

# 7 IT superheroes -- and their fatal flaws

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IT superheroes can't fly -- at least, not without an airplane. They don't possess X-ray vision or super strength. They won't be found wearing capes or spandex (at work). But the geeks who save the day time and time again for enterprises around the globe exhibit some extraordinary powers.

Some tech heroes have an instinctive ability to suss out problems and conjure up solutions. Some are quick-fix artists who do their best work under pressure or when all seems lost. Others are tireless workers who will not quit until the battle has been won, or insist on doing things the right way every day, no matter the cost.

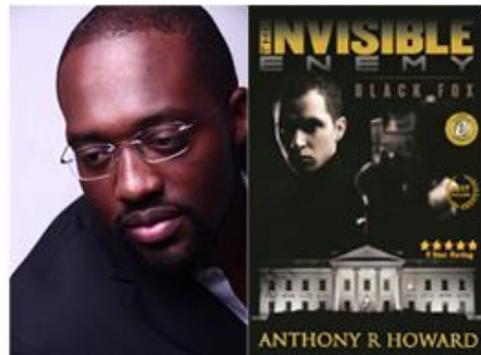
Most organizations can't function without at least one kind of IT superhero -- and usually more. But beware: All heroes have fatal flaws, and sometimes a hero is not what he or she seems. Relying too much on geek heroics can backfire badly.

Here are seven geek superheroes, one of whom could be a supervillain in disguise. No need to put out the bat signal to find them -- just look inside your IT department.

## IT superhero No. 1: Captain Instinct

*Superpower: Otherworldly IT intuition*

Technical degrees from top schools and high-level certifications are all well and good, but to be an IT superhero [sometimes you just gotta go with your gut](#).



### [IT Superhero No. 1 Anthony R. Howard](#)

"What's important is your ability to feel your way through things," says [Anthony R. Howard](#), a best-selling author ("[The Invisible Enemy: Black Fox](#)") and independent technology consultant for Fortune 50 companies and the U.S. military. "Old-school geeks like me who have been living and breathing this stuff for 20 years can just sense what's wrong and how to fix it."

For example, in 2007 Howard was called in by a major bank that had suffered a catastrophic failure of its primary storage array.

"For four days, they called anyone they could think of to figure out why their storage array was down," he says. "Finally they called me. Before I even touched the array, I had figured out the problem."

It turned out the bank's tech team had installed a new disc tray into an older array. The new tray was incompatible, bringing the system to a screeching halt.

"After doing IT for so long, I had a kind of sixth sense about what it could be," he says. "There were only a few things that could cause a fully redundant array to go down without a power outage. I went with my gut."

The failed array cost the bank untold millions of dollars in downtime. Afterward, all but one of the bank's tech team was fired, says Howard. The guy who told the truth about what went wrong, instead of trying to cover his assets, was spared. (See [IT superhero No. 7: The Lone Geek](#).)

But there's a downside to relying only on instinct: Guess wrong, and your intuition can come back to bite you. Howard says you need to back up your gut feelings with facts before you go public with your theory.

"You want to follow your hunch, but back it up with the facts before you broadcast it," he says. "Even if you end up being wrong, no one can fault you because you've substantiated it."