



## SHOULD WE UPGRADE OR BUY NEW COMPUTERS?

Don Bridle asks “Is it always true that you get what you pay for?”

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A Manager may wonder if it is time for a club to buy a new computer. Here's the good news - there are other upgrade options to consider before buying new equipment.

To improve your computers' performance, consider both software and hardware choices. Unless you are running something earlier than Windows XP, upgrading your operating system may be an unnecessary option. The key thing with Windows is to keep it up-to-date on-line. Microsoft issues updates that should make your system more robust, but you have to check if there are any available.

Some software, whilst installing itself, puts unnecessary start-up routines on your computers. This slows down start-up procedures and gives computers extra things to take their attention whilst running. But this problem can often be eased. For example, some of the MS Office and Kodak routines can be altered so they only start when you choose to use them. It is usually a mistake to disable anti-virus programs from performing background checking. Although this checking slows down your computer's performance, it is vital for your security. However, you may not want all of your printer's software to be monitoring everything as you work. So look at the options available, especially with Hewlett Packard multi-purpose printers.

How effective are hardware updates?

Answer: It depends.

- ⌘ For the cost involved, it is unlikely that a main board (motherboard) is worth replacing
- ⌘ If your hard discs are more than three-quarters full, replacement is a cost-effective option. A competent IT professional will make sure you don't lose any data in the process
- ⌘ Replacing CPUs (Central Processing Units or main chips) is not nearly as effective as increasing memory
- ⌘ Usually there is a marked increase in performance by doubling RAM (Random Access Memory, the type used all the time the computer is switched on). This is likely to be the best use of funds, but make sure the professional installing a memory upgrade enables the computer to make full use of it.

The most efficient approach for a club with more than one computer is to have a rolling plan of upgrades. In any one year, buy some new equipment and improve performance on others.

Most IT professionals will give advice before performing upgrades. Some offer a free initial consultation, so you really can be better off without spending any money!

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