The Perils of Tech Support

As computer networks move out of the workplace and into the home, difficulties arise in from having home users configure, use, and troubleshoot network technologies originally designed for expert systems administrators.

We are interested in understanding the difficulties home users have with configuration and troubleshooting of their networks.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it…
Although home network users have certainly experienced a myriad of networking problems, they may not be able to express what problems they have experienced in a detailed, technical manner.

You will attempt to uncover what kinds of networking problems home users have by interviewing or surveying the people who help them (that is, people who work in technical support positions for ISPs, call centers, or computer repair centers). To accomplish this task, you must:

1. Read the paper “The Work To Make a Home Network Work.”
2. Develop a survey or interview guide for use in your study.
3. Gain IRB approval to complete your study.
4. Find study participants. Ideally, you will interview or survey technicians who provide tech support for home networks (i.e. ISPs) rather than large enterprise networks (i.e. CNS in the College of Computing). However, getting access to the right people may be difficult! Some places you might want to try to find participants include:
   - CNS in the College of Computing
   - OIT at Georgia Tech
   - BellSouth
   - EarthLink
   - Best Buy or other retailers that have computer repair centers
   - A locally-owned computer repair shop
5. Conduct interviews/surveys.
6. Analyze your data.

Project Deliverables
- Survey/interview guide
- Research data.
- An N-page analysis of your results.