

Gizmos cause us a multitude of frustrations

by Mark Pavilons

Things that are annoying usually stay that way.

If you think about it, almost all of the frustrating gizmos, contraptions, machines and items have inherent weaknesses. They are prone to failure, just like us.

We modern-day consumers believe that when we plunk down our money on a new gizmo, it should serve us for years to come.

Alas, feeble humans, we are doomed by our own creations.

The greatest gift of all to humankind is the "internet of things." This amazing, invisible system allows us to connect, contact, send and receive images, buy things and organize our finances. When dealing with personal information and yes, our hard-earned money, safety, accuracy and efficiency are key.

One would think that our financial institutions would utilize the best of the best in terms of IT and computer systems. And yet, nothing is perfect.

Since my wife introduced me to online banking a couple of years ago, I just love the convenience. Even depositing cheques on my smart phone into my account is fantastic.

And yet, I find that when I do my regular banking and pay bills, it takes longer than I expect. The process is lightning fast, but the recipients wait several days before getting their money. I thought once you hit a button, the transaction zooms across the internet, right to the recipient, and voila. It works that way when sending an e-transfer, so why does it take days for utilities and credit card companies to get the message?

But boy are they quick to send you a note or give you an automated call when you own them a few bucks!

And, of course, this only works when you have electricity and a strong internet connection. Lose either and we're back to the stone age!

We've done away with those folding maps and hand-written directions, relying on Google Maps, even Siri. And yet, this wonderful, automated voice does steer you wrong from time to time.

She (or he) will take you on some fantastic journeys to your destination, some of which incur the 407 toll road and even some drive-thru restaurants! I have gone in circles listening to her voice. Be careful what you wish for, and when in doubt, ask for directions or look up another source when venturing into the unknown. Oh, and our attention-grabbing smart phones, where would we be without them? My two-month-old iPhone 14 has some glitches, so off to the geniuses we went. They changed the guts, to the tune of \$700, but luckily we had the care package. But after more than a decade perfecting this device, how could it fail? I can't imagine if I had to pay for the repair. Just how much does an iPhone change from model to model?

I would hope that when I plunk down a couple thousand dollars for a refrigerator or washer/dryer combo, they would last.

Picture my index finger briskly wagging side to side.

Most of us remember our parents having the harvest gold- or almond-coloured appliances that seemingly lasted decades. They did!

And yet our super-smart machines, which you can access from that aforementioned smart phone, make all kinds of noises with their fancy flashing lights. But durable? Not at all.

A couple of years back we had a repairman come to our house to look at our two-year-old fridge. The new ones have a large circuit board that operates everything. If it goes, they recommend you simply toss the unit and buy a new one.

What? Why would engineers of these major companies design something so fragile, that it becomes useless when one part fails?

Often it seems like we're caught between a rock and a hard place.

Our automobiles are basically computers on wheels and repairs can no longer be done in the garage with a wrench. The on-board computer can tell you exactly what's wrong with your car, and doesn't care about your inconvenience or financial situation.

Take that, tiny humans, our cars shout behind our backs.

As a cheese lover, I often turn to the processed slices when nothing else is in the fridge. After decades serving the public, you would think someone would have found a better way to package the slices. It's annoying, often impossible, to open the packaging. This is a bane to my existence. Not only are bits left behind, tightly gripped by the plastic wrap, but the process hurts my brain.

Does anyone know why ketchup builds up on the lid/spout of the bottle? We've been putting up with this for decades. It's about time we stand up and demand justice for ketchup users everywhere!

On the flip side, twist ties and plastic sandwich bags are great, and have a multitude of uses.

My late father was a bit clumsy when it came to modern annoyances. There were times when cream shot straight up in the air when he attempted to open one of those tiny tubs. I don't think he ever understood the engineering behind these things.

And when it came to milk cartons, look out! How many of us struggle trying to pry open the spout, and even resort to doing it on the other side? Thank Heaven for those round plastic spouts.

So, my friends, while we can indeed build a better mousetrap, some things remain unchanged, and test our patience. Good luck folks!