

When Things Go Bump in the Night (or Morning or Afternoon)

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On the day of his birth in July of 1956, Compitano Ulysses TerUser's parents gave him this unique first name in respect to his great grandmother's maiden name. His middle name of Ulysses was after his uncle on his mother's side. As time wore on he grew tired of his unusual first name so he formally shortened it to Comp and thus became Mr. Comp U. TerUser. He graduated with high honors from a Midwest business school and began a career in banking. He worked for 10 years at a local branch bank where he excelled and gained deep experience in the banking business. He then left that bank company and went to work at a larger company and was appointed head of the investment management department. He stayed at this second company for a period of five years during which time he excelled and gained deep experience in the investment banking business. With fifteen years of experience under his belt he felt it was time to start his own company and be his own boss.

It was now 1993. Intel had just released its first Pentium Processor operating at a speed of 60 Mhz. Windows Version 3.11 and DOS Version 6.0 were the operating systems of the Day. Comp started an investment banking consulting business and used his computer, fax machine and telephone as fundamental tools to carry out tasks in servicing his customers. He would meet with customers and provide his expertise and they would pay him in the customary methods of the day. As time wore on into the new millennium, he found that his consulting business had grown ever more successful. He was now using his

computer during most of every day to contact and communicate and to transact business with his clients and business associates.

Life was good. His computer fired up each day and presented him with his contact lists and to-do lists and he received and processed E-Mail and took orders and payments over the internet with great ease. He had arrived at a point where each day's activity was totally reliant on the continued stable performance of his computer equipment. His current computer was the latest and fastest and best computer that money could buy. He relied on it every hour of every day to transact business. It was so reliable that he never bothered to perform any backup. It just wasn't necessary.

Then one day, a strange thing happened all of a sudden right in the middle of operating on a proposal for a prospective customer. The mouse and keyboard froze. He couldn't do anything. He became concerned because he promised his prospective client that he would have the proposal completed and e-mailed to him by 4:00 PM and it was now 2:00 PM.

He called the local computer service company and was advised that about the only thing that he could do if the system was really frozen was to turn the power off and then turn it back on. Will he lose every thing that he had typed into this proposal since 10:00 AM this morning he asked? The computer service technician told him that he would indeed lose any thing that he had typed since the document was last saved.

Huh? He had never bothered to save anything before until it was completely done. The computer had not ever frozen up like this before. Nevertheless, his only option was to restart the computer after powering it down. The computer did start up again but with a message about windows not terminating in a normal way, need to check the hard disk, or something like that.

After checking the hard disk the computer did seem to start up again so he went back into the Word Processor and began to generate the proposal again. If he hurried, he could still make his 4:00 PM deadline. Typing and composing as fast as he could, he was nearly finished at 3:30 PM when as luck would have it the system froze again. Again he had to power down the computer and again he lost everything he had typed in since 2:00 PM. He hadn't bothered to save the document because the computer was so reliable (usually). This time when he powered back up, the computer seemed to power up OK but all he could see on the monitor was "CHECK SIGNAL".

On the phone again with the computer service technician, he was informed that that message is coming from the monitor indicating that it is not receiving any video signal from the computer. In other words, his computer would not start up. He tried again and again hoping that it would finally start properly but it never did.

Lessons to be learned from Mr. Comp U. TerUser's story:

1) Any computer is liable to instantly quit working at any time. If you are in the process of any vital task, be prepared for an alternate method of performing the task should this occur.

2) When working on a relatively long document, save the document every 5 to 10 minutes. This way, if the computer does come back up OK, you will have lost only 5 or 10 minutes worth of work.

3) Perform frequent thorough backups of data files that are vital to your activities.

Mr. TerUser had to take his computer in for repair and it was out of service for 5 days. During this time he could not conduct any business and suffered a monetary business loss of \$18,000. When he got his repaired computer back with a new hard drive, all of his data files, document templates, address books, calendar of appointments, contact phone numbers, and emails sent and received were gone. It had taken him 24 months to build up a rich and valuable store of contact information and company standard documents. It would take quite a while to build it back up.

The moral of the story: In the information technology world, bad things happen to good people. They can and will happen to you just as they happened to Mr. Comp U. TerUser. When they do, be sure that you will find yourself in a prepared condition. Files backed up. Restore/remedy protocols in place.