

Windows 7, Remote Technology, And Idiots Like Me

By Gene Marks

I am a remote worker. And I am an idiot. This I admit.

I take showers at one in the afternoon, and sometimes skip a day (but don't tell anyone). I watch Dr. Phil on my computer. The other day I spent two hours on e-bay bidding for a bandana worn by Stevie Van Zandt during a Springsteen concert. Oh, and I'm pretty sure my neighbor across the street from me is having an affair with the Comcast repairman. Yes, I get easily distracted. I am a remote worker. And I am an idiot.

Sadly, I'm also the owner of a small business and everyone in my company also works remotely. Most of my employees are idiots like me, but not as bad. We used to have an office. But I shut that down when I realized that no one was visiting us. We now have a virtual private network supported by a local IT firm. Imagine those poor guys who have to support us idiots. It must really suck.

And now Windows 7 is released. Now that really sucks for my IT firm.

Why? Because my ten person company is no different than many other small businesses around the world. Other than having an idiot as its owner. Most of the businesses my size are still in Windows XP Land. That's because they were smart enough to stay away from Windows Vista and all of its shortcomings. I also stayed away. Not because of Vista's shortcomings. It was because I'm not only an idiot, but a cheapskate too. I recently read Windows Vista has been adopted by only 8.8% of potential users. At the same stage in its lifecycle Windows XP had been adopted by 87.1% of potential users. This means there's also a lot of cheapskates out there. And a lot of Windows XP users that haven't yet upgraded their systems. We're one of those.

The bad news is that I've been told that my company is going to have to migrate to Windows 7 in the next year or two. That's because, according to a recent survey, most Independent Software Vendors will be phasing out their support of Windows Vista in 2011, instead turning towards Windows 7 as their operating system of choice. I may be an idiot, but at least I'm smart enough to know not to watch "Glee." And also to know that my software needs to run on a supported operating system. So Windows 7, here we come. Kicking and screaming.

I hope my IT firm is prepared. They're pretty smart guys. But, like me, they're a small company and most of the guys working there are bald. Citrix Online recently conducted a poll of 200 IT professionals in the SMB world and found that 42% of them expect Windows 7 will have "more than a small impact" on their operations next year. Understatement or what? And at the same time, only 13% of these guys plan on hiring extra staff to help migrate their clients to the new platform. I'm expecting that's the case with my IT firm.

Those poor guys. They're going to have migrate me...an idiot...to Windows 7 sometime in the next year or two. And you know what they're up against?

They're up against a guy who's been using the same computer for the past five years. I've got everything PERFECTLY organized. I know how to use only what I need to use. I know only enough of Windows XP that I need to so that I can do my job. My kids are hitting the peak of puberty, my car is starting to shake ominously on the highway and my wife keeps hinting at turning my beloved basement into a "family room." And now I hear that Jon & Kate may never get back together again. I don't need any more changes in my life. Upgrading me will not be fun.

And they're going to be up against a bunch of problems. Getting my printer to work. Creating my e-mail accounts. Connecting me to the network. Setting up my backup routines. Configuring security. And dealing with all the applications that I like to download that sometimes do funny stuff to my computer. But hey, that's the price you pay if you want to do a little late night online

gambling, right?

The good news is that my IT firm has tools in place to help me migrate to Windows 7 with as little pain as possible. Thank God for that.

Thank God for GoToAssist. Whether I decide to upgrade my existing computer (unlikely) or get a new computer (probably, but it still kills me to do so), my IT guys will be using GoToAssist to take control of my system. This way I can turn my computer on, leave the house and chill to that same Neko Case album that's on perpetual replay at the Starbucks down the street while they connect and do what they have to do to configure my system. And if I come back to find something's not working right, they can connect again and again until it does.

And thank God for GoToMeeting. Because even before I let my IT guys touch my beloved, perfectly configured and trusted Windows XP workstation, I'm going to need to have an infinite number of conversations with them so I can fully understand how they're going to make sure my new Windows 7 workstation will also be perfectly configured and trusty. Because I'm as particular about my new computer's settings as Lady Gaga is about her fashion. Wait, wrong example. But you get my point. With GoToMeeting, my IT guys can show me on their screen what I'll be expecting to see on my screen and how they're going to get me there.

I'm thankful for GoToWebinar too. That's because I'm an idiot. And I'm going to need lots and lots of training. It took me two weeks after seeing "The Fourth Kind" to figure out the entire film was a complete fake. And I never would've known if my ninth grader didn't explain it to me. That's how stupid I am. And I'm worse learning new things on the computer. So GoToWebinar will help my IT guys teach me all the great ways Windows 7 will change my life. Or at least how to turn the damn thing on and off.

The research firm Forrester says that there are about 34 million “teleworkers”. They say that by 2012 enterprise mobile workers will make up 73 percent of the workforce. I’m willing to bet that many of them are idiots too. My IT firm, and many IT firms like them, will have their hands full supporting idiots like me when we all have to upgrade to Windows 7. They’re going to need all the remote tools they can get their hands on.

By the way I forgot about one other remote connection tool. That’s GoToMyPc. I’ll be using it to connect to my old Windows XP box which I fully intend to keep up and running. Just in case Windows 7 hiccups. Hey, maybe I’m not such an idiot after all!

About the Author

Gene Marks, an idiot, is also an author of four best selling small business management books and a frequent online columnist for Forbes.com, Businessweek.com and American City Business Journals. Gene owns The Marks Group PC, a ten-person CRM and Financial consulting firm located in Bala Cynwyd, PA. His website is www.marksgroup.net.