10+ things support techs say (and what they really mean)

By Jeff Dray

This list is based on the article [*"Unlock the hidden meanings in help desk language."*](#)

There are a number of key phrases used on a regular basis at help desks around the world. They sound harmless enough but often have hidden meanings, understood only by those who have been initiated into the black art of the help desk. In this listing of common phrases and their true meanings, I'm sure you'll see some that you've heard before and some that you might have even used yourself.

	What we say	What we mean
1	"To tell you the truth/To be honest…"	"I am about to heavily bend the truth."
2	"It would probably be best to re-install the software."	"I don't know how to fix this, nor does anyone else here. By the time we've worked out the solution, you could have re-installed the package a dozen times."
3	"Hmmm! That's a good one!"	"What the heck are you talking about?"
4	"There must be some incompatibility problem."	"I haven't got a clue."
5	"I'll check with my team leader."	"He hasn't got a clue either."
6	"We have passed the problem on to the developers."	"Even they don't have a clue."
7	"Let me just check with a colleague."	"I'll press the mute button now because I can't stop laughing."
8	"What operating system are you running?"	"Do you know what an operating system is?"
9	"Are you getting a login error?"	"You've forgotten your password, haven't you?"
10	"Let's check your system settings."	"I wasn't listening the first time."
11	"I apologize unreservedly for my mistake."	"Damn! I just broke the first help desk law!"
12	"Let's run through that procedure one more time and check the exact error message."	"I need to play for time while I reboot my machine, swallow this huge lump of sandwich I just bit off, find the relevant help file, or finish making the tea."

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