

# Le Bon Journal

Sunday 8 February 2004 <http://www.bonjournal.com>  
Volume 2 Issue 11: Computer has broken, with not a warning

---

Technology is supposed to increase our productivity. Why can't I get my computer to work the way it should?

## **Trying to connect**

Since Monday I have been trying to connect to the Internet. "No dial tone," my laptop flashed repeatedly. Whether it's AOL or ATT, whether it's through the telephone or directly from the wall, whether it's from the bedside outlet or the desk outlet, the result was the same: no dial tone.

While my colleagues were able to connect from the hotel and from the exhibition floor, I wasn't able to.

Could I have broken the modem on my way here? Could the cables be damaged? Are they protesting about being on the road for too long?

The Sheraton Essen staff were kind enough to let me use their business centre on the same floor as my room. However, my unfamiliarity with the German keyboard hindered my usual touch-typing. I typed Z instead of Y and vice versa. Finding the @ key was even more difficult.

Today I called my computer guru friend who suggested that I run a diagnostic from the control panel modem properties. Lo and behold! There was the switch for turning off the dial tone. As if by magic, I got connected, though only for a few seconds. By then my Internet account had been cancelled, and I had to set up a new one.

I figured I could access the Internet from the business centre. After booting and rebooting several times in English and then in German, I still could not get the computer to detect its modem. Once more the damsel in distress, I called hotel reception for help. It turned out that the hotel's Internet connection was down. There was never need for a modem because it was all ISDN.

When I finally got access to the Internet, I had only half an hour

before I had to check out from the hotel altogether.

## **Victim of technology**

Was Murphy a genius or was his Law a universal phenomenon?

I shake my head at the technological problems I've been having ever since I became a job-free citizen.

Since yesterday my keyboard and mouse had been ceasing up every minute for 30 seconds. My Windows XP detected that I had a buffering problem and suggested that I download an update.

While waiting for the download, I went to my Web site and found that it wasn't accessible. Coincidentally I had received e-mails from Internet Seer informing me that my Web site was not reachable.

Thankful for my engineering education, I was aware that my Web site and my PC were separate problems. But how was it that they occurred at the same time?

What this meant, of course, was that I could not work at my usual pace or update my Web site. My site visitors might be turned away especially since my site was down last week. But that was because my Web host had put a heavy hitting new site on my server.

Such problems are enough to make me want to go back to a full-time job at an office. At least I don't have to personally diagnose the problem. It gets fixed. I can abdicate. The computer help desk does it all.

## **PC vs Mac**

Compared to my PC, my MAC II si was heaven. During the five years of active use, it never once gave me a single problem. It stood the test of time, location (moved at least five times), and technology upgrade. By the time I finished writing my thesis, however, the PC had caught up. So I abandoned it in favour of the PC.

About two years ago, I bought a PC from a local computer shop. Almost

as soon as I started using it, I ran into problems. Since then it has continued to plague me.

This past weekend I installed and uninstalled Adobe as well as Visio. Doing so somehow interfered with my ability to save a Word document as HTML. I can no longer copy from a text file and paste into Frontpage 98. The midi plug-ins in Internet Explorer 4.0 no longer work. I can't even connect to the Internet.

My tech guru friend was kind enough to doctor my PC. He told me that the PC is a complicated machine. Action - reaction. The new software you add may be incompatible with parts of existing ones. It's like our society, not everyone gets along. Installing a piece of software on a PC is not trivial at all.

I miss the good old days of MAC's. My MAC had given me high expectations of usability. When I surf the net, I expect it to be as friendly as my MAC. The PC on the other hand is a virtual stranger.

## **Slow Internet connection**

Space, or the lack of, isn't the only thing that requires getting used to. Pace is another. Having gotten used to my American friend's DSL and cable Internet connections for checking my e-mail, I get frustrated by the slower dial-up connection I have from my home. But even my 44 kB/sec is far faster than 16.8 kB/sec I'm getting from my Dutch friend's dial-up.

Watching my hotmail slowly load, I had to kill another Internet explorer browser to reduce the traffic.

While waiting for each message to be downloaded, I started thinking about the life that's on hold when we're waiting for something to happen.

"Multi-tasking" has become a behaviour pattern for the time-challenged. Waiting is not a legitimate activity because you're not doing anything when you're

waiting. With slow Internet connections, I sense my productivity decrease ten-fold. It dissuades me from wanting to check my e-mail.

How do people with slow Internet connections cope? They can't surf the Net or rely on it for everyday information needs.

So how am I going to cope the next few days? I might as well as go off-line and start reading all the material I've printed from the Web when I had access to a T1 connection. I surfed like crazy then but had no time to read.

### **Sites are back up**

When my sites are down, I feel as if a part of me has shut down. Today they came back up. I'm alive again.

My Web host said they were down because I had transferred my domains to a new registrar. But this is hardly likely because I had earlier transferred analyticalQ without any downtime.

The new domain name registrar said it was because the parent domains were registered with Verisign.

The terrible consequence of this was loss of e-mails and site traffic.

To resurrect the situation, I decided to change the domain name servers (DNS), essentially transfer to a new Web host rather than wait for the situation to resolve with the old. What this meant was a further delay before my sites could be up.

During the blackout period, I felt the uncertainties and my confidence in my old Web host eroding. Will this happen again?

The previous Web host of analyticalQ often attributed the frequent outages to another Web site on the same server that got too many hits. It dragged my site down.

Another reason for downtime was the entire Internet highway being log jammed --- sort of like rush hour.

Well, my conclusion is that it is better to know why my sites were down and do something about it than sit in the dark hoping someone else will turn on the light.

### **Laptop woes**

No sooner had I finally got connected to the Internet, a window popped up, warning me that my system will be shut down by the NT Authority\System. Something about a Remote Procedure Call (RPC).

One minute in cyberspace doesn't provide enough time to say hello, let alone chat in instant messengers. I managed to upload my updated journal entries, send and receive e-mails, and work very fast before my laptop shut down and reboot again.

Until today, I suspected that it's due to the ADSL Internet provider here in Holland. I had some problems installing the ADSL software, for my system pointed out that the software did not have a Windows logo or a digital signature to say it's Windows compliant.

When I'm offline, I have full control of my laptop. However, I have noticed that my hard disk is churning away every second. There seem to be many memory-resident programmes running at all times.

Why are there so many processes running at the same time? Even if I have no applications running, there are all sorts of things going on that I don't understand.

My cyber-friend James diagnosed my 1-minute shut down as a result of the infamous blaster virus. He kindly sent me a programme to fix it.

While offline, the fixblaster.exe programme found 3 files and deleted them. But by clicking on YES - please get me a patch, the Internet delivered a new msblaster.exe programme to my C:\winnt32. So I've had to run it again.

"Frustration" is my middle name. Lately, I seem to be inundated with interruptions to my workflow -- having to set up my computer connections, fix my Web sites, and fix my computers.

I just want to get back to the good old days when things ran smoothly. Those good old days were when I got paid to write and somebody else got paid to fix my computer

problems. As a back-up, I had a boyfriend who loved fixing computer problems - so much that he was constantly trying to find things to fix on his computer.

Smooth, continuous operation comes at a price --- that of being self-sufficient and tolerant of imperfection and hiccups.



**Anne Ku, editor**

Someone sympathised with Anne's struggles and submitted a parody on Cat Steven's "Morning has broken."

### **Feedback from a reader:**

*Computer has broken  
With not a warning  
Swear words were spoken  
Like the fast train  
Keeps on rebooting  
X-P is hanging  
Windows misbehaving  
I'm cursing in vain*

*Sweating like rain fall  
Sherlock from Help Desk  
What is he lookin' for  
Magnifyin' glass  
Eyes wide with emptiness  
Checking the buffer  
Watching the data flow  
Found it at last!*

*Buffer is overflowin'  
Constantly hanging  
Change of some settings  
Problem is solved  
Praise with elation  
Test every function  
What a revelation  
Of the new day*

*Genius has woken  
No longer mourning  
Computer's working  
No more in pain  
Praise for Technician  
Praise for the invention  
Praise for the programs  
I'm producing again*

"Morning has broken" parodied by the Hungry Poet, Malaysia

**Copyright 2004 Anne Ku**