

Carl Bulger presided.

Presentation:



Matt Elkins, Tech Supervisor at Bowie Staples and Frank Tiwarri, Asst. Manager at Bowie Staples
(Photo courtesy of Dennis Edgington)

Unlike many vendor presentations, these people answered our questions without much sales talk.

If you're completely locked out of your computer by a virus, they recommend (as has Bob Blum) that you download Kaspersky Rescue Disk (free) to a CD or flash drive. You need to use another computer to do this. Then use it to boot up the computer and clean out the virus and malware.

They recommend antivirus software from Kaspersky, Norton, and Sophos.

Irv Salzberg asked what they use to get rid of "talking viruses". These tend to be adware, for which they recommend MalwareBytes.

MalwareBytes removes spyware and adware but doesn't offer antivirus protection. SuperAntiSpyware is comparable.

Avast antivirus will add its own spyware/adware.

Windows Defender, which comes with Microsoft Windows 8.1, is the best Microsoft Anti-virus product. It catches the "big stuff".

HiJack This! Is a good tool. This depends on volunteer experts to analyze what you have on your computer that may be causing your problems.

What kind of failures do they see most often?

80% of failures are in the hard drive, especially in desktop computers.

Motherboards and memory rarely fail.

They see more failures in Dell products, but that may be because there are more Dell products.

They recommend that we run our browsers without add-ons. Add-ons slow down the computer and provide more things to go wrong.

Matt likes Windows 8.1. He ignores or deletes automatic manufacturer updates. On HP computers, they are offered through HP Assistant. He applies official Windows automatic updates, which usually come out on the second Tuesday of the month.

Someone asked about the Recovery Partition on the hard drive. Unless the hard drive is defective the Recovery Partition allows you to restore the computer to the condition it was in when you bought it including all of the "crapware" pushed out by the manufacturer. He recommends that you put the computer in the condition you prefer, and then backup it image.

Mark Laster said that the D drive (Recovery Partition) is too small. Matt replied that if you do a clean install of Windows, repartitioning is possible.

What diagnostic software do they recommend? HP has it built into the hard drive and memory. Although it is not free, PC Doctor is good. Mr. FixIt from Microsoft is good for specific, minor fixes.

Hard Drive Reliability: S.M.A.R.T. diagnostics? Eric Hein said that the Computer Lab/Classroom had two hard drives fail without warning even though those computers had S.M.A.R.T. diagnostics. Tom McCabe recommended the Hard Disk Sentinel program. It adds additional information.

How much to upgrade from Windows 7 to Windows 8.1? \$139 - \$199 if Staples does it.

What do they recommend to clean the Registry? RegCure (free)

System Mechanics is OK but uninstall it afterwards. Otherwise it will slow down your computer.

CCleaner can be used

For serious problems, ComboFix is effective but it can damage the computer.

Hirens Boot CD (free) will boot up a defective computer and offers many tools.

Cyber Security is becoming more important. The Naval Academy is offering a CyberSecurity major.

Windows Professional offers Bitlocker encryption.

Touch Screens appeal to some people and not others. A mouse or touchpad can be used instead. Dave Hackenberg said that he and his wife have interference between their wireless mice. Solution? Buy a different mouse for one of the computers.

What kind of computer should I buy? It depends on your needs.

How many cores should it have? Again, it depends on your needs. Duo-core is a step below Intel's i3 processor. Intel's i3 and i5 processors are multi-threaded. I7 processors have 4-6 cores and are double threaded.

Intel processors are currently better than AMD processors and generally have video integrated into the processor, so you don't need a separate video card unless you are a gamer or other type of high end user of video apps. Intel's i5 and i7 processors have TurboBoost.

Chromebooks are not useful for non-students. Google Docs is all cloud-based.

Printers: Inkjet printers have become cheaper than laserjet printers.

Routers: Buy one which conforms to 802.11n rather than the older 802.11b or 802.11g. The later routers are more secure and have maximum transmission speed of 1GB/s.

Staples in Bowie have three technicians, Matt Elkins, Frank Tiwarri, and O.J. They also use Staples Remote Teams in Idaho to do routine, monotonous, time wasting work remotely to allow the Bowie technicians to work more efficiently. Turnaround time is normally about three days. Desktop computers are easier to work on than laptops. They frequently send out the laptops for repair. They do no warranty work. They charge \$149 for virus removal. Occasionally on weekends they will do free tune-ups. Staples offer a one year total support plan for \$170 and a two year total support plan for \$270.

If you liked Matt and Frank's presentation and answers, email Umar.Raspberry@Staples.com.