



## Thinking of new IT equipment?

*Buying hardware to support your business is a real challenge. With product and capabilities changing every couple of months, working out when to change equipment and what you need to support your business whilst also trying to get value for money eludes most businesses resulting in wasted cost, user frustration and lost customers. The recent release of **Windows 7** brings additional challenges to the upgrade jungle.*

### Buying PCs and Laptops

Anyone can walk into a PC superstore or buy from one of the numerous online stores but are you getting what you need, let alone value for money? For many understanding what sort of PC or laptop they should have is a struggle which can often result in wasted money, sometimes lack of performance, frustrating compatibility issues and later on, discovery of undesirable limitations? Worse, did you really need to change the PC at all? Let's look at that first before having to choose a replacement.

### My PC is slow; Is there anything I can do?

PCs and laptops in today's environment rapidly appear to slow down within months of purchase and often reach a point where poor performance encourages many to buy a replacement. However, in many cases replacement can be put off for months or years with a few minutes of regular maintenance. This regular maintenance will avoid the common problems which unnecessarily degrade performance:

- Disk space shortage
- Fragmented disk
- Shortage of processor power
- Shortage of available memory

Our maintenance recommendations include removal or back-up of unnecessary files and keeping at least 5GB of hard disk free on the C Drive, defragment the disk monthly and lastly and importantly, removal of any unnecessary back-ground processes.

Not familiar with back-ground processes? These are computer programs hidden from the user which run and consume sometimes vast amounts of processor power and memory. These programs come from many sources and get installed and turned on at boot time and frequently without the user realizing. A good example is KService.exe which comes with the BBC I-Player. This is one of the worst culprits for using resources as it sits in the background 24x7 consuming not only processor and memory but also network (broadband) bandwidth. This can become chronic when other members of the public copy over large BBC files from your PC to their PC using your resources and without your knowledge other than the effect it has on your PC's performance!

It is not uncommon to come across a PC and find fifty plus back-ground processes. Some are essential for the operating system and anti-virus processes but many are not. To stop the unnecessary processes we recommend tools like [Tune-Up](#) which can give guidance as to which processes can be safely stopped and will even help you stop them. It also has a number of other tools to help with performance. Better still, it can be tried for free for 30 days.

### Other reasons for changing your PC

If having maintained your PC, but it's still slow this could indicate a reason to upgrade, but before looking at what to buy let's examine a few other reasons for buying a new PC.

- You need Windows 7 and it is more economic to buy a PC with it already installed
- The PC or laptop is unreliable and it is uneconomic to have it repaired or software reloaded.
- The PC or Laptops does not support an essential new external device and there is no easy or economic upgrade to the hardware.

Often the economic grounds for replacement are influenced by the depreciated capital value of the PC which can mean that replacement brings better value than repair or upgrade.

## **Buying a new PC, some pitfalls**

There are three main problems to overcome when buying a new PC or laptop.

1. Understanding what to buy
2. Buying it or its equivalent at a fair price
3. Choosing the right Operating system
4. Getting the PC or laptop loaded with programs so that it is in a useful state.

Understanding what to buy can be a challenge. If it will only be used for standard light use business applications and the odd graphic but no video editing, then most basic models of PC or laptops will suffice. Heavy usage, video editing or servers may require a much bigger budget and we recommend obtaining advice and guidance to get the right model and best value for money. With Windows based machines the majority of new machines will ship with Windows 7. If your choice unit is still being shipped with Vista, make sure it is fully Windows 7 compatible and also comes with a free Windows 7 upgrade. If not, I suggest choosing another model. Windows 7 is still the preferred choice for most PCs and Laptops however Netbooks still require a more efficient and light-weight OS such as XP or Windows 7 Starter 32bit. A word of caution for corporate Netbook users, Windows 7 Starter does not have 'windows server domain join' capability.

## **Should I buy a PC or laptop?**

There are obvious portability advantages of laptops. However even if your need is only for the office, then it's still worth considering the following.

- Low end laptops and PCs are today similarly priced
- If higher power is needed, laptops are significantly more expensive than the equivalent desktop
- Laptops have on average <10% of the running carbon footprint of a desktop PC.
- Laptops have very limited upgrade capabilities when compared to the generic desktops
- Laptops are more easily lost or stolen even from offices

## **Getting the equipment ready for use**

Once the equipment has been acquired, the PC will need to be networked, anti-virus software installed and then loaded with all the applications needed to run your business. Apart from being able to locate the software installation disks and product activation keys from that old PC, will the software actually work with your new PC, an important consideration with most PCs shipping with Windows 7. The result is that some applications may struggle to be workable or not be workable at all if the PC has only Windows home premium installed.

## **Don't forget WEEE**

Lastly, when getting rid of the old PC or laptop, don't forget to have the disk wiped and the equipment disposed off in compliance with the recent WEEE regulations.

## **In summary**

When waking into one of these computer superstores, it can look so simple to buy a new PC, however the whole issue of is it the right thing to do, what should I buy, is far more complex than the salesman would have to think. It is no wonder than many small businesses pay over the odds or are disappointed with their acquisition or the time taken to get it fully up and running.

## **[Social Enterprise IT CIC Ltd](#)**

[www.SEIT-CIC.co.uk](http://www.SEIT-CIC.co.uk)

Social Enterprise IT can help maintain you PC and when the time comes to replace it we offer a great service to help you get the right equipment at a good price. Please see our 'Services' web page.

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