

A survivor's perspective on an IT meltdown

by Caroline Evans

Anyone who knows me, know that I'm a glass half full person. However, my bounce-back resilience was sorely tested this Christmas...

Unlike today's digital natives, my early experience of office technology was built on the mantra – born of bitter experience – that “if you press the wrong button, you'll lose everything”. Who, at work in the 80s and 90s, hasn't at some point had to start again because of a vanished and un-retrievable document? My low point was a lengthy – and of course, urgent – report on the VAT treatment of financial instruments. The nightmare of the experience returns regularly to haunt me more than 30 years later.

Anyway, my point is that if *your* experience of technology is framed by such an initiation (and you are not naturally disposed to embrace how things have moved on), it's easy to switch off and allow others to set up and manage the systems upon which you so depend. AT YOUR OWN RISK is the lesson I learned this festive season!

For many years, and to some extent still – thank you **Board Intelligence** and **Company Matters** – I have been fortunate to be supported by IT colleagues with brains the size of the universe and the patience of saints. However, they can only help me so far; what I've failed to address is my lack of real understanding of the language and infrastructure of the systems upon which I rely on for my basic business operations. I HAVE FAILED TO PAY ATTENTION and technology has finally extracted its revenge...

Meltdown began around the 19th of December and has taken approximately 4 weeks to resolve. On the one hand, perhaps the season of goodwill with all of its distractions was the best time for this to happen, on the other it inevitably protracted the pain.

So, now I am (fingers very crossed) on my way out the other side of the trauma, what did I learn or what is my Black Box Thinking?

- Find an expert who understands how your mind works and therefore understands your approach to technology. NOW!

Thank you **Rich (my IT Santa Claus)**!

- Get your expert to explain not just the 'what' but also the 'why' of how your technology works.
- Take the view that it's not disaster recovery but tech decluttering. Having just deleted 12,000 sent emails, I've beaten the famous Marie Kondo to this!
- Learn how important it is to know what you are about to click on before doing it. E.g. from what to do with links in safe emails to recognising emails that are not safe.

- Upload your computer system's protections, updates and security clean-up and optimisation protocols on a monthly basis.
- Run regular back-ups of your hard drive.
- Finally, have a review every six months with your expert to ensure that nothing has gone awry in-between.

It's been tough but ultimately worth it. I feel more like I control my tech, and it doesn't control me; bring on 2020!

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