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ReadyNetGo ... News

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TIP OF THE MONTH

When building your IT budget the following items, at a minimum, should be included:

Hardware

PCs
Server equipment
Printers
Battery backup system (UPS)
Network cards
Switches/Hubs/Routers/Firewalls
Maintenance and support agreements
Consulting fees

Software

Operating systems
Application software
Anti-Virus utilities
Maintenance and support agreements
Consulting fees

Training

Ongoing for employees
Resource materials; CD's, books, training manuals

Miscellaneous

Toner and miscellaneous printer supplies
Tapes for backup
Cables
Removable media
Internet Access Fees
Internet Domain Registration/Hosting

Building Your IT Budget

The business world is changing fast and technology is a major contributing factor. You need to keep up. Technology is no longer something you address when all else is done. It is a necessary part of your business and without it productivity will be lost.

What should I buy?

Ideally you should replace one third of your PC inventory each year. This will keep your PCs (and employees) up-to-date and happy.

The current recommendation for a PC configuration is a Pentium 4 processor with 512 MB of RAM. This configuration will allow you to continue to run current operating systems and desktop applications. Many of the applications coming on the market today will either not run on older computers, or have great difficulty doing so because of clock speed and/or memory issues.

Specifically, computers that do not have Pentium III class processors, and/or less than 256 MB of memory will be very limited in their use over the next year, especially for Internet applications. These machines should be evaluated for replacement.

WWW (Websites Worth Watching)

- 1) www.sharefoodprogram.org - SHARE (Self Help & Resource Exchange) is a non-profit community that provides wholesome and nutritious food to families and individuals.
- 2) www.hungercoalition.org - The Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger brings together community-based emergency food providers, public health and social service professionals to address hunger and food insecurity in Southeastern Pennsylvania.
- 3) www.philabundance.org - A food-rescue organization, Philabundance collects donated surplus food and distributes it free of charge to local organizations serving people in need.

How much should I spend?

Plan on spending \$1200 - \$1400 per unit. This will include the CPU, keyboard, mouse, monitor, operating system software and application software licenses. The useful life of most computer hardware is three to five years. However, the typical warranty on the system lasts only three years. Hence, the general rule is to replace one-third of your systems every year.

How do I decide who gets what?

The first step is to assess your current inventory. To evaluate how many PCs you will need, consider making a list of each employee in the company with information about the PC they are currently using. The information should include, at a minimum, processor power, hard disk space, and RAM.

You can begin your assessment by looking at the employee's needs. For example, if everyone in the Customer Service department shares a database application and has multiple programs open at a time, these employees will require faster processors and high amounts of RAM. If the administrative assistant's responsibility is to type letters and set up meetings, they can get away with less power. Once you have this information you can decide who will get the new computers. You can extend the shelf life of the older computers by reformatting the hard drive, doing a clean install of all the applications and, if needed, adding more RAM. These computers can be rolled down to the users who do not need the power.

Other things to considerServer Equipment

This category is often not considered until it is an emergency. There are a few easy steps you can take to avoid catastrophe.

1. Apply the same shelf life to a server as you would to a PC (although it is slightly longer, you can keep your most important servers up to date and use older ones to do specific jobs).
2. Keep an eye on storage (adding storage this year can extend the life of the server).
3. Buy brand name equipment.
4. Keep Operating Systems current and apply recommended patches.
5. Don't ignore error messages. Little error messages can quickly snowball.

Printers

Consider workgroup or network printers instead of having a printer at each workstation. In addition to saving on consumables (toner cartridges etc.), you will also save money if less equipment is listed on a service agreement. Workgroup printers are very reasonable and have a shelf life of at least five years.

Training

Put money aside in your budget for training. Productivity is greatly improved when your employees know how to use the programs you have given them. If you do not want to spend the time sending the employees out for training, think about building a training library or sponsoring an in-house training event. There are many companies that sell training CDs, provide on-line training, or provide group discounts to come to your facility. Make it part of the new employee orientation and you can feel confident that your employees are making the most of their time.