

Compute this!

Yeah, I got your user friendly right here.

The new computer arrived about the time it was originally scheduled to ship (it's like Scotty on Star Trek...tell 'em it can't be done for 3 days and have it done in an hour), which eased my mind because I thought it would arrive (typically) on the day I was down in the Keys. Nightmares of a box left by the door getting drenched in an afternoon Florida downpour were running through my head in the days before my trip.

The day after the trip, I was just flat out tired, plus an air conditioner servicing which took most of the morning (and some of the afternoon) knocked out that day. I finally got to unwrapping and setting up the machine on Friday. Much smaller and lighter than my old monster Dell.

One dismaying fact that came to light almost immediately was that the new computer had no mail program. Now I know most everyone likes internet mail accounts for ease of access and use, but I like my Outlook for scheduling, task lists and the all-important birthday and special event reminders. Plus, there is never any concern with space limits. I like not having to worry that I may be coming to the end of my allotted storage capacity (no issues now with a 1.5TB hard drive).

My investigation of this determined that despite the Office version I purchased being labeled "professional", apparently in Microsoft's view, "professionals" at home don't need mail. Upon further investigation, I discovered in disbelief that the cost of Outlook alone was \$140! Are you kidding? With the aforementioned *free* mail available everywhere? \$140?? I can't decide if that's insane or just crazy.

I decided I would keep my old computer (running on XP) and set up a network between it and my new computer (running on Windows 7) via my wireless router. Granted, I'm not a

computer tech, but I've been using them for years and figured I could handle this. Sure, I had that one minor incident recently where I disintegrated my website forum, but I'm sure that was a rare aberration.

Or not.

All of Friday and most of Saturday, I worked futilely in trying to set up the network. My first problem turned out to be something that shouldn't have been a problem. When I set up the computer with a spare monitor I had in the closet, I was reminded why I had put it in the closet...the monitor just had bands of white and colored lines streaming vertically down the screen. Now, why I just didn't throw this monitor out years ago, I simply can't explain.

So now I needed to go out and get a monitor. First shot, Best Buy. Of course, their advertised HD monitor (at a great price) was sold out. I had the privilege of waiting there for 20 minutes to find that out. There was an Office Max across the street so I popped in there. They had an even larger HD monitor at an even cheaper price, but the manufacturer was unknown to me. You have to love today's smart phones, though. I looked up the brand and some reviews and learned the reason it was so cheap.

So, back to the house to do more advanced research on the net. Ultimately I not only ended up with a newer (and slightly larger) monitor from the same manufacturer I currently owned, but it was on sale at...of course...Best Buy. Well, it was on sale *online*, but I could pick it up at the store. This strikes me as a stupid thing, since if the monitor had been on sale *at the store* I could have picked it up then! Whatever.

So, with both computers now hooked up and on the same wireless connection, the rest should be cake. Eh, not so much.

For whatever reason, I could not get the printer to share

across the computers. The printer was pretty important, seeing as how my Outlook task lists and calendar schedules were resident on the old machine. Sure, I could go out and buy a remote printer, but hadn't I spent enough already? And besides, this was supposed to be easy!

Thankfully, the solution to any real computer problem can be found on the internet. Not at the actual websites of the companies involved, perish and forbid. Those sites are so byzantine in their help structure that you actually need a help site to find your way through their help. No, the easiest way to solve problems now is simply to type a phrase into your search engine and find a site that answers it (in English...figuratively and literally). I found one this morning and 10 minutes later, I was connected and working.

Hoo hah!

As I get more acquainted with my new machine and OS, I am struck once again how every time these operating systems change there is a great hoopla surrounding how easy or better it is. Because the programs and formats are so similar, the expectation is that familiarity will breed ease of use.

I'm not so sure that concept works as well as planned. I think sometimes the little tweaks are harder to get used to than grand sweeping changes. Or that could just be me, the guy who keeps cars, TVs and computers longer than most so that when I do finally change, I actually *am* getting huge sweeping changes with the mistaken impression they are only tweaks.

Still, I'm not averse to the creature comforts now afforded (like wireless keyboards). If nothing else, it is yet another challenge for me to learn new things. Maybe someday I'll even think this system is easier to use.

But not yet.