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A Computer techâ€™s story by Antonio Matsuoka

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Today, I did a computer outcall, and I thought this was going to be a walk in the park. The customer over the phone mentioned to me that the Operating System keeps crashing after about 5-10 minutes of turning the computer on. She even presented me with the blue screen error message that she received after the computer had blue screened on her.

Upon booting up the computer, I figured it was best to run my handy little blue screen tool called â€œBlue Screen Viewâ€•. This tool shows me the number of blue screens a person has experienced, the time of day, and even which file is causing the issue. Upon reviewing the information, I realized that the driver called â€œAtaport.sysâ€• was the cause to the userâ€™s blue screens. Realizing that this probl was going to be a bit more involved, I proceeded to test the hardware.

The first thing that I tested was the hard drive, using the HD Tune Tool which I have preloaded on my utility disk. I chose the error scan test and proceeded to run both the quick & slow and steady portions of the test. The results of both were positive with no indication of hard drive error. My second test was focused on the memory. I ran MemTest86+, which in my opinion is the best memory checking test on the market. It performs a series of stress, write, & recalls on the memory to check for any errors or miscommunications. Upon trying to run the test, i was met with running issues for the first time ever when trying to use the program.

It just wouldnâ€™t want to start up, so I went ahead and proceeded to pull out my laptop which I always bring with me to the job and I tested the memory on my personal machine. The tests ran fine, and showed me that the memory indeed was not the culprit.

One thing did stick in the back of my head, â€œWhy did my memory test fail, and why is Ataport.sys still giving me this problemâ€•? So I went ahead and tried my hardest to find a mode where the computer wouldnâ€™t crash almost immediately, I tried to boot up normally to no avail, I tried safe mode with networking yet when I tried to run my computer check software I ran into another blue screen. Then I decided to just go with the bare minimum, and I tried to go on using just Safe Mode with no fancy bells or whistles. I managed to run my computer check software, and it corrected issues related to internet explorer, and possibly a worm.

When I restarted the computer however, I attempted to boot up normally and the computer blue screened on me again! Troubled by this failure I went full speed to the Toshiba website and I downloaded every single driver & update that was available to me. I updated the IDE ATA drivers, video drivers, sound drivers, touchpad driver, the often unnecessary miscellaneous updates which programmers dish out, and then I rounded things out by running a computer registry repair. I restarted the computer again, and it blue screened even quicker than before. In discontent, I slumped in my chair and knew what I had to do. I proceeded to back up and save every file on the computer and performed an operating system reinstallation. Making this decision is never easy, but I wouldnâ€™t want to run around in circles trying to fix that which couldnâ€™t be. My system restore even failed!

Sometimes, even us computer techs have to know when to call it quits and just take the short road home.

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