Get More From Your Technology Budget

Small businesses face many of the same challenges that larger ones do when it comes to getting the most value for your money. That doesn't just mean a dollar-for-dollar exchange. It also means keeping your employees motivated and productive, and ensuring they can reach your customers and your customers can reach them. Most importantly, it all needs to happen quickly and efficiently, keeping costs down without sacrificing service. Here are ten ways you can be sure to get the most from your tech buck in price and productivity.

1. **Make working together easier.** Boost efficiency while reducing costs by enriching collaboration between employees, partners, suppliers and customers. Through an intelligent network, your business can take advantage of interactive calendaring, video conferencing, unified communications and other technologies for easy, interactive communication.

2. **Liberate your employees by enabling them to take their phone systems wherever they go**. Missed calls create project delays, wasted opportunities, lost revenues and, ultimately, frustrated customers. Networked voice and data solutions empower your employees with one phone number that rings simultaneously on multiple devices, so customers reach the right person the first time. From one inbox, your staff can access all their communications from anywhere, checking for e-mail, voicemail and faxes.

3. **Reduce unproductive travel time.** Often, time spent on the road is time lost. Networking your phone solution with video calling and Web conferencing can help reduce the time and expense of traveling to offsite meetings and training sessions. Instead of spending time traveling, you can leverage technology that let's you use that time to get work done.

4. **Hire a professional managed service provider.** Managing your network is not always the best use of your employees' time. Consider the advantages of hiring a managed service provider for network administration. Doing so can free your IT staff to focus on more critical IT tasks and leverage their productivity.

What our customers are saying...

"As a small business, investing in a phone system is a big deal for us. With TDS' *managed*IP, we now have a reliable system that will expand as we do. We found the pricing to be in line with, and actually a little better than, some of the other services available. Because we didn't incur a major capital expense, we've been able to invest in other areas of the agency rather than in our communications system."

Wayne Harris, President/Partner
Glowac, Harris, Madison, Inc

5. **Develop a long-term technology strategy.** The process of replacing obsolete hardware can interrupt your employees and bring the office to a standstill. Unexpected downtime can cost you more than the face value of the computer — it will cost you downtime, customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. Minimize these disruptions with the development of strategic short-and long-term business objectives. Then work with your network vendor to launch technology that matches these objectives.

6. **Improve employee satisfaction.** Reduce employee frustration caused by aging or obsolete phone systems and slow networks by choosing a secure and reliable provider for quality systems and a fast network.

7. **High-Speed Internet.** Today, with our increased reliance on Web-based software and managed services, network speeds and configuration are more important than ever. It is important to look beyond the slowest and cheapest speeds; a few bucks more a month for faster broadband will pay for itself as your web applications speed along and streaming media doesn't suffer.

8. **Deliver anytime, anywhere access to employees on the go.** To stay productive on the move, it is essential that your employees have the capability to reach the people and information they need – anywhere, anytime. With tools like virtual private networks, your employees can work outside the office and still enjoy safe access to the business network.

9. **Secure the company against sophisticated threats.** Instead of taking a disjointed approach to security infrastructure, understand and prioritize security risk management activities for your business. That way, your IT team can focus on high-priority risks that the company can't afford to neglect and avoid overemphasizing lower-priority risks that lead to wasted resources and efforts.

10. **Don't overspend on computers.** High-end, beefy computers look cool and strut enough power to run a small country, but a $1,500 desktop is overkill for most employees. Establish a budget of around $400, which can get you a functional desktop with a monitor – then consider spending any excess cash on a second monitor to boost your productivity. For employees who need to run heavy-duty multimedia software, process HD video and crunch massive databases, you will still need to invest more for a higher-end computer.

With the New Year around the corner and budget season in full force, now is the time to evaluate the options for increasing the productivity of your employees, not to mention your technology budget. Take this time to look into technology updates that will enrich your company's performance, and establish a plan to ensure maximized return on your tech investments for the upcoming year.

You've got needs. We've got solutions. Total ROI.