

## Geek is Chic

### with Outsourced IT Solutions

You've undoubtedly seen them around. Maybe it was a yellow VW savvy geek at the wheel...heading down Macleod Trail for an emergency crash scene - a computer crash, that is.

They're young they're hip and they have uncanny ability to rescue us from our deepest, darkest moments of IT misery. "....."

Many small to mid-sized businesses rely on outsourced IT departments from companies like Geek Patrol, Tech Squad, Nerds on Site and so on as opposed to hiring their own IT person. Underneath the clever branding and cool cars, lies a service that makes solid business sense.

John Leishman is the chief executive geek of the Geek Patrol. He says the general rule of thumb is that businesses that have 50 PCs or more should look into hiring an in-house person, though; every business' needs are unique.

"It's not black and white," he says. "A company with 30 desktops but four servers might need someone on-site."

So what is it these techies on call do?

"We end up doing a little bit of everything," says John Leishman.

"From helping an 86-year-old grandmother who's just bought her first computer to setting up networks for big Calgary companies." Both Geek Patrol and Tech Squad say their business is split evenly between residential and corporate calls.

They perform services ranging for the regular maintenance like updating patches and virus protection to network installation and management and consulting on hardware and software

purchases. They also, of course, fix problems – and most of the time, it's an emergency. "....."

"It's a service some of the big guys are catching on to," Leishman says. Best Buy, CompuSmart and Future Shop are all looking at developing their own fleets of mobile IT services, adding to a marketplace he says is already becoming crowded. The ability to come through on short notice is an advantage these smaller local companies have over larger competitors.....

"There are at least six of us in Calgary using humorous branding," he says.

"And it's also raising the bar for service and keeps the prices competitive." He adds that the demand is growing as more people are using computers regularly at home and as the business climate in Calgary continues to thrive.

While mobile IT companies continue to pop up both Leishman and Kubryn warn business owners to carefully choose who handles their IT needs.

"Often you have small business people hiring Jim's brother's cousin's uncle who knows about computers because he plays video games all day coming in to fix their systems," says Leishman. "We end up fixing a lot of damage done by well-intentioned people."

Leishman outlines several things companies and individuals should look for when outsourcing their IT needs, including:

- Microsoft Certification
- At least five years of experience
- A professional image
- More than one or two technicians
- Remember you get what you pay for