

THE NEED FOR SPEED



Jason Connolly from Next Generation IT with some advice for the curse of the computer – running slow

One of the most often asked questions of any IT helpdesk must be 'why is my computer running slow?' It is a simple question with a complex answer, as there are myriad reasons for slow performance. But there are some practical things you can do to improve computer performance.

Turn it off and on again ...yes really. This will close any crashed programs, free up memory and can be the simplest, most effective way of resolving issues, especially if your computer has been running for several days. Open applications hog memory and do not give it all back again when they crash or close down, and this slowly strangles the performance of your computer. Restarting your computer will free up resources again, leaving your computer ready to take on your monster spreadsheet without a complaint.

Too many programs running. Many applications set themselves to automatically start up when your computer starts, loading them into memory whether you use them or not. Stop these unnecessary programmes from running in the background and sapping your computer's performance by checking the start-up programmes listed in your computer's settings. Clean up your PC regularly by uninstalling unused programmes, deleting temporary files, and setting applications to automatically update themselves. The more software on your computer the slower it will run. We strongly advise against downloading software that says it will speed up your computer. It is unlikely to work and is more

likely to contain malicious or unwanted software.

Malware and viruses can make your computer run slow. A serious and sudden decrease in performance can point towards a virus infection. In addition to the damage malware does to data security, it can have a significant impact on performance and can cripple your computer. Make sure you have up-to-date antivirus software installed and set to scan your computer regularly. Microsoft and other vendors continually release software updates to close vulnerabilities as they are discovered, so it is very important to keep software up-to-date.

Finally, it is critical that you keep a separate backed up copy of your data to external storage. One warning, the recent spate of ransomware attacks not only encrypt all data on network computers and server storage, but also attack attached backup drives. So simply making a backup copy of your data on an attached USB drive or NAS box may not be adequate. Use backup software to make a protected copy that cannot be accessed by the hackers.

Internet connection slow? A slow internet connection can make you feel like you are wading through treacle. You can test your speed at www.speedtest.net. The first thing to try is rebooting your router, which will clear any errors and allow your line to sync up at optimum speed again. If you find that you need to do this regularly, there may be a deeper problem which will need help from your ISP or IT profession-

al. If you are connecting via Wi-Fi, the issue may be poor signal, in which case try moving closer to the access point, or plug your computer directly into your router to test.

Computer too old? If all else fails and your device is more than five years old, it may have seen better days and unless you are really attached to it, your money would be better spent buying a new computer. If it is not quite that old, you can improve its performance significantly by installing more memory or a solid state drive, which could extend its life by a couple of years. I would recommend your computer has at least 4GB of memory and 8GB would be even better.

If the computer is connected to a business network, then the problem may not be the PC, but the corporate network, and servers that need a tune up or replacement. If others around you are also struggling with slow internet, opening files, emails or remote access speeds, then there could be a more fundamental system-wide issue. In that case the IT department or IT service provider should be your first port of call. The same five-year rule applies to your business's IT infrastructure and it may be time to look at refreshing your systems.

Moving onto a hosted IT system, such as NGIT's Office Anywhere, would allow you to do away with onsite server infrastructure, spread the cost of IT onto a monthly basis, and cost-effectively outsource your IT provision to local experts.