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Five Things Small Businesses Hate About Technology

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Do you resell technology to small-business customers? Be careful. Running a small business is challenging enough. But dealing with technology that sometimes doesn't work and oftentimes disappoints can really make a customer miserable. So on behalf of myself and my small-business clients, here are a few of the most unpopular things about the world of technology.

1. **People Who Hate Microsoft:** Let's face it: Microsoft may be an overly aggressive monopoly, but just about every computer that a small business uses runs Windows. There are thousands and thousands of software programs written to work on Windows. And what's the result? A standardized toolset for getting work done. It's cheaper, and we like things cheap. Microsoft has established a standard. Can't we all just get along?

2. **Paying To Fix Bugs:** As much as I support Microsoft, I'm just glad they don't build airplanes. If they did, I'm pretty certain we'd be seeing Microsoft Windows-based aircraft dropping out of the skies on a daily basis due to system freezes, lack of memory and corrupted files. Small-business owners don't have the resources to pay someone every time a new bug is discovered. They depend on technology that should work as promised.

3. **Systems That Don't Talk To Each Other:** Intuit's QuickBooks is great, but it doesn't speak to FrontRange Solutions' GoldMine. Microsoft Outlook is great, but it won't do quotes. Microsoft Word is great, but it won't translate into a BlackBerry. Duplicate data is typed into multiple places. This is expensive, time consuming, unproductive and frustrating. If I hear one thing from my clients it's 'I need a system that does it all!' Can't the vendors of the most popular business applications work more closely together?

4. **Overhyped Software And Technology:** 'Synchronize all your information with just one click! ... Be alerted every time your inventory falls! ... Instantly convert a quote into an order and notify your customer!' Small-business owners hate when technology companies overhype and oversimplify their products. Sure, it can work. But there will probably be a lot of pain and suffering to get there. That's what they should be saying.

5. **Unnecessary Complexity:** That little box on your desk is as complicated as the car you drive. One little thing that disturbs this man-made ecosystem can have

catastrophic effects. Even the most basic technology has become too complicated for the average small-business owner to fix. As a result, he or she must suffer downtime, inadequate support and expensive consultants to keep their systems running.

But you know what small-business owners hate the most? When everything actually works! It reminds us how things really should be. Such bliss is so fleeting!

Gene Marks is founder and principal of the Marks Group PC, Philadelphia, which specializes in providing IT consulting, software and services to small businesses. He is also the author of "Outfoxing The Small Business Owner: Crafty Techniques For Creating A Profitable Relationship" and "The Small Business Desk Reference." His next book, "The Complete Idiot's Guide To Successful Outsourcing," is due to be published in July.

