

The 'anti-geeks' of computer repair

Paul The Computer Guy takes an everyman approach to tech

By Tim Doran / *The Bulletin*

Last modified: May 25, 2010 6:07AM PST

Quality of life attracted former software engineer Paul Spencer and his wife, author Suzanne Schlosberg, to Bend, as it has many others.

But Spencer found it's also a good place to start a computer-repair business, as well as a great location to raise a family.

Since Spencer, 42, moved his business, Paul The Computer Guy, into a storefront on Northeast Franklin Avenue in December, he has seen it increase 40 to 50 percent.

While Bend has other computer-repair businesses, few market themselves so vividly or with the same humorous flourishes.

First of all, the business's name contains an everyman quality.

Then, Spencer has it emblazoned in orange on his white Subaru Outback, right above his slogan, "We know what the heck we're doing."

His store, located a few doors west of the 7-Eleven at Third Street and Franklin, displays large posters that poke fun at universal computer frustrations. One, for example, features a man screaming at his laptop. "Yelling won't make it go faster," the accompanying text says. "We will."

Spencer credits his wife, a humorist and health writer, with adding many of the amusing touches, such as the slogan. He enjoys running his business and interacting with customers, he said.

He also has much more fun now than during the 10 years he spent working in the aerospace industry, most of it the Los Angeles area.



Rob Kerr / The Bulletin

Paul Spencer leans against his Subaru Outback, which has become one of the best marketing tools for his computer repair business, Paul The Computer Guy, 244 N.E. Franklin Ave., Suite 2, in Bend.

"I really liked programming computers," Spencer said. "The environment (in the aerospace industry) I didn't like very much. The people are really, really geeky."

Spencer and Schlosberg met when they lived in L.A., although she had lived in Bend previously.

Shortly after they began dating, Schlosberg returned to Central Oregon to write a book, prompting him to travel north several times to see her.

They decided to marry and planned to eventually move to Bend, but in 2003, Spencer's employer, Teledyne Controls, laid him off, fallout from an airline industry trying to recover after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

His work, programming embedded systems, did not lend itself to telecommuting, so he knew he would have to retool, he said.

When his wife asked what made him think he could start his own IT business, he replied with a variation of the phrase that became his slogan.

Spencer began working from his Bend home, splitting his time between designing web pages and computer service.

Eventually, he moved the business into a small office on Fourth Street near Franklin. It served as a location for his clients to bring their computers, but he quickly outgrew the office.

In Paul The Computer Guy's new storefront location, Spencer and his associate, Susan Galecki, have the space for an assembly-line setup to service multiple computers at once, such as when running a virus scan. The shop does not sell computers, and Spencer no longer designs Web pages. He strictly performs service and repair, both in his shop and on-site,

Galecki, who ran her own computer-repair businesses before moving to Bend, is an Apple-certified technician, and Paul The Computer Guy received notification recently that it has been approved as an Apple authorized service provider.

When it becomes official, the business will be able to perform warranty work on Apple computers. Spencer also has certification from CompTIA, a nonprofit trade association for IT professionals.

Spencer agreed to answer a few additional questions for The Bulletin on Monday.

Q: How is your job now different from the aerospace industry?

A: With this job, I don't work with geeks. I'm the geek. I get to work with other businesses. I play a pretty vital role in their business. I'm a tech guy, but I don't really spend my day with technical people.

Q: How is Paul The Computer Guy different from other computer-repair companies?



Rob Kerr / The Bulletin

Paul Spencer leans against his Subaru Outback, which has become one of the best marketing tools for his computer repair business, Paul The Computer Guy, 244 N.E. Franklin Ave., Suite 2, in Bend.

The basics

What: Paul The Computer Guy

Where: 244 N.E. Franklin Ave., Suite 2, Bend

Employees: Two

Phone: 541-330-0610

Web site: www.paulthecomputerguy.com/index.html

A: When they come here, they (customers) get a lot of personal attention. We don't talk down to people.

We kind of think of ourselves as the anti-geeks. All the stereotypes, we're trying to be the opposite of that.

I'm having fun with it. People come in and they smile. They ask, "Are you a franchise?" It's such a compliment when they ask if I'm a franchise.

As much as we can, we make it a lot more pleasant. We talk to them, listen to how they use their computers.

Q: When did you paint the car?

A: I did that at the beginning of 2009. (When I'm stopped at a red light,) I can see people pointing at the car and laughing. The car has probably been the single greatest piece of marketing that we've done.

Q: What's the most common problem your customers have?

A: It's about 70 percent viruses. It's all off the Web. There was a virus being handed out by The New York Times. (In September, the Times became the victim of someone who placed rogue ads on the site, according to its archives.) So you never know.

A lot of people still think they don't need virus protection. For a PC, it's mandatory.

Tim Doran can be reached at 541-383-0360, or at tdoran@bendbulletin.com.

Published Daily in Bend Oregon by Western Communications, Inc. © 2010

www.bendbulletin.com