Selecting the "Right" Computers...
and Keeping Them Up and Running!

Computers are supposed to make our lives easier—they are tools to help us be more productive. In business this is especially true, as computers store and manage the information that 'is' our business and livelihood. PCs have almost become a little too personal though, in that we personalize every computer we sit at—home, work, etc. We install the programs we like, change the background, etc., the majority of which are benevolent. Each program we install, though, performs a specific task and does so in an environment with other applications.   We've all seen programs conflict with others or just behave strangely once we install something new. While there are legitimate and technical explanations for all of this, it comes down to this—do you want to take the time and spend the money needed to maintain a PC and ensure it won't crash right in the middle of a busy sale?

—Dean Casey

When we purchase computers, they tend to come with additional programs installed. These computers and applications are typically targeted at home users and students. When it comes to businesses, though, things change a little bit. Our computers are no longer for surfing the Web, checking social networking sites, etc. We purchase computers for our businesses so they can run the programs that *help* us run our businesses! Adding additional programs, allowing users to utilize the computer for general use—e.g. checking social networking sites, installing miscellaneous apps—and even installing security applications, comes with a "cost." For security applications—anti-virus, firewalls, etc.—they run best when configured and inspected on a regular basis. New updates are installed on a regular basis and the majority of them "learn" and watch your computer as you work. If they detect "unusual" activity (anything those programs have been programmed to label as such), they can block other programs from running properly—programs you actually NEED to run! It is better to select business class computers or hire a professional who can determine which apps are needed and which might cause "issues" with existing software.

The best parallel I can bring is looking at the PCs installed throughout restaurants. Servers and bartenders walk up to touch screen devices, punch in a code, enter our orders, print receipts, etc. I'm pretty sure their businesses don't let them install and use other programs on those PCs (yup, those are the same as the PCs in our homes and businesses). They select the software that will help manage their business, consult with an IT company and select a hardware infrastructure that will run said software. They also take into account additional business needs as well as anticipated growth over the next few years.

This doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg either, so don't feel that your business is "too small" to warrant this sort of attention. In the end, the cost of selecting the right software and hardware for your business, as well as properly maintaining those systems, is far less than leaving everything to chance.

So the next time you're about to install that nifty marble game or let your employees install a few programs from home, consider any cost that might come along with those actions. The day a silly little game or application brings your business to a screeching halt might make one just say "Duh!" ♻

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