



Consumer Awareness Guide

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Consumer Awareness Guide To Choosing An Honest, Reliable, and Competent Computer Support Company

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

Hiring the wrong computer support company can not only be incredibly frustrating and expensive, but you could end up losing ALL of your irreplaceable files!

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 computer support technician.
- ✓ Why you need to avoid "cheap" or "bargain" computer support services.
- ✓ The one surefire sign that you should run – not walk – away from a computer support company.

Provided as an educational service by:

Joseph Stoll, President
Technical Action Group Inc.
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From The Desk of:

Joseph Stoll
President
Technical Action Group Inc.

Dear Colleague,

There are no shortages of horror stories about fly-by-night computer support companies causing problems as a result of their unethical or incompetent behavior. I'm sure if you talk to people from other businesses, 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 clients come to us to clean up the disasters they have caused.

Another big problem with 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 relatively 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 support technician. Even if they are honestly trying to do a good job for you, their inexperience can cost you dearly in your machine'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 Support and Maintenance

#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 computer support technician should be adamant that you have regular maintenance done on your machine and should offer to set up automatic virus definition updates, spam filtering (to avoid viruses), and automatic system backups that are stored OFF-SITE.

If your computer support company does not press you to let them do this for you, then say goodbye to them. Lack of system maintenance is the NUMBER ONE reason most people end up losing valuable files and incurring heavy computer support bills. If your support company isn't offering you these services, you need to find another company 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 company 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) is 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 accounting clerk/neighbour/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 upgrade your machine.

Most people look for a part time "guru" to help them save money, but this often comes back to haunt them. Most of our clients come to us needing our help to clean up a mess that was caused by an inexperienced staff member, friend, or relative who was just trying to help. If the person you have working on your computer systems does not do computer and network support for a living, there is a good chance they won't have the knowledge or experience to truly help you. Technology advances at lightning speed and it takes constant learning and practice to master it. If your part-time technician is not working on 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.





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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 client 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.

#5: All computer support companies are created equal. Your best option will be the one who offers the lowest price.

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

With your valuable business data and any irreplaceable personal documents at stake, do you REALLY want the cheapest company working on your machine?

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 five solid years.

5 Critical Characteristics You Should Demand From Your Computer Support Company

- 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 clients. 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 a support company that has multiple technicians is because no one computer guy – no matter how good – has infinite knowledge about every type of software, hardware, and platform. Multiple technicians many multiple skill sets and a higher likelihood that your computer problem will get resolved faster.



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- 2. Demand someone who has a long-standing reputation.** Let's face it; there are a lot of other computer support companies out there, but a lot 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 computer support companies that have a proven track record in your area. Technical Action Group has been servicing clients in the Greater Toronto Area (some with offices nation-wide), for over five years now.
- 3. Demand that they have specific knowledge or expertise in solving your particular problem.** Do NOT let someone practice on your machine. 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. This is TAG's standard practice.
- 5. Demand that your machine retain the same settings, look, preferences, and applications that you had on it prior to the work performed.** There are a lot of second-rate companies with inexperienced technicians who will end up causing you more problems than you bargained for. Very frequently, these inexperienced 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.

WARNING: In addition to wiping out your hard drive, some of these companies 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. Because of TAG's numerous professional certifications and code of ethics, illegal activities such as using stolen licenses is strictly forbidden.





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Your Client Bill Of Rights

Here is what we promise to deliver if you choose TAG to service your 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 90 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 machines or your data. Before we start working on your computers 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 machines.

A large proportion of our business comes from referrals from very satisfied clients. 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.





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Don't Take Our Word For It; Just Listen To What Our Clients Have To Say...

Our Employees Are Happier and More Productive

"Before hiring TAG, we had multiple problems... our servers were running out of memory, they were slow and sometimes freezing. We had problems with our virus software and a myriad of other problems with laptops and desktops that our previous support company was not able to fix in an adequate timeframe or with the right attitude.

Thankfully, we found TAG. We now have more productive uptime with our computers, our employees are happier and more productive, and my life is easier because I can rely more on my I.T. company now and I have faith in TAG to deliver on all of our needs. They're a great fit for us and I would absolutely recommend them."

Daniel Kolber, Director, Asset Management
Retrocom Mid-Market REIT

We Went From Chaos to Peace of Mind

"Before TAG, it was one disaster after another. We continually had computer problems and things never seemed to get rectified properly. One of our employees who knew Joe from another company recommended him and we brought TAG into our company and ever since then, things have been fantastic.

As a senior partner, I don't get involved in the day-to-day operations, especially on the computer side. Plus, I'm not very computer literate which is why I love TAG so much – because things just work. They come whenever we call them. Everything runs smoothly and before TAG, we did not experience that. We went from chaos to peace of mind. "

Andrew Kay, Senior Partner
Kay & Warburton,
Chartered Accountants





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Services We Offer

**Our TAGuard Peace of Mind Programs Keep Toronto Small Businesses
Safe from Crippling Viruses & Spyware,
Their Critical Data & Systems Protected & Preserved and
We Prevent Disasters That Could Wipe Them Out....**

All While Avoiding Expensive Computer Repair Bills

Monitoring

We will remotely monitor your entire network 24/7/365 to detect, diagnose and prevent lurking problems from turning into major interruptions to your business in the form of downtime, security breaches, or other failures.

Proactive Maintenance

Network: One of our senior network engineers will perform regular, scheduled maintenance on your servers, desktops / laptops, firewalls, backup system at regular intervals (remotely monthly, on-site quarterly). We will make sure your virus protection is up to date and your backups are working properly. We will check critical firewall and security settings, and update software patches. We'll even conduct a series of system optimization tasks every month that will keep your network running at maximum speed and performance.

Backup and Disaster Recovery Service

The average failure rate of tape and removable hard drive backup systems is 100%!

Incredible, isn't it? Most people don't realize that ALL tape and removable hard drive backup systems fail at some point. But what's really dangerous is that most companies don't realize it happened until it's too late.

In addition to the fact that they are unreliable and are guaranteed to fail at some point, tape and removable hard drives require a user to swap out the tapes /





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drives on a daily basis. If someone forgets, goes on vacation, or leaves the company, the plan falls through.

Eliminate the risks and hassles associated with tape and removable hard drive backups finally and forever with TAG's Backup and Disaster Recovery Service.

Your data is automatically backed up to a dedicated backup server in intervals as frequently as every 15 minutes. At the end of each day, your data is automatically sent to an off-site secure location (no more having to remember to switch tapes / drives and risk losing or destroying them).

In the event of a server failure or crash, we can have your business back up and running within TWO HOURS instead of days. In the event of a catastrophic event with your server(s) (fire, flood, theft), you'll have the peace of mind knowing that your data is safe and secure (because there are no tapes and removable hard drives to risk destruction along with your server). Within as little as two days, a new server and all of your data is delivered to you, so you can be back up and running.

Computer Support

Consistent highly qualified support for day-to-day computer issues. Over 80% of support issues can be resolved using our remote support tools, which means your issues get resolved faster, with less cost to you.

Special Projects

Including but not limited to office moves, network installations / upgrades, new business applications, system standardization, disaster recovery planning, business IT review and strategy, virtual office setup





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Never Worry About the Security and Stability of Your Network Ever Again, Like This Client...

I Have Total Peace of Mind

"With our previous IT provider, our server was always crashing. They didn't have the knowledge to handle our computer troubles. There were times when our server was down for half a day! They would come in and fix that which was broken, but we wanted to make sure that nothing got broken. We were really concerned about not being properly backed up and we wanted a company that could solve a problem quickly. If we go down and we can't access our server, we're out of business.

We made the decision to hire TAG and they are monitoring and testing our backup system and monitoring our servers and computers and doing preventative activities on all of our systems. Now everything is running fine, my employees are happy and more efficient and I have total peace of mind. I've already recommended TAG to others because they really know what they're doing and are very responsive. "

Wayne Noffle, President
Stateside Consulting





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How Disaster-Proof Is YOUR Network? FREE Security Audit Reveals The Truth

Because you have taken the time to request and read this report, I would like to offer you a FREE Network Security Audit. Normally I charge \$495, but I'd like to give it to you for free as a way of introducing our "TAGuard Peace of Mind" programs to your company. To qualify for this offer, your company must have at least one Windows server and 10 workstations.

During this audit I or one of my senior engineers will come on site and...

- ✓ **Pinpoint any exposure to or risk** from hackers, viruses, spyware, spam, data loss, power outages, system downtime, and even employee sabotage.
- ✓ **Review your system backups** to make sure the data CAN be recovered in case of a disaster. You don't want to discover that your backups were corrupt AFTER a major disaster wiped out your network.
- ✓ **Scan your network for hidden spyware and viruses** that hackers "plant" in your network to steal information, deliver spam, and track your online activities.
- ✓ **Look for hidden problems that cause error messages, slow performance, and network crashes.**
- ✓ **Answer any questions you have** about your network or keeping it running problem free. I can also give you a second opinion on any projects you are considering.

There Are No Strings Attached

If you want to say goodbye to your computer problems and stop worrying about the security of your data from hardware failures, viruses, hackers, and other threats, then you'll want to sign up right now for this Free Network Security Audit.

There is absolutely no obligation or pressure for you to buy anything, or to ever use our services again. As I stated earlier, this is simply an easy way for us to demonstrate how we can help your business at no risk to you.





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How To Secure Your Free Network Security Audit

1. Fill in and fax back the request form on the next page.
2. Call me direct at 416-489-6312 x 204
3. Send an e-mail to Info@TechnicalActionGroup.com with the words, "Security Audit" in the subject line. Be sure to include your company name, address, and phone number so I can follow up with you.

Good Networking,

Joseph Stoll
President
Technical Action Group
416-489-6312 x 204
www.TechnicalActionGroup.com

P.S. There are zero obligations for you to do or buy anything when you sign up for this audit- so do it now while you're thinking about it!

P.P.S. A friendly reminder that to qualify for this offer, your company must have at least one Windows server and 10 Windows workstations.





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

Please sign me up for a **FREE Security 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. I further understand that these audits are being made available on a **first-come, first-served basis**. If I am not one of the first 5, please put me on your stand-by list and notify me if a spot becomes available.

My company has at least one **Windows server** and **10 workstations**.

Please complete and fax back:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City / P.C.: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

of Computers: _____

Operating System: _____

Fax To: 416-778-1714

