

Re: I need help as I am growing tired and weary

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On Sat, 4 Sep 2004 07:00:45 -0500, "MisterKurtz"

>*Rude? Maybe.*

>*Blunt? Definitely.*

>*However, you also don't disagree with the possibility that the user is*

>*(re)introducing a problem to their system(s).*

Part of the art of being a tech (not that I'm claiming this skill) is being able to focus on the ball and ignore the players completely.

IOW, you immerse yourself in the technology, seeing all possibilities unweighted by "who's fault is it", "who was stupid" etc. You find the problem like a duck diving underwater, and bubble back up to the human surface with the news clenched between your duck teeth.

Then you have to present this info in a way that causes the least amount of useless emotional noise, and propose a fix.

At this point, the human dimension comes back, but only in the sense that you don't lose sight of the human cost of tech screw-ups. IOW, you seek to preserve user data first, not "does our product work?" or "can Windows boot?" as the first priority. This is the difference between a tech working for the user, compared to a tech who is there to look after some vendor's support responsibility.

>*If a user were go online without AV software after repeated infections, is that a machine/software issue or a user issue?*

It's an installation issue (where "installation" is the site you are working on, not the process of installing software). The site includes the hardware, software, settings, data, connections and environment, and you have to scope out all of those.

In this case, as is often the case with malware cleanup, there's likely to be a need to upgrade/update user skills – the user knows this, that's why he's asking for help and is (at this moment) receptive to new ideas.

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Alienating him by calling him an idiot tends to blow this opportunity just as surely as switching off a modem mid-download.

*>Doesn't there come a point in troubleshooting where one asks
>themselves, "What could I have done to cause this?"*

Yes – and the more experience you have, the sooner you ask yourself that question; it's part of the process of "growing up".

When you start out, you think everything's your fault and you barely dare to use your PC. You trust the wisdom of dialog boxes and click the duhfault buttons, even when it's commercial malware slimeballs telling you that you "need" their software to fix your PC's clock!

Then you learn just how stupid software can be, and what scumbags vendors can be, and that while error messages are always your friends, they can't always be taken at face value. You learn to tell dialogs and duhfaults to ^%#\$ off, and when things go wrong, you now assume it's the stupid software rather than user failure.

By now, you prolly have a rep as a bit of a geek, and folks call you to fix things. You get better, and tech colleagues call you to fix things. The going gets a bit tougher, because by now the things you see have stumped some good brains who have muddied the waters a bit. You spend a few marathon sessions only to find your own user failure lay behind the problem, and you realise that entropy (aka Murphy) will not only always be with us, but lives in our own heads.

At this point, your identity as a fixer isn't so fragile that to admit your mistakes puts it at risk. The emotional drive of what you do starts to fade, and you hopefully become more rational and methodical; jobs that you'd fix after flailing around for hours, you now break in a set time by following a SWAT-like approach that leaves no nook unchecked. You start to think in terms of best-practice, i.e. not only how to fix but how to do so with a minimum risk of colateral damage. You're now ready to charge for the value you bring.

And by now, when things go wrong, you prioritize in two ways:

- what will be the most damaging / highest-risk cause?
- what part is most likely to fail?

On the second, you know that what makes humans so flexible and thus effective in adapting to changed circumstances, also undermines their ability to do set things with a low error % the way that PC hardware generally does. HD and RAM copies have an infinitesimal error rate unless they are defective, even modems don't error that often and have robust error-detection to fix this on the fly, and humans... well, they are "only human" <g> So you include user failure in the list.

>The user is part of the system and needs to be considered as such.

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Aye. On usenet, the user is also the cat's paw you have to rely on to fix the PC, and it's the poster's PC that you're trying to help fix.

So where possible, you want the user emotionally "on side" ;-)

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Rudeness is human nature's way of curbing demand
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