

## December 2009 Newsletter

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### Troubleshooting 101

In last month's issue, I promised a troubleshooting newsletter as a follow-up to the Repair or Replace issue and my own office computer disaster. If you know the basics, you can save some repair cost even if you can't fix the issue yourself. Just knowing the symptoms helps point your friendly repair tech (me!) in the right direction.

### Website Update

As mentioned last month, my new and improved website is online. It contains new products, updated contact forms, and prior issues of the newsletters in PDF format. If you'd prefer to receive this newsletter via e-mail rather than by snail mail, you can sign up online. Check it out at: [www.medofficesystems.com](http://www.medofficesystems.com)

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### Troubleshooting 101

One day, your computer suddenly stops working and you're not sure why. You didn't really notice anything different before, but it's definitely acting up now. So what do you do? A few simple troubleshooting steps can help spot the problem, and may get you back to work quickly. Following are a few of the most common issues, and some guidelines for generic troubleshooting.

#### **Most Common Issue #1: Can't send or receive e-mail from Outlook, Entourage, Thunderbird, etc.**

This is far and away the most-reported issue I deal with. E-mail client software such as Outlook lets you check email locally on your PC, but when it fails there are many "working parts" to check. So here goes:

1. Check that you are online – can you surf the internet?
  - a. If there's no internet connection, e-mail won't work – check cables and status lights on the cable or DSL modem, and your router. Green or Amber lights are good, Red lights indicate failure.
  - b. It sounds trite, but shut down all computers and network equipment, and then re-start it all.
2. Assuming you are online, next check if you can get email via webmail.
  - a. Nearly all e-mail accounts come with a Webmail interface
  - b. With webmail, you check email through your browser online rather than with Outlook, etc. AOL, Gmail and Hotmail users are familiar with webmail – it is the default method for all three
  - c. If you don't have a webmail interface, use a free version at [www.mail2web.com](http://www.mail2web.com)
3. If webmail does not work, then it is likely a server issue and you should contact your service provider.
4. If you can send / receive with webmail, then your email server is OK, and it's most likely a problem with your e-mail client software (Outlook, Entourage, Firebird, etc.)
  - a. Check that the password you use in your e-mail client software is correct
  - b. Check any notices that your Service Provider may have issued – many are implementing enhanced security configurations that need to be set before e-mail will flow again

#### **Most Common Issue #2: Can't surf the Internet**

This problem is related to problems with e-mail since the basic common thread is a working internet connection.

1. Refer back to Issue #1, Step #1 – make sure:
  - o make sure cables are plugged in and
  - o you see green status lights on all devices

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2. If everything looks normal, try this:
  - Power-off all devices: computer, wireless or wired router, Cable or DSL modem.
  - Wait 5 minutes, especially if you have ComCast cable. Longer is OK, but not less than 5 minutes.
    - Power up your wireless or wired router first, wait at least 2 minutes
    - Power up your Cable or DSL modem next, wait at least 2 minutes
    - Power up your PC, try to surf and get email - if still not working, call me!

**Most Common Issue #3: Can't print...**

1. Again, start with the physical things:, check cables, make sure things are powered up and lights are on.
2. Shut down the computer and printer, then restart - this often works wonders.
3. If steps 1 & 2 don't work, check the printer status in the control panel:  
<Start> <Settings> <Control Panel> <Printers and Faxes>
  - i. Check the printer icon and make sure it is the default printer -  
-if not, right-click and select "Make Default"
  - ii. Check the printer to see if it is offline -  
-if not, right-click and select "Use Printer Online" or "Resume Printing" to restart
  - iii. Check the printer to see if it is paused -  
-if not, right-click and select "Resume Printing" to restart printing
  - iv. Check if there are stalled print jobs -  
-if there are stalled print jobs, right-click and select "Cancel All Documents"
  - v. If you still can't print, then call me!

**General Troubleshooting Questions:**

**When does the problem occur? Is there a pattern to the problem?**

- Only while browsing the web?
- Only while using a specific software program (example: "only when saving a Word document")
- At specific intervals – a certain time interval or always after a certain event - like printing?
- How long has it been happening?

**Turn the clock backwards...**

Think back to the last 5 or so things you did prior to noticing the problem. Did you:

- Install or uninstall software?
  - This includes software updates, security updates, and website add-ons like toolbars
  - Install or uninstall hardware?
  - New printer, USB Flash Disk, Mouse, Keyboard, Printer, etc.
- Change any settings?
  - Screen resolution, Screen saver, passwords, pop-up blockers, etc.

I hope this short troubleshooting tutorial can help you with some of the basic computer problems, but if not I am always available at 630-852-1736 to help you!

**[Happy Holidays!]**

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