

Working With Computers

In Today's Society, There's No Escape

Well, we've been warned that this time would come - probably from the earlier eighties on. Yes, computers have finally taken over and if you doubt it, we're here to convince you - but not because we want to or because we can. We want to convince you that if you don't take the necessary steps to control that reign, you're going to be left behind further than you could have ever imagined.

Computers are everywhere. Take a moment to try and think of a place a business where you didn't see a computer in use. From the small local corner store to the largest hospital, computers are in every gas station, grocery store, bank, restaurant, beauty shop, and doctor's office around. From a consumer's point of view - you may not think that's much to worry about. But along with computers, we've also been infiltrated with a little thing called "self-service." Today, there are more self-serviced resources than ever and in an effort to synchronize them with headquarter databases, they're provided via your inescapable computer.

Here are some examples. Banking is self-serviced through the desktop-clad ATM machine. Gas stations are self-serviced through a menu-clad touch screen kiosk. Most cash registers are Windows XP or Vista machines that send purchase details back to headquarters via the Internet (or a small Intranet). Having your weight, blood pressure, and heart rate measured and recorded is now a digitized process. Even ordering a pizza is now a simple matter of dialing from a wireless cell phone and making a few selections from series of pre-programmed menus!

The important thing to realize here is that this phenomenon isn't a new convenience - it's a new requirement. And if you haven't jumped onto the binary wagon, you're going to face a few problems. For just as this new lifestyle was once predicted, we're going to predict that "the old ways" will slowly disappear.

We're going to predict that all paper-based transactions (checks, money orders, etc.) and documentation (think of the old filing cabinet system) will disappear. We're going to predict that chips will replace everything that was once transported from one location to another through the trusty post office. And we're going to predict that homes will become less cluttered with stacks of paper and that our natural resources will flourish as a result of it.

This all sounds fine and dandy of course, but if you're not computer savvy, you're going to feel a little lost once the choice has past and the revolution is 100% complete. Fortunately, computer systems are designed in a way that even a child can manipulate them. In fact, if you can remember that most systems are

designed along the line of menus and the selections of a few options on these menus, you'll do just fine no matter how many buttons there are to push.

For example, when you're faced with an electronic system, look for a main menu. Most main menus display themselves as soon as a device is turned on, so chances are that if you're standing before a device that shows a bunch of choices to do something, you're looking at a main menu. The buttons on these main menus of course take you to additional menus, which in turn give you even more choices to make. And all of those choices will eventually bring you to the service that you need. One very important choice you'll want to keep your eye on is the option to return to the main menu. This way, you can return to the beginning of a system and start over in case you get lost along the way.

Another important choice that you want to keep your eye on is the choice to get help! This option may not be available on every device that you encounter, but when it is available, be sure to use it.

There's just no way around it. Computers and computerized systems are here to stay. There's no need to fear them - but you surely can't avoid them. Just remember the menu system and you'll soon discover that you can approach and use these things as if you designed them yourself.

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