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 was recently shopping for a small, 600 dot-per-inch PostScript laser printer at a large national computer reseller. I took a look at an Apple LaserWriter 4/600 and an HP LaserJet. Both looked like they would do the job, but I wanted to see a few test prints. A salesperson soon arrived to offer his assistance.

"Can I help you?" he asked.

"Yes. I'd like to see a few plain paper printouts from each of these two laser printers."

"We can't do that. These printers aren't hooked up to any computers."

"Um...okay. Do you think I could see the sample printouts that each printer generates?"

"I'm sorry, but we have no electricity over here in this part of the store. But here, let me show you another printer that prints just like these printers."

We walked to another area of the store and the salesperson looked around at various inkjet printers, spotted one with a sample print in the tray, grabbed it and said, "Here!"

My eyes widened slightly, and then twitched. My jaw dropped.   Calmly, I said to the salesperson "But this is an inkjet printout."

"Well, yes... it prints just like those other printers, though."

"No it doesn't," I began, trying to retain my composure. "And this is a COLOR inkjet printout!" I handed the sample back to the salesperson, muttered a polite "Thank you" and headed for the door.

"Is there a problem?" the salesperson pleaded, somewhat astonished. "Did I say something wrong?"

sold an external Apple CD 600e drive and an Iomega Zip drive to a customer who was fairly new to computers. She was going to connect both external SCSI devices to her desktop Mac. I wanted to make sure she would have the proper SCSI cables for these two devices. I tried to describe the process over the phone before she received the hardware, but I realized that it is difficult to picture how to create the SCSI daisy chain.

I waited until her hardware arrived and I called to see if she was having any difficulty getting them connected. She said "No, everything is fine. My husband just went out to the local computer store to buy a Daisy Chain."

And the husband returned to report: "The salesman said they only have the PC version available right now, but they would be happy to special order a Mac version."

ne of our technicians got a call from the stereotypical clueless customer—no matter how detailed her explanation was, it just wasn't detailed enough for this guy. Every time the tech asked him to open or close a file, she had to describe the process. After 40 minutes (half of which was spent describing how to use the Mac Operating System), she decided to just give up and let someone else step up to bat.

"I'm going to refer this to a senior technician," she said. "He'll be calling you right back."

"But that won't work," the customer protested. "There's a three-hour time difference, and I won't be here in three hours."

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