

## **Make Technology Work for You!**

Following on from the previous edition of The Voice, finding the right IT Partner can mean the success or failure of your business. Once you have found the right IT partner that understands your business and can support all your network requirements, it may be time to consider a make-over of your current technology to more efficient solution. Making this type of decision brings with it a few key points to consider, such as how it can improve your business, how to choose the right solution, what to look for in a solution, and finally a good return on your investment.

Sometimes letting go of the procedures and processes you've been so used to can seem a little scary. But you could be enslaved by old habits and processes – the 'this is how we've always done it' syndrome doesn't necessarily mean it's the most cost effective or time saving method of operating your business. Why not challenge anything that could be wasting time and effort, particularly habitual tasks and don't be a slave to an outdated process or system. Make technology your business ally. There are a plethora of IT products and services out there in the market and choosing the right solution for your business needs can become a major production, almost bigger than Ben Hur. Your IT partner can help cut straight through to the solutions that meet your specific business criteria and needs, and help you create an optimum short list. Your IT partner knows that if their proposition(s) cannot be seen as leading to savings of both money and time, then clearly you will not be very interested in a new solution.

Only if it can be demonstrated in 'black and white' just how much you can save or make, should you then perhaps consider alternative options. These short listed alternatives should always be weighed with the features and benefits compared with value for money. Things to look for in a solution could be such things as performing tasks that will either save you time or money, or that produces information with which you can make sound business decisions previously difficult to get or unavailable.

Once the benefits of a new solution are clearly established make sure alternative methods for acquiring your new technology are factored into your consideration. For example if your cash flow is not exactly flowing, then request alternatives to paying up front. Perhaps look at time payment options or even leasing or renting options. There are several different alternatives available and your IT partner should be able to offer them to you.

Lastly finding that solution that gives you a good return on your investment (ROI) would complete your selection criteria. Consider things like easy training packages, which lower the total overall cost of ownership and a solution that pays for itself through a reduction of processing time. If you can accomplish a good return on your investment, combined with a true value for money solution, chosen from a selection provided by a trusted IT partner, then you will truly have technology working for you!

### **Hints: Some IT Do's and Don'ts**

Don't put too much stock in all the hype about features and benefits of some IT products.

Do ask questions about how the features benefit you. Even ask for a demonstration of the product, particularly if you're considering solutions with a hefty price tag.

Don't get stuck with old technology, you could find yourself unable to find compatible accessories or worse without any technical support in the event of a disaster.

Do invest in maintenance programs where possible that allow for updates and support. This is also a way for you to have a competitive edge.

Don't get overwhelmed by too many technology choices available to you.

Do work with your preferred IT partner to come up with a short list based on your business criteria or needs.

Don't base your decision entirely on price once you have made your short list. Make sure you're comparing apples with apples. The old adage is 'if all else is equal, price then is the only thing'.

Do weigh up price against value for money and long term benefit, and look for a high return on your investment.

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