

PCD - Pulaski
County
Democrat
St. Robert, MO
Circ. 700
From Page:
9
7/18/2008
14682



61 Minimize Formatting Headaches

Most of us have been there before. Occasionally an e-mail from a friend is littered with peculiar boxes and icons that appear as if they don't belong. This is not some secret, coded language but rather the result of what happens when the dialogue between two computers is formatted incorrectly. Frustrating as this tech gibberish may be, there are certain precautions to take to increase the likelihood of a file or e-mail appearing as intended.

Ben Roudenis is a technical support agent at Socket, a Missouri-based telephone and Internet provider. He often fields phone calls from frustrated e-mail users dealing with the hassles of e-mail formatting problems. According to Roudenis, the most common formatting problems people run into relate to fonts.

"Fonts are not embedded into most documents or e-mails," said Roudenis. "Therefore, in order to make sure another user sees the document or e-mail properly, they will have to have all the same fonts the sender used on their computer."

Roudenis says there are three different ways e-mail can be written: plain text, rich text format (RTF) and hypertext markup language (HTML).

All e-mail programs can read messages in plain text format, making it the safe option. However, plain text does not allow for common formatting adjustments such as bold text or

Socket tech Talk

font and color changes. Using those types of formatting flare requires the use of RTF or HTML formatting.

Unfortunately, RTF and HTML e-mails aren't accessible from all e-mail programs, and even if they are, they can be interpreted and displayed differently. Senders should be aware of these restrictions and format the message according to the recipient's e-mail program if possible. RTF e-mails should only be sent to recipients using Microsoft Outlook or Outlook Express. HTML formatting should only be used when it is neces-

sary to insert graphics or create a specific layout, such as in an e-mail newsletter.

Finally, Roudenis cautions against copying and pasting into the e-mail message from Microsoft Word. Formatting adjustments made in Word are embedded into e-mail messages, so problems do not become obvious until the e-mail is sent. It is best to edit within the e-mail program or copy and paste from a plain text source, such as Notepad.

"E-mail problems are frustrating, but fortunately they're relatively easy to avoid," said Roudenis. "Consider your recipient, and only use formatted elements when it's necessary to convey the intended message."

Do you have a technology-related question you'd like to see featured in Socket Tech Talk? Let us know by visiting www.socket.net/techtalkfeedback or by calling 1-800-762-5383.

Socket Tech Talk is provided as a service to distribute general information concerning technology-related topics. Please consult your local computer expert for information specific to your situation.