

TIME FOR A NEW COMPUTER (OR TWO) ?

New computers both in the office and at home are usually celebrated by their humble users as they tend to be a lot quicker than their ancestors as well as being more aesthetically appealing to the eye. However businesses and home users are often faced with the conundrum of not knowing when is the right time to trade in their current systems or if a minor upgrade might be all that is required. This used to be just a major dilemma for businesses but as home setups are becoming more elaborate, as well as home offices becoming a fast growth sector in the economy, these decisions are becoming more important universally. In this article I will document some guidelines and shortfalls to help you make that decision.

With hard disk space becoming cheaper and cheaper and processor speeds increasing constantly, there is less of a focus for companies like Microsoft when designing programs like Windows to make it compact or compatible with previous generation processors. Hence the version of Windows that your system came with, given that it has had no major upgrades, will be the one that will run best on your system. Therefore any upgrades to the later versions, while being better for you system for things like security, will in all likelihood slow your system down considerably. Having said that, if you are connecting to the Internet and/or using programs, I would recommend that you should at least be using Windows 2000 and therefore your system may need to be traded in. The Pentium III processor would be my minimum requirement for Windows 2000. If you have some sort of network in your business/home and/or are sharing an Internet connection, then Windows 2000 or XP is almost a necessity in terms of ease of setup and use but more importantly security and reliability. Basically, if you are doing anything beyond basic word processing or playing solitaire then Windows 98 or previous versions are not recommended and hence this will mean buying a new system.

In terms of upgrading systems, the only things you can do these days includes, increasing the memory or hard-disk space. While these can improve performance, they are generally not appropriate for moving to the next version of Windows or more elaborate uses beyond what your system was initially intended. It is the motherboard and processor that needs changing and this is basis of getting a new system.

With fast broadband Internet becoming ever more popular, the requirements of your system and network have never been more important. Often the true benefits and speed are impeded by the older technology of the systems they are running on. Newer systems and newer versions of Windows were designed with broadband Internet in mind, and hence are able to take advantage of the potential with things like Internet sharing and security.

These days it is not uncommon to see homes with as many if not more computers than people. With kids requiring more from their computers due to curriculum becoming more online based, email becoming people's preferred form of communication due to its simplicity and low cost, the Internet ever expanding and home offices more prevalent, it can be just as important to get the setup right at home as well as the office.

Cost becomes a major issue in these instances but if you talk to a reputable computer sales/service establishment who provides good systems at competitive prices along with setup and ongoing support, then both your initial and ongoing costs will be minimised and you will also have peace of mind. Of course with business there is always the option of leasing in regards to cost.

It should be said that if your current setup is performing the tasks you require at an acceptable speed, with little problems, then stick with what you have bearing in mind things like security risks via the Internet.

These days with more elaborate setups, price competitive deals, post sale service and on-site setup are very important meaning traditional retail establishments are not necessarily the best option.

Monthly Tip

Have you ever wondered what software is on your computer or what are your system specifications, like memory or CPU speed? Is this a question friends & computer people constantly ask you but you are unable to exactly answer. At www.belarc.com you can download and then run free system analyser for non-commercial use. This will quickly give you an easily understandable snapshot of your system's current hardware and software state.

Product of the Month

LCD Screen – These newer computer screens have the advantages of looking spectacular, being easier on the eye, giving you more desk space and allowing you to see more on the screen at once. The costs are fairly reasonable now and the smile it puts on your face (as we have often seen) can be worth it!

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