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Quality Support & Products

I don't know if it is just computer related manufacturers or most manufacturers in general, but lately support from several computer manufacturers has dropped drastically in quality.

Missing Features

We have experienced products that do not have the included features as specified. The manufacturer's response, after several attempts to contact them, have been that, "Yes, you are correct, it does not have that feature." When we ask when or how do we get the missing features, the replies have ranged from, "We don't know when" or "Maybe within the next couple of months."

This is, in our opinion, an unacceptable response. When we have run into this situation we replace the product with a different brand, first checking that it does have the missing features. Then go through the painful process of getting the original product returned. The return process can sometimes consume weeks.

During this entire process, both you and we suffer loss of time in providing the necessary solution.

This is not an entirely new situation. Because technology is always changing and changing faster than ever, there will never be a 100% errorless circumstance. But, as I mentioned,

the quality level of support has decreased.

Faulty Product

Another support problem with some manufacturers is faulty or non-working products.

Again, this is not a new situation, but also has become more difficult to resolve with certain manufacturers.

We run into problems with unqualified or uneducated support persons. The only thing they seem to know are a few standard questions and responses. Anything outside of their basic scope goes unanswered or more often than not we get, "I never heard of that problem, don't think I can help you."

Warranty Issues

How often do you read the complete warranty for a product or can even find the warranty agreement?

We have run into the problem of getting replacements for units that are under warranty. In some cases this has taken months. The response from the manufacturer is, "There is no replacement stock available." Yet, we could order a new unit. Another response has been, "This is a new product and we don't have replacements available yet". They state that the warranty replacement is based

on availability, and yes, they are correct— they have themselves covered. I guess that's why most manufacturers call it a Limited Warranty.

Many network products are labeled with Lifetime Warranty. But, if you read the fine print, it usually does not cover the power supply or fan—the two most frequent items that can break.

You do rely upon us and should be able to trust our judgment or recommendations for solid and dependable equipment. We, nor do I know of anyone in this business, can not test every piece of new equipment. This would be a fulltime job for many people.

Selection Criteria

When we recommend products we look at several qualifications with the following priority.

Does the product do what you need it do?

How long has the product been in production. We try to avoid new technology until it has been proven to work.

The quality of the manufacturer's products based on past history.

The quality of support from the manufacturer based on



Tape Life

Do your tapes need replacing?

Tapes used for backup are not expected to last more than **one year**. This is based on using a tape once a week.

Older tapes may still work but you may not be getting as much space as possible on older tapes. If an error occurs when writing to the tape, the streaming process will skip that section of the tape and continue on. This eventually results in not being able to write the total amount of data per the specifications of the tape.

Of course, if enough errors occur, you will get a write or verify error message.

We recommend that you write a date on the tape when you first put it into use so you know when a year has passed. After a year, it is time to order new tapes.

Cleaning operation should be performed every 10 hours of use.

past performance.

Price comparison from different manufacturers.

Note that we put price as the last criteria. A more expensive product that has better longevity and better support when needed is cheaper in the long run.

Not Recommended List

So now that I have bored you with this saga, what does it mean to you. At this point in time we have listed several manufacturers that are on our Not Recommended List.

*These are **not** recommended...*

Linksys, DLink, Netgear and IBM

You are probably surprised to see IBM on the list. For many years we have recommended IBM products due to their reliability and support. Unfortunately this is not the case anymore.

Recommended List

In place of these manufacturers, we are now recommending...

Dell servers, HP PC's and notebooks, HP Procurve, Sonicwall and Cisco network products

Time changes everything as a few years back we took HP off our recommend list due to their poor support and attitude. Their new CEO appears have corrected most of these problem.

Ultimate Threat Management

Several months ago we wrote about the need for UTM's and that after our research was complete, we would update you on our results. After using ourselves as the guinea pig, we have settled on the Sonicwall Pro 1260 as the model of choice. Lower priced firewalls no longer can provide the level of security that are needed to protect your companies equipment and data.

Without boring you with the technical details, here are some of the features this model includes that are necessary to adequately protect your system.

Intrusion Detection—Basically this feature monitors for hackers trying to break into the system. We have discovered that repeated attempts by hackers to break in can actually slow down your network. Better Intrusion Detection methods prevent this from happening.

The DMZ feature allows for only servers that have to be seen to the outside world to be accessed, such as Email out Web pages. Other computers are on a different network, thus preventing any unauthorized access.

A 24 port managed switch is included where each port can be configured for the type of network traffic that is allowed to pass.

An easy to use Web interface is used to configure and monitor reports that are created by the unit.

If you still have a Linksys or DLink firewall, or some other brand, we recommend contacting us so we can review or upgrade you to this new unit and provide better protection for your company's data and systems.



Free Alternative to Microsoft Office

OpenOffice has been around for 20 years. It was originally called StarOffice and was purchased by Sun Microsystems several years ago and has now developed into a very reliable and useful package. Sun offers the program under a open license agreement which translates into no charge for you. You may download OpenOffice.org completely free of any license fees. Install it on as many PCs as you like. Use it for any purpose - private, educational, government and public administration, commercial. Pass on copies free of charge to family, friends, students, employees, etc.

It includes word processing, spreadsheet, presentation package and several other applications. All of which are compatible with the Microsoft Office products. You can create a Word document or Excel spreadsheet and open it in OpenOffice and vice-versa.

An added bonus is that OpenOffice runs on Windows 98 to Vista, Linux, Max OSX & Solaris BSD.

We have tested the word processing and spreadsheet applications and found them very easy to use and have had no problems. You can download it at www.openoffice.org or the next time we are on-site ask us to install it, we already have it downloaded on a thumbnail drive.

Support Response

Seeing as how support was discussed from manufacturers, this would probably be a good time to discuss our support and response time.

We try to respond as quickly as we can to any request. Urgent or emergency requests always come first. The problem we occasionally have, is when several customers have an urgent request at the same time. This often happens after electrical storms, where lightning or a power outage has damaged equipment.

Even though we do not offer maintenance contracts, where you pay a monthly fee for a technician to be available, we respond as quickly as possible. Most of the time we respond in less than four hours and, if necessary, can be on site the same or next day. Companies that do offer maintenance contracts only provide for a four hour response or next day. So, even though we do not offer maintenance contracts, we still match their response times and you are not paying a monthly fee for a service that you do not use.

We recommend that all servers be covered by a maintenance contract. We recommend Scantron for this service. Consider it as an insurance policy. If your server or servers go down, usually the entire operation is at a standstill.

For networking products, such as switches, firewalls, wireless access points, **we recommend having preconfigured spares that can be easily swapped.** This is the fastest and cheapest way to get up and running when a piece of network gear fails. Network products are low in price so this becomes a very practical solution for emergency situations.

We have implemented a support request system on our web site. This is convenient for requesting support and also allows you to monitor the status of all open requests. It is especially convenient in the case of emergencies. You can flag the support ticket as urgent and Email is automatically sent to everyone on our staff. This enables us to provide the first person available to get back to you and you don't have to make different calls to each tech. For non-urgent requests, you can also set the priority level for each support ticket.

If you want to use this systems and do not have a login, please contact us so we can get you set up.

5 Easy Steps to Improve Web Sites

1. Put a compelling, interesting headline on the home page that identifies what you can do for them. The headline on any marketing campaign accounts for the majority of the responses. Clients won't mind reading long headlines as long as they are interesting.
2. Make the fonts easy to read. Don't make the font grey or light colored, don't use reverse copy (dark background, light letters), don't use tiny fonts, and don't put pictures behind the text.
3. Put a free offer on your Web site. Not everyone who visits your site will be ready to use you on the spot. Some may be casually looking because someone referred them. You want to do everything possible to get visitors to opt into your Web site and give you their contact information so you can follow up.
4. Use testimonials and client success stories. Visitors will not only be more likely to read those than a bunch of text about what you do, plus the benefits of your service will be easier for them to comprehend when wrapped into a real-life case study of how you applied your skills and expertise to help other business owners.
5. Have an easy way for visitors to reach you.

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No wonder the English language is so difficult to learn

- We polish the Polish furniture.
- He could lead if he would get the lead out.
- A farm can produce produce.
- The dump was so full it had to refuse refuse.
- The soldier decided to desert in the desert.
- The present is a good time to present the present.
- At the Army base, a bass was painted on the head of a bass drum.
- The dove dove into the bushes.
- I did not object to the object.
- The insurance for the invalid was invalid.
- The bandage was wound around the wound.
- There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
- They were too close to the door to close it.
- The buck does funny things when the does are present.
- They sent a sewer down to stitch the tear in the sewer line.
- To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
- The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
- After a number of Novocain injections, my jaw got number.
- I shed a tear when I saw the tear in my clothes.
- I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
- How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

