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I'm From IT, and I'm Here To Help You …

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"Whenever anyone calls with an IT issue, you will utter these words," the instructor intones. The students sit motionless, leaning forward fully attentive. This sounds serious.

A computer once beat me at chess, but it was no match for me at kick-boxing.
—Emo Phillip

Over the years we have become increasingly dependent on computers and technology. As radiologists, we are at the bleeding edge of that trend—no more transcription, plain films, tomograms, or barium. Now it's MDCT, voice transcription, PACS, and a jillion interfaces with other systems.

We have people embedded within our departments who do nothing but tame the computer beasts—our information technology (IT) staff. I've been a physician director of an IT section, so I know a little bit about what I'm about to rant about. And don't misunderstand: I respect the hell out of these folks. However, we all have our foibles. They just have more and larger ones.

I have in my mind the first day of IT school. Young, eager minds sitting in an auditorium as a senior staffer enters the room, closes and locks the doors, and strides to the podium. After it gets quiet, the students hear the instructor speak these words:

"Okay, before we break up and go play computer games and learn to program a few cool things, we are going to swear you to secrecy and give you the most important teaching you will get here."

The room falls deathly quiet; even the few people weirded out by the locking of the doors are full bore locked in. They are motionless, straining to hear the next utterance. Their minds are fully attentive. This sounds serious.

"Whenever anyone calls with an IT issue, you will utter these words," the instructor intones.

"The words you will say every time, and then again for at least the next five minutes, each and every time someone calls with ANY issue, large or small, are:

"Have you tried rebooting?"

A few nervous laughs. Those who laugh are harshly attended to. The room falls silent again. You could hear a floppy disk hit the floor.

Let's all repeat together," the instructor says. "*Have you tried rebooting?*"

"Have you tried rebooting?" the students respond. *"Have you tried rebooting?"*

Again and again they repeat: *"Have you tried rebooting?"*

It soon becomes a chant, rising in volume each time. The students stand, shaking their fists and chanting louder and rhythmically until the auditorium is rocking.

After more than 20 repetitions, the staffer stops and the students grow silent. They sit down to contemplate their lesson.

They break up into sections for some computer time, but everything has been made clear. The major IT life lesson has been given to them. They will meet daily for the next year to recite the same chant until they are saturated with it, and its significance.

As it is written, verily, verily, I say to you, when thou shalt call about a computer issue, the first words the IT pro speaks to you will always be the same.

"Have you tried rebooting?"

I'm just getting warmed up. More on this next month. Keep doing that good work.

Mahalo.

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