

Computing Center Update - May 2021 We are Still Open!

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Update - May 2021:

It's hard to believe that it's now been over one year since the Covid-19 Pandemic hit the world. Below this post is our June 2020 posting telling our clients that we're open. We are very much still open. Monday thru Friday 8am to 5pm.

During this extraordinary past year, The Computing Center had to pivot our business model more than once to meet our clients needs.

- As an essential business, we had figure out ways to have a number of our staff regularly come to the office and keep everyone safe and healthy. We created an office cleaning regimene, got everyone masks, found disenfectants that were in short supply for a while, and developed procedures for equipment dropoffs and pickups.
- We needed to operate remotely which we knew how to do, but to do so with more of our staff AND many more of our clients also working remotely. That turned out to be challenging, but our staff and our clients quickly detrmind the best ways to do so.
- We and all the other business owners and management had to navigate the sometimes confusing and once-in-a-while contradictory governmental guidance and instructions. Rules changed- sometimes daily. And early-on, there was no guidance. We found ourselves looking at the science and credible reports to determine what would work well for our staff.
- As it became available, we embraced Covid-19 testing. We leveraged the Cayuga Health System "Mall" drive-thru testing center where testing results was available typically in less than 24 hours. Anytime our staff or their families had any kind of exposure or just didn't feel good, we sent those working in the office home and we had people tested. That kept us on top of what was going on. Nearly all The Computing Center staff were tested, a few several times. That system helped keep us healthy and reduced exposure.
- In January, as the vaccines became available, we got vaccinated. 100% of The Computing Center staff are now fully Covid-19 vaccinated and so are most our staff's families. We did not mandate this, just encouraged and of course provided the extra time-off for the shots and for anyone who had reactions. By the way, reactions ranged from none-at-all, to mild fatigue, to a couple of people who needed to take a day off.

We learned alot over the past year:

The Computing Center's "hybrid" business model worked extremely well during the pandemic and continues to do so. In the computer technology world, many of the "experts" have told companies like us to just focus on one area or another. We have always believed that we need to sell and service hardware/software and provide consumables (printer toners, inks, etc.) to our clients. We also believe that we need to provide on-site service and support to anyone who wants it along with remote or onsite managed services. Unlike others in our industry who struggled in 2020, we were able to pivot our business during the pandemic. For instance as more people worked from home, we sold A LOT more printer ink and toner. And we were able to shift clients from on-site to remote support and back again as conditions changed.

Our staff is incredibly resilient and flexible. Everyone stepped up. "Other duties as assigned" became our in-house mantra. In April 2020 when there was nearly a 10x increase in orders for consumables; technicians, sales people, and others stepped-in to get inks and toners out the door. Jobs that were normally done in-house became hybrids of their own with some work done remotely and the rest in-house.

Our clients are fabulous! You all trusted us to tell you the truth as best we knew it at the time. We worked together to find alternatives when normal sources of products dried up and worked with our engineering staff to understand and implement secure remote technologies, many times in very short order. You did all that under stressful circumstances. Nearly everyone maintained very positive attitudes. Thank you.

We all know that the pandemic isn't over. Some of our clients still have many of their safety protocols in-place. You tell us what protocols you have and we'll work to your standards. We also know that many technology and business projects have been put on-hold during the past year. Now's the time to get going on those initiatives again. The Computing Center will be there to provide the best in computer technology and services, just as we were during 2020 and ever since 1978.

June 2020

About two to three times per week, we get a phone call, email or text asking if The Computing Center is open. The simple answer is: YES, WE ARE! WE NEVER CLOSED! Early on in the Covid-19 Pandemic, computer technology companies like ours were deemed essential businesses in New York State. As we said in our [March 20th](#) Blog post and email to our clients:

As of this writing 100% of non-essential employees can no longer report to work. Because of what The Computing Center does in supporting essential businesses in our community, we are allowed to maintain in-house operations. Some of the essential local organizations we directly are supporting include:

- Healthcare organizations, hospitals, and physicians' offices
- Financial institutions including banks, credit unions, and insurance companies
- Accountants offices
- Animal shelters
- Human Services organizations
- County and other government offices
- Ithaca-Tompkins International Airport
- Logistics companies

Although it seems forever ago, our world had changed. So, with relatively little guidance, we needed to figure out how to stay open and how to do it while keeping ourselves and our staff healthy and safe. What did we do it? Looking back, we took what was published at the time, contacted some of our health care clients for advice and made what seemed like good choices to us. Primarily that included:

- Washing hands frequently and using hand sanitizer when hand washing wasn't possible.
- Disinfecting all surfaces along with equipment coming in the door.
- Wearing disposable gloves when handing computers and other equipment.
- Having our engineers and others who could work remotely.
- Sending anyone who wasn't feeling well home.
- Restricting access to anyone from the outside.

Remember, Covid-19 PCR testing wasn't generally available till the latter part of March. And much of the guidance we now take for granted didn't exist:

- Wearing masks
- Social Distancing
- Outdoor vs indoor exposure differences
- The effects of crowds - % of employees in the workplace.
- How long the virus lasts on various surfaces
- Any kind of consistency between businesses
- Daily employee screenings
- Taking employee and visitor temperatures

How did we do? We're happy to say - we pulled it off. No one at Computing Center or any of our families became infected. We did have a couple of concerning situations where employees early on were exposed to some client employees who ultimately tested positive, but our people were fine.

Today, we are all still healthy, the rules and recommendations are more consistent across all businesses, and we're helping many local businesses that were shuttered reopen and recover. Our technical staff still can and does work remotely, but we also go onsite.

Our logistics group does free local pickup and delivery of computers printers and printer consumables. With so many people working from home, our consumables businesses (inks and toners) has greatly increased. We have most of the major brands of printer inks and toners used in our area in-stock.

When you come to our offices, (we recommend setting up an appointment) you'll find:

- "X" spots all over the office floor marking off 6' increments to help people socially distance.
- If you're not already wearing a mask, you'll be asked to wear one - we have extras if you forget yours. (Ours are logoed!)
- We'll take your temperature (and if it's above 100.4 degrees, you'll be gently asked to leave). We'll also ask you if you've been exposed to anyone that has been ill over the past two weeks.
- If you haven't made an appointment, we'll ask you to sign-in.
- If you bring in a PC, laptop, or printer with you, it will be wiped down with a disinfectant cloth before we work on it.
- If you're just dropping off a machine, we have a work area just to the right of our interior lobby door where you can fill-out all the paperwork without having to come into the office.
- The place is spotless - it gets cleaned and disinfected daily.

This is The Computing Center's version of the "new normal". Please remember - Shop with locally owned businesses and organizations. That's how we will all get through this, survive and thrive.