

The Aspect Diary



As you'll have read in Vassilly's blog, the newsletter PC was forcibly upgraded to Windows 10 & Office 2016 at the beginning of the year. Cue many words best transcribed using the top row of the keyboard such as \$*!@&!\$!! Sadly, it turned out our version of Sage wasn't compatible with either. Oh no! So back to Win7 & Office 2013 we had to go. So disappointing! (He-he-he).

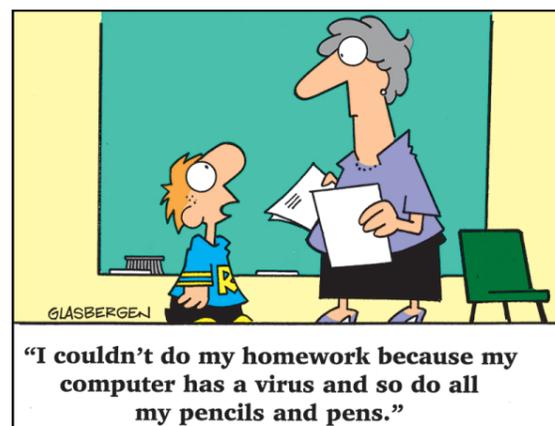
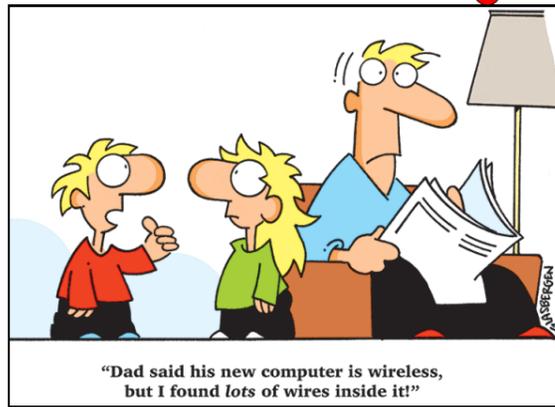
As you'll also have read inside, it's been all go here. New website! Plus relocation, relocation, relocation!! In case you're wondering how on earth we managed to pull together a newsletter too (never mind in a revamped format), well we'd like to call it strategic time management, but really it's because we wrote most of it in Jan. Throwing the last parts of it together with the move going on as well was a real scramble. But we are like a swan: calm & elegant where it shows & paddling like hell underneath.

Moving is always interesting, whether home or office. It's an occasion for making you wonder how you ever accumulated so much stuff. So we were ruthless. Where in the past we've been reluctant to throw anything away "just in case", this time anything without immediate use or value went straight in the skip (oh calm down. That's a euphemism for environmentally-friendly recycling. We know all about WEEE.... it's that gleeful noise you make when you send some other piece of c**p sailing into the skip - weeeeeeeeeee!!!) Anyway, be warned - if you're still clinging onto your old steam-driven PC with the pedals underneath, we're not going to be able to bail you out if it breaks anymore.

Not content with going 'weeeeeeeeeee!', we're going to try & tweet more as well. Operative word being 'try'. We've had a Twitter account for ages but we keep forgetting to feed it. To explain by way of an analogy, we know that sometimes Steve can project a rather ... shall we say ... world-weary aura ie. you think you want to talk to him about something, but the expression on his face makes you mentally catalogue everything you were about to say & conclude it's unworthy of his time. So you just turn around & quietly go away again. The entire process can take less than a couple of secs. (He was ridiculously thrilled to discover he had this expression in his arsenal but realised it did explain why sometimes people would just look at him for a beat before walking away). Anyway, that's kind of how we feel about Twitter. There's always things we could tweet but we overthink it & decide nobody would care. However, when you've got stuff like viruses arriving in new ways all the time, maybe tweeting when we see a new variant coming along is a good idea. Not that it'd all be doom-mongering; we'd tweet nice stuff too, like when the newsletter is out. So, if you're on Twitter, follow us - we're @AspectComs. We promise not to share pictures of our lunch.

So that's a wrap for this issue (we may be spending a tad too much time with film production people). See you in the summer, by which time we'll be well established in our new offices & all this moving hoo-ha will be a distant memory (& just as well, because a moving hoo-ha is worrisome).

The Last Laugh



The Aspect Newsletter



Keep this image in your head for the next time those people from "Microsoft" or "Windows" ring you. We gather they're now projecting a Reading number and giving out Microsoft's address in Reading if asked, so clearly they're getting smarter. But these days, you can have any old telephone number in the Cloud, regardless of where you are, and as for knowing Microsoft's proper address in the UK, well, duh - hello Google. It's still a scam, so don't get foxed. Oh and by the way, we understand "BT" have got in on the act now. People pretending to be from BT ring you up saying they need to carry out service checks on your system because you've been hacked. Simple rule - never let anyone onto your PC unsolicited, whether they claim to be from Microsoft, BT, your bank, the police, FBI, CIA, Interpol, MI5 or Marvel's Avengers. *Nobody*.

Anyway, *happy* New Year / Easter and a warm welcome to the first newsletter of 2017, which you may have noticed looks a little bit different. Well after seven Aspect years ^(a), we thought it was due a makeover. So, to what does it owe the honour at this precise time? Well there was so much else going on here, it got caught up in the excitement. Oh yes, we've got a lot of news for you inside and not of the fake variety either ^(b). For example, we've moved! From over there to over here. (The significance of that remark will become clearer inside). But going back to the makeover, we'd welcome any feedback or comments on the new look. And before you panic, *yes*, Vassilly is still blogging. And *yes*, we still have the *Tech Support Nightmares*, except they've gone retro - we're back to calling it *The Helpdesk of Horror*, because so many of you still do.

^(a) We are not implying that Aspect years are like dog years; we just meant the newsletter has clocked up seven years in its Aspect persona. The editorial team has been churning out these newsletters for coming up to fourteen years.... fourteen YEARS....FOURTEEN YEARS?! Surely we must be up for parole ?

^(b) Egocentric.... hopelessly non-PC.... given to sudden rants.... invents his own vocabulary.... lots of hair.... Uh, we were talking about Vassilly. Who were you thinking of?

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Aspect BC FAQs

My standard letters have a whole lot of "stock" phrases, sometimes entire paragraphs. Do I really have to type them every time?

No, you can use **Quick Parts**. Grab a document where you've used these chunks of text, and highlight one of your 'common' sections. Now do **Alt + F3**. It'll come up with a little dialogue box for you to fill in, though mostly all you need to do is give the chunk of text a name. By



default, it'll use the first few words of the text, but you can call it something more meaningful if you like. It'll want to save it in your normal.dot template, which is probably fine too - that's your default template that Word uses for all your new documents.

Now, when you want to put that chunk of text in a document, choose **Insert** and then click the **Quick Parts** button on the toolbar. Choose **AutoText** and click on the piece of text you want. It'll get slotted in wherever your cursor was in the document.

I find Outlook a bit 'washed out' in these newer versions. How can I make my new emails stand out?

Yes, they don't exactly scream HELLO!! in 2013 or 2016, do they? Click on **View** on the top menu, then **View Settings** on the left hand end of the subsequent toolbar. Now choose **Conditional formatting**. With **Unread messages** highlighted, click the **Font** button. You can now change the font, change the colour to something more in-your-face, and can make the font big or bigger. We find a big font size in a delicate shade of fuchsia to be quite eye-catching.

NB. If you have a number of mail folders in your Outlook view, you'll need to go through this process for each folder in turn.



We'd love to hear your comments and feedback. Just email: newsletter@aspectbc.co.uk

(Recent issues are on the website if you missed them).

Ch-ch-ch-changes ...

1. Slave to the \$\$\$...

We've had to announce a number of price rises lately, firstly as a result of Microsoft's "harmonisation", which we mentioned before Christmas, and then subsequently as more and more dollar-related rises have crept in.



Unfortunately, almost every piece of software or computer component out there is traded in dollars, so the prices rises are impossible to avoid. And while we always do our best not to pass on our cost increases, collectively they've just been too much to absorb. We've still tried very hard to keep them to a minimum though.

2. Are you being served?

The ups and downs of the dollar have, as we said, forced us to re-assess our pricing overall, but as part of that process, we also reviewed our support contracts ... *pause while a collective shudder runs through our customer base ...* Oh come on, don't you want us to give you the best support possible? *And pause again while you try to decide if there's any way to answer 'yes' to that where it won't mean more money....*

Cynicism is not becoming, you know....

Unless you've signed up relatively recently, then we will be getting in touch to discuss your contract. But this is not an exercise to wring more money out of you. That'll just be a happy by-product. (Joking!!!) The main issue is that we want to match our clients up to the best support package we can give them, which in some cases is not the one they've chosen to run with for years. And us being us ie. incalculably nice, we often end up giving clients the support they *need* instead of the support they're *paying* for. So rather than be at perpetual cross-purposes, we decided it'd make more sense to sit down and talk about it. Besides, there's some of you we may not have seen for a little while. A catch-up would be good.

Tell you what, we'll even bring the biscuits.

Granted, they might not survive the journey to your premises, but then you can't expect miracles.



... but not far. Well everyone says it's a stressful experience, so we opted just to move less than 100 metres across the car park. Hence we're now in Unit 14, instead of Units 27 and 28. We've also got a second office and showroom on the other side of Bridgend in Waterton Lane.

There's been a gradual change in the kind of support we provide, with less emphasis these days on traditional parts 'n' labour type contracts. It means we're less obliged to stock a range of parts to rival eBay and therefore we can outfit the new business accommodation more to office space as opposed to warehousing. So a nicer environment for us and for our visitors.



This made us smile when we saw it

Don't count your chickens before they cross the road and move in...

.. or something like that.

A cautionary tale, if we may, related to our move (above):- for the last year or more, the average lead time to get a new phone line put in was about two working weeks. Sod's law, of course, when we came to order *ours*, that'd doubled to four. Our line ended up going in just two scant days short of our intended move date.



One of our clients in a similar predicament discovered there was no capacity to even *give* him a phone line where he was moving (and we're talking prominent business park location here).

So the moral of this story is:- make sure you've got all your eggs in your basket before checking out. Because if you're depending on it all going to plan, chances are it won't..

Can we mangle a metaphor or what?

♪ Don't leave me this way ..♪ ie. taking all my data with you



If you've ever had an employee leave with all your customer records in their pocket, or you're scared it could happen to you, then you might be interested to know about one of the tools in our remote monitoring package.

In a matter of minutes, we can remotely lock down the USB ports and the optical drives on any machine so they're not accessible. That means no surreptitious copying to pen drive.

This is just one of a whole raft of security measures we can deploy to keep your business secure from threats - why not give us a call?

Jargon Buster ... has been bumped for this issue

We're skipping the Jargon Buster this time in favour of yeah, yeah, **ransomware** again. Look, if we can come up with anything that gets the message across, it's worth it, so bear with us.

We understand that BBC Wales' *X-Ray* programme recently ran a piece on ransomware, where the unhappy victim had coughed up the Bitcoin equivalent of several thousands of pounds and they still weren't given the decryption key. Seriously though, that is a bit of a PR backfire for them - it's only the expectation of getting the key to unlock the data that makes people pay. If it's all stick and no carrot, what's the point? The trouble is, ransomware software is a commodity, and as such, it gets sold to all sorts. Looks like it's now made it into the hands of unethical thieves. Wow. Who'd have thunk?

The idea of paying these people at all sticks in our craw, as it only encourages them. Is there an alternative to paying? Yes. It's called a B-A-C-K-U-P.

All right then, once more from the top. What are the rules of best practice?

1. Avoid a blame culture mentality

Forget about the actual remedial action for a minute. This is one of *the* most important points, as every second counts here and you want people to own up fast if they accidentally unleash a ransomware virus. Yes, sure, probably they should've noticed the email looked dodgy, blah-blah-blah, but if we keep flogging that horse, we're not going to help matters. Fact is, people get tired, they get distracted, and mistakes happen. So like little Georgie Washington and the cherry tree, when someone owns up to doing something they shouldn't have done, honesty needs to be smiled upon, even if you don't particularly like what they're being honest about.

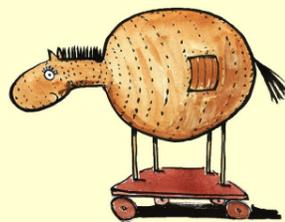


2. When ransomware hits ...

You need to understand that ransomware doesn't actually spread. The machine that lets it in? That's where it stays. Yes, it'll encrypt every file that computer can *access*, but if you take that computer off the network, the encryption across your network stops. So once you've all grasped the honesty-is-the-best-policy bit, what you need to know then is that if you've opened an email you shouldn't have, get the PC off the network *fast*. Never mind messing about with logging off - just yank the network cable out. Then shut it down. And phone your IT support. If you've got the *slightest* suspicion that you've done something bad, pull the network cable straight away and get your IT support to check it out. You can never be too careful.

3. How do you spot it?

Assuming the person who released it *doesn't* own up, it may be up to other people to notice what's happening. So what are you on the lookout for? Well, ransomware renames files, for example the OSIRIS version slaps OSIRIS onto all the filenames. So if you're looking for a file by browsing your network, you might well notice that. But you might just be trying to open something on the Recent Files list from within your Word or Excel - if it can't find it, or can't open it, that could be a flag that it's not called what it used to be called. So quickly go and look at the folder your file ought to live in and check for renamed files. If you find an infection, and you don't know where it originated, you'll have to get *everyone* to pull the network cable immediately. Then you have to isolate the right machine. If no-one says they did it (and maybe they did it and went home before they realised), the clue is going to be in the My Documents folder. Ransomware encrypts everything it can see, but it starts in the My Documents folder. **Any PC with renamed My Documents is the PC that started it.**



4. Make sure you have good backups

We usually run with a multi-pronged attack. We generally turn on shadow copies, which keeps previous versions of files, plus we have traditional overnight backups, be they online or to local disk. Shadow copies do have an overhead in terms of disk space. How could they not? You're hanging onto multiple versions of all your files. But it gives us the option to roll back to ten minutes ago, an hour ago .. whenever the file changed. Worst case, we roll back to the last backup. Fact is, we've had many clients affected by ransomware, of course we have. But have any of them ever had to pay the ransom? No. Have they lost critical data? No.

It need not be the end of the world to be hit with ransomware. With prompt action and good backups, there's no reason it should cost you anything more than a short period of inconvenience. Yes, you'll have a bit of downtime while your data gets restored; how long that turns out to be will depend on how long you let the ransomware do its thing before stomping on it.

"That light-bulb moment" quiz!

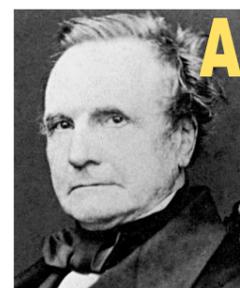


The consensus after the Christmas quiz was that you suck at geography. Yes, all right, the pictures were small. We'll let you off.

So how are you at Science and Technology? Come *baaaaaaack!!* OK, clearly you can flip a page faster than the speed of sound, but techie stuff can be fun! (We chant this every morning at Aspect. It makes 5:30 look less like an impossible goal).

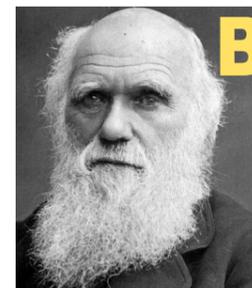
Here are photos of some famous scientists and inventors. We've also given you clues as to exactly why they're so famous, because we suspect the photos may not be enough. Let's face it - the Kardashians, they're not (there again, personally I couldn't tell one Kardashian from another). Put their surnames into the grid where indicated and the blue squares will spell out the surname of another giant in the history of science.

Answers, as ever, on the website; follow the link on the newsletter page.



1791 - 1871
British

The father of the computer. (Yes, it's all his fault). His *Difference Engine* was a mechanical device designed to solve polynomial functions



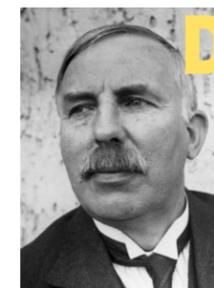
1809 - 1882
British

Naturalist and geologist who proposed the theories of natural selection and evolution



1874 - 1937
Italian

Often credited as the inventor of radio, transmitting the first signals across the Atlantic.



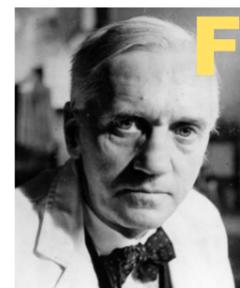
1871 - 1937
New Zealander

The father of nuclear physics, discovered the concept of radioactive half-life and the make up of atoms



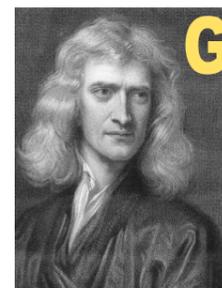
1867 - 1934
Polish/French

First woman to win a Nobel Prize. Discovered the elements polonium and radium, and developed the theory of radioactivity.



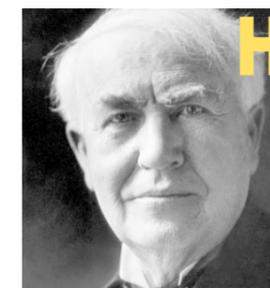
1881 - 1955
British

Biologist whose messy laboratory brought about the accidental discovery of penicillin.



1643 - 1727
British

Formulated the laws of motion and universal gravitation. HE DID NOT INVENT GRAVITY! Built the first practical reflecting telescope and shares credit for the development of calculus



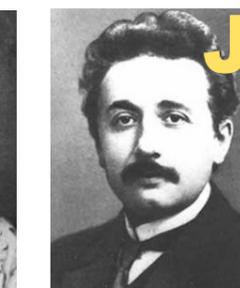
1847 - 1931
American

Prolific inventor, credited with the phonograph, the motion picture camera and the electric light bulb amongst many others



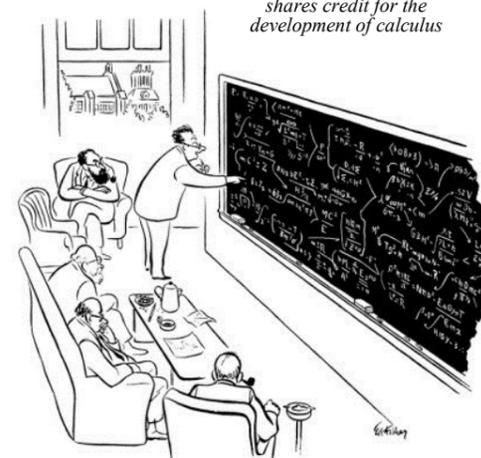
1815 - 1852
British

Daughter of Lord Byron. During her association with (A), she was credited with writing the first ever computer program

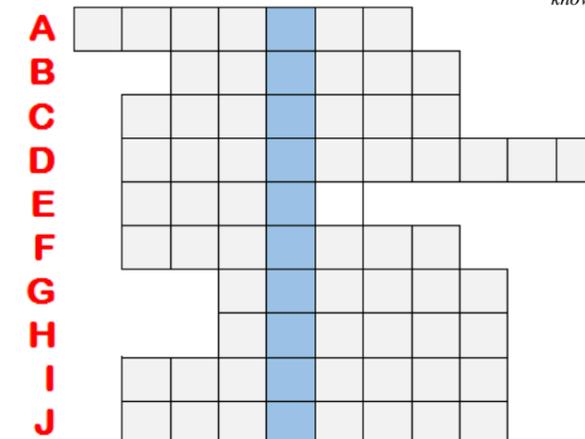


1879 - 1955
German

Theoretical Physicist. Developed the general theory of relativity. Yes, it is who you think it is - he wasn't *born* looking like he'd been plugged into a light socket, you know.



Say, I think I see where we went wrong. Isn't 8 times 7 equal to 56?



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Check out the new Website!



After telling you for about the last year (or is it two? Might even be three) that we were going to revamp the website, we finally did.

The initial pages are live!!

Cue ticker-tape parades and fireworks!!



(These looked more impressive on screen, honestly...)

It's brighter, less complicated and so - we hope - easier to navigate. But we'll let you be the judges of that.

While designing it, we obviously wanted it to have a contemporary look, so we browsed around to see what's trending. We noticed a definite trend towards businesses showing videos of their staff in the workplace. So we gave that some thought. For all of five seconds. And then decided we'd cheerfully live without being that trendy.

The website is still a work in progress, but we'd welcome any feedback while we develop it. Check it out at:-

www.aspectbc.co.uk

Vassilly's Blog

Look, loyal fans!! Half way through Blog, I am finally get new photo! (And Payrolls lady say is worth much money - she say snap of me at work is rarer than snap of snow leopard on unicycle....)



Tues 3 Jan

I am write in soft whisper because loud print is make head hurt. You are remember how 'kats is not liking curry? I am have update after New Years party. 'Kats is not liking vodka martinimabobs either. Payrolls lady is ask if I am have mine shaken or stirred. According to stomach, I am have mine churned. Ohhhhh, I am have to take off waistcoat. Is hurt eyes....

Wed 4 Jan

Worst. Day. Ever. Is start when IT Boss Man is send me up ladder to look at faulty camera. Is so cold, paws and whiskers is freeze to ladder rungs and I am stuck. Oh, but is OK, ladder is coming down... wait, what is happening? IT Boss Man is load ladder on roof rack! He is forget about me!!! I am whip head round to shout, but I am forget that whiskers is stuck to ladder.... OK, so now whiskers is still stuck to ladder, but is no longer attached to face. This is bring tears to eyes. Which are freeze also. IT Boss Man is put pedal to metal, and both van and Vassilly is scream out of car park. Wind is blast into face and lips is curl back. I am stuck to end of ladder with frozen bug-eyes and shrieking mouth like scary troll pencil topper. IT Boss Man is flip sun-visor up and I am goggle at him upside down through windscreen. He is try to drive up tree.

Fri 13 Jan

Weather peoples say big snow is come. I am have excusings for absence all lined up, like "snow is up to whiskers" (and is not funny, loyal fans, because whiskers is still stuck to Aspects ladder on roof rack). But is Fri 13th. No snow. No ice. No luck.

Thurs 19 Jan

After many protestings, Payroll lady is get upgrade to Windows 10 and Office 2016. IT Boss Man is warn rest of us of nuclear fallout. Is pity Sergei is deaf, no? (Snh-snh-snh). I am say to him "when you are bring tea, be sure to be asking how she is get on with new systems".... He is interesting mix of ashen fur and tea stain when he is come out.

Mon 23 Jan

I am little bit late for work today, but I think no-one is notice. Then I am get summons from Payrolls lady. *Gulp.* She is ask why I am late. I say I am not late. She is rewind CCTV which is show me come in at quarter past nine. She say facts show I am late. I say maybe I am offer alternative facts....

Fri 27 Jan

BIG clear out! IT Boss Man say we are get rid of all old useless stuff. I am put Sergei in back of van.

Mon 20 Feb

Ah-ha! Reason for big clear out is become... er... clear. We are move!! This is excite news, no? IT Boss Man say is all paws on deck for movings. He say since we are only go short way across car park, we are just carry everything. But Sergei is ask to be excused from movings, on grounds of being useless. So he is get put on tea duties. He is totter across car park with tray of tea and coffee. I am look in mug and is nothing but small puddle in bottom. Everything is slosh out because he is walk like pneumatic drill. He is utter waste of fur.

Wed 22 Mar

I am not blog for long time, peoples, because Aspects is work me like slave. I am cable. I am paint. I am up ladders. I am down ladders. I am tote barge. I am lift bale. I am get overtime. (OK, so maybe not like slave). Also, I am get big new office! With new desk! (Is size of football field!!) ... Oh. Apparently I am share desk with Sergei. And with Bogdan. And with Payrolls lady. Well this is cosy.

Mon 10 April

Another long spell of no blog! Aspects is work paws to the bone, peoples!! I am have magnolia paint ingrained under fingerclaws and so much dust in fur, I am look like Sergei. But good news, loyal fans! Is long weekend of Easter chocolatusness coming up!! What? What?!!!! We are *work!* But... but ...but ... is *Easter!!* Payrolls lady say is much work to be doing with movings and we are not waste opportunity. I am have news for Payrolls lady - I am not plan to waste Easter opportunity. I am plan to eat much chocolate and do impression of sloth. She say is not good for me. She say I am feel much better with activity. But I am plan special Easter workout activity! Open wrapper, bite egg, chew egg, swallow egg. And repeat.

Sigh. Happy Easter, loyal fans. Be thinking of me with nose to grindstone

The Helpdesk of HORROR ...



So we've all heard the urban myths of people who think their DVD tray is a coffee cup holder, who write 'click' when they're told to right-click, or who can't understand why their PC won't work during a power cut, but just because they're urban myths, it doesn't mean people aren't actually that dumb

"This fax you've sent me is blank."

"Oh. Well I haven't used the fax machine often but I'm sure I did it right."

"You just fed it in face down?"

"Yes... well I did fold it in half, because it was confidential and I didn't want anyone else to read it."

"My printer isn't printing blue."

"Is it a colour printer?"

"Ummm ... oh. No."

"Right, so at the prompt, type 'cmd' and hit Enter. You should have a little black window now."

[Heard in an aside...]"Cheryl, is this window black?"

"Yeah, see I deleted all the image files that were older than three days and now I can't find the pictures I scanned last week. Is there a problem with the database or something?"

"My colleague is away and I need to get onto her PC to get an email."

"Do you know her password?"

"Well I was sure I did, but it's not working. I don't understand - I've watched her type it dozens of times."

"What password are you trying?"

"Five asterisks."

"How many pins does a 16-pin cable have?"

"... so it just comes up with a message that says 'Click OK' - what do I do?"

"My new printer isn't working."

"OK, let's just do some quick checks. Is the power cable plugged in securely?"

"No, no, it's wireless. It doesn't need a power cable."

"I unplugged my PC from the wall, how do I plug it back in?"

"Uhhh ... align the pins with the holes and push?"

"Okay, thanks."

"What program do you use to make a Word document?"

"So do I type the serial number into the box that says 'serial number' or the box that says 'company'?"

"See the Recycle Bin? Does someone come round and empty it?"

"Have you tried restarting your computer?"

"Oh no ... I don't think my computer can do that."

"What seems to be the problem?"

"When I change my font size, all my letters change size."

"OK, now press the right arrow."

"The bar is going down."

"Are you pressing the right arrow?"

"Yes, and it's still going down."

"You're sure you're pressing the right arrow key?"

"Yes .. Oh, wait, that's the key with the arrow pointing right isn't it?"

"Yes."

"OK, click on that with the left mouse button."

"Which one is that?"

"Well, you know your left from your right, so click the button that's on the left."

"Nothing happened."

"You definitely clicked the left mouse button?"

"I think so."

"The one on the left?"

"Which one was that again?"

"Yeah, every time I turn off my computer, I lose my network connection"

"I have an error on my screen that says 'disk full'. What does that mean?"

"Perhaps your disk is full?"

"Hmmm... okay."

"Yes hello, I've forgotten the username for my login."

"The username, *not* the password, right?"

"Yes, the username. I don't know how I'm supposed to keep track of all these things!"

"Well your username is your name, sir."

"Oh this is unacceptable. How much am I supposed to remember? There's just too many things!"

"Well, yes, but surely one of them would be your name?"

"I guess I'm going to have to write it down."

"What kind of computer do you have?"

"A black one."

"How long is your 10-metre Ethernet cable?"