

What To Look For In A New Computer

Here are a few quick things to help you purchase your next computer.

Typically, you should replace your computers every 3-5 years. While it is possible to get longer use, at the rate that technology changes today, you will suffer from lost productivity and added expenses to maintain them after that point.

A computer is a tool that you use every day in your business, so treat your computer purchase as an investment in your business. Get the right tool for the job and you will be much more satisfied than if you just run down to Walmart and get the cheapest thing you can find.



BASICS

Brand

It is best to stick with name brand computers. In today's world that is **Dell, HP or Lenovo**. There are many other companies that make computers, but for a business class PC stick with these three companies and you will have better maintainability, compatibility and supportability and lower term costs.

Processor

Now that you know what brand you need, it is time to focus on the specifications of the computer. The best processor series right now is the Intel "I" series processors. These will be designated at i3, i5 or i7. **For most business applications we recommend the i5 processor.** It is the best combination of power, performance and cost.

Memory & Hard Drive

computer memory hard drives are similar to the human mind. Computer memory is like your short term memory, and the computer hard drive is like your long term memory. The more memory the computer has, the more things it can do at the same time. **You should get at least 8 GB of computer memory**, and consider getting 12GB or 16 GB for even better performance.

The hard drive is where the computer stores things that it needs to keep, such as documents, spreadsheets, pictures, programs, etc. The best decision is based on three things: Amount of storage needed, performance and cost. The choice is between a traditional hard drive or the new style SSD hard drive. Traditional hard drives use the same basic technology that has been around for over 40 years, but your storage capacity per dollar spent is very good. A SSD drive uses chips that are very similar to a computer's memory chips to store information and they are very fast. Because they are using newer technology and are faster the amount of storage per dollar spent is higher. In general, Traditional hard drives offer a lot of storage at a lower cost and SSD hard drives usually have less storage per dollar spent, but have much better performance. **If you want fast, then purchase the SSD drive. If you need to store a significant amount of files, then go with the traditional hard drive.**



Operating System

This is a source of great debate right now. Windows Microsoft currently supports versions 7, 8.1 and 10. **We recommend either Windows 7 or Windows 10, but make sure you purchase Professional version.** The home version does not have the same networking and security features and causes many support problems in a business environment.

Case Size

There are many sizes of computers today, from the big traditional tower sized computers down to the “tiny” cases that are about the size of router. The important thing to keep in mind is that as the case gets smaller there is less room for air to flow through the computer to keep it cool. The sources of heat are the power supply and the hard drive. If you are going with a smaller case like an Ultra Small Form Factor (USFF) or Tiny, make sure it has its power supply outside of the case. Many of these will use an outside power supply that looks like what you would use on a laptop. Another consideration is to get one with a SSD hard drive because they do not generate

as much heat.

STAY AWAY FROM

All-In-One Computers

On the surface, the All-In-One computer concept sounds good. The power, processing and hard drive are all built into the same unit with the monitor. Having everything in one unit does save space. However, they tend to have heat related problems which may cause parts to not last as long. It is also more difficult to find parts and repair, which leads to higher costs more to maintain them. If you have a tight space to work with, there are better solutions.

Brands (other than Dell, HP or Lenovo)

For business use, it is best to stick with computers made by these three companies. Computers from these companies are easier to find parts for repairs, device drivers are readily available and they make quality products.

Windows 8

There is no compelling reason to run Windows 8, instead of Windows 7 or Windows 10. Both of them offer better performance, networking and usability as compared to Windows 8. We recommend the free upgrade to Windows 10 while it is still available, but do it in a controlled way. Your upgrade to Windows 10 will go much smoother if you do it in a planned and controlled manner instead of letting it automatically upgrade.

Home version of Windows

If you are using a computer for business, do not get the home version of Windows. The Home version of Windows does not have the security and networking features that are needed to function correctly in a business environment. This introduces security risks and creates support headaches that can be easily avoided by purchasing a computer with the Professional version of Windows installed.



Box Stores

Most “box” stores don’t sell business quality computers. This includes Office Depot, Staples, Best Buy & Walmart. They all compete on lowest price (lowest quality) for technology and focus on consumer (home user) electronics. Their products tend to be computers that are either:

- lower quality product lines
- have less power
- Home versions of Windows
- Include junk programs, trials and advertising that are not needed on a business computer.

SOFTWARE & ACCESSORIES

When you start thinking about getting a new computer, you should also consider if you will need new software and accessories.

Office Software

These are the programs like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and Publisher that are part of the Microsoft Office Suite. The choice now is between the traditional standalone version of Office 2016 (one time cost) Office 365 (recurring subscription). **We recommend Office 365 Business.** This gives you all of the programs in the Office Suite, each user can use Office on multiple devices and you get automatic upgrades so you do not have to worry about versions not working with one of your other users.

There are also free Office alternatives such as Google Docs, Libre Office and OpenOffice. However, these can be a more challenging to utilize and work with the macro files from HUD and with your housing or accounting software. Usually it is best to stay with Microsoft Office instead of one of the freebies.

Accounting Software

You will not need this because your housing software will also handle your accounting. However, it is very common for housing authorities to also use an accounting program like Quickbooks for processing payroll, printing checks or managing collections. There are many accounting programs on the market today, but Quickbooks is the most universal and works well.

Monitors

Often, if your monitor is working fine, you might decide to continue using it. However, you might want to consider getting a new monitor and setting up dual monitors for your computer. Studies have shown a very good productivity increase from using 2 monitors.

If you have a smaller monitor you might consider purchasing a larger monitor 24 or 27 Inch LED monitor. The price for larger monitors has decreased significantly over the last 2 years and larger monitors make it much easier to see everything on your screen if you have any kind of vision problem.

Speakers or Headphones

If you will need to listen to webinars or internet training, speakers or headphones will be needed.



Microphone

If you need to record your voice or if you will be speaking on a webinar a good quality microphone would be a good addition to your computer. Our favorite choice for a microphone is either the Blue Snowflake or Samson Go. Both of these are small, connect with USB and sound great.

Webcam (Prefer Logitech, most HD models also have decent microphone built in)

Network Storage (Recommend Synology)

**Let us help you find the right computer and equipment for
your needs!**

We also specialize in helping Housing Authorities!