level Civil Engineer design a bridge with no help. Technology is the same in that it will take weeks or months to become comfortable with it. So, get to work!

There is no help for those who will not step outside of their comfort zone.

How many readers have spent more than 4 hours on a technical support call in the last 3 months? How many of you have taken your computer to one of the big box stores and been disappointed with their services? Please write to me about your experiences. I will share the best stories!

If you don't want to waste your time on the phone with incompetent support people, give your local technical service businesses a try. You may be very surprised at what you find! If the business has been around at least five years, you can be safe in assuming that they do a good job.

I have a competition for you all. Please go to <http://www.trendmicro.com/spyware-scan> and press the "Scan & Clean your PC" button. You will have a few questions to answer to install an ActiveX control. Then press the "Start Scan" button to get results. Send me the total number of spyware applications it reports. The person reporting the highest number gets a free computer tune up from the Computer Surgeon.

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Please contact us at questions@compusurgeon.com.