

How do you keep your technology investments current (Part II.)?

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We've all been there... bought the very latest and greatest computer system, only to have it become almost obsolete in a relatively short period of time. How long does a new computer workstation remain useful? What is the cost to replace a third of your computer workstations each year? How do we remain current, without breaking the bank?

Eight years ago we might have spent \$3,000 on a fully configured desktop computer. With that initial investment, we would upgrade it as needed to remain useful, increasing RAM or installing a larger Hard Disk Drive. We added CD readers when available, then CD Burners, then combo DVD readers and now DVD burners. In recent years, we have seen prices drop far below \$1000 for brand new desktop computers comparatively configured. Why bother to upgrade a much lower cost, possibly obsolete system when you can get such an economical replacement, with current technology?

Some have realized tremendous savings by continuing to upgrade these newer low-cost desktop computer systems, rather than replacing them, on a three-year cycle. In fact, component part prices have dropped so low, that you can replace/upgrade almost all key components for a third of the cost to replace with a new computer system. In other words, it is possible to have new, "latest-technology" component part upgrades installed every year, for about the same cost to replace the desktop computer every three years. You might ask, "are the replacement upgrade parts as good as getting a whole new computer"? If using new, latest technology parts for all significant computer components, then the answer is "yes", they are as good, and at significantly less cost.

Even such cosmetic things as the computer case can be upgraded to give the look and feel of a new computer workstation.

The single most expensive individual component of a new computer can be the operating system software. You should be sure to follow all software licensing requirements when upgrading your systems.

Should our regular IT Support staff be burdened with these hardware component upgrades or should outside vendors handle them? Some have found an economical alternative is to hire some limited part-time technical help. Many high schools now offer computer IT technical hardware courses. Many techno-savvy young people seem to be well suited for the challenges of upgrading and troubleshooting desktop computer workstations. They gain hands-on, real-world experience while you get cost-effective computer maintenance. Even when paid at above minimum wage rates, it can be a very economical proposition.

You can have superb performance at a bargain price. How do you keep your technology investments current? Perhaps frequent upgrades are an alternative for you.