

Please Mr. Fix-it, break it to me gently



Daryl-Lynn Carlson

Repair gobbly-gook enough to make consumer despair

It's becoming harder to get a simple explanation when something goes wrong with any apparatus that is powered by electricity or gas.

Even lawnmowers have a computer component that requires the attention of a specially skilled engineer who graduated from the International Institute of Ways to Humble by Applying Advanced Terminology (WHAAT).

When I had trouble starting my car the other day, my mechanic told me the problem was due to a free radical nucleotide wedged into the integrated circuit chip causing a redundancy in the replicator component.

In other words, one of the wires was worn.

But I have confidence in my mechanic. His garage is filled with highly advanced computerized equipment that, when he's not fixing cars, he's using to build the next Remote Manipulator System for Spar Aerospace that will make Canadarm look like the paw of an injured marsupial.

And my mechanic will make the effort to translate his vast and technologically advanced vocabulary into layman's terms for me so I know what I'm paying him for.

That's not always the case. Service repair people who fix things that have computer elements know they have one up on most of us.

Recently, I had to take my computer printer to be repaired. After a power outage, it wouldn't print and warning lights were flashing ominously.

I call the shop to convey the problem.

"Sounds like a fuser," an apparently knowledgeable woman preliminarily diagnoses.

A fuser. That must be a fuse. And fuses blow sometimes when the power goes out.

Ah ha, I believe I am keeping up. So I bring it in and it's four days before it is ready to be picked up.

When I arrive, the woman tells me the problem wasn't the 'fuser' and a fuser is not a fuse but a \$100 part connecting to something else technical and I should be relieved.

Yeah, I am! So what am I paying \$85 for?

"Cleaning and calibration," she blurts.

Hmmm. I ask what they cleaned. "The inside," she says.

OK. And what's calibration?

"Well, it's as good as new," she says dismissively.

Great!

Once home, I plug in my printer and voila - it still doesn't print and the Las Vegas light show is still going on.

Eventually I realize I can get it to print if I hit the reset button every time I turn it on, which is what I deduce the shop did before declaring it fixed, for \$85.

But when I haul the thing back, there's no apology and I merely receive assurances the purveyors of engineering proficiency who work at the shop have simply made an honest mistake.

I'm told the problem is actually a run-time error with a motherboard malfunction that requires a new pixel panel, which I am now hoping comes with a Kevlar heat shield that will withstand my fuming hot temper.

My frustration this day is the cumulative effect of numerous dealings with self-proclaimed techno wizards who know that they know what you don't.

Inevitably, however, you get the gist you've just had your head plunged into a giant cow patty, having forked over a wad of cash to have someone baffle you with techno-speak while basically telling you to press the ON button.

These micro-technicians toiling away in cluttered cinderblock units at the local strip mall would have you believe they're as elite as rocket scientists.

To their advantage, rocket science seems easier to understand.

When the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded seconds after take off in 1986, thousands of scientists, engineers, forensic experts, astronauts, technicians and other sundry specialists descended on Cape Canaveral in Florida to investigate the demise of one of the world's most advanced innovations.

Within weeks, there was a consensus about what had gone wrong.

It was an O ring.

An O ring! Sweet simplicity - we can all understand that!

So surely there is cause for people to feel anxious when they bring in their car or digital clock or blender for repairs and are peppered with terms such as terabytes, flexural yield quotients or inverted rotation velocity.

It's a ruse to make people feel like they're getting their money's worth

when really, they're being fleeced.

After my printer experience, my refrigerator failed.

Following a cursory search on the Web, I opted not to call a repair specialist and pay to discuss possible malfunctions in the capillary tubes or condenser coils.

For slightly more money, I bought a new one instead.

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Announcement



Nicole Fletcher, Director of Advertising, is pleased to announce the following appointment as part of the immediate restructuring of the New Business and Distribution Sales Team for the York Region Newspaper Group.

Dawna Andrews is the Managing Director. Dawna has 25 years experience with Metroland. She has classified, real estate, retail and flyer sales and management experience. A large part of Dawna's success comes from her team player approach. She is constantly looking at the big picture to ensure a win-win situation is achieved.

Dawna will be a significant force in our future growth through strong leadership, innovation and new business development.

Please join me in congratulating Dawna on her appointment.



Nicole Fletcher, Director of Advertising, is pleased to announce the following appointment as part of the immediate restructuring of the New Business and Distribution Sales Team for the York Region Newspaper Group.

Steve Kane is the Manager. Steve has 18 years experience with Metroland in sales and management. He has worked and established strong relationships in Newmarket, Markham, Stouffville, Richmond Hill and Vaughan. Steve loves the challenge of creating new products to continuously meet customers' needs.

Steve will be a significant force in our future growth through strong leadership, innovation and new business development.

Please join me in congratulating Steve on his appointment.

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