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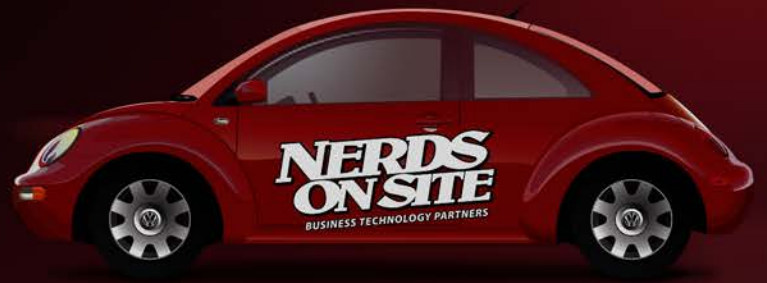
TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS



10 SMART WAYS BUSINESSES MANAGE THEIR TECHNOLOGY

Lower costs. Mitigate risk. Reduce pain.

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For many business owners, technology spending can feel like more of an expense than an investment at times. Deciding when, where and how much to spend on technology can be challenging. Here are a handful of tips that we hope will help guide you to greater peace of mind with your tech, as well as a greater realization of what we like to refer to as the '3 Ps'… **P**leasure, **P**roductivity, and **P**rofitability of technology in your business!

Here we go!

USE BUSINESS-GRADE COMPUTERS, (NOT CONSUMER-GRADE)

All computers are not created equally. There are PCs and laptops that are intended for home use, and those designed for work environments. We'll use Dell as an example to explore the differences, although Nerds on Site carries and installs a number of different hardware brands. So what is the difference? Here is an example of 4 popular DELL computer models and what you can expect to get with each:

HOME USE: DELL Dimensions (PC) and Inspiron (Laptop)

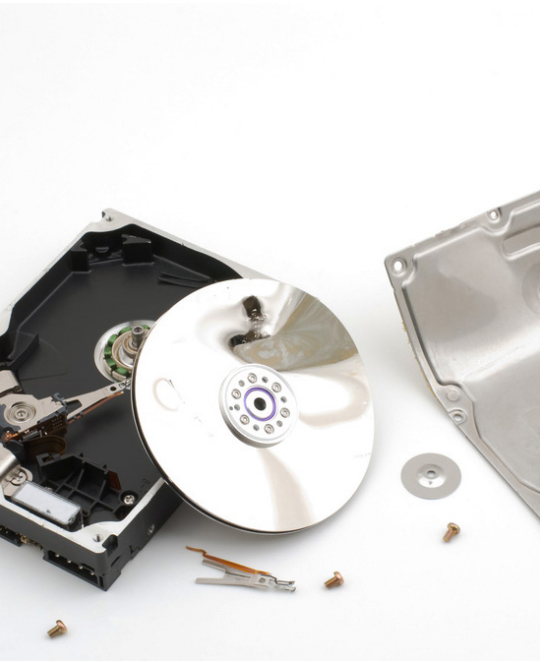
- *Typically loaded with lots of the latest bells and whistles*
- *The models do not remain the same for long*
- *Less expensive parts are often used to reduce costs*
- *Support is typically not North American-based*

BUSINESS USE: DELL Optiplex (PC) and Latitude (Laptop)

- *Expanded support options (Complete Care - Protects against spills, drops, etc.)*
- *Limited bells and whistles - Rather, they are built for stability and performance.*
- *Long life cycles… DELL is slow to change components that make up these systems without rigid testing to ensure stability.*
- *Support is North American-based.*

We would recommend that business only run 'business-grade' systems. While they may not have the latest and greatest graphics card for the latest and greatest games… in our experience, these systems are workhorses that are easier to maintain, have far fewer compatibility issues and come with the most superior support. Business-grade systems are no nonsense!

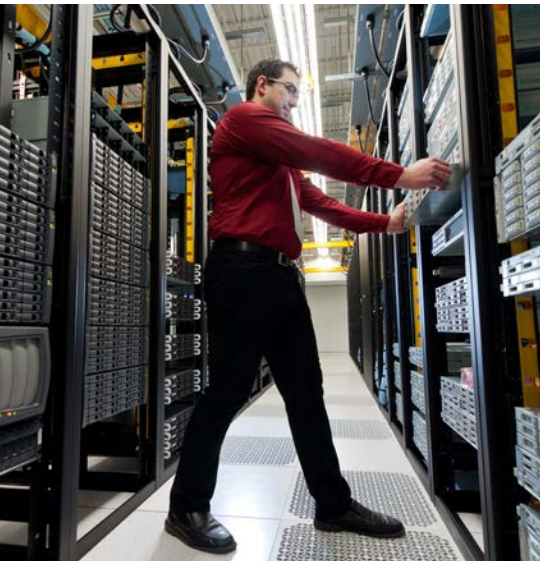
COUNT THE TRUE COST OF DOWNTIME



A business that has ever been at a standstill on the tech front for one day, two days, four days, or longer, definitely knows true pain. Whether it's an email that gets lost before sending or the loss of team momentum when a server crashes, downtime costs too much time and money. Over the last several years, '**Business Disaster Recovery**' (BDR) solutions have matured and become very affordable.

Simply put, a BDR solution saves a business from technology disaster.

Without a BDR solution, a server that crashes can easily take several days to restore. Waiting on replacement parts, reloading and configuring the server software, and finally restoring 'backup data' can take anywhere from 48 hours to a week! There are simple 'pay as you go' BDR solutions available today that can ensure a server is up and running on a secondary device, or even in the cloud, should a business be displaced from their office due to a fire, flood etc. This can be done within minutes of a major crash. It's one of the best value insurance policies out there!



BACKUP, BACKUP, BACKUP!

How much backup is enough? We follow the **3-2-1 Rule:** There are always 3 copies of critical data, which at any given time exist on at least 2 separate pieces of hardware, 1 of which is kept offsite (in case of fire, flood, theft, etc). Online backup services make the off-site backup a snap. Files are immediately encrypted and backed up to 1 or more remote servers, and can be retrieved if ever needed. No more switching out backup drives or tapes (On that note, please don't ever run backup tapes… unless you REALLY love the rush you get from gambling. They are notoriously unreliable).

Of course, the backup of critical files (like accounting data, documents, production files, etc.) is in addition to any Business Disaster Recovery solutions, which are specifically designed to keep a business running in case of disaster (See: 'Count the True Cost of Downtime").

THE VALUE OF LEASING TECHNOLOGY

Most business owners would agree, you wouldn't ever hire an employee and pay them 3 years salary in advance. Employees are paid as value is derived. Leasing your technology means that you pay for it as you derive benefit. Other benefits of leasing include:

- *Getting the technology you need, NOW! The opportunity cost of putting off technology investments can be very real.*
- *Simplified accounting. With leasing, it's easy. Simply write off your monthly lease payments as an operating expense (including the interest)!*
- *When you lease instead of purchase outright, your cash is available to invest. Purchasing a fast-depreciating asset (like technology) is not a way to invest cash reserves.*
- *It's easy to plan upgrades and updates. When you lease, you can afford to replace ALL of your technology at once, wait 3 years, and repeat (See: Update/Replace Systems in Bulk).*
- *A predictable technology budget. A technology lease means you can budget a monthly amount for ALL the technology you need, and chances are, that amount will drop when it comes time to upgrade (typically every 3 years). No more surprises!*

UPDATE/REPLACE SYSTEMS IN BULK

- Limit the amount of brands/models in use. When all of the systems are the same brand/model, they are far easier to support (for example, testing something on 1 system means it will work on all of them).

- Avoid the scenario where you buy one computer at a time, as you can afford it. (See: The Benefits of Leasing). In offices with many employees, this often results in the 'computer shuffle'. The boss gets the new computer (makes sense so far), then his/her computer goes to Derek, Derek's computer goes to Linda, Linda's computer goes to Adam and so on and so forth. Running the hand-me-down technology game plan adds an element of cost (that's several computer setups every time 1 new computer is purchased)… and every time a system is passed along, there is an increased risk of lost data, or data falling into the wrong hands. Upgrading the systems in batches is far easier to plan and execute.

EMBRACE THE CLOUD

Which is easier: Paying a monthly electricity bill for the convenience of electrical service, or building and maintaining your own power generating station?

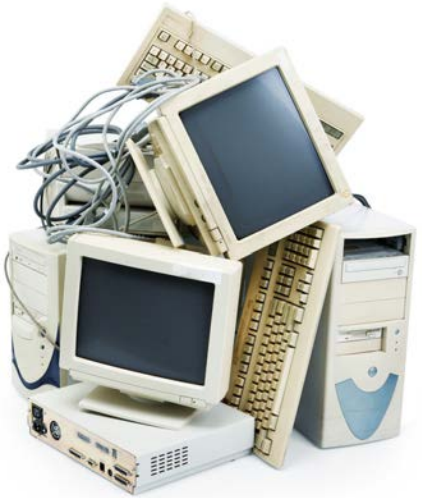
In much the same way, it makes more sense to subscribe to cloud-based tech solutions, rather than to maintain them yourself.

For example, the cost to purchase and maintain your own email server in the back room of your business is very high compared to an online service such as Google Apps (Gmail for business). Google Apps clients pay just a few dollars per month per employee, and enjoy a rock-solid email experience with zero maintenance costs, seamless integration with mobile devices, shared calendars and much more. This is just one example of a cloud-based solution that shines as brightly or even brighter than it's backroom counterpart, for a fraction of the cost.

24/7 MONITORING

Many businesses are open 9 to 5, Monday to Friday. This means that there is a 76.19% chance that technology will fail OUTSIDE of business hours. Too often, this means that owners and employees are showing up to work the following day to discover that they are at a standstill. This should never happen to a business. Today, tools are available which monitor systems around the clock. Even small issues result in an alert that can be sent to the tech support team as well as the company owner. These issues can then be addressed immediately (even at 2AM!), before they become big ones. Of all the costs associated with technology, downtime can be one of the biggest. 24/7 monitoring of systems means fewer surprises and less downtime.

REPLACE AGING SYSTEMS



A study conducted by Wipro Product Strategy and Services shows that:

- *Businesses stand to save a whopping 52% in PC support costs with new PCs compared to supporting and maintaining a 4-year old system.*
- *In year 4, support costs are higher than the cost of a new mobile or desktop PC.*

A study by J. Gold and Associates found that:

- *Keeping notebooks an additional 2 years (into years 4 and 5) actually costs $960 per machine, which is equivalent to a typical replacement cost.*
- *Further, outdated equipment will cost the organization $9,600 in lost productivity over the same time period.*

Replacing systems in bulk every 3 or so years is a great way to:

- *Keep employees happy and productive.*
- *Eliminate spikes in IT spending.*

- *Always have warranty coverage for any hardware malfunctions.*
- *Make sure that people are not limited by the speed and reliability of the technology they use day in and day out.*

INTERNET GATEWAY... INVEST IN A GOOD ONE!

The same way that homes have security systems, businesses have long known that it is good to have a firewall (a router for example) on the edge of their office's Internet connection, to keep out the bad stuff. However, "gateway devices" (as they are often now referred to as), can do so much more today. They can:

- *Block distraction websites and non work-related sites all day, or just at certain times of day.*
- *Provide reports on Internet usage, per employee (For example, who is on Facebook and for how long)!*
- *Ensure that enough Internet pipe is reserved for mission-critical users and applications.*

- *Block a whole host of threats such as malware, phishing attempts, hack attempts, viruses, and more.*

- *Provide graphs and reports on bandwidth usage, so that you know when you need more Internet, and what types of activities are consuming the most.*

Like a dashboard display in a car, a robust Internet gateway provides invaluable (and timely!) insight into what is happening on your companies Internet connection and network.

DEMAND A TRUE TECHNOLOGY PARTNER...

We believe that a ***Technology Partner*** is someone that you want in your boardroom, chiming in on the company's strategic objectives as it relates to technology.

A Technology Partner doesn't simply respond to technology emergencies as they arise. They seek out new and proven ways to reduce risk, and increase productivity and pleasure through the use of technology, with the end objective of more Profitable results for you and your company.

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