**Documenting the Problem and Attempted Solutions**

Documenting the problem, attempted solutions, and solutions that work are a major part of a DST’s job. Although companies, call centres, ISPs, repair shops, and small business owners each has its own way of documenting, documentation tasks usually involve creating (or accessing) a file for a specific client, subscriber, end user, or company computer and then updating that file each time there is a service call regarding it. The documentation might be handwritten on a documentation worksheet and then transferred to a computer file later (for home or desktop technical support), or it might be immediately entered into a computer (for call centre or ISP technical support).

Depending on the job you hold and your position in the tier structure, you might be required only to fill in a few fields of a documentation worksheet. However, if you own your own company and keep your own records, you will want to keep much more detailed information. Here are a few items that you should almost always document, regardless of the type of job or position that you hold:

■ The date and time the service call was initiated

■ The name, address, phone number, logon information, and any other pertinent data that identifies the end user

■ The computer ID, operating system version, connection type, and installed applications, as appropriate

■ The problem in definite terms, with as much detail as time allows

■ The attempted solutions and the results

■ The solution or escalation information

■ Whether the issue has been resolved and how long the resolution took

Keeping customer and service call documentation (with even minimal information) is crucial to being a good DST, running a successful business, acquiring experience, or advancing in your field. Keeping a separate log of problems and solutions that you have dealt with can also become quite a reference tool; you can refer to your own personal documentation when the problem arises again with another client. In the next section, you will learn how to create a personal knowledge base.

**Creating a Personal Knowledge Base**

There are several options for collecting and maintaining the data you will compile while performing your job as a DST. Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access make good databases and organizational tools, and third-party software might also be appropriate, depending on how much data you want to keep. Keeping your own personal knowledge base of problems you have encountered and their solutions can make it easier for you to access the answers to those problems the next time they arise.

When creating a personal knowledge base of problems and their solutions, document the following:

* The problem in detail, using keywords so that a search for the problem or one similar to it will produce results
* The cause of the problem, using keywords so that a search for the problem or one similar to it will produce results
* The resource that offered a solution to the problem, including a Uniform Resource Locator (URL)
* The solution
* Problems that resulted from the solution (if any)
* How many times the problem has been encountered and solved