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[Interview] Part 8: Barb Bowman - Home Computing Lessons

This is the next blog in the [continuing series](#) of interviews with leading professionals. In this series of blogs, I have an exclusive interview with Barb Bowman. Barb is an internationally acknowledged home networking and device authority; Microsoft Most Valuable Professional (MVP) - Windows Networking and Windows XP Media Center.

Enjoy!

Stephen Ibaraki, [FCIPS, I.S.P., MVP](#)



Stephen: Provide commentary on three topics of your choosing.

Barb:

Topic 1: *Purchasing Your First Home Networking Router*

Brick and Mortar stores want to see you what they have on their shelves and what gives them the most profit. Typical store personnel have very little product knowledge or know much at all about home networking. If you must buy at a brick and mortar retail store, try to bring someone more knowledgeable with you. Research products on the web before you purchase. Check www.dslreports.com for known problems and also check the groups dedicated to various ISPs.

Topic 2: *Shared Family Computers, Safety and Security*

If you don't already have a home network and a router, chances are good you have a single shared family computer connected to a broadband modem. Even if you don't have wireless networking and even if you just own a single wired computer, it's advisable to buy a router and place it between your computer and the broadband modem. Even a cheap wired-only router will do. Most have a built in hardware firewall and **NAT** will give you an extra cushion by not exposing you directly to the Internet. ISPs are still installing directly to a computer. Most offer downloadable anti virus programs and firewalls. Maybe the tech installed this add-on software, maybe not. Or maybe your 13 year old disabled the anti-virus software because it was slowing down gaming responses and maybe he/she turned off all firewalls because of similar reasons. I've got neighbors surrounding me that are all were this situation. I've made it a point to educate them. I wish more people would follow my lead here. Those of us who know the dangers need to be the educators because the ISPs are not doing this and should be.

Topic 3: *Data Backup for Home Users*

This rarely happens. Home users don't think about data backup until disaster strikes. Gone are 3 years worth of digital images of your firstborn child. Your personal email is wiped out and you've lost all financial info you were storing in Quicken or MS Money. And all that digital info you had accumulated in Family Tree Maker after painstakingly building a family tree is gone. Sure, some programs now offer online backup and backup to writable CD/DVD but how many people actually take advantage of these tools? Pitifully few. Windows Home Server is coming soon. This may be the answer for some, but for many, it will involve getting and setting up a router and a network. And it may be in itself, the best reason for setting up that first home network.

Closing Comment: Barb, we thank you for sharing your time with us and we wish you continued success for the future.

Barb: I'm sure that my little niche is somewhat different than the IT/Enterprise oriented technologist, but I hope I've shared some insight into the state of the residential home user space that has been helpful. Thanks for the

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shared some insight into the state of the residential home user space that has been helpful. Thanks for the opportunity.

I encourage you to share your thoughts here on these interviews or send me an e-mail at sibaraki@cips.ca.

Posted: Friday, June 29, 2007 8:00 AM by [cdnitmgr](#)

Filed under: [Stephen Ibaraki](#), [Interviews](#), [Wireless Technology](#)

Comments

Graham Jones said:

I think that it is terrific that you have the average consumer "at heart" and personally I would certainly welcome more material here with that focus. As professionals it is all too easy to take our understanding and knowledge for granted. I think that we have a "duty" to educate. My own feelings and philosophies are very close to yours. The current commercial infrastructure sadly seems not inclined to help.

I have friends and neighbours with the same "needs" as yours as I am sure most of us do, and I try to help them. However, it is hard not to feel a little "frustrated" at times because as individuals we are limited in what can be achieved. We need more of a "groundswell" movement.

It also upsets me to see people being taken advantage of by costly home computer services. I will refrain from naming them! Unfortunately most people don't know where else to go for either free or more affordable options. They get "mesmerized" by the uniforms and certification that gets thrown at them.

I teach a one day class where we build a PC from scratch, set up a LAN and connect to the internet. I don't do it to get "rich". In fact I would gladly volunteer to do it given time and facilities. I do it because these are relatively easy skills to learn for the average consumer and I am convinced that ultimately education is the starting key to most things that produce a "better" life. So far not one single person has failed to build a PC that works first time. They are all quite amazed that they did it with a little clear instruction and the imparting of some basic knowledge. I don't expect them to necessarily rush home and "build a new PC" but the basic maintenance and upgrades are well within their capabilities.

You mentioned backup which is a big "home" user problem. Many don't even appreciate the need let alone are disciplined enough to do it. Windows Home Server (<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/winfamily/windowshomeserver/default.aspx>) is expected to be released fairly soon. I have been in the "beta/MVP" program for some time now and am very pleased to finally see a product, which is basically aimed at being "consumer proof" and "protect consumers from themselves". Even we so called "professionals" aren't always as fastidious as we should be when it comes to backups. Chances are anybody who tells you that they have "never" lost any data is either very, very lucky or a good "storyteller". I am perfectly "happy" to let WHS take care of my home/home business backup needs automatically and not have to care!

I also liked your comment about using a router/NAT firewall even for a single home PC. There is a popular misconception (not aided by store sales people - more fool them since it is limiting their sales) that a router is for home networking and internet sharing for multiple PC's and that a software firewall (either OS or separate product based) is all that is required for protection. Apart from the concept of multiple layers of protection, "keeping the enemy as far away as possible from the PC itself" seems not to be understood. All of my close friends with single home PC's have a router because I explained the benefits/importance to them.

Finally, thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts, knowledge and experience with us. I have found it personally educational in a couple of places. It is only by "sharing" that we all gain.

Cheers

Graham J.

July 2, 2007 4:55 PM

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