

13 00 2008 - What's Wrong With Technology

I'm a bit of a geek. My house is full of all kinds of gadgets and gizmos that the average person wouldn't even think to buy; after all, who really needs a fingerprint reader to login to their computer? Being a geek, however, I have no problem with learning how to use these products. My parents, on the other hand, are a different story.



My father, though computer-obsessed, is a little less than geeky. He recently purchased a new smart phone only to discover that he has no idea how to hang it up (ah the minutes I've spent listening to him hum to himself in the car after saying "goodbye"). As funny as it may be (he's a sixty year old

My mother's the same way. She'll spend hours looking through phones at the store to find one that doesn't have any features - always to the salesman's dismay, of course. What she wants to do with a phone is quite often at odds with what I want to do with a phone. She wants to call people; I want to sit on YouTube and watch a panda sneeze while I wait for a table at a new restaurant that my phone just found for me.

The gap between technology and understanding is growing almost as quickly as technology itself. As consumer devices become more and more advanced, their learning curves become steeper and steeper. Sure, people would love to do some of the things that these devices can do; the only problem is that they can't seem to figure out how to do them.

Apple's working hard to fix this very problem and, with some of the simplest interfaces in the world of technology, they're quickly doing just that. Their undeniable ability to blend design with technology and simplicity is what put the iPod in the hands of nearly every man, woman, and child in the country. Still, there shouldn't be just one brand that's designed to be simple enough for my parents to use. If someone can't pick up a consumer device and use it, it probably needs a trip back to the drawing board.

Over the next several years, as green technologies begin to finally reach the mass-market, this concept should be at the front of the minds of designers and companies alike. There will always be a geek that loves to learn new things but, even so, everyone isn't really a geek. People are eager to try new things, to make their lives easier, and to embrace technology - but only if that same technology

