

Clear COMMunICaTions

From those friendly people at DOT-COMmunications



Clear COMMunICaTions is a regular column offering I.T. advice & support. If you have an IT-related problem that would also benefit others, please send an email to the address shown below, & we'll do our best to answer your questions.

Q. Should our organisation use a cabled network or would it be better to use a Wireless Network to connect our computer systems?

A. The simple answer is it depends on your circumstances, but you may have to accept a reduction in reliability and bandwidth in exchange for the convenience of wireless networking.

Some of the factors you need to be aware of include:

Wi-Fi signals degenerate through walls & ceilings, so every time you add a computer or move computers in a wireless network you have to think about whether the signal will reach,

Wi-Fi can be subject to interference/cross-talk from other Wi-Fi transmitters (including some wireless DECT phones) and there is nothing to stop someone putting one in right next to you (possibly in the next office),

Wi-Fi is rarely as good in PCs as in laptops. This may be due to the PC itself creating more interference,

The speed you get across Wi-Fi networks is only a fraction of that in cabled Local Area Networks (LANs). It doesn't matter so much for simple internet access but if files are being shared between computers, it will be noticeable,

Wi-Fi just isn't as reliable as cabling; the signal tends to fluctuate and may drop out,

Lastly you nearly always need some cabling anyway - routers, phones, printers and NAS drives probably could be converted to Wi-Fi, but they are bound to work better and be more reliable on network cabling.

If you decide to proceed with a wireless connection, we suggest you carry out a Wi-Fi survey of the premises using a program such as [NetStumbler](#) or [similar](#). If you are wiring up desktop computers in different rooms, consider using a wireless card with a separate antenna rather than standard PCI cards, as having the card in the back of the PC with all the other stuff degrades the signal. A USB dongle on a breakout cable can be positioned to get the best signal (and is much easier to fit).

It is also worth noting that old buildings with plaster walls and wooden floors are Wi-Fi friendlier than buildings built of brick or pre-stressed concrete.

Q. Is there a way to save a laptop if coffee is spilt on it accidentally?

A. I'd hope it wouldn't have been deliberately! By working fast, you can save your laptop from the effects of a coffee spill. When liquids meet electronics, you can't waste time. Conductive liquids cause most of the initial damage. Immediately unplug the laptop from its power cable and pull out the battery. Don't bother closing programs or saving data, time is of the essence.

Now tilt the laptop to get most of the liquid out the same way it came in, but be careful as you turn the machine over that you limit the liquid's contact with circuitry as much as possible. Always keep liquid away from the LCD screen.

You can read the rest of the instructions at [PC World Magazine's](#) website.

Funding for ICT — MissionFish: eBay for Charity

eBay for Charity gives eBay users an easy way to support their favourite charities by making donations when they buy and sell. Buyers can support a good cause and sellers can donate a percentage from any sale to a charity of their choice and add Gift Aid. Charities can also sell their own items directly on eBay to raise unrestricted funds. As eBay's partner for the programme, MissionFish vets charities, processes donations, collects Gift Aid and advises on how to make the most of eBay. More information at [Mission Fish](#).

Reduce Your (I.T.) Energy Use

TechSoup (a U.S. based I.T. Support organisation) has five quick and easy ways to reduce your ICT energy use - visit [part one](#) for an overview, [part two](#) looks at power settings in more detail and links through to parts 3 and 4.

Updated Data Protection book now available

The third edition of Paul Ticher's comprehensive book on Data Protection in the Voluntary Sector has just been published. £18.95 from [Directory of Social Change](#).

FREE Calderdale.COMmunications Newsletter

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DOT-COMmunications' is Calderdale's **ONLY** dedicated not-for-profit provider of computer support services & solutions to local community, voluntary & faith sector organisations & not-for-profit social enterprises.

For more information & a free consultation,
please contact: **01422-845003** or email: **talk2us@dot-communications.co.uk**