Eight Top Small Business Computing Mistakes

Introduction
Your entire business runs on its computer network. With this in mind, it is vitally important to make wise decisions regarding your computers and networking. Many small businesses make serious mistakes in their computing decisions. Here are the top eight mistakes we see small businesses making on a regular basis.

1. Buying Low
There are real differences in quality and manageability between the superstore bargain boxes and business grade computers. You get what you pay for and computing is no exception to that rule. Better machines are faster, more stable, and can be managed remotely, allowing your service provider to respond quickly to your needs, often simply by connecting remotely to resolve your problems the same day. *Ask NSI about Intel VPro® systems and what they can do for your business.*

2. Until Death Do You Part
Technology has a "useful" lifetime, and a "useable" lifetime. The fact that a PC will boot up does not necessarily make it suitable for continued business use. There are other factors to consider, such as the responsiveness, reliability, and security of the PC. If you waste one hour per week on a slow PC, you've easily spent over $1,000 in a year. Once you consider the ROI and costs of maintenance, security risks and lost productivity, you can really see how much it costs you to save money this way.

3. Cutting Too Many Corners
Can you put off the larger flat panels until next year? Of course you can. Can you skip buying a real server that is reliable, manageable and secure? Well, does your business need to stay up and running? Can you put off buying a fully capable firewall to protect your network, your data and your business? You can always find something to pare down, but your servers and your network security are the wrong places to cut. Lee Iacocca said "people want economy and they will pay any price to get it." Do your best to make him wrong.

4. Failing the Planning Test
Your network is a complex system, not just an assembly of random parts. While many different products can be mixed and matched together, you need to work with a plan. It is extremely common to see businesses running computers built on ten different platforms, three different versions of Microsoft Office, and sharing ten different printers. Plan, standardize, and build your network logically. Work with a local vendor that you can trust to this for you. And then trust them to do so.

5. Failing the Security Test

Security simply cannot be short changed any longer. And security is not the frosting on your network cake. It is the cake. You need to employ a true DPI (deep packet inspection) firewall to fully scan your Internet traffic. You need to deal with email security threats, protect your remote access. You need to protect your wireless access. You need to maintain networked antivirus software and perform regular software updates. You need to develop security policies and procedures, implement and enforce them. And you need to document these policies and procedures and your efforts to enforce them. It is pretty daunting to do all of this on your own. Find a firm that can guide you through this maze or do the work for you.

6. Failing to Keep Track

Who exactly is in charge of changing backup tapes there? Where are your physical copies of Microsoft Office, or how do you maintain your licensing information? Who knows the WPA key for your wireless access? How many copies of Office, AutoCAD, etc. do you actually have licensing for? Who has the password for your server/firewall/local desktop admin (fill in the blank on your own)? It is surprisingly hard to keep track of all these details, so it is probably not getting done. Work with a good support company that can get you up to speed here.

7. Failing to Keep Current

Designing and implementing a secure network is only the first step. You will need to maintain your network. You will need alerting of failures, software patching and updating, antivirus scans and reporting, security training, firewall monitoring and more, to keep your network running and secure. Not doing these things is simply not an option. If you have the expertise to execute all of this in-house, use it. If you do not have this resident expertise, find a qualified vendor and contract with them.

8. Having Lucky Boy Cater Your Wedding

Few business people would have their contracts written by "a guy that my cousin knows who once went to law school." And who would have their corporate tax return done by the cafeteria lady at the middle school that took a couple of accounting courses. And yet how many businesses out there have their business network, setup and "managed" by the son/daughter/nephew/niece (fill in the blank on your own)? There is virtually nothing more important to your business than your computer network, so take care of it.

Net Sciences, Inc.

Since 1996, Net Sciences has been building reliable, secure networks for our New Mexico customers. On networks of three to 300 computers, supporting law firms, architects, engineers, scientists, accountants and nearly every other profession, Net Sciences is the complete solution to your business network equation. Net Sciences designs, builds and supports networks, keeping them running smoothly, and protecting your data so that you can focus on taking care of business!