

The Luddite Lounge

Episode 7 Transcript, 10/15/15

www.ludditelounge.com/episode7

You're listening to The Luddite Lounge where we're serving up news, views and how-tos for the digital world we've all come to depend on—whether we like it or not!

Hey there glad you can join me today in The Luddite Lounge. I'm Elizabeth Kricfalusi, publisher of the Tech for Luddites blog and Chief Luddite.

This is Episode 7 of The Lounge and unlike the Five Five Tech episodes – five topics in five minutes -- I've got lots to talk about today. You can find show notes with related links at ludditelounge.com/episode7.

Let's get started!

(00:48) It's been just over a month since launching the Lounge, so I'm going to start the show off by talking a bit about how it's going. In Episode 0, Welcome to the Luddite Lounge, I said that it was going to be a work in progress as I try to figure out what works and what doesn't. I did say my initial goal was to produce a longer episode, like this one, every week, with shorter segments like Five Five Tech in between them.

So it turns out that producing a podcast is a lot of work! And while I knew that going in, I didn't realize just how much time some things were going to take. In addition to preparing for the show and recording it, I then have to edit the recording which takes longer than you might expect. Although note to self: If I could stop saying Um so much, that should cut the editing time in half. And I do like to make the show notes as helpful as possible with relevant information and links so putting those together is also more time-consuming than I expected. And while I do pay a service to transcribe the recording, at the moment everything else is just me. All that to explain why in my first month I was only able to record two of the longer episodes and four Five Five Techs.

So my new goal going forward is to do 1 or 2 of the longer episodes per month and still do some shorter segments in between. I would like to come up with some different types of segments for variety, and I'll be test-driving one in this show so we'll see how that goes. It would be nice if I could say new Five Five Techs and other segments would always be available on a certain day of the week, but I'm not yet at the point where I can be that consistent so hopefully my listeners will enjoy being surprised when the new episodes show up.

Another thing I said in my Welcome episode was that I wanted to keep even the longer episodes to between 20-30 minutes. And then in Episode 4 I interviewed Ryan Downey from the Streaming Advisor and we were having such a great discussion about all the new announcements and rumors coming out with the top streaming media players, that even after a hard edit, I found myself with a 50-

minute episode. Now I think it was totally worth it, but it's something I'll need to take into account for future episodes where I have guests on.

Which brings me to another point. I'd like to have more guests on! But of course those require even more planning so right now I'm trying to come up with a few topics where I could invite other good guests like Ryan, which I think will make the shows more interesting for you guys as well. So if you have any suggestions for topics or guests, please shoot me an email at e.lizbeth@ludditelounge.com.

And finally, a few stats. According to Blubrry, my podcast hosting company, there have been a grand total of 90 unique downloads since launching the Lounge. The most downloaded episode so far is Episode 5, one of the Five Five Tech shows with 20 unique downloads. The least downloaded one is Episode 3, also a Five Five Tech, with just 6 uniques. 77 of the 90 downloads were from the United States – not surprisingly – and the rest were from Singapore, Canada, the UK, and there was one from France so Bonjour and Merci to you Madame or Monsieur! 😊

Now these numbers aren't breaking any records – at least not any good ones and a big part of that is because I haven't been promoting the show anywhere near as much as I should have been. So that's going to be a priority going forward. But one of the best ways to get more people listening to the show is if they hear about it from people who already do. So please, if you've been enjoying The Luddite Lounge, head over to iTunes and rate and/or review it. And if you're on social media, a quick shout out to your friends would also be appreciated. Something as simple as "Hey, I recently discovered this podcast and wanted to recommend it to anyone interested in learning some useful tech tips, getting current tech-related news in plain English, and maybe getting a couple of laughs along the way as well." Of course, if you're sharing it on Twitter, you're gonna have to cut that waaaay down.

So that's where we are with the podcast in general and now on to this episode's specific content.

(5:04) I wanted to start with a couple of updates about the Tech for Luddites blog. I mentioned earlier about the Lounge episode that focused on streaming media players and now I'm in the process of updating earlier blog posts about what I like to call The Big Four: Roku, Amazon Fire TV, Apple TV, and Google Chromecast. I've already done the first two and hope to have the other two done by the end of this week. I'll also be updating a couple of other posts that reference these devices like the comparison chart and the "Which streaming media player is right for you?" article. So stay tuned for those.

Once I've got those updates done, I want to put together a couple more Windows 10 how-to videos. I've been using the new operating system for two months now and I've been holding off on changing certain settings until I can share them with T4L readers. But a couple of them have started to drive me crazy so I reeeally want to get those videos done.

(6:00) Next up is the new segment I mentioned before that I'm trying out today for the first time. I'm calling it "Someone Needs to Explain To Me." In these segments, which will be kind of a combo of info and opinion, I'll be talking about something I really don't understand and then I hope that someone listening will actually respond.

In today's episode, Someone Needs to Explain to Me why anybody uses Gmail. I mean, I do have a Gmail address, mainly because you need one to do just about anything else on Google. But since I always have Microsoft Office on my computer, I've always just used Outlook as my main email client. Almost two years ago, I wrote a blog post about how much I hate it when email clients combine your messages into threads or conversations and provided instructions on how to turn it off in various programs including Outlook and Gmail. And this has become one of my most popular blog posts. But while you can turn it off in the Gmail settings in your web browser, for some reason unknown to man—or, in this case, woman— Google flat out refuses to offer it as an option in their Gmail mobile app.

Now before I get an onslaught of comments about how wonderful threading is, I get that there are people who absolutely love it. Awesome. I'm glad you have that option. But those of us who don't like it, absolutely detest it. I don't think I've ever seen anyone say "Hmm, I can take it or leave it." And Google is well aware of this because when I was writing that post, I discovered that they hadn't offered the option to switch back to unthreaded in the browser when they first introduced Conversation View. But after a LOT of user complaints, they finally gave us the option to choose our preference.

So why won't they do this in the mobile app? Even worse, the mobile app actually has a setting called Conversation View that you can turn on or off, but this doesn't work with Gmail accounts. It's only for other types of accounts that you connect to Gmail. But since there's a fairly sizable number of people, I'm guessing, who have no idea what a POP or IMAP email account is, I get a number of questions from them asking why Gmail keeps threading their messages even though they've unchecked the box.

Oh, and in case you're wondering, I just use the default Email app on my Android phone and my Kindle Fire tablet, which is also built on Android.

But that's not the only reason I can't figure out why anyone uses Gmail. After all, as I mentioned, a lot of people love the Conversation View so if that was its only issue, I would understand why it would be a great client for those people. But it's not.

For example, Gmail doesn't provide any kind of indication of whether you've replied to or forwarded an email. What?! Every other email client I use shows some kind of arrow next to the message to let me know I've taken action on it. But not Gmail.

And finally, although there's probably a lot more but this is more than enough for me to veto the program, I only recently discovered—again, thanks to a reader question—that you can't sort your Gmail Inbox by sender or subject or any other criteria except date. Again I say, what?! I sort my Outlook Inbox by those two columns all the time. It helps me find messages, it helps me bulk move or delete ones from the same sender or about the same topic. How can Gmail not have this? Are there any other email clients that don't have this feature, something I consider so standard I literally couldn't believe it couldn't be done until I found about a dozen articles online that were either complaining about it or sharing some sort of complicated workarounds.

So if you use Gmail, can you please explain to me why? What are the features that it has that other clients don't, if you have actually tried other ones? And how do you deal with the issues I've mentioned above? If you want to Explain This To Me, please do so in the comment box below.

(10:05) Now on to the main feature for this episode: 7 Tips for Being a Better Tech Support Customer.

Now, I'm sure everybody listening here can provide multiple stories of nightmare support experiences. And I'm right there with you when it comes to frustration and anger at being passed around from department to department, having to deal with rude reps, and getting either wrong answers or no answers at all.

And while I'm not a tech support representative myself, I do play one on TV--or at least, among friends, family, and blog readers. And in playing that role, I have discovered a number of tips that can make these interactions not only more pleasant but, most important, more effective.

Tip 1: Always remember you're talking to a person. This is true whether you're getting support over the phone, through a live chat session, or through email. And that person probably spends 90 percent of their time dealing with unhappy people who don't necessarily treat them very nicely. So if you say hello, ask how they are today, say please and thank you, you're going to stand out as someone they actually want to help.

Tip 2: Be specific about the problem you've got . For example, instead of saying, "My Internet isn't working," which could mean multiple things, say "When I try to go to a web page, my browser is saying it can't connect to the Internet." That will help the rep get to the root of the problem faster and therefore help you find a solution faster.

Tip 3: Eliminate the phrase "It didn't work" from your vocabulary. I get this a lot after I tell somebody to try something. But "it didn't work" tells me nothing. Instead, tell the person what actually happened. Did you click on something and the screen stayed exactly the same? Did any dialog boxes pop up? Were there any error messages? Again, the more specific details you can provide, the more likely it is that you'll get the help you need.

Tip 4: Accept that you might not know as much as you think you do. This is more of a problem for people who have a certain level of technical understanding who then end up arguing with the person trying to help them. But the person you're talking to is dealing with these types of problems over and over again so there's a good chance that they do have at least a little extra knowledge about the matter and so hearing them out is probably a good idea. Now I'll admit, I've been guilty of this myself. But nowadays when I find myself starting to say "but, but" to someone before they've finished, I try to remind myself that, if I had all the answers, I wouldn't have needed to call tech support in the first place.

Tip 5: Don't be afraid to ask questions. Now this tends to be more of a problem for the people who are less comfortable with technology because they're afraid of embarrassing themselves by not knowing something they think they should. But even though I'm pretty knowledgeable about certain

technologies, I ask questions all the time, even ones that might seem obvious. And when I'm helping someone else, I especially like it when they say something like "Let me see if I understand this correctly. Are you saying such-and-such?" because then I can nip any misunderstandings in the bud. In the same vein, don't be afraid to ask someone to repeat something.

Tip 6: Take screenshots. Obviously this only applies if you're talking about a problem with your computer, or your phone, or your tablet. Here's an example of why this is important. One time, someone called to tell me that all of his emails had disappeared. I must have spent more than half an hour walking him through different settings and scenarios to try to find out what happened and at one point I asked him to send me a screenshot of his email Inbox. When he sent it to me, I discovered that the problem was that he had accidentally pulled up the reading pane so the list of messages couldn't be seen behind it, making him think they were gone. Now if you don't know how to take a screenshot, I recently wrote a T4L post on it and I'll link to that tutorial in the show notes.

Tip 7: Escalate respectfully. Even if you follow all the tips above, there will be times when, for whatever reason, the person you're dealing with is not able to help you. When you realize that, it's fine to ask to speak with another representative or their manager. But going back to Tip 1, remember you're dealing with a person and this person has been trying to help you. So just say something like, "We don't seem to be able to solve this together. Can I speak to someone else who might have some other suggestions I can try?" Of course, if the person has been rude or otherwise disrespectful to you, you should definitely report that either to their manager or through a feedback form if there's one available. Nobody should have to be treated that way by anybody.

So those are MY suggestions for how to be a better tech support customer. If you have other ones, I'd love to hear them as I'm sure other listeners would as well, so please go ahead and put them in a comment below.

(15:26) And finally, a tech tip to close out today's show. Recently a few readers have asked me some variation of this question, which is: If you have a Smart TV do you also need a streaming media player? And the answer is, it depends. A Smart TV is one that can connect to the Internet, which is also what a streaming media player does. But what it depends on is what content you want to watch on your TV. Most Smart TVs that I've seen to date support fewer content providers than the players do. I think most of them support Netflix, so if that's mainly what you want to watch, then you probably don't need a player as well. But I have seen TVs that, say, don't support Amazon Video so if that's where you get most of your videos, then you would need a player that has Amazon on it, like Amazon's own Fire TV or a Roku.

And people also sometimes ask the reverse question, which is do you need a Smart TV to use a streaming media player? The answer to that one is no, but I think some people who ask the question might be mistaking an HDTV with a Smart TV. An HDTV is simply one that has HDMI ports in it so you can connect devices, like streaming players, to watch high-definition videos. But an HDTV isn't always a Smart TV, which as I said earlier, is a TV that can connect directly to the Internet. So most streaming media players today do require an HDTV, although there are a few that can use A/V cables, which are

the ones that have yellow, white, and red connectors, but they don't need Smart TVs because the player itself is connected to the Internet.

I know that even though streaming players are becoming a lot more popular, there's still a lot about them that can be confusing, so I hope this tech tip helps clarify at least one point. You can find a lot more info in the Streaming Media special section on Tech for Luddites.

And that's it for this episode of The Luddite Lounge. Again, you can find the show notes at ludditelounge.com/episode7.

Thanks for listening! Until next time...