Plan your IT Budget, Painlessly

Your IT department should never act as a drag on your company-wide annual budget. But at times, many business owners can come to see their technology outlays as an expense that can't be avoided, instead of an exciting investment of funds.

Your technology can provide cutting edge innovations and operational improvements that can make running your company easier, more cost-effective, and fueling your next level of growth. As you plan for your next year's budget, use this abridged Technology Self-Assessment Check-list to keep your costs predictable, your systems running smoothly, and to make sure you're investing your money towards IT, instead of simply spending it.

Check off as many items as you can to evaluate the current status of your IT infrastructure:

1 Your server:

- ☐ We are regularly monitoring and updating our server, as needed, to maintain security and operational requirements
- ☐ We have projected the amount of server space we will need for the coming year
- ☐ We have recently assessed our current server storage capacity to make sure we have the necessary available space
- ☐ If we do not have the necessary available server space, we have researched cost-effective options for increasing server space
- ☐ We have replaced Microsoft 2003 servers, which are no longer supported by Microsoft
- ☐ We have a current warranty on our current server

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2   Your hardware and software:

- ☐ We have performed a company-wide survey of our total current hardware and software infrastructure to detect any out of date, unsupported, or damaged devices/applications
- ☐ We have reviewed, updated or cancelled all necessary software licensing and maintenance contracts
- ☐ We have considered going paperless and researched our options for implementation
- ☐ We have assessed our telecommunication costs to detect any areas of over-investment, be it in our phone hardware, software, internet or phone service expenditures
- ☐ We have considered a cloud-based unified communications phone system and have researched our options for implementation
- ☐ We have researched cloud-based application alternatives to standard operational utilities (like Microsoft 365)

3   Your security and continuity:

- ☐ We have an up-to-date managed encryption solution, providing us the ability to monitor and report on which devices in our hardware infrastructure need to be and/or have been properly encrypted
- ☐ We have an email continuity plan in place, so that if our server goes down, operations don't come to a halt
- ☐ We have a business continuity plan defined, so that in the event of a major outage or disaster, our data and applications are protected and operations can quickly resume
- ☐ We have researched cloud-based technology solutions to provide better backups and security solutions
- ☐ We have implemented some cloud-based technology solutions to provide stronger remote work accessibility
- ☐ We use a two-factor authentication log-in to keep our data and networks better protected
- ☐ We have automated our systems patching to aid in putting out of technology fires and mitigating risk
- ☐ We have performed a recent security risk assessment to detect any areas of vulnerability

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5 Your vendors:

- ☐ We are not blindly renewing our vendor contracts
- ☐ We have assessed our current vendor contracts to make sure the technology is still a needed asset and/or hasn't been replaced by a newer innovation that the current vendor doesn't provide
- ☐ We have assessed our current vendor contracts and researched competitors to make sure we are receiving the best deal

6 Your staff:

- ☐ We have evaluated our current IT staff to determine any skill requirements that are not currently being filled or training that needs to be performed
- ☐ We have trained the entire staff on new/updated security and compliance policies and procedures
- ☐ We have evaluated any areas of our current IT department that would be more cost-effective to outsource
- ☐ We have researched outsourced IT partnership alternatives

So, how did you fare? Were you able to check off more than 75% of this list?

If not, you might want to take a look at overall construction of your technology infrastructure and strategy. What holes need to be patched? What areas are leaking unnecessary costs from your budget? And are there any noticeable ways to innovate, streamline, and improve your technology operations? All of these questions can provide cost-saving benefits as you plan your coming year's IT budget.

Total Networks offers independent assessments if you would like a second opinion to validate your current plan or to identify ways to improve. Click here for more information.

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