



FEATURE



## Technology Burnout

[By Bill Gaffney]

I just fried my second computer in just over a month. My computer guy and good friend tells me I am not treating them correctly. I do think what he is saying has a lot of validity, but that is not the subject of my column.

I want to talk about the addiction to technology. I am sure many of us have seen the term “crackberry” for Blackberry and have heard how it is destroying couples’ intimate relations. In fact I am the co-director of a networking organization, and my right hand lady is just as addicted as I am. When she was going in the hospital 15 months ago to deliver her second daughter, we were teasing her about taking her laptop so she could get out the newsletter. If she could have figured out how, I bet she would have done it. I wouldn’t have wanted to see the hospital bill for the power strip and sterilization of the laptop, though. Any accountants out there who think this might have been a legitimate tax write off?

Anyway, I lost my computer just after killing its predecessor. I do have access to another computer in the house, though it doesn’t have my stuff downloaded from Mozy backup and a bunch of libraries. But I want that sucker 24-7. (By the way, if you are wondering, I am typing this article in the wonderful world of Yahoo by virtue of the fact that my Prodigy account is mirrored in it.) The last time I lost my computer, I went through withdrawal for 48 hours. This time it was just a few hours.

My first thought was, “How am I going to recruit?” Then I remembered I had my best years of recruiting without using a computer,

and the information that I need I still have fairly available access to. The ironic thing is that my boss, in about 1999, had to make me start using the computer. Here I am eight years later addicted. No, I don’t carry a Blackberry, but I do own a PDA that I feel lost without when I don’t have it with me. Now mind you, I have only had it for 18 months or so, and I only started using it to port the address book and calendar between two computers in different locations.

So where am I going with all this maniacal rambling? We have become a society addicted to technology. I know that’s big news to most of you. I realize we are more productive with it, but is there a point where we become less productive, where we reach the law of diminishing returns?

How many people that receive this column realize that a telephone call today to someone might make you unique and different in the business world? I am not kidding. I know recruiters who rely almost totally on email. There is not a personal touch in that. When I train other recruiters, I tell them to use the telephone more and not to get hung up on getting every single detail recorded on the computer. Eventually the whole point of your business becomes lost for the details.

Last summer, I was listening to an interview

with Chris Spielman, the former All American and All Pro linebacker. As some of you may know, he has done a “reality” TV show during the last two summers, where he has taken a number of athletes from different colleges and put them together in a house to see how they would interact. When they first put them together, there was almost no interaction. That is because they all had cell phones, Gameboys and iPods. When Chris figured out what was going on, he took all those devices away. It was amazing how they interacted after that.

Now I know there are all kinds of organizational coaches and gurus who will teach you to check your email two to three times a day and how and what to do with all those emails. Who are they kidding? I’m addicted. Would you tell an alcoholic to drink a glass of wine with dinner three times a week and stop? Get real. We are dealing with a serious problem here. And then add in the easy access to news and blogs worldwide. I am overwhelmed. No wonder I can’t get any work done.

I will end with this story. A few years ago, my wife and I attended a Friday night Shabbat (Sabbath) meal at a friends’ home, where a conservative Rabbi taught about the “Sabbath Rest”. He said he didn’t believe it was totally possible to leave the world behind for 12 to 24 hours because of all the distractions. You know me. I asked, why not?



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I am not teaching a religious lesson. But isn't it time we took back control, made business fun again, actually had a few meaningful, more-than-10-word business conversations, and had a life outside of work? No, this is not another "bring back the dress code" rant. Just, I would like to have fun in business again.

By the way, my computer guy who is a tech wiz and has every gadget known to man can go for hours without answering a message on his cell phone or returning an email. What's up with that? Has he achieved nirvana and not the rock band?



**About the Author**

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