

Small Business Advisory Guide To Choosing An Honest, Reliable, and Competent IT Consultant

Don't Trust Your Computer or The Irreplaceable Files on It To Just Anyone!

Hiring the wrong IT consultant can not only be incredibly frustrating and expensive, but you could end up losing ALL of your irreplaceable files, photos, music, e-mails, and other important documents!

Read this guide and you'll discover:

- ✓ Computer scams and rip-offs that you MUST be aware of.
- ✓ 5 Costly misconceptions about computer maintenance and repair.
- ✓ Viruses, worms, spyware, and hackers: what you need to know to protect yourself.
- ✓ 7 Questions you need to ask before buying any computer equipment.
- ✓ 5 Critical characteristics you should demand from your IT technician.
- ✓ Why you need to avoid "cheap" or "bargain" computer repair shops.
- ✓ The one surefire sign that you should run – not walk – from a computer technician.

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From The Desk of: Gary Jacobson
Founder, JCI Group

Dear Fellow Business person,

There are no shortages of horror stories about fly-by-night IT consultants causing problems as a result of their unethical or incompetent behavior. I'm sure if you talk to your own friends and peers you will get an ear-full of the unfortunate experiences they have encountered in this area.

You see, the computer industry, along with a lot of other industries, has its own share of unethical businesses who will always try to take advantage of uneducated buyers in their greed for easy money. Fortunately, businesses like these are the minority, but we know they exist because we have had a number of customers come to us to clean up the disasters they have caused.

Another big problem of the computer industry is that it is not regulated like many other industries. Automotive repair shops, electricians, plumbers, lawyers, realtors, dentists, doctors, accountants, and even restaurants (to name a few) are heavily regulated to protect the consumer from receiving substandard work or getting ripped off. However, the computer industry is still very new and there aren't any laws in existence to protect the consumer.

Anyone who can turn a computer on can market themselves as a computer repair technician or IT consultant. Even if they are honestly trying to do a good job for you, their inexperience can cost you dearly in your network's performance or in lost or corrupt data files. That is why we decided to offer this report.

The information in this Guide is provided to help raise standards within the computer repair and support industry, and to give YOU useful information to help you guard against the unethical or incompetence of some companies and technicians.

The Five Most Costly Misconceptions About Computer Maintenance and Repair

#1: If your computer is working fine right now, it does not need any maintenance.

This is probably one of the biggest and most deadly misconceptions that most computer users fall victim to. Computers are just like cars. If you don't change the oil, change the filter, rotate the tires, flush the transmission, and perform other regular maintenance on your car, it will eventually break down and cost you FAR MORE to repair than the cost of the basic maintenance.

There are certain maintenance checks that need to be done daily (like virus updates and spam filtering), weekly (like system backups), and monthly or quarterly (like

checking for and installing security patches and updates, disk defrag, spyware detection and removal, checking the surge suppressor and the integrity of the hard drive, and so on). Your IT consultant should be adamant that you have regular maintenance done on your machines and should offer to set up automatic virus definition updates, spam filtering (to avoid viruses), and automatic system backups OFF-SITE.

If your technician does not press you to let him do this for you, then RUN – don't walk – to a different consultant. Lack of system maintenance is the NUMBER ONE reason most people end up losing valuable files and incurring heavy computer repair bills. If your technician isn't offering you these services, you need to find someone else to support your computer or network for two reasons:

1. Either they don't know enough to make this recommendation, which is a sure sign they are horribly inexperienced, *OR*
2. They recognize that they are *profiting* from your computer problems and don't want to recommend steps towards preventing you from needing their help on an ongoing basis.

Either reason is a good one to get as far away from that person as possible!

#2: The maintenance tools provided in the Microsoft Operating System and software are all the maintenance you need.

Again, this is a terrible misconception. Microsoft does NOT include ALL of the security features to protect your data from viruses, hackers, and data loss or prevent your PC from running slowly.

Additionally, Microsoft (and other software vendors for that matter) are constantly providing critical patches and updates to their software to protect you from viruses and hackers. However, if you don't know to look for them, or if you don't know how to install them properly, you could easily end up getting burned.

#3: My nephew/neighbor's kid/brother-in-law knows this computer stuff and can help me solve my problems.

If only this were true. Obviously, not all technicians are created equal. Just because a person is good with computer applications (what we call a power user) does NOT mean they know how to install a critical security patch, detect and extract a deadly virus, or design, install, and maintain a Microsoft Windows network and servers.

Most people look for a part time "guru" to help them save money, but this often comes back to haunt them. Every week we get new customers who call needing us to clean up a mess that was caused by an inexperienced technician, friend, or relative who was just trying to help. If the person you have working on your network does not do this

for a living, there is a good chance they won't have the knowledge or experience to truly help you. Technology advances at lightening speed and it takes constant learning and practice to master it. If your part-time technician is not working on a VARIETY of PCs and networks every day, they probably only know enough to be dangerous.

#4: You can always get a better deal on computer software, equipment, or services by shopping online.

The key word here is "deal". Sure you can always find a cheaper price if you shop online, but you might actually end up getting the short end of the stick. As with anything in life, you get what you pay for. Companies simply cannot give you dirt cheap prices AND champagne service.

If you are getting a cheap bargain, chances are you will get very little if NO service after the sale. If something goes wrong, or if you just have a question, you might find out that the customer service line only goes to a voice mail box that never gets checked, or that you have to submit questions via e-mail that takes DAYS to return.

Before you buy ANY computer equipment, make sure you know the answers to these questions:

1. How long have they been in business? The last thing you want to do is buy a lemon of a computer from a fly-by-night organization. Thanks to the Internet, ANYONE can set up a website and start selling computer equipment, parts, and software. That is why you want to look for a company that has been in business for 20 years or more.
2. What is their guarantee or warranty on the equipment or services you are buying? As a standard rule, they should offer one year replacement warranty on all parts at a minimum.
3. How do they handle returns and exchanges? Do you have to ship the defective item back to them on your dime or do they arrange to have it picked up? Do they send the replacement first? What is the guaranteed turnaround time for an item? This is why many people prefer to buy all equipment from a local vendor.
4. What type of help desk support do they offer? If you are like me, you want to speak directly to a knowledgeable technician when you need help. However, many companies only offer e-mail and web-based support, and charge a hefty fee for anything outside of that. Which brings me to the next question...

5. Where is their help desk and customer service office located? Many of the big vendors are shipping their help desk support overseas to save money. While this works out great for them, it can be incredibly frustrating when you are trying to communicate with their customer support representatives.
6. Do YOU really know how to install, configure and troubleshoot this new device? If not, you may want to consider hiring a qualified technician to install it. Quite often, drivers and software can conflict and cause problems and unless YOU have installed this device before, it might be worth the small fee to get someone else to do it for you.

#5: All IT consultants are created equal. Your best option will be the one who offers the lowest price.

As we stated a moment ago, you get what you pay for. A cheap price usually means a cheap job. Really good technicians and consultants do NOT work cheap because they are in high demand. The only ones that will work cheap are those that are just starting and they are grossly inexperienced.

With your valuable data, precious customer files, and other irreplaceable documents at stake, do you REALLY want the cheapest technician working on your network and systems?

We take the view that most people want value for money and simply want the job done right. You will find that we are not the cheapest and we do not apologize for that. You will also find that we are not the most expensive. We simply feel that we should offer a good service at a fair price. That's why we have been able to stay in business for over 28 solid years.

5 Critical Characteristics You Should Demand From Your IT Consultant

1. **Demand that they have multiple technicians on staff.** If you rely on a “one-man-band” operation, you might find yourself without any help when they go on vacation, get sick, or when they are simply too busy servicing other customers. Having multiple technicians on staff is not a guarantee of fast, reliable service, but you are far more likely to have someone to talk to when you have a problem.

Another reason you want an IT consultant that has multiple technicians is because no one technician – no matter how good – has infinite knowledge about every type of software, hardware, and platform. Multiple technicians mean multiple skill sets and a higher likelihood that your network and computer problem will get resolved faster.

2. **Demand someone who has a long-standing reputation.** Let's face it; there are a lot of other computer repair technicians out there, but most are new or just getting started. You want to make sure you avoid hiring a fly-by-night technician between jobs that sets up shop one day, and is out of business within a month or a year. Only deal with technical services companies that have a proven track record in your area. JCI Group has been computer and networking services in Lucas and surrounding counties for over 28 years now.
3. **Demand that they have specific knowledge or expertise on solving your particular problem.** Do NOT let someone practice on your network. If they have not worked on your problem before, they should TELL you that in advance. There is too much risk involved financially and in your data and equipment.
4. **Demand that your technician backs up your system BEFORE working on it.** This is just common sense. Don't let them touch your machine before your entire system is securely backed up just in case something goes wrong. Remember, this will take additional time for which you'll be charged, but it is far cheaper than losing your data. Of course you have the option of making your own backup.
5. **Demand that your machine comes back with the same settings, look, preferences, and applications that you had on it prior to the work.** There are a lot of inexperienced technicians who will end up causing you more problems than you bargained for. Very frequently technicians will recommend that you wipe out your hard drive and re-install Windows to fix a problem. This means you lose all of your settings and preferences, as well as losing all of the software programs you have installed. This should ONLY be done as a last resort. Demand the technician attempts to save your settings first – if he knows how.

WARNING: In addition to wiping out your hard drive, some of these shops will put illegal software on your machine using a stolen license. Not only is this illegal and putting you in a position to get fined, but most illegal software (especially Microsoft's) is locked, which means you cannot download and update critical security patches. This leaves you unable to update your machine and protect it from deadly viruses, worms, and hackers.

Your Customer Bill Of Rights

Here is what I promise to deliver if you choose JCI Group to service your computer or company network:

1. When you call us with a computer problem, we guarantee that your phone call will be either answered immediately or returned within 60 minutes or less by an experienced technician who can help.
2. You deserve to get answers to your questions in **PLAIN ENGLISH**. Our technicians will not talk down to you or make you feel stupid because you don't understand their "geek speak".
3. You deserve complete satisfaction with our products and services. We will do whatever it takes to make you happy. No hassles, no problems.
4. You should **EXPECT** that no damage will be done to your machine or your data. Before we start working on your computer or network, we will evaluate your problem and alert you to any potential risks involved in fulfilling your job. If there are any risks, they will be explained in full, and your authorization and agreement will be obtained before the work commences. You can also choose to have your data backed up before we start any work on your machine.

A large proportion of our business comes from referrals from happy, satisfied customers. We want you to recommend us and we know that you will only do this if you are happy with the services we provide. That is why we work so hard to go above and beyond the call of duty.

Be sure to see our list of services and how to take advantage of our **FREE** offer at the end of this document, but first...

Don't Take Our Word For It...

Just Look At What Our Clients Are Saying

Jeff Bosch
President
Junior Achievement



“John was assigned to us.... he comes in monthly making sure our IT is working correctly. I would call him and JCI Group our **insurance policy**. We don't have, internally, an IT specialist. We agreed to a monthly service plan with JCI Group. The service plan provides us **peace of mind**. It provides us insurance that hopefully there are no surprises. Without the service plan, when things popped up we would have to call someone to come in and they would have to learn about the network and then address the situation, which is costly. With our plan, John is already up to speed on our equipment and can more easily fix any problem quickly.”

Tom Titus
Managing Partner
Titus & Urbanski
Certified Public Accountants



“We are growing significantly due to some of the strategies we have and the services we use from JCI have helped us by allowing us to apply our technology as efficiently as possible, It's added to our ability to deliver our services. I would recommend this maintenance agreement or service agreement because it's important to have the ability to have someone come in and make sure the back ups are working and error messages are taken care of and so on. That really heads off potential problems. I would absolutely recommend that JCI Group provide that kind service to another business if asked. Their response time is fantastic! Their professionalism and their longevity in the business indicate they are here for the long term. That's an important quality. “

Eric Osborn
Financial Secretary
Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 50



“John comes out once a month to service the server and what helps then is that he takes care of the small fixes. It works out well when he is servicing the server and running checks on it he’ll have a 15 or 20 minutes span of time where he’ll just walk around and see if there are any questions. You know how computers are. There are always a few questions here and there and having him do that is really helpful.”

Fred Earl Keith Jr.
Business Manager Financial Secretary
International Brotherhood
Boilermakers Local 85



“JCI Group is a reputable company to work with. If we were completely down and couldn’t get into anything they are very helpful to troubleshoot over the phone to get us back on line or to get someone here immediately. Having the monthly plan has made our employees more efficient..... at least 25% more efficient and I have added additional work loads to them and they get all of it done more efficiently. This plan has helped us serve clients better and it makes me more efficient as well since I don’t have to deal with the IT issues.”



Bob Seeman
Owner
Erie Tool and Supply



“I was reluctant to jump into a Service Plan but because our network was new and unfamiliar to me..... I thought just to be sure I ought sign up for it. And my intention was to try it just for one year to see how it worked. So it was really a precautionary reason that I signed up..... to be sure I didn’t have problems. But I’ve continued with it because now I don’t have to deal with it at all. It’s not my problem anymore. My people don’t come running to me. It doesn’t take my time up and it is stable. I let the individuals in the company call JCI Group direct when they have issues. They call Ginger and she sets something up to have someone come out and take care of everything. But truthfully there aren’t many problems. The biggest benefit to having the plan is the lack of worry. They have been able to take care of every problem that has come up quickly.

If you are down for any time you are losing revenue. You are spinning your wheels and are concerned about all the revenue you are losing. If anybody has had any fear of their network being down they should not have any qualms about signing up for a proactive service plan. I would certainly recommend JCI Group to do this service based on my own experience.”



Services We Offer

- ✓ Complete management of all computers and network devices
- ✓ Computer and printer repair
- ✓ Network design and installation
- ✓ Name brand computer and printer sales (HP, IBM, Apple, Toshiba)
- ✓ Cisco sales, SmartNets, and services
- ✓ Routers and firewall evaluation and configuration
- ✓ Anti-virus, anti-spam, and web browsing content filtering
- ✓ Network monitoring
- ✓ Off-site backups
- ✓ APC uninterruptable power supplies, cooling, and racks

FREE Problem Prevention Audit for All New Customers

As a prospective customer, we would like to offer you a \$495 Problem Prevention Audit of your network for FREE.

During this audit we will do a comprehensive 68-point checklist of your network to look for potential problems, security loopholes, and other network problems that will cause your network to run slow, act funny, crash, and lose data.

One of our trained engineers will perform this audit, and then alert you to any potential problems they discover. We will then advise you on your options for remedying the situation.

We will:

- ✓ Check for security updates
- ✓ Review your firewall and security settings
- ✓ Check the integrity of your server's hard drives
- ✓ Audit your virus definitions and protection
- ✓ Review your system backup and restore
- ✓ Review workstation, laptop, and PDA integration to network
- ✓ Review company growth and expansion as related to technology

All you have to do is contact us for ANY computer or printer repair, or network service and we'll do this comprehensive audit for FREE!

How To Request Your FREE Network Audit:

Fax the attached Response form to: (419) 794-1494
Or call (800) 353-0931 ext.220

“Yes! I Want To Make Sure My Network And Company’s Data Are Safe From Harm”

Please sign me up for a FREE Network Audit so I can make sure I am doing everything possible to secure my network. I understand that I am under **no obligation to do or to buy anything by requesting this audit**

Please Complete And Fax Back:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ ST: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Number of PCs: _____

Operating System: _____

Fax To: (419) 794-1495

Call Me Direct At: (800) 353-0931 ext. 220

Gary Jacobson