

I'm going to take the assumption that I'm breaking ranks with my fellow anti-DRM commenters. I won't talk about how DRM has personally affected me because it really hasn't. If a product has DRM, I just don't buy it. Instead, I'll talk about people I've come across who have been tricked into purchasing DRM products and the losses they subsequently incurred.

I work for a consumer electronics store. My job involves helping my customers with their technology woes. I can't put a percentage on how many of these woes are DRM related, only to say that even one customer is too many. The point is, these customers, who legally paid for music/movies/software, are now paying even more money so someone can help them use it.

I can't tell you how frustrating it is when I have to tell my customers "Sorry, this just isn't going to work the way you believed it would." When they asks why their friends can do whatever it is they're trying to do, I tell them "That's because your friends didn't purchase their music. They illegally downloaded it and ironically have more freedom to use their product than you do."

You play by their rules. You try to be honest and it means you're restricted. That's why you should think of DRM as Digital Restriction Management.

Real examples of customers paying me to fix DRM problems.

1. I bought this DVD and it plays on my DVD player but won't play on my computer.

Answer: This disc is copyright protected and a patch needs to be downloaded from Dell.

Costs: \$130

2. I never used to have problems with my Blu-Ray player, but now half of my library of movies won't play.

Answer: Blu-Ray uses DRM. You have to constantly upgrade the firmware of your Blu-Ray player or you won't be able to watch new movies. I understand that you don't have high-speed internet in your area, so this may cause a problem.

Costs: \$100

3. I spent a lot of money on this media server to store all of my movies so I can watch them whenever I want without having to eject and insert a disc. Now you're telling me it can't be done?

Answer: Legally you are allowed to have one backup copy of a movie you purchased, for example, backing it up to your media server. However, thanks to the DMCA, it is illegal to break the encryption of the DVD even though you honestly paid for it. Sorry, but I can't help you.

Costs: \$100

4. AT&T told me I have High Definition, but this doesn't look like Hi-Def.

Answer: Due to ongoing complications with HDCP (Hi-Def copyright protection), U-Verse boxes can't display HD content through all HDTV's. To make your service reliable, albeit degraded in quality, AT&T downgraded you to analog 480p. Technically,

1080p is being delivered to your box, but until AT&T can fix their DRM, you're picture is no better than standard cable. Don't expect support for this or reimbursement by AT&T. You were lied to and you just have to deal with it.

Costs: \$130

DRM locks honest consumers out of their legally purchased products and does absolutely nothing to halt those that are determined to pirate. Pirates get their products for free. Monetarily free, DRM free and the freedom to use their product anyway they want. Meanwhile, the honest consumers pay double due to the "DRM tax". The tax that comes in the form of paying someone to educate them on the rules that come with their DRM product and the tax they pay for getting half the functionality.

The principles of the free market would assume that if DRM is really a problem to the consumer, then the consumer would simply opt to not purchase products containing DRM. However, 2 things are not being taken into account.

1. Consumers almost never find out that their product contains DRM until it's too late to return the product.
2. Consumers are sometimes willing to pay someone to help them with their product because they blame themselves for not knowing enough about technology.