

How To

by David Dunham

How To Trouble Shoot Fax Machines

When I first started here at Ambrosia I was understandably nervous, we had a new crew and none of us were really familiar with the office, our jobs, or even the office equipment. Whenever an office machine/appliance would beep, I would jump. I would get up and try to decipher the mysterious clues given to me by the anti-rosetta stone that was the message display. "Check toner drum" I would check the manual and then open the appropriate door/panel and the machine would beep anew, "Check door three, door three open." Well I have to open door three to check toner drum, hmmm.

Our wonderful office mascot/curse, Hector must have liked my gung ho attitude, he would mimic the sounds of the various machines until I would get up and check the drum roll or printer window for anything awry. I could almost hear the beast laughing at me. He had a special talent for the fax machine. Even if I was aware Hector was in one of his moods and toying with me, he would imitate that fax machine and, as a great deal of our orders are faxed, I had to get up to be sure that wonderful piece of.....technology was up and running. As you can probably understand, I got to really hate the sound of that machine.

Well I had finally gotten so I could tell if it was Hector beeping or the real mccooy, when we changed our 1 800 service. The old service would email all of the day's orders to me at the end of each day. Our new service started faxing the orders to us. This started about a week after we released Mars Rising, as you can well imagine, we had a few orders each day. Our glorious fax machine is/was a cantankerous old beast, and when the orders got to be too large the fax machine would freeze up. BEEEP!! It would start printing the same order or orders over and over, and the memory would read 100%. BEEEP!!! There were orders in there, it just wouldn't give them up. And then it would choke, and when it choked, it really choked. It would BEEEP (I don't have a font large, or obnoxious enough to do justice to this sound.) I would jump up, sneering at Hector, and check the alarm readout. BEEEP!!! "Check Drum", I'd check the drum, the machine would BEEEP as I did. "Door Open", well of course, the door has to be open when you check the drum GRRRR! "Check door 1", BEEEP "check door 2", the whole time it would be printing out the same order over and over again and beeping incessantly.

We called the repair place and their advice in this high tech world - "Does the problem persist with extensions disabled?" D'oh - I mean it was, "unplug the machine for ten minutes, let it rest, and then turn it back on." Of course all the orders in its memory would be lost into the ether. This went on daily for a few weeks. We would get a few orders, "OK the fax machine is back" and then BEEEP, "check door

1", BEEEP "check your sanity...." We all secretly began harboring fantasies of fax death. High windows, high impact vehicle collisions, the cursed machine beeping for mercy that just wasn't going to come. Ahh, it made the days bearable anyway.

We put up with this for a few days, and then called a fax repairman, he came in, looked at it, did a maintenance check and pronounced it well. At this time we had other problems with the 1 800 service (don't get me started), leading us to have the 1 800 line ring into the office. This led to other issues, but it did get the fax machine off our backs. The fax machine was relegated to the occasional international order, purchase orders, and a non disclosure agreement or two. (More on those from Jason) The fax machine grudgingly handled this load for a while.

Then the big breakdown. BEEEP, check drum toner. I checked and changed the drum toner, and went back to work. BEEEEEEEP!!!, "Check drum toner." BEEEP Hmmm, of all the strange permutations of the messages recieved, I had never seen this one repeated. On top of this, the machine was frozen, it would not let it go. BEEEP "Check drum toner" BEEEEEP!!! "Check drum toner" This looked like the end. I didn't get my hopes up though, John Cook, our barbarian accountant, is very persistent and very thrifty. I knew in my heart of hearts that that beast of a machine would be spitefully BEEEPing away at me the next morning. Then John left for the day. The only people left in the office were Matt Walicke, the data entry person, and as such the person closest to the beeping menace, and our illustrious leader, Andrew. Well, I guess the BEEEEEPing was just too much for those lightweights. When I got into the office on monday, there it was, in all its glory, the brand spanking new, mother faxing BROTHER MFC-4450. One of the most impressive displays of modern technology I have ever beheld in my very own gaze.

This of course left only one issue. What to do with that decrepit old beast, the FAX MACHINE. First thoughts were of high windows, but that would be too quick, too impersonal, and besides, David Letterman has done that to death. Next, vehicle impacts. I liked it. Still a little too quick, but the contact felt right. We had to be up close and personal. I wanted to hear that machine BEEEEEP for mercy. There

was only one way. Being across from Frontier Field and Rochester's own Red Wings and being good red blooded Americans, the answer was obvious. Bats. Baseball bats.

had just the beast too. My roommate carried it in his car...with a ball and glove of course. No lightweight Louisville slugger for us. No, we needed the Peckerwood. 30 Inches and a couple of pounds of good ole american hardwood, er, I mean Peckerwood.

We just needed the perfect day. Today was that day, good people. The sun was shining, the birds were singing, we could practically hear the Gods of Revenge saying, "Time has come today".....no wait, that was the Ramones, but you get the point. We took our victim out to a nearby parking lot, where all the local bodies are buried. (Don't ask me how I know these things) We didn't waste time with ceremony or long testimonials we just started beating fax butt.

got first swing, my cubicle was closest to the beast. I stepped up, and with all of the anger and frustration I could muster, I let loose. My shot hit it high on the right side. The paper tray flew, the casing cracked, but the beast still lived. Like a piñata, we were taking turns. I had to wait for Jason, Andrew, John, and Ben, our lowly intern. He had never dealt with the agony of the fax machine, but he had to write a log of his daily activities and smashing a fax machine would look very good on a school report. Andrew stepped up and whooof, he hit, but just grazing the top. One more swing and Crack! Toner billowed out everywhere. Jason did the top down smash, aiming for that infernal display. John stepped up, and like the great Babe, called his shot.

e all stepped back, John isn't called the Barbarian Accountant because of his genial disposition. Blast! The machine finally started to give up its precious silicon guts. Circuit boards flew, capacitors and transistors pinwheeled away into oblivion. Ben got in his shot, good form and lots of contact. I smiled knowing how proud his teachers and advisors would be. Now it was time for the finale. The Hummer.

Andrew lined up, hit the gas and with a diesel scream, he leaped forward. The front tire lined up perfectly, direct contact. Toner exploded in an indigo and black cloud. The rear tire caught the beast and dragged it across the cracked pavement. I could almost hear it, BEEEEEE merciful, BEEEEEE quick. Even the hardened souls there could feel the need for mercy. Andrew backed up, and then into gear, romping forward and with the perfect balance of gas and brakes, he locked 'em up and slid right on top of the fax, dragging it once more across the broken ground.

sliding into a puddle, where the beast lay, under an inch of muddy water, its broken cyber guts strewn across the cold, hard ground. It was the end. It was one of the most glorious moments of my professional career. Once again, man had triumphed over out of control technology, we had put the beast in its

place.

Balance had been brought back to the work place, peace was ours once again.