

Whitstable Computer Repair

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A Newsletter?

Hi this is Gary from Whitstable Computer Repair and welcome to the first edition of our newsletter.

Why a newsletter? Well apart from the obvious reminder that I am still here if you need any help, I realised that while I'm out and about repairing computers, I get to hear and discover lots of computer related "stuff". Now if I'm honest, 99% wouldn't be of any interest to you at all, but there are a few things that might be of great help to you.

So a newsletter seems to be a good way to get this out to many people in the most efficient way.

You may not want another email to add to the pile, so there is an unsubscribe link at the bottom of every issue, one click and you will hear from me no more (unless you call me that is).

I also realise that while I may be telling you all about megabytes and gigabytes, what you really want to hear about is how to set up a video call to your granddaughter in New Zealand (yes, it can normally be set up for less than £10), so if you want to hear about something specific, please let me know and I'll try to include it in the newsletter.

Finally, I don't have an endless supply of time (or ideas), so I may only be able to send you a newsletter every quarter, but if you tell me you like it, I will try to contact you every month.

If you know of anyone who would also like a copy, please forward this to them with my blessing. They will need to visit

<http://whitstablecomputerrepair.co.uk/newsletter.php> and enter their details, then click the link in the confirmation email they will receive.

Thinking About a New PC?

While I don't have the sheer buying power of the likes of PC World etc. I am now able to offer a range of competitively priced PCs, based on your actual computing requirements, rather than the sales targets of the representative you deal with in the shop.

I am happy to discuss your requirements in detail and to organise the provision of a replacement PC. There will be a charge for setting up and data transfer, but this would be offset by the fact that unlike a store, I deliver the PC to you, I transfer the data from your old PC, set up the internet and email connectivity, check that you are fully protected against viruses and malware and ensure that the whole thing is working properly before I leave.

I can also offer initial familiarity training by request.

If you require disposal of your old PC, including confidential destruction of data, I can do this too. Data destruction is carried out to US Department of Defence standards.

If you want to know more send me an email (help@whitstablecomputerrepair.com), or phone me on 075 1000 1555

Tips and Tricks

...or Outlook Express vs. Windows Live Mail vs. Webmail

...and why using Outlook Express is becoming increasingly risky

A few years ago many things limited your access to your email, two of the main things were a) the storage limit imposed by email companies and b) the difficulties getting an internet connection.

The former is no longer an issue at all, because there are any number of email accounts available to all, mostly free, with pretty much unlimited storage. The latter with the availability of broadband almost worldwide, is no longer a major consideration either.

Many people still use Outlook Express, this is ok, but for three issues, firstly Outlook Express is no longer supported by Microsoft, which means

that no further security fixes are going to be issued, secondly the emails you store are saved on your hard drive, so you are one hard drive failure away from losing all of your email records and finally, if you are away from home, there is no way to look at an email you received yesterday – or last week, for that matter.

Along comes Windows Mail and Windows Live Mail, these are both basically the same product, the former was part of Windows Vista and the latter is a free download that anyone can use, it is a direct replacement for Outlook Express and works very well, but...

There is always a 'but'

At this time in almost every situation, I would urge you to use Webmail, if you are unfamiliar with the term, it simply means using your browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome etc.) to visit the email page of your email provider and login using your email address and password, to view, send and receive your emails, this has many advantages over home storage:

- You can access your emails from anywhere in the world where you have access to a computer on the internet, whether in an Internet Café, visiting relations, on holiday, wherever.
- Your email provider stores your emails on an array of large fast computers called servers, they carry out regular backups and offer a much more secure method for protecting your data.
- There is no longer a need to delete every email once you have read it, save as many as you wish, because data storage limits are so high and getting steadily higher they are not worth worrying about. By the time you have reached the limit under normal use, they will have raised the limit again.
- You will have instant access to yesterdays last weeks and last months emails, wherever you login, anywhere in the world.

The only real limitation is that you will not be able to access your emails without an internet connection, but as the availability of broadband becomes ever greater, the consequence of this occurring becomes less and less likely.

Let's Be Careful Out There!

As you can imagine I come across a wide variety of virus and spyware attacks in my normal working day, so I thought I would share with you the latest infections that seem to be popping up and how to avoid them.

One disturbing development that I have recently become aware of is customers have been receiving calls from an Indian call centre. The caller states that they represent Microsoft and "would like to assist them with the virus infection".

This is what has been reported by The Guardian, back in July...

"The scam always starts the same way: the phone rings at someone's home, and the caller – usually with an Indian accent – asks for the householder, quoting their name and address before saying "I'm calling for Microsoft. We've had a report from your internet service provider of serious virus problems from your computer."

Dire forecasts are made that if the problem is not solved, the computer will become unusable.

The puzzled owner is then directed to their computer, and asked to open a program called "Windows Event Viewer". Its contents are, to the average user, worrying: they look like a long list of errors, some labelled "critical". "Yes, that's it," says the caller. "Now let me guide you through the steps to fixing it."

The computer owner is directed to a website and told to download a program that hands over remote control of the computer, and the caller "installs" various "fixes" for the problem. And then it's time to pay a fee: £185 for a "subscription" to the "preventative service".

The only catch: there was never anything wrong with the computer, the caller is not working for Microsoft or the internet service provider, and the owner has given a complete stranger access to every piece of data on their machine."

So as you can see, the dangers are no longer limited to your online activities!

Someone once said: "As long as a computer is operated by a human or connected to a network, there's no definitive way to guarantee complete security."

But we can try...

Rootkits – This is a particularly nasty type of virus infection, there has been a disturbing increase in the number of these I have encountered recently and they can be very difficult to eradicate.

MyWebSearch – Classic spyware, MyWebSearch (FunWeb products) is a toolbar that attaches itself to your browser, then redirects all of your internet searches to websites that offer payment by referral, you lose control of your searches, they get paid.

The toolbar comes bundled with a variety of software online, such as Cursor Mania, Cartoonify, My Mail Stationary, PopSwatter and as part of the My Way portal, so as you can see it is targeted at children and it's families who need to be aware of the risks.

Fake Antivirus - These are usually generated by a Trojan – a program that takes control of your computer – after you open an email attachment, click on a pop-up advertisement or visit a particular website. (Adult sites are special favourites.)

Preventative Measures - In each of the above instances it is best to ensure that Windows Firewall is in place and operational (to check this: Click Start | Control Panel | Windows Firewall). Keep your computer up to date with all Microsoft security updates (the little yellow shield bottom right will tell you when new updates are available). Ensure that your Anti Virus software is running and up to date. In addition, avoid opening suspicious emails and certainly don't open any attachments unless you were expecting to receive one.

I've just discovered the best kept secret of how you can save money on your shopping and utilities!

I have been a customer of Utility Warehouse for nearly two years, they offered such a great opportunity to save money that I decided to become a distributor.

In a nutshell, Utility Warehouse offer very competitive Broadband, Telephone, Mobile, Gas and Electricity.

You may not have heard of them before – unless I have already spoken to you – because they don't spend tens of millions of your money

advertising in the media. Instead they rely on a network of distributors to spread the word about how to:

- Save 20-30% on your household bills every month.
- Eliminate having to deal with overseas call centres.
- One simple monthly bill showing exactly how much you are spending and, more importantly, saving.
- No contractual tie-in.
- The unique Utility Warehouse Triple Value Guarantee*
- Plus I am your local representative on the rare occasion you encounter difficulties.

*The Utility Warehouse Triple Value Guarantee

1. For your Gas, we guarantee our prices will always be cheaper than British Gas, wherever you live in the UK.
2. For your electricity, we guarantee our prices will always be cheaper than the prices charged by the regional electricity supplier for the area where you live.
3. And for your complete peace of mind, we guarantee our prices will always remain competitive compared with the cheapest standard tariffs available from the "Big 6" suppliers.

As I said, I have been a customer for nearly two years and regularly save between £10 and £30 per month, so if you would like know more, email, or give me a call and I will pop round to explain, and hopefully save you loads.

Contact Us

Recently we have been reorganising the phones, looking at ways to make it easier for you to contact us, while keeping costs down.

When I first started out with Whitstable Computer Repair, I used an 0800 number, because it represents a no-cost call for customers, but over time it has become apparent that 0800 calls from a mobile are not free and a growing proportion of my calls are from mobiles, also quite a few of my customers have admitted that they didn't know 0800 calls were free and perhaps most importantly, they really don't seem to care! If their computer is broken, they want a quick solution, not a free telephone call.

The final nail in the coffin was that I have been paying between £30 - £50 every month for the 0800 number.

So we have had a re-think and this is the result...

- If you need a response right away, then call me direct on 075 1000 1555
- If you would like to book a service, tune up, or other non-urgent visit, then either email me on help@whitstablecomputerrepair.com, or call the office on 01227 200536.
- I check the above on a daily basis, but as you can appreciate, I'm out and about most of the time, so I might not reply right away.
- I still have the 0800 number and my old mobile number (0796 29 29 719), but these are answered on a best endeavours basis.

I hope you found this first newsletter interesting, I welcome your comments and constructive criticism and hope you will stay tuned for more instalments.

Cheers

Gary