

Tips, Tricks and Advice from your local “IT Guru”

This month I want to talk to you about a few things that have been brought to my attention recently. The first is that old favourite: viruses. There was a bit of a fuss in the computer press a while ago regarding a new type of virus that could penetrate the Apple Mac systems, and how all users needed to rush out and buy some anti-virus software. Strangely enough, the people calling most loudly for this seemed to be the anti-virus companies themselves! Now, I wouldn't want to overlook the risk, but this was only one virus and Apple stepped in pretty quickly to fix it. So, I don't think there's any need to panic just yet! The only thing to do is to make sure you have applied all of the software fixes that Apple's Software Update utility tells you about, and all should be fine.

On the Windows side, there is yet another type of fake anti-virus software doing the rounds. This one purports to be from the Metropolitan police, informing you that you have all sorts of nasty illegal software and seedy material on your system. Furthermore, it offers to remove these for the small sum of £100! Yeah, right! The advice remains the same: don't pay, switch the system off, and call an expert.

Now, moving onto other matters... As regular readers will know, I am a big fan of Apple systems. I have no hesitation in recommending an iPhone to anyone who needs or wants a smartphone. They are simple, elegant to use, and with access to a few hundred thousand Apps in the Appstore there's a good chance you can find an App for almost anything you need to do. However, they are very expensive, and you really need to be "all in" with Apple to get the very best out of the whole ecosystem. In comparison, Microsoft's Windows Phone 7 running on the newly released Nokia Lumia hardware provides a viable alternative to the iPhone. I have been using a Nokia Lumia 710 for the past few weeks, and I have to say that I am very impressed. Sure, the hardware is not quite as stylish as the iPhone, but then the model I am using only cost about £100. Compared to the cheapest iPhone, which is currently sitting at £320, this is quite a difference. The only small issue is that as yet there are not quite as many Apps available, and whilst all the 'big' ones are present it might be a small downside for those of us who are a little more picky. The catalogue is expanding all the time, though, and this is something to keep in mind. In regards to the interface, it is refreshingly easy to get the hang of, and you can be up and running in a matter of minutes. If you use one of the big email systems, such as Gmail or Hotmail, then all your information will be pulled across to your device in seconds. This includes your contacts, and your calendars! Things like Facebook and Twitter are built into the system under something called the 'People View.' This allows for you to keep up with all of your friends easily, across all platforms, in an easy-to-read format. The Nokia handsets even include a full SatNav system with free, downloadable maps of most of the world with no on-going costs for data usage. Also, the integration with Xbox makes the prospect of interchangeable gameplay between phone and console rather interesting. With the imminent arrival of Windows 8, which we discussed last month, the prospect of having a common interface between your phone, PC, and games console makes Windows phone an attractive idea.

Finally, a few people have asked how my dad is getting on with his iPad. Well, I'm pleased to report that his old laptop hasn't been turned on for 319 days now, and he has mastered all of the things he wants to do! He uses it daily for email, browsing the Internet, and keeping tabs on what his children and grandchildren are getting up to. He often uses it to catch up on TV he has missed and has even made a few video calls! Definitely a great success!

If you know of anyone who wishes to take his or her first steps into the world of computing and the Internet, then I would still recommend this as a great way to get started.

If you have any questions or anything you would like me to cover in this column, email me at look@4-11consultants.co.uk

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