



# NEWSLETTER



## Local Business vs. Big Box Computer Repair

Your computer is down for the count. You've tried the perennial favorite – turning it off and back on again – but somehow, your tech magic has not worked this time! You need help, and you want it fast. The question is whether to take it to a local computer business or big-box store for repair.

Many big-box stores offer depot computer repair. Why are we calling it *depot* repair? Because just like at a bus or train depot, that store is only one stop on your computer's repair journey. Typically, the store does not have the facilities to repair your laptop or desktop on-site. Also, their employees lack the skills to do the work right there.

Instead, that computer, along with all your important files, is shipped on to another location. This presents some problems:

- Computers can get damaged in shipping/handling.
- Accountability is lost when the device is passing through a chain of people.
- You don't know where your computer is at any given time.
- It's return to you slowed by shipping times.

That's why we recommend getting your computers repaired at a local business

with the skills and facilities to do the work on-site.

### Benefits of Small Business Repair

When you take your device to a locally owned small business, you know at all times who is handling your computer. You often hand over your laptop or desktop to the person fixing it, or at least to someone who is in direct contact with the person doing the repair.

Fewer people are going to have their hands on your device. You're not dropping it off at one location to travel to another location via a major shipping company's trucks, which means there's greater accountability.

Another advantage is that should something come up while your computer is in for repair, you could actually get to your device, because it's not on a loading dock or in some pile of laptops in a manufacturer's centralized computer repair shop. You can simply take your thumb drive down the road and ask to power the computer on and retrieve what you need, assuming that the device still turns on, that is.

### Selecting the Small Business for Your Repair

When selecting a local computer business to do the repair, it's a good idea to ask about the following:

- **Qualifications.** Do they have experience with devices like yours, and licenses and credentials?
- **Services.** You don't want to be looking to fix a cracked screen and go to someone who focuses on retrieving lost data.
- **Customer service record.** Look for testimonials – you can also check this with business monitoring groups in your area and on community website boards.
- **Savings.** If you don't want to have to buy a new computer, work with a business that is in the habit of reviving old devices.
- **Flexibility.** When you're anxious to get your computer back, you're going to want someone available right away. Don't let this cloud your judgment, though.

If you are looking for a business with a proven track record of quality computer service, contact us today at: **940-282-0290**.



## Want to be Anonymous Online? Incognito vs. VPN.

Maybe you want to be a little mysterious, but more likely you want to protect your privacy when browsing online. You don't want cybercriminals seeing what you're doing, or marketers knowing where you go online and what you search for. So, you anonymize your activity using Incognito mode or private browsing. Really though, you want to be using a virtual private network (VPN).

Google Chrome's Incognito mode helps maintain your privacy when you are online. Other browsers, such as Safari, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, or Internet Explorer, also offer private browsing. When the feature is at work, the browser does not save a record of the websites you visit or what you what you searched for. Plus, it doesn't save any of your site logins. This means you have to do without the convenience of access credentials auto-populating.

Privacy browsing also disables plugins that may be used to track your internet activity. Still, plugins often serve a purpose while we're on the internet. So, again, disabling them can disrupt your convenient, efficient browsing experience.

Yet, as cybersecurity concerns rise, recognizing privacy concerns while browsing may not be enough. For one thing, hiding your browser activity is only half the battle. You should also know that:

- your internet service provider (ISP) may be monitoring the sites you visit;

- the site you visited could be tracking your ISP address to find out where you logged in from;
- if you're not on an encrypted site, a cyber bad guy could potentially read your data.

That's why many businesses and home computer users who want to preserve their privacy online look to a VPN. We'll discuss the distinct advantages next.

### Online Privacy Advantages with a VPN

With a VPN, you have your own secure and private connection to the internet.

Consider these advantages of having one for your computer, smartphone, or tablet:

- A VPN encrypts your online activity. That means no third party (company, government, or hacker) can watch your activity as it is transmitted.
- When you connect, your IP address is masked. The VPN provides you with a new IP address, so you can't be tracked to your home or business connection.
- You may be able to access otherwise restricted content. The VPN IP address could appear to be in a country that is allowed access to specific content. So, the website won't know to block you.

Of course, the VPN provider could be recording your online activity (as an ISP might also do), but the most reputable providers make it a policy not to keep any activity logs for their users.

### What Do You Want from Your Anonymity?

When deciding, it comes down to what you want from your anonymity efforts. If you want your browser to not record what you are doing locally, Incognito or another privacy browser will do OK.

If you want a private and secure connection that allows you to enjoy freedom and peace of mind online, the VPN is for you.

**Need help securing your online activity? We can help you determine the best approach and implement the right strategy. To find out more, contact us today at 940-282-0290.**