
November 2009 Newsletter

Repair or Replace?

When your computer starts to behave erratically, you are faced with the dreaded repair or replace decision. It might be something simple, but no one wants to put money into a machine that might end up as an expensive paperweight. This newsletter offers a few guidelines to consider when facing the repair vs. replace dilemma.

Finally, there is a new Internet service available in the Chicagoland area. It's named Clearwire, and it is a fixed wireless service that is as fast or faster than DSL and cable, but cheaper. If you're fed up with Comcast cable or ATT DSL, this may be for you. The initial rollout is November 1, and available at retailers December 1. But you can get in now by calling me 630-852-1736

If you need help with this decision, please call me and I'll be happy to make a recommendation for you. Check out this and prior newsletters online at my newly updated web site: www.medofficesystems.com



Medical Office Systems, L.L.C.
4540 Elm Street
Downers Grove, IL 60515
Office: 630-852-1736 Cell: 630-373-7429 Fax: 630-214-4565

Repair or Replace?

Ok, so the computer starts acting funny and you're fed up with it. You're not sure what's wrong but it's slow and cranky, and perhaps it "freezes" occasionally. So what to do?

First, if you've been following my previous recommendations, (hint, hint) you feel fairly comfortable, since you have remote backup or local backup disks that are updated daily. If not, step 1 is to make a backup before the system fails completely. My website lists two products that make backups easy: www.medofficesystems.com, under the "Remote Data Backup" and "Utility" menus.

I'm going to skip the details about Troubleshooting 101 - that is a topic for next month's newsletter. We'll start with the premise the problem has been determined to be hardware-related and that the decision has boiled down to repair or replace. Significant time may have been spent determining that the problem is hardware, and that factors into the repair/replace equation as well - more on that in the future.

Arm Yourself With The Facts:

- **Computer Lifespan:** Most computers will run reliably for up to 4 years, but most will have had some failure by 6 years, and if your computer is still working after 9 years, you may have set a record.
- **Know the age of your computer:** Many people underestimate how old their computers are - I do it myself! Even though it seems like it is only 2 years old, find out for sure.
- **Check Your Warranty:** the machine may still be under warranty - you may have forgotten you have a warranty or extended warranty. If it's still in effect, you have an easy decision!
- **Research the cost of a new computer:** Fortunately, the overall cost of computers has dropped significantly - computers on sale today have over double the capacity of machines from 2-3 years ago.

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Phone: 630-852-1736

john@medofficesystems.com

Fax: 630-214-4565

- **Determine the “True Cost” to replace** – the purchase cost is just the start – there is significant time to be spent transferring data, installing software, re-installing printers, and getting the new PC set up “just right”. Whether you do it yourself or have it done, recognize there is a “hidden cost” to a new PC.
- **Get a repair estimate:** I am happy to provide a free estimate for repairs. I make every effort to do the repairs as cheaply as possible, but some that require a lot of labor can be very expensive.

Now that you have the facts, let’s look at the decision process:

Replace if any of the following are true:

1. The computer is more than 4 years old
2. The computer has previously needed hardware repairs – you may have a lemon on your hands
3. You need the speed or function increase of a new computer vs. your existing computer
4. The “true cost” to repair the machine is greater than 25% of the cost to purchase new
5. Parts for the current machine are not available

Repair if any of the following are true:

1. The computer is 4 or fewer years old and parts are available
2. There is a function you can’t easily replace with a new machine. For example
 - a. you have a specialized peripheral such as a SCSI scanner that is connected to the unit
 - b. new units lack a certain function, such as parallel ports for printers, or wireless adapters that are expensive to replace
3. Your software will not run on a new machine
 - a. I have found some software will not run because the processors on new PC’s are too fast!
 - b. The new operating system is not compatible with your old software
4. The “true cost” to repair is 25% or less of the cost of a new machine

Should I upgrade the computer?

Generally “No”, unless it is a memory or hard disk upgrade – memory and disk prices have dropped precipitously and are a relative bargain these days. Other upgrades to major components like processors or motherboards are not economically worth the effort.

Summary:

- The economic lifetime of the average computer is 4 years
- Some computers may function as long as 9 or more years, most have had some failure by 6 years.
- If your computer falls into the over 4 year old category, you should probably replace it.

When deciding between repairing or replacing, consider the true costs to replace which include time to re-install peripherals and software, as well as moving data to the new machine. If you wish to upgrade the computer at the same time as the repair, adding memory (RAM) or a new hard disk make sense, but not major components.

I hope this guide helps when you are faced with the repair or replace decision - please call if you have questions or need advice about repairing or replacing computers – 630-852-1736.

Special Note: check out my revised website at www.medofficesystems.com - if you missed any newsletters, they are all online on the website in PDF format – easy to print, save, or forward to friends. If you prefer to receive this newsletter via e-mail, you can now sign up to get the newsletter online from the Newsletter and Tips page.

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