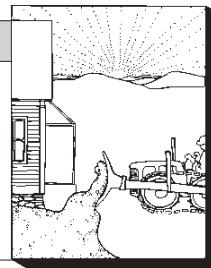


The Dog Ate It

by Martin King



A CUTTING-EDGE GUIDE TO HIGH-TECH EXCUSES

The best of us occasionally gets caught in mid-blunder—our stupidity exposed to the world. For example, we call to explain how a sudden illness will prevent the plumber from hooking up the kitchen on Christmas Eve, and the client says, "Oh? Mr. Jackson is hooking it up right now, and he looks perfectly healthy to me!" The computer can help with this.

As a high-tech device that hardly anyone understands, the computer possesses an authority that few humans can match. This authority opens a range of possibilities to the astute computer owner. In addition to computerized estimates; job-cost, and scheduling, you may also employ computerized-excuses. In the situation described above, you could try the following:

Sometimes cash flow slows to a trickle, and you may discover that you have "overlooked" a bill you promised to pay.

Computerized excuse:

"I'm awfully sorry, George. I've checked the printout and somehow your invoice didn't get on the computer this month."

Occasionally it's necessary to jog a client into action by overbilling. (The grosser the overbilling the faster the response.)

Computerized excuse:

"Of course you don't owe \$111,000 on the cabinet upgrade. Just send the \$1,100 we agreed on and I'll see that the record is straightened out."

At other times you simply don't know what went wrong, and need time to get your act together before responding.

Computerized excuse:

"The computer's down right now, and I can't even get the day and year out of it. Can I call you back tomorrow?"

Of course, there's the tax penalty when you file your taxes too late.

Computerized excuse:

"We have been in the process of converting our bookkeeping to computer, and encountered unexpected conversion problems that have since been remedied. We request that the penalty be waived."

You may be reluctant to lay such blame on the computer which serves you so well. But they really don't mind. Computers are loyal, dim-witted creatures that run day and night without complaint. All they ask is that you press the right buttons. They are used to taking the blame for human errors. It goes with the territory. However, fairness requires that you only use computerized excuses if you own a computer. If you don't, you can always fall back on that time-honored excuse, "The dog ate it."

