

## **Kids and Technology**

by

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Our 3 year old hops out of his bed in the morning and the first thing he does is race down the steps to beat his sisters to the computer. Remember when we were mesmerized by the cookie monster when we were 3? Heck, that's boring. Trevor is a computer monster among a new generation of computer monsters. I am amazed as he opens up explorer, goes to favorites and finds his Nick Jr and Thomas the Train websites, and starts playing. Of course our great hope is he's actually learning while he's playing. I think the greatest thing he's learned is that he's not afraid to try anything even if that means guessing at all the buttons on the keyboard to get to his final destination. "How did you know how to do that?" I often ask him. He just shrugs his shoulders, says a few words and keeps on playing as though I don't get it. Trevor is part of a revolutionary new breed that gets "it". And I find myself in a constant game of catch-up, trying to get "it".

If you are a football fan, perhaps you noticed an IBM commercial that was frequently run a year or so ago during the nationally telecast games. Frantic business executives come to the conclusion that someone has stolen all the computer equipment out of their data facility. They are then greeted by a nerdy, bespectacled kid eating a sandwich who tells them that the computers haven't been stolen at all. Instead, they have all been replaced by a single server running the Linux operating system. The advertisement tries to make the point about getting "it". "It" being technology. The commercial pokes fun at the business professionals who just don't get "it" as it makes the case for IBM.

Like the commercial, business professionals often don't get "it" when it comes to technology. Why? Recently a manager in charge of a large technology implementation project told me he was fed up with the young computer people who had come into the organization. "These iPod wearing techies think they know everything" he began. "Most of the time I have no idea what they are talking about. And, what they want to do is just not how we do it around here."

I was somewhat familiar with his staff and I could tell they were extremely talented. "My advice to you is to listen to them," I said. "If you want to improve your business climate, then really listen to what they have to say. If you want to be more successful, then tap that potential and be open to do things differently." He replied, "Look I have a deadline to meet. I don't have time for some touchy-feely serendipity session."

Unfortunately, this scenario happens too often today. The result is a gaping void between the "net-generation" who thinks differently, and the traditional manager.

I believe the key to getting "it" is listening. We may think we've all been there and done that. But technology has changed so rapidly, we are often looking at solutions today that will be obsolete in less than a year. And unless we have remarkable technical skills coupled with vision, we may find our own professional and personal efficiency diminishing.

Business people, especially small business people need to understand how the technology strategies they employ today can be a springboard to the solutions of the future. And there is no better way than listening to the ideas of young people who grew up with PC's and the Internet.

Instead of the linear thinking that looks for THE right answer to a business problem, this generation often finds there are a variety of ways to get to the right answer because they like to press all the buttons even if they don't know where it will take them. This is different than what we are used to doing but quite effective. While it may be enormously difficult trying to understand the folks who thrive on iPods, iPhones, Linux and Dilbert, the benefits of simply listening could be tremendous. The creative energy that this generation possesses just may be the kind of innovativeness that could come in handy in your professional or personal life.



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