## We'd like to show how you can use standard computer equipment in a smarter way….. for your business

**Taking the cost and risk out of technology and communications is the foremost IT issue for business**. There are smarter ways of spending ICT dollars. The first is to ensure business data is safe, the second is to be able to get at it – from anywhere. Everything else is ancillary. Focus should be placed more on communications and less on technology – certainly less on getting new tools (hardware or software) just because some vendor has released them!

**In the last decade, business has spent far too much on desktop computers.** They generate significant costs from licences, anti-'everything' subscriptions and consulting fees on managing, building, patching security and sometimes restoring/repairing them. There has also been a plethora of upgrades and new versions of systems and tools. Yet in most business situations, most staff just want to perform basic functions like access key business databases, write reports, send an email, access the internet (like banking or fetching business pricing/brochure information). **Many staff have exactly the same requirements– yet business is spending big money on each individual staff machine.**

Desktop computers are the single biggest risk to a computer network adding excessive costs to business. When they fail, there are further costs from lost staff time and distractions and the fees for fixing the machine. **Virus, trojans, spam, spyware, human error, hardware failure are all major risks at the workstation level**. Ideally, a desktop computer should have no programs (software) and most definitely no business data located on it – then there is nothing to lose!

**Often, all that's needed is a low cost, very fast computer accessing business data from a central server. Such a desktop computer would have no accessories, disks, or connections that allow perpetration of risks from local sources. All it needs is a fast processor, lots of memory, a quality screen and comfortable keyboard and mouse. Even smarter, would be to harness the local power of that desktop machine to actually RUN the programs – even though they are NOT LOCATED insecurely on the actual machine. There is no reason why common PROGRAMS can't be fetched from a secure server, but then run locally. This is not just a 'thin client' but smart!**

Centralise the tools (programs) that a business uses, protect them, distribute them and just use them.

Now look at the core of a business system – its central business data and specific programs/applications that control such vital information. It could be an accounting system, a stock system, special applications like drawing programs (CAD), marketing tools for making brochures and publications. For some of these requirements, a true workstation with the right software on it may no doubt be needed, for those select staff that are personally responsible. But remember, these may not be the bulk of your desktop computer requirements, so **avoid falling into the trap of putting expensive workstations on everybody's desk.**

Irrespective of the type of desktop computer / workstation used, any business data generated by these specific programs/users, must be securely stored and backed up – that's where **central SERVERS come into the picture**.

Behind the scenes, servers should provide a means of centrally and securely storing all business data, and backing it up to cover the contingency of equipment failure, operational error or some environmental impact (ie: power outage). Risk of losing business data can be minimised by constant duplication of business data for immediate access now, quick recovery from a static 'yesterday version' or in cases of major loss, restoration from offsite archives/backups made on additional media like disk and tape. **These are imperative technologies for storing, and securing DATA.**

**Now look at the data COMMUNICATIONS aspect. Mobile, remote, or offsite staff will need to access business data from wherever they are.** Security plays a major role in how this is done, and dictates that proper firewall equipment with tailored VPN services are in place. This only permits known staff access from remote branches or mobile services to access business tools and data. Meantime, internal staff will require network access to central business data servers. Careful selection of quality networking technologies is required in order to avoid such risks as wireless security breaches. **High speed wired communications is essential for serving the needs of desktop computers on a network.**

**Voice communications is another significant cost area for business, and this can be dramatically cut**. Consider adopting computer technologies that provide not only internal phone services, but also low cost connections to external mobile staff all driven from low cost GSM gateways and CAT5 based computerised phone equipment. No longer is there a place for high cost proprietary PABX and telephone equipment**. Instead, remotely configurable and maintained computer based VoIP and handset equipment provides a low risk, low cost solution.**

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is a leading Systems Integration Consultant Engineer as well as having a qualified business background with experience in the computer industry since 1975. This has involved managing software, engineering, operations and providing project and facilities management for SM/E and corporate clients across a variety of businesses and industries, dealing with all styles of technology. In his experience, he has observed that the computer industry has moved back to server based centralised control/management of both the critical business data as well as centralising key applications/programs likewise. Yet business owners are still falling victim to allowing costly workstations distract them from having a secure and productive network. There is also the business challenge of smarter, lower cost communications to allow access to such systems remotely, on the road and from branch offices, and to enjoy considerable savings in the area of voice communications. *"There are some well proven technologies available, but the real solution rests in having someone sensibly integrate them into an effective overall, well supported business facility".*

**FOR THE RECORD PLEASE NOTE:**

*We are not sellers of hardware or software (except for small incidentals such as cables). We are independent consultants in the field of computer technology encompassing systems designs and appraisals, software integration and troubleshooting. You are free to source equipment or software that is recommended by us from anyone of your choice or alternatively should you choose, we can recommend a preferred and trusted supplier.*

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