



# Tech Support

# Tech Support

from *Labor Saving Devices*

LABOR SAVING DEVICES IS A COLLECTION OF THREE TEN-MINUTE PLAYS  
SUITABLE FOR READING OR STAGING

**BY TOM BROWN**

## THE CAST

Chris, Tech Support Assistant  
Headset, Tech Support Manager  
Tech Two Assistant  
Tech Three Assistant  
Tech Four Assistant  
Three Offstage Callers

**The Tech Support facility has three long tables, U-shaped with the curve facing the audience; on the tables are five phones, with or without auxiliary headsets. Chris sits at front; the Tech Support Assistants sit behind him. During the play, Headset is up and down, moving from his seat at the far back and walking around, then back to his seat — over and over. Headset often jots notes and gives them to the assistants, even while they’re talking to callers. The “callers” are voices coming off stage, but audible, and always directed at Chris. While Chris handles each call, the other Assistants are also managing calls, but their voices are mumbled technobabble, and barely audible.**

HEADSET: Productivity makes for profit; keep those calls moving!

CHRIS: This is Technical Support. I'm Chris. How can I help?

CALLER #1: It's... it's my hard drive! It — right in the middle of entering a bunch of data — it just froze up! I can't, it won't, the darn thing seems stuck! Can't re-boot. Won't shut down. Nothing's moving! What do I do?

CHRIS: This is not unusual, sir. Every computer is a machine, and all machines get stuck from time to time.

CALLER #1: But this data is *critical!* I have a report to give... in the...

CHRIS: It's just like Herman Melville in *Moby Dick*. Wasn't that where the ship was stuck in the water — for days on end — no breeze — couldn't move...

CALLER #1: Morning! Tomorrow morning! That's when I got to have this report done, and clean done. The drive is locked, I tell you, *locked!*

HEADSET: Productivity means moving those calls! Remember: productivity is profit. You're measured — *we're measured* — on how many calls you can take and move. Take! And move!

CHRIS: I think what Melville was trying to teach us (now, that was a century or two ago, I know) — you see, sir: movement is not always progress. There could be all kinds of reasons — philosophical reasons, I mean, why your hard drive froze right now. Have you thought about that?

CALLER #1: I... I... I... [hangs up]

CHRIS: Have you? Have you given it *any* thought? [extra long pause] Hello, this is Tech Support. I'm Chris. How can I help you?

CALLER #2: This darn manual stinks — it's really, really bad. *It's awful!*

CHRIS: Well, no computer company ever succeeded based on its writing ability!

CALLER #2: Look, I don't care about how *well* it's written. It just doesn't tell me what I need to know. Now, come on! All I want to do is connect my new scanner to the back of this infernal machine. Is that supposed to be hard? Why do you folks make it so darn hard to attach a simple accessory to... I oughta ship this whole system back to you! *Nothing* should be this hard!

HEADSET: Productivity is right now; it's how you're moving — now! Take those calls and move 'em!

CHRIS: I'm sorry, I didn't get your name.

CALLER #2: Sue!

CHRIS: Sue, calm down. Okay? [pause] Did you ever read *The Myth Of Sisyphus*? It could help you right now. Camus could actually help you... right now.

CALLER #2: Where do I buy a cam-oo? Is that a kind of cable? Can I get it at Radio Shack?

CHRIS: No, no, no! Camus wrote *The Myth Of Sisyphus*! He's the guy who talked about how all of us are pushing a huge boulder uphill and how, just as you're reaching the summit, the rock slips back down. And you have to keep pushing. It's about life. It's about living.

CALLER #2: Maybe there's someone else I could talk...

CHRIS: It's sort of like Laurel and Hardy, pushing the piano up all those steps... to the house on the top of that hill... Did you ever see that? It *still* makes me laugh... a bit. Are you getting my point?

CALLER #2: [extended pause] Is this Tech Support?

CHRIS: Maybe the lesson here, for you, is that we may not always be able to connect one machine with another — hey, it's just like people; they don't always connect, either — but we *have* to keep pushing. We can't give up. We must not give up!

HEADSET: Productivity: the most calls per hour wins!

CALLER #2: I just want this idiotic scanner to work. With this computer! Now! It shouldn't be this hard! Tell me how to make it work! How do I get this scanner to work with your computer? Tell me! Tell me!

CHRIS: If you just keep pushing, like Camus said, things *will* work out. Or, even if they don't work out, then that really is part of life. It's all in the pushing. It's all in *not* giving up. It's about pushing. [pause] Hello? Hello? [long pause] Hello, this is Tech Support. I'm Chris. How can I help you?

CALLER #3: Hey, Chris! Todd here again. You know, the screen is still dark. I hear the computer running; I hear things inside it humming; the sound for incoming e-mail is audible... every hour. All the power lights are on, even the green light on the monitor itself. I've checked the brightness button. Cables are all hooked up. But, dad blast it, the screen is still dark. I'm not seeing anything!

CHRIS: Todd, did you think about what I said when you called earlier this morning? You know, the reference I gave you? I asked you to go read John Milton... *Paradise Lost*? Did you get into that?

HEADSET: Productivity! A call extended is a new caller denied!

CALLER #3: No, no, I didn't even try. No bookstore here has any books published in the dark ages, or whenever it was he wrote. And... and... my problem is that this blankety blank computer screen is... BLANK! No image at all. But it is getting power! I've got juice here...

CHRIS: You see, John Milton went blind. They say, now, that he could have easily regained his sight if the doctors in England knew then what they know now. But they didn't know how to fix his blindness. Then. And so he had to write while blind. That's why I wanted you to check out *Paradise Lost*; there's a lesson here for you. It's really something you and I should be talking about.

CALLER #3: I don't want to read no English writer! Get with it, Chris! I want to *see* what my computer is doing! Don't you understand the problem?

CHRIS: Oh, I understand...

CALLER #3: You don't understand, do you? Don't you know what to tell me? What am I supposed to... to do? You don't know. You don't! Or do you know and just don't *want* to tell me? I want an image on my screen! Make that happen. Can't you make that happen? Make that happen for me, will ya? Forget English Lit; get my computer screen lit!

CHRIS: I'm not sure you're getting what I've been trying to say... [pause] Hello, Todd? [long pause] Todd?

HEADSET: Chris, a lot of your callers are dialing back and asking to speak to a "real" Tech Support Assistant!

CHRIS: Oh?

HEADSET: You're not being productive! I know you know your stuff. No Techie ever scored higher in our employment application process. But you aren't helping the people who are calling you. What's wrong, Chris? What's wrong? *What's wrong with you?*

CHRIS: [long pause, just staring at Headset] Ever read that Emily Dickinson poem... you know, the poem about...

HEADSET: What's wrong with you, Chris?

CHRIS: Her poem...[pause] about the fly buzzing... just before...

[the other Assistants growing notably louder]

HEADSET: Chris, what's wrong with you? What's wrong with you?

CHRIS: Just before... she died?

**For more information about the author,  
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