

Radio Days – 2009-05-02

Tip of the Week – Radio Woes

Last week's *Tip of the Week* was about bad connections for wireless internet. This week's tip is about mobile phone coverage. I met a client who changed his mobile phone company, as their rates were lower, then found that his mobile had no coverage at his home. The phone company is building a new tower to service his area, and it should be working soon, but meanwhile he is left without mobile coverage from his home. As he, like me, is self-employed and works from home, this is a major problem.

To resolve this, check the coverage map on the internet (though these maps are notorious for being wrong) and get a guarantee in writing that the full cost will be refunded if the service is not acceptable. This shows the need for a single mobile network to cover the whole country.

Planning Your Learning

So many times in my travels in the wild world of computing I meet people who say *I wish that I knew as much as you do*. My response is often that I wish that I knew as much as they do about their chosen subject! The difference is that they are often a plumber, an electrician, a cook or have some other very useful skill. Another difference, it seems to me, that it is easier for a plumber to learn how to use a computer (because a plumber often has a computer to learn on) than it is for me to learn plumbers' skills (because I do not have the tools needed to be a plumber).

If you feel that you need to update your skills (in computing or any other field) then please remember two things:

- You cannot learn it all at once
- An hour's study each day for a year will teach you more than a year at university

If you can grasp, and apply, these two principles you will be able to learn all you need to know in a surprisingly short time. The question now becomes *What do I need to learn*. Only you can answer this question, but the obvious place to start is to find the places where you spend a lot of time but seem to get very little done. One area that I have often seen is when a person uses the wrong program for the job. One test for this is to stop and try to imagine a way in which a task could be done more quickly. I have seen too many people do the books for their business manually then, after a few months with a good accounting program, realise just how much effort they have saved and how much more information they have at their fingertips.

A quick test: do you know what each of the following programs can do: a word processor (eg Word), a spreadsheet (eg Excel), a page-layout program (eg Publisher)? Can you use each of these programs to their full extent? There are tutorials for all of these programs, and many others on the internet. All of these programs are expensive, and each one of them has a free alternative. The free alternatives are all available on the internet, and they all have tutorials to help you get started. If you do not know what these programs can do then you can easily download a free program, and the tutorials, from the internet and practice.

One option which may make more difference than all the rest is to learn how to type. My favourite typing tutor is *Ten Thumbs Typing Tutor*, which is available for a 10-day trial. It costs about \$35 to buy and, for many people, may make all the difference needed.

Websites

Office suite	www.openoffice.org
Page layout	www.scribus.net
Typing tutor	www.tenthumbstypingtutor.com