

## From the TechnoManor

This week I'm continuing with a piece of email in my Inbox from the prior week. I'll be working on the 2<sup>nd</sup> topic in that email. But first, I have a correction to my article from last week.

I mentioned in [Things to know about updates](#) that "Most software updates are free." I found a correction to my own article while reading Jim Rossman's article, "Spring for anti-virus update" on Page 2 of the Business Section of the October 17, 2008 edition of *The Dallas Morning News*.

I had forgotten that current security programs (your "aunties") prompt you for updates, and they want a credit card number, too! This typically happens about once a year.

So I guess my revised advice should be:

- Most software updates are free. The legitimate exception should be your security program (your anti-virus/anti-spyware program). That annual update may ask for a credit card number, or confirm to use a number they have on file. If any other update pitches for money. click Cancel and call for help to find out what's going on.

Moving on to answering the 2<sup>nd</sup> topic from my reader:

*"...I received a notice from Dell asking if I want to extend the warranty for my computer (current one expires this week) until 2011 for \$249. The extension includes Limited Warranty, in Home Service, and Technical Support. I should have asked you sooner about this one...but do you have any quick advice. Is it a good deal?"*

I used to pooh pooh extended warranties. However, I changed my opinion over the last few years.

If your computer is a laptop computer, I highly recommend extended warranties. Laptops are not easy to repair. They are composed of a few, specialized parts squeezed into a small space. These parts are difficult to come by and require unique knowledge to replace them. I shudder when I have to look inside of a laptop computer...even my own.

For desktop computers, you have to be the judge. In my opinion, \$249 for three years is a good value. Here are some things to consider.

- Chances are your computer will have at least one significant problem at around 3 years old. Typically the power supply will fail, the hard drive will crash, or something else will render the computer unusable.

- I charge \$40/hour for my services. Other companies (like the Geek Squad) charge much more.
- Replacing a power supply costs about \$50 for parts, and about 1 - 2 hours for labor.
- Recovering from a hard drive crash costs about \$100 - 150 for a new hard drive, and about 4 - 8 hours for labor (assuming you have the original Windows installation CDs and good backups!). It can go higher.
- The extended warranty should cover all problems during that period, not just one problem.
- Finally, how much do you rely on your computer? If you use it daily, and important information is stored on it, you can simply call Dell and say, "come fix it!" On the other hand, if your computer is more for casual Web surfing and occasional email exchange, it can be cheaper to find a neighborhood fix it shop to repair your computer, or it may be more cost effective to buy a new computer.

Yes, \$249 is a chunk of change. You can play the odds and hope you don't need your computer repaired. In my house, we have six computers of varying ages. Three of them have had significant problems (one failed twice) requiring me to fix myself (when I could) or return to the manufacturer (luckily still under original warranty). The other three have never had a problem (they're 2 - 3 years old).

So, my bottom line advice is: if you rely on your computer, and if you can afford the cost, buying an extended warranty is a good value.

Next week I'll be answering a question about managing a large quantity of email. Until then, if you've got a techno question, drop me a line. My Inbox can be found at:

[frenchygrey@gmail.com](mailto:frenchygrey@gmail.com)

And if I don't find anything, I'll have to make something up.

Dave Gillen