

# A trouble shooting Goth

He wrote a computer programme in his early teens before he got his hands on a pc, now Alan Doherty is an independent network consultant - the man the corporate companies call when their own IT departments can't solve a problem.

From an early age Alan, originally from Merville, was very keen on the world of computers: "In that sense I would have to say that I was a bit of a computer geek from the beginning and was very interested in learning about them from an early age and when we got our own one I spent a lot of time on it."

Alan was given access to the computers at his secondary school, Carnadonagh Community School, while he was a student there.

"I was one of only three students allowed access to the modems and was given access passwords and we were able to place a connection to any other Eirpac connected computer so we could gain access to E-mail and Information Systems such as Prestel Campus 2000 and ECHO."

Alan studied Applied Computing on Magee Campus of the University of Ulster in Derry.

"When I started at Magee there were a lot of people doing computers already, thinking that's where the money is and not doing it out of interest."

"It was like accounting in the Eighties and law today, people very often do these courses because they think they will earn a lot of money later and not because they want to do the job," said Alan.

"I wouldn't say I was much ahead of my class mates, but there were a few of us who had already had access to E-mail which hadn't been very common back then."

Alan stayed in Derry for a couple of years after graduating in 1995 and worked in technical support for Stream International.

"I was applying for jobs all around the country and I was very fortunate that a job came up in Dublin with EUNET Ireland and I've been in the city for ten years now."

Six years ago Alan decided to give up a full-time



**PEOPLE LIKE YOU**  
with Seán P Feeny

position and become self-employed: "Deciding to work for yourself is not the way to go for 99 per cent of people working in IT, but for me it was just the right thing to do at the time."

"The longest jobs I would do take about two weeks but they are exceptions, very often it just takes two or three hours to fix a problem."

"I'm a trouble-shooter hired by networking companies to see what they couldn't manage by themselves," said Alan.

"It's about five per cent of the jobs that I do and they're certainly not boring tasks and they keep my job very challenging and exciting."

Alan said that 95 per cent of problems in the IT world can be solved by following instructions, it's those other five per cent where you actually need to understand what programmes are doing and how they communicate with each other.

He said: "My main jobs tend to come from corporate companies here in Ireland, but I also have a lot of clients abroad."

There is a steady flow of work for him, Alan said, but there can be times when it is really quiet on the job front.

"There could be a couple of months where there's nothing, but then the next two months I'm flat out working morning, day and night. It can be pretty much 24/7 on call with customers in the States calling me if they have an urgent problem."

"Thankfully it's enough money overall during the year, but who knows, if the right full-time job came up I might take it."

The problem with most full-time jobs in IT is that they can be a death of skills to you: "In most jobs you only work with one

particular brand of fire-wall and that means you don't keep up-to-date with others."

"At the moment, to keep on top of my game, I try to keep myself educated in most programmes used, so I can help more companies and do more jobs," he said.

The best job for him, Alan said, would be working in a university: "The good thing about universities is the IT department are always on the look-out for new ways to improve their systems."

But self-employment is still feasible for Alan and it gives him time to work on his side projects.

"I've been working on 'the God of all anti-spam systems' as I've been describing it to my friends," he laughed, "and when it's finally done I will give it out for free to users, and obviously I'll offer to set it up for corporations and I will then maintain it for them."

Alan is also working on another project with a colleague in Australia, which will be a system to notify users if their computers are infected and other people are using their networks to send out spams and other things.

"This is a nasty problem and it's all over the place, and it's a problem that people don't realise exists and they don't know how to check if their pc has been infected."

## GOth CLUB

When he does get a little spare time, Alan goes to the goth club, Dominion, at Frazier's on O'Connell Street, Dublin, every Saturday.

"I've been going there for eight or nine years. It's a club that has outlasted many of the other alternative nights here in Dublin."

"I've been a fan of the music since my secondary school days, but only considered myself a goth halfway through college," he said.

While there used to be a separation between work and social life, and the clothing aspect, this slowly blended into each other.

"I worked in a place where we could dress down, so I was wearing black at work, as well. Now, at the age of 34, I think I'm a more ageing and lazy goth."



Alan Doherty from Merville is a man the corporate companies call when their own IT departments can't solve a problem.

"I still wear black and still have a Mohawk, but I couldn't be bothered spending all that time getting my hair into shape, ironing and spraying it," he laughed.

Alan said that there is a serious lack of honesty in

today's IT business: "Most people in IT make margins on what they sell and not how much they help people, that's why I only sell my time."

"I will certainly advise customers on what they should buy, but not sell it

to them myself. There needs to be a more honest approach in IT, so customers are sold only what they need and not all the latest things on the market."

If you are a company interested in availing of

Alan's expertise, you can contact him through [www.alandoherty.net](http://www.alandoherty.net) where you will find all his details or if you're living in Donegal and you're a fan of goth music you can contact Alan on [alan.gothic.ie](mailto:alan.gothic.ie)