

## Stretch your IT budget with these tips

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For small- and medium-sized companies, the difference between a successful year and a dismal one often comes down to how well they can stick to the b-word: BUDGET.

Luckily, the recipe for budgeting success is simple: Spend less, while making more. But there's a virulent SMB myth that - especially in a weak economy - the only way to save money is to forgo buying the new computers, servers, and printers that your employees need. Not true.

Below are some simple reasons why investing in technology can actually save you money over the long term.



1.

### Understand the total cost of ownership (TCO)

Many SMB owners suffer from sticker shock when contemplating the upfront costs of buying new equipment. Unfortunately, they don't see how much higher the overall price tag is for holding onto old, outdated machines when you factor in maintenance, lower productivity and energy consumption. And, don't think that buying cheaper equipment is necessarily better for your wallet. While consumer PCs and printers may take a smaller initial bite out of your budget, they don't offer the same robustness or security standards that make business equipment worth every extra penny.

### 2. Meet in digital space

The Business Travel Association estimates that the global business community spends nearly \$1 trillion on travel annually - that's "trillion" with a "t". Chances are your company is adding at least a small percentage, even though today's technology makes a lot travel unnecessary. Rather than spend valuable money on flights, hotels, and per diems, you can easily host meetings in digital space using free or affordable technology. Save the in-person meetings for your best clients, prospects, and vendors. [more/]

### 3. New vs. nearly new

While investing in new technology can mean a big difference in maintenance and energy costs, it doesn't mean you have to pay the inflated price of driving it straight off the lot. The constant overturn of new technology forces many companies to sell off their slightly used equipment at steep discounts. That means there are great deals to be found in refurbished equipment - much of which comes with warranties or return policies. HP's Business Refresh, which offers discounts of up to 25% off the price of high-quality, refurbished business PCs and notebooks. Other manufacturers have similar programs.

### 4. Go green, save green

"Going green" may seem like a new-age buzzword that has little ROI or true business value, but that's not the whole truth. Some green initiatives not only reduce your impact on the environment, but can also positively impact your budget. Save trees and printing costs by moving paper forms online, which will also allow you to share documents and information easily between coworkers. Or invest in ENERGY STAR® qualified equipment, that use Instant-on technology to cut your energy bill and put less of a strain on the power grid.

## **5. Take advertising into your own hands**

One of the major benefits of the digital revolution is the democratization of information publishing. No longer do you have to spend thousands of dollars for traditional advertising. With a little creativity, you can use simple technologies such as a corporate blog, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube to create word-of-mouth marketing and open up room in your budget. Don't think you have time to self-advertise? We at The Computing Center have been using this eNewsletter for over six years and find the time each month to publish it. It's one of our best marketing and self-advertising vehicles.

## **6. Get creative with financing**

Despite even the most proactive budget planning, sometimes needs arise that make you reassess your technology expenses. Luckily, there are options. HP offers great leasing options on new HP business equipment. Other leasing companies will finance the equipment, software and our installation and maintenance services. This will spread your cost over the lifetime of the product to make the initial price tag more manageable.

Even the most budget-conscious SMB owner knows that new technology is essential to provide the best service to your clients and give your employees the tools they need to keep up with the speed of business.