

Two Perspectives

There are many perspectives that differentiate between Hackers and other people. We could all name off several off the top of our heads.

But regardless of the distinctions, as in a classic Venn diagram, there is overlap representing the fact that both types have to interact.

So when worlds collide there is usually friction. They don't understand what we are trying to communicate and we cannot always decipher their meaning due to their lack of technical vocabulary or the perspectives from which we organize and understand technology.

Neither is really at fault. If a person has a passion and aptitude for technology they will likely put the time and energy in to become proficient with it. Most people are not passionate about technology and have the aptitude necessary to become proficient.

Truth is they are not likely to learn enough tech to allow for clear and easy communications. So, it is up to us to bridge that gap the best we can.

Bridging this gap requires that we understand better how nonHackers think. Since most of us are busy analysing systems including our own thinking, it seldom occurs to us that they think entirely different.

And one way to begin is to recognize that Hackers approach technology similar to the Google Earth interface. We start with the big picture which includes the areas of technology we are familiar and functional with.

Programming, networking hardware, protocols, Operating Systems and so on. We see all of these areas and their relationships. As we zoom in closer, more detail is revealed, associations become specific, and we can map our current question into an informational picture that allows us to plan, troubleshoot, understand, learn, and explain.

NonHackers, on the other hand, see the same things (to a much lesser degree) in terms of process. Click this, type that, plug-in this cable to that socket, and so on. They work from ad-hoc checklists and memory to accomplish the task at hand. They may even pull up a Youtube video or two on the topic. However, they are not looking to refine their mental map of how they understand technology, they are looking for the command that will accomplish a task, the steps to resolve a problem, or for suggestions for looking further.

What they find fixes a specific problem in a specific context, but does not expand their mental map of technology. In contrast, when a Hacker learns new information, or even a process, they fit it into their mental map, filling out the detail in higher and higher resolution.

Then when a problem arises, rather than rely on one or two lists of steps that may or may not relate to the problem, a Hacker can zoom in to the area experiencing the problem, run through a number of possible solutions and exercise the flexibility that having more information which is more detailed, and more relevant which quickly leads to a better solution, even if it spans multiple areas on their mental map.

In addition, Hackers collect information in a different way.

We organize it into mental maps for better recall and relevance.

When we come across something interesting or that fills in a sparse spot in their map they process it right then.

Hackers know there is too much information to know it all, or even a significant chunk of it. The fact that we usually cover a large number of areas that people typically specialize in. So, rather than try to commit everything to memory, we make notes and organize them into near-line storage using a variety of tools and techniques.

And for a large number of