

Best Practices: Documenting your work, assigning passwords, creating backup routines

Document your work:

There is a huge advantage in being obsessive about documenting what you have done. Put simply, you won't live forever and somebody else is going to have to step in where you left off.

In the past I've suggested using a spreadsheet or a database as an organized way to document your work, but in recent experience, I've found it better to have things written **chronologically** and **verbosely** than organized **tersely** in a database. The moment you do something, write it down!

There are a few key items you need to include when documenting your work:

Date, time, and location of work performed.

Your name and your contact info.

Who your primary contact is on the jobsite, and their contact information.

What you did, specifically:

What equipment did you set up or remove?

What were the model numbers and serial numbers on the equipment you set up or removed?

If troubleshooting problems, did you contact outside technical support?

What was the number you dialed? Who handled your case? Was there a dispatch or trouble ticket number assigned to your case?

Does any of the work you performed require a follow-up at a later date?

PASSWORDS: many times when you set up computers and networking equipment, you will be in charge of assigning administrative passwords. It isn't a good idea to write the passwords on your job log, rather mention in your log that the passwords were assigned, and give a copy of the passwords to your primary contact at the site.

Take pictures, or be really, really clear about where you found or put things. Did it take you a half an hour to find that the Ethernet ports were underneath the green shag carpeting under the desk with the heavy fish tank? Write it down, and save future generations the hassle of crawling around.

Example:

UFW Job log for Miles Reed (831) 212-7110 milez@ucsc.edu

5/1/2005 9:00 am Onsite. UFW Watsonville research office. Primary contact: Jocelyn Sherman (906) 555 – 1234, jsherman@ufw.org

Installed two new Dell Optiplex gx280 desktop computers. Serial nos. 9jh234 and 9jh244.

Upon connecting the 9jh234 computer to the monitor and turning the computer on, I discovered that there was no image being shown on the display. Checked connections and made sure input selection was correct. This may be a hardware issue with a defective video card.

Placed call to Dell tech support (800) 531 2234. Bob H at ext. 123 surmises that there is a defective video card in the computer. Bob assigned this as case no. 12345 and sent out a replacement video card to us which should arrive by tomorrow. Part dispatch no. 1234.

The other gx280 is up and running normally. Assigned it a network address of 192.168.0.100. Gave it an administrative password. Jocelyn has a copy of this password. Installed Microsoft Word and Microsoft excel. Created a guest user account for general access.

Connected the computer to the internet by plugging it into the router. The nearest jack to plug the computer into was behind the filing cabinet near the window next to the door. We ran out of data ports so I installed a 5 port switch on the underside of the desk next to the stained glass window.

Rewired telephone jack. See picture for the pinout I used.

Also on other gx280

Downloaded the latest security updates from Microsoft.

Installed anti-virus software, updated virus definitions, and created a scanning schedule.

FOLLOW UP: Tomorrow—replace defective video card. Plug computer into network. Install Word and Excel, update virus defs and security patches.

PASSWORDS:

Should be easy to remember, but hard to guess.

It should also be hard to figure out using a “brute-force” or dictionary method of guessing.

When a password is described as “strong” it means that it is complex enough that it can’t be easily guessed, or hacked with a brute-force or dictionary style of attack.

Strong passwords:

Are composed of upper and lowercase letters.

Are also composed of numbers

Are also composed of symbols (if the equipment allows it)

Create a password using a catchy phrase:

My cat is 23 lbs; he is large and placid.

Turns into

Mci23lbs;hilap.

Create an effective backup schedule:

(in progress)