

World fixer

Through the internet with no human interaction and in less than an hour with no data loss – that's the promise of Zak Dechovich - fixing your broken PC and to conquer a global market worth billions of dollars.



By Rafael Fogel,

February 2008 – Hebrew Translation - Eyal Plotkin

Lately anyone listening to radio 102FM could hardly miss the following commercial that repeated all of last week, day-in-day-out: “Free repairs for personal computers; a newly formed Start-up company is releasing a revolutionary new product that will fix any PC. Anyone who wishes to fix their PC should just bring it to our offices and we will repair it, for free!” Additionally, anyone reading the local newspapers in Ramat-Gan area, came across a similar advertisement offering free repairs for anyone that had their pc exhibiting symptoms of “Slow downs, freezes or crashes” - adding to that, the company incited, anyone bringing a PC of which they couldn't repair would receive 50NIS.

Behind the barrage of Newspaper ads and radio campaigns stood one company – Reimage. The explanation for such strong statements is quite simple, a few months earlier the company had built up a strong financial backbone – with American financiers to push the development of a software. This software will one day, conceivable replace human PC technicians in the task of repairing our personal computers. “But in order to see how it works outside the lab”, says Zak Dechovich (29), Company's founder and CEO, “we had to do our QA with PCs end-users had managed to destroy”.

Initially, the start-up guys thought that a few hundred computers within the area of the company offices will suffice. They believed that for this purpose recruiting a few technicians working in the Ramat-Gan Bourse surrounding will suffice; this thought changed rapidly as they realized quickly a much larger number will be needed for testing.

“In order to see how our software deals with a variety of different problems in wide range of PCs we needed for get a lot more computers for repairs, to do that we needed to invest in advertisement”, says Dechovich, “It was crazy, there were people calling the office and asking if we could come down to the lobby, where they just gave us their computers, a device that

probably had cost them 20,000 NIS two weeks ago. They told me, "take it, and fix it for me". People brought us horrible PCs. In some, you have to wait 20 minutes for internet explorer to load, others were crawling with virus's spyware and malware, a lot were filled with porn to such degree that they didn't work at all".

A month before the beta launch date, with the presence of select PC technicians from the United States and after several months of testing broken PCs, Dechovich already declared that his product fixes 8-out-of-10 computers that suffer from software malfunctions. One PC of those remaining two can be partially fixed by Reimage's software, in which case the human technician will have to manually complete the repair. What happens with the remaining PC?, you may ask? - "Currently we destroy it", admits Dechovich. "We have included a restoration function with our software, which will enable you to rollback – post repairs".

Q. How is your software superior to the human technician?

Dechovich: "Reimage's technology performs the same testing process, with a clear advantage: if the average PC technician can test about 30 symptoms of common malfunctions in a half an hour, Reimage's software will test all hundreds of thousands of objects working inside an average PC during the same 30 minutes."

"Inside a PC there more than half a million objects and when a malfunction occurs, some of them change, get deleted and a communication failure between proper and unrelated objects might occur. There also might be a situation where a PC has some unnecessary objects such as viruses or mismatched versions of different software".

Our software cross-checks the relationships between all those objects and components against a Reimage's researched data base containing 10 million components and connections that are in proper order. At this point the program decides what needs repairing and what should be left alone. That data-base, Dechovich points out, is the basis for Reimage's automatic solution.

Q. So, how does it work?

"Our software breaks apart proper working objects and their inter-connections, then produces information suggesting the proper repair procedure and indexes it into our data base. In conjunction we have a specialist team that researches existing objects, their inter-relationship and links between them, the info gathered is catalogued into the data-base. After a comparison between the damaged PC and our data base, we refill the missing connections or erase all useless objects which disturb proper functionality. All that is done while preserving the users data.

About 45 minutes later the user's work-environment will stay intact but he will immediately feel a big change in performance for the better. Photo development is one process that was reduced from 3 days to a matter of hours, such change is what we're going to do to the PC repair world".

In the past Dechovich founded the Security Start-up - SecureOL, a year ago he established Reimage with a two million dollar initial investment made by fortune investor Charlie Federman, the first investment Mr.Federman made since his departure from the BRM fund, Checkpoint's

mythological investors the Barkat brothers. Federman was joined by Warren Haber from the Crossber Fund, Decima Ventures, and various other investors from Canada and Philadelphia. The American investors and their business connections in the US appeal greatly to Zak, with his hawk-eyed gaze poised on the vast PC technician market in the United States. With glistening eyes Zak claims that it's a market of at least four billion Dollars. "Pc repair market has roughly 248 thousand technicians, 70% of them have close to no education in the field and they are forced to deal with more than twenty million computers a year that show random software malfunctions. The fact of the matter is that they can't deal with most problems they encounter and therefore are eager to solve the problem with a format."

"A typical PC technician can analyze about 50 of the commonest symptoms in computer errors, than he tries to identify what is defected with the computers operations because he receives it from the client with no further information, finally inducing how to fix it. In actuality he won't check the computer for more than half an hour, because it just isn't worth his time. After he has already unpacked his arsenal of software: Anti-virus, Anti-Spyware, Registry cleaners, Driver removal, he will finally resort to a full format and reinstall. A reason you always hear that "the Technician had to reinstall your computer"

Q. And how are you going to approach that technician?

"In the following months I will turn to 38 thousand SMBs that comprise PC repair business in the United States. We will offer them a free usage based system on a monthly cost of 250\$. Our New York office is already established, on floor 41 of the One Penn Plaza building on 34th and 7th. In the near future we will employ around 30 people, marketing and sales agents along with a technical support team".

A technician that will join the software's Beta phase will receive a Username and Password; he then will be able to connect any defective computer he gets to Reimage's servers for online Analysis and repairs. If the PC's malfunction is so severe that it can't connect to the Internet the technician will be given a Boot-CD or USB that will enable his broken computer to establish internet connection. Then the technician will be free to perform various other things that deserve his precious time.

Zak promises that: "Our first Marketing campaign in the United States will tell the Beta tester to take our program along with a coupon for star-bucks and go have a cup of coffee on us while the software does the job for him". Zak finishes off with proud words on current communications with two of Israel's leading ISPs that are interested in purchasing the software for their customers.

What do ISP's have to do with PC repairs?

"When your computer breaks down, Software-wise, your first attempt at tackling the problem would be logging on and surfing the web for a solution. But if you don't have an internet connection the first thing you're going to do is call your ISP. This forms a scenario where 50% of technical problems that reach ISPs customer support are not even related to their actual internet connectivity, and the support representative doesn't know what to tell or advise to help you, that's why this is another potential market for us"

Despite negotiations with ISPs and sales of the online repair service it was very important for Zak to clarify they are not just another Internet based Start-up. "We are not a Web 2.0 enterprise" he writes in an email received this morning after our interview the other day. "We are a service provider for an existing problem. Even if all the markets were to crash tomorrow, people will still ruin their PC's and pay someone else to fix them. Even if the world goes into recession and computer sales will drop, the odds a broken pc will reach my doorstep just increase".