

Switcher's Uncle

Written by Philip Roy

Saturday, 14 February 2009 00:00 - Last Updated Monday, 16 February 2009 22:28

So, a Mac miracle happened recently. Not that any of you would have noticed, as it was a family miracle and not one broadcast across the net. My eldest brother after years of using a PC, decided to buy not one Mac, but two. To me, after years of using Macs and going on about how great they are...it was pleasing to know that he...well, never listened to a word I said.

This is because I should point out that his email contained two gems of info. One, that friends had been convincing him to buy a Mac. And two, he was really worried because he had all these M\$ Office docs and what the heck was he going to do with those!?

At that point, I introduced my head briefly to the same wall I had been banging against for years, then realised...as I often have, that you simply can't win. I didn't feel like I had failed in preaching to convertees (those that I try to convert), because they simply don't know they need to be converted.

I have friends who have known for years that I'm an obsessive Mac user...know I love Apple...know I have an iPhone and heck, two sites that are all about both. But sometimes, slip into the conversation that you don't use Windows on your Mac and the conversation grounds to a halt....

- Q: What do you mean, you don't use Windows?
- A: Well..I use a Mac.
- Q: And so why isn't Windows on it?*
- A: Well because a Mac uses a different operating system.
- Q: What does it use?
- A: It uses something called the Mac operating system
- Q: And that isn't Windows?
- A: No

**Of course, I'm ignoring the fact we have the ability to run windows now on intel Macs in this brief example*

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At this point, I generally start to use the analogy of cars running petrol and diesel. Yeah, sure, they get you along the same road and yeah sure, fundamentally they are the same...but look closer and they work kinda differently. At this point there are nods of understanding (feigned understanding) and the conversation moves on.

I mean...would my brother even care that Microsoft Office came out on the Mac first? Well I can be really smug and tell him...but for him, it means nothing...and why should it?

You see, I'm from the psychologist-light-bulb-joke school of thought when it comes to Macs. What do I mean by that?

- Q: How many psychologists does it take to change a light-bulb?
- A: One...but the light-bulb has to *want* to change

Get what I mean? You can't force switching upon people until they *want* to switch. I'm one of those people that don't force Macs down people's throat (family and friends might disagree) but the fact is there is no point trying until they are ready.

Even as I write this first part, with my brother still only just now placing an order, he tells me my two nieces are very very upset at the thought of losing their PC. I told him to wait a month or two and they'd be over the moon (I've never ever been proven wrong on that one!). He said for me to email them and start convincing them. I told him I didn't have time.

That was true..but it also goes back to the light bulb analogy. They're not going to be interested in what a Mac can do until such time as they need it to do certain things. Emails from their Uncle raving about the Mac's superiority is just going to confirm one thing....that they're right in praying that geekness isn't hereditary.

Why shove iMovie down someone's throat if they have no interest in movie editing at the time? Why show them iDVD if they have no interest in ever making a DVD?

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I often say to people that I've recently turned (with the purchase of an iPhone) into the guy I never wanted to be. You know the one...the person you spot showing off his iPhone in a pub to friends.

Now don't get me wrong...I love to show my shiny toys off to people as often as I can...but 1) you need to pick your moments, and 2) it's unlikely to generate sales.

Instead, convincing people to switch isn't about showing off...it's about doing it subtly. It's about the person coming into your office to ask you to do something...and you do it so quickly and beautifully they ask "How'd you do that?". It's about making a book in iPhoto in such an easy and stunning way that when they ask how they can do that, the reply is "Get a Mac".

The PC/Mac ads do that brilliantly. They have a great balance of appealing to the knowledgeable geek, whilst also targeting the frustrated, common all purposes garden variety PC user. They show in so little time just one simple reason a Mac is the best choice without going on about everything else. Build those frustrations up, ad upon ad, and you have people thinking.

I'm glad my brother is switching, but I take little or no credit for it. It's not about listening to the obsessive...it's about listening to the people whose opinion you value. If that's his friends, then great. All I know is that in a couple of months or two, I hope to be having a good discussion with my nieces and nephew about their Mac. And the switcher's Uncle should (fingers crossed) have good things to report back on them at that stage.