



It's a year since I started writing this blog every week. Before that I'd just dipped my toe in the water, wondering if I'd got anything useful to say on a regular basis to my computer support clients and potential clients. So, this week I thought I'd have a look back on some of the earlier posts and see what's changed.

Microsoft Security Essentials

On 16th October 2010 I wrote [a post about Windows free antivirus program - Microsoft Microsoft Essentials](#). I had just installed it on an XP machine, and then I put it on my Vista Ultimate machine. It hasn't caused me any problems apart from the tray icon disappearing initially on the XP version. The program just quietly gets on with the job. It's caught a few nasties and seems to have dealt with them without drama. Admittedly, I don't use these machines much except when providing remote computer support to clients who use Vista and XP themselves, and as destinations for backups from my main machine. Nevertheless, it appears to have done a near perfect job so far. It's easy to install and very unobtrusive.



I now trust Microsoft Essentials to the extent that I have installed it on my new main laptop - a [Samsung RF511 15.6 inch notebook](#). (This is my third Samsung and, so far, it's as good as the first two.)

AVG Antivirus



Shortly after blogging about Microsoft Security Essentials [I covered AVG Free](#) and even then I was complaining about how they try to mislead you into installing a trial of the paid version rather than installing/upgrading the free version. It's my impression that this tendency has got worse during the last year and, frankly, I'm now too embarrassed to recommend it to clients unless I think they will be happy to do battle with AVG's mis-directions. Recently, I've even seen AVG popups that suggest that AVG has saved the user from innumerable threats in the recent past. This is unnecessary, intimidating and misleading. I'd been recommending AVG for several years, but I now recommend [Microsoft Security Essentials](#) instead.

Zen Internet

on 5th November last year I gave a plug, by way of a [blog posting](#), to [Zen Internet](#). They'd just won PC Pro Magazine's award for Best Internet Provider for the seventh time. Guess what: they've just [done it again](#).



As a consultant providing computer support to small organisations, independent professionals, and home users, I am often the person asked to deal with internet provider call centres on behalf of bemused and frustrated clients. I have some clients who call me to their homes and offices specifically to deal with these call centres because they find the experience too stressful, frustrating, and protracted to do it themselves.

Call centres appear to be geared to handling the maximum number of technical support calls with the minimum expertise. The way they do this is to force their support staff to follow a strict troubleshooting sequence that doesn't require them to think: just to follow the instructions on their screen. The agent isn't allowed to deviate from "the script". so no real dialogue takes place with the client. It doesn't seem to matter very much what the customer tells the "support agent", the agent will still insist on making the poor client jump through exactly the same sequence of hoops every time. This approach tramples right over the customer's primacy in the exchange. It's appalling, frustrating and dis-empowering.



Compare this approach with that of [Zen Internet](#). Their support people (based in Rochdale) actually listen to you, engage with you, and address your issue as a one-off that needs to be solved as such. It's true that they don't offer 24 hour support (it's 08:00-20:00 weekdays and 09:00-17:00 at weekends), but that's probably because they're staffed by human beings - who need to sleep. Despite only being available during reasonable hours, Zen provide a much much better service than the likes of BT, Virgin and AOL. It's true, though, that Zen are not competing on price. You won't get broadband from them for a fiver a month. I use the Zen Lite service. It's their "entry level" service and costs £15.31 plus VAT per month. It only includes 10gb downloads, but that's fine for me as I don't download movies or watch BBC iPlayer. As far as I am concerned Zen are worth every penny and I am happy to keep recommending them and plugging them.

So, as I've kept blogging on a weekly basis for a year there's every chance I'll stay with it. The readership is small but very very select! Actually, the readership is growing slowly and steadily, but I've not spent time and effort promoting it beyond the readers who matter most - my own computer clients and potential clients. I try and keep the focus on the needs of my own computer clients, but I am, of course, very happy for anyone at all to subscribe to the newsletter or read the blog online.

Thanks for reading!

Share this:

- [Click to share on Twitter \(Opens in new window\)](#)
- [Click to share on Facebook \(Opens in new window\)](#)