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IKA Tech Talk

Fatal Error...Your Computer Will Self-Destruct...

“Blue Screen of Death” Blues

You're in the middle of a twenty-page report. Under a tight deadline. Have been typing and editing for two hours...without saving the document. Suddenly, you lose control of your mouse and keyboard, your monitor flickers, and your heart sinks as you read "A Fatal Exception Error has occurred....any data not saved will be lost..." on a pretty light blue screen. Has this message ever sent chills up and down your spine? How many hours worth of work have you ever lost? How much hair have you pulled out? Well, you've been zapped by the glitch gremlins and welcomed into the world of "The Blue Screen of Death," or "BSD." Yes, Virginia, that's really what we call it.

Lessons Learned

The first lesson you should learn from this experience is, don't panic. Although these messages conjure up scenes from Mission Impossible – you may even "hear" the theme song playing in your mind -- and probably had you ready to run for the door, they are not as "fatal" as they sound. Must have been some computer geek's idea of "gotcha" humor when originally programming the operating system. Second and most importantly, you should have learned to SAVE YOUR WORK FREQUENTLY! It takes less than two seconds to click on the little floppy disk icon on your toolbar to save your work, but it saves hours worth or re-typing. I can't stress this enough. Saving your work is like gambling – only put in what you are

prepared to lose. You may lose everything, at least what you haven't saved. In reality, you may not lose any information. Some programs will automatically open a recovered document when re-opened, but don't rely on this happening.

How Come??

The BSDs don't necessarily mean you have done anything wrong. They are triggered by many events and for many reasons. Software or hardware incompatibility, incorrect settings, errors in programs, computer gremlins. Okay, maybe not real gremlins.

What Do I Do?

The best course of action is actually to do nothing. Nothing more than observe when the error happens. Are you running a specific program or does it happen with more than one program? Are you running the same combination of programs? Does it happen on a specific day? Is the error message always the same? Are you working on one specific file when this happens? Try to be specific. Log the exact programs running, what task you were performing, etc., during the event. If the error defies logic, it may be a virus. Collecting this information will help you or your consultant pinpoint the problem more quickly. We all know that time is money, so the less time the consultant spends researching the problem, the less it will cost.

At times, the software or hardware manufacturer may be aware of a problem, stemming from an error in the coding or strange interaction between programs and/or hardware. So you may be in the same boat as countless others across the world. In these cases, the manufacturers usually post fixes or "patches" on their

web sites. Their web sites also provide the latest drivers for downloading. It's a good idea to visit their web sites regularly to check for any updated drivers under normal circumstances.

Prevention

While there is really no action you can take to prevent BSDs, working smart will help direct you to the problem area. When installing programs, only install one at a time. Then use it for a while. See if any problems arise. If so, that program is probably the cause. Do the same with any new hardware, and also when removing software. Remember to document what you do with your computer and when problems arise.

Next time you get the dreaded Blue Screen of Death, just sit back, relax, and follow the instructions on the screen. Happy computing. This newsletter will self-destruct in 10 seconds. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. 1.....

Dot Com Me, Please

Five or six years ago not too many 'regular' people even heard of the Internet. Certainly, an e-mail account was not a pre-requisite of a business owner. Almost overnight, however,

more and more people began to discover the power of the Internet. In today's business world, not having an e-mail account is sort of like not having a fax or answering machine in your business. Likewise, 'surfers' have come to expect to type in your business name sandwiched between "www" and ".com" to find your web site. What, you don't have a web site? Ready to join the millions of successful companies on the Web. Contact IKA today. Web site design packages start as low as \$350. It doesn't have to be painful or expensive.

NJAWBO Annual Conference 2001

Ina Klasko will be presenting two workshops at the NJAWBO Annual Conference 2001, "Learning To Earn," April 25-27 at the Doral Forrestal in Princeton. Become organized, grow your business, and save money with "Taming Your Business Life With Microsoft® Outlook." Take your presentations out of the ho-hum and into great one with "Dynamic Presentations: Exploring Microsoft PowerPoint®." The Conference Committee is hard at work to bring you a terrific event in a pampered atmosphere. Plan to join us for these and other informative workshops.

IKA News

Ina Klasko has joined the Adjunct faculty of Warren County Community College (WCCC) in Washington. A 12-hour QuickBooks® 99 For Business course will be taught at WCCC beginning February 15. The next QuickBooks 2001 course at CCM begins March 20 at HQ Plaza, Morristown.

On February 22, Ina Klasko was installed as a member of the NJ Small Business Development Centers' (NJSBDC) Regional Advisory Board for the Skylands SBDC region.

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