

Mac vs PC

The study of why Macs are better than PCs

“There Are Problems With Existing Macs...”

Macs are the most problem free computers on the planet.

The internationally respected *Consumers Reports* magazine comes to this [conclusion](#) in their December 2004 magazine (subscribers can read the full report online, but here is 2002's [study](#), which is similar). They report on a survey of more than **60,000** computer users where they looked at three issues: **1)** Repair History, **2)** Technical Support, and **3)** Buying Computers. Let's see what they found out:

Repair History results were that Apple Macs were by far the most trouble-free computers made.

Regarding Technical Support, *Consumers Reports* examined four aspects: **1)** was the problem solved, **2)** how competent was the support staff, **3)** how long was your wait on the phone, and **4)** how good is the company's web site support. Apple again was rated number one, and received **extremely** favorable ratings in **ALL FOUR** parts, which was enormously better than any PC assembler. (Dell, for instance, was not rated favorably in **ANY** of these categories.)

On the third issue computer users rated *buying* computers from Apple to be the **best of all manufactures** (who were rated by **price, selection, help, and knowledge** of service personnel).

Consumers Reports concluded their exhaustive report by saying that "**our findings have been consistent over the years.**" *Exactly what else do you need to know?*

In an August 2004 [study](#) the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor measured the attitudes of consumers in several different computer categories. Their findings were that **Apple's customers are the most satisfied of any PC vendor**. They said that "Apple's success comes from a focus on innovation and improving tech support. Just about every other PC vendor received technical support scores that were less than the scores they received for the quality of their products, but Apple was the **only company** that received high marks for **both quality and support.**"

In their July 2003 report, [PC Magazine](#) says that Apple was rated as the top vendor (A+) in the desktop **and** portable **and** business (!) **and** server categories by its readers. They go on to also state that "we've seen a rise in criticism of the products and customer support of Dell." Further on they remark that their readers say that the Mac OS crashes less often than Windows XP.

OK, here's another perspective. Three years ago *PC World* magazine (yes, *another* PC publication) surveyed buyers of **18,000 personal computers** representing 23 brands and asked them to rate the computers in nine categories relating to reliability and service. The categories were:

- **overall problem rate,**
- system DOA rate (problems with motherboard, disk drive, etc.),
- non-system component DOA rate,
- time to reach a support staffer,
- time to resolve a problem,
- percent of problems never resolved,
- willingness to buy again based on service received,
- overall satisfaction on service.

Apple received the highest rating (5 stars) in **every** category [except component DOA rate, in which Apple rated 4 stars]. Its total score exceeded the score of **every** PC box assembler.

In October of 2002, *PC World* magazine did another survey, this time of some **30,000 computer users**. No surprises here: Apple again was rated number ONE. See their lengthy fifteen pages of [conclusions](#), which includes a special write-up that they called "**Dell's Fall From Grace**."

How about hearing it from still another source? ConsumerAffairs.com, an independent Web site dedicated to providing consumers with a wealth of unbiased information regarding products, services, and dealers said: "Surely there is no product that enjoys greater customer loyalty than Apple's Macintosh line of computers. **Apple remains the gold standard in building brand loyalty**. Apple users don't just like their machines, they adore them. They are loyal to the core, and rightly so. Very few Mac users defect to the Wintel world, and a look at hundreds of user reports ([see samples](#)) tells why – Apple machines work right out of the box and when there's a problem Apple fixes it ... pronto. Can't beat that."

A Georgia school was keeping a live update chart on the web comparing repair rates of Macs to Windows/PCs. See it [here](#), and then email their technology director (Pete Seabolt) for more details. Their experience is that Windows/PCs have a failure rate almost **FOUR TIMES HIGHER THAN MACS!**

Considering these (and many other similar surveys) if anyone in a school (or business) environment is having Mac "problems", the most likely cause is insufficient attention to their Mac.

All computers are **very complex** pieces of electronic equipment. Not performing basic preventative care is akin to driving your car without any oil changes. Regardless of the quality of the car (e.g. Mercedes, Ferrari, etc.) **all** cars will sooner or later fail without an oil change. So it is with computers.

To make things easy for you (or your MIS people) to understand, we are including our opinion (based on working with thousands of Macs) of what these basic steps should include, on the following pages:

- 1 - [Keeping Macs Healthy](#)
- 2 - [Apple Updates-9.1/iMacs](#)
- 3 - [Apple Updates-8.6/iMacs](#)

[Note 1: no OS X Update page is needed since any school with OS X will likely have a cable Internet connection. All they need to do to update their Mac is to choose the Software Update option under the Apple menu.]

[Note 2: to see which Mac's will startup with OS 8.x or 9.x, see Apple's [list](#).]

If the MIS people are **not** doing **all** of these (mostly free and easy) things, you should insist that they do, as these amount to nothing more than basic good maintenance practices. That is their job.

Furthermore, if the MIS people are not doing **ALL of these** things, then they are **CAUSING** Macs to have problems (which, in some cases, may be their agenda).

On the other hand, it might be that your MIS people will indicate that they are already doing a thorough job of maintaining the existing Macs. Great - hope that it is so.

However, if you have some suspicions, or just want to double check, here's a list of questions you might want to ask them. Their answers will give a good indication of just how professional a job they are doing. [Note that these questions were prepared for our local school district, which essentially had all Macs, and mostly Windows/PC servers. Edit the questions to fit your situation.]]

Some Questions for Your Local School System's Technology Staff

- 1 - Please provide a copy of the existing, detailed written procedure for keeping the school district's Macs up-to-date with: **a)** the latest possible, best performing version of Mac OS software, and **b)** the most current free Apple software supplements to that OS.
- 2 - Please provide a copy of the existing, detailed written procedure for keeping the school district's Macs loaded only with the *minimum* Extensions, Control Panels, and Fonts.
- 3 - Please provide a copy of the existing, detailed written procedure for keeping school district's Macs up-to-date with third party commercial software.
- 4 - Please provide a copy of the existing, detailed written procedure for troubleshooting the school district's Macintosh computers.
- 5 - Please provide a copy of the existing, detailed written procedure for exactly what each school's technical person can do (*on their own*), in their effort to maintain and troubleshoot the Macs in their school.
- 6 - Please provide a copy of the existing, detailed written procedure that explains good computing practices for teachers and students to follow.
- 7 - Please provide a copy of the existing, detailed written procedure that explains how teachers and students transfer Mac files to PCs, and the reverse.
- 8 - Please provide a written detailed explanation as to why Windows/PC servers have been used instead of Apple servers.

By the way, if they say that some of these things are esoteric (i.e. not necessary), your reply should be that they are **all** important, and that understanding intricate details of the computers they are servicing **is their job**.

Again, nothing on this list is complicated or unreasonable or time-consuming or expensive. One other page to reference is our list of [possible suggestions](#) (based on what information you get here) that you might want to make to your local school board. Again, please edit it to your situation.

I also maintain a more detailed explanation of Mac [troubleshooting ideas](#), with several links. For most situations however, the [basic procedure](#) (from above) is sufficient. The always informative Tidbits website also has a worthwhile two part article on Mac troubleshooting. See: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).

Occasionally one hears a few MIS people complain about the difficulty of servicing iMacs. As usual there is a tiny bit of truth to that, due to the iMac's compact design.

However, the big picture is that **1)** iMacs rarely need servicing in the first place, and **2)** when they do, it is not *really* that hard. For example, *MacWorld* published an [article](#) (with pix!) showing a layperson how to do such things as replace an iMac's hard drive. If a non-tech person can do these projects, it would seem that a professional MIS person should have no problem.

Here is an excerpt from an unsolicited email I received in February of 2002: "I am a computer technician for Metro Public Schools in Nashville, TN. When I was hired several years ago to fix the few PC's in the school system I had never even seen a Macintosh. I quickly learned how to repair Mac's. **I was shocked at how superior the Macintosh is over PC's. They are easier to use, troubleshoot, and repair. I wish all people could see Macintosh quality and performance.**"

For some additional discussion of MIS issues, see our [MIS Management](#) page.

If you really want to talk about PROBLEMS with computers, a good personal health analogy would be that Mac issues are like having body odor (superficial, primarily caused by the person, easily fixable), whereas Windows/PC issues are like having cancer (systemic, often unknown cause, difficult to solve). Want more examples? Here's a VERY comprehensive [discussion](#) of typical everyday Windows issues.

What really hits home (and applies to users dealing with ALL versions of Windows) is the author's observation that when he complains about these pervasive problems to his Wintel-using associates, their responses fall into three general categories:

"1. 'I've gotten used to Windows' problems.' This is the most common answer, one that I've dubbed the "Surrender Response." Translated, this person is saying, "You are right, Windows has lots of problems, but there's nothing we can do about it." Which is obviously a silly answer; unless the computer salespeople are forcing you to buy PCs at gunpoint, no one is stopping you from using something else. If you ask me, I'd recommend a Macintosh, but even Linux is a workable alternative.

"2. 'You're just expecting the computer to work the way you want it to.' Well, of course I am – I'm spending almost forty hours a week with this PC, it better work the way I want it to. Engineers customize their work areas to have their references where it's best for them, and choose their tools according to what they're more efficient with. Why should computers be any different?

"3. 'Deal with it.' This is the macho equivalent of the Surrender Response; it usually comes from the self-proclaimed grizzled veteran of the office, the one who remembers life before personal computers. This is a response that sneers at all criticisms as pampered whining, and says that "real men" (women rarely say this) don't need luxuries like ease-of-use or intuitive design.

"This argument falls apart at the inherent hypocrisy involved. If these "real men" don't need such comforts, why are they using computers in the first place? Toss out those spreadsheets and compilers and word processors – let's give these digital frontiersmen their punch cards and abaci and typewriters already! Not that they would surrender their PCs, of course; the whole point of using computers is to do things better and faster and more efficiently than you did before. But then, why shouldn't an operating system/user interface be subject to the same demands for improved efficiency?"

For more information about the benefits of iMacs for students, read [this](#).

Conclusion: *If your school or business is having Mac "problems", the almost certain solution is to check out how they are being setup and maintained by your MIS people.*

This section's Haiku
(see the bottom of page 1 for more explanation):

***The Tao that is seen
Is not the true Tao, until
You bring fresh toner.***

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