

# NETCARE

## HELP DESK

## Squeezing Extra Value Out of Your Existing Computer System

*A report on Best Practices for maximizing the value of your existing system*  
*Author: Darryl McAllister, Managing Director, NetCare HelpDesk*



If you're like most business owners and managers, you probably view your computer system as a necessary evil and a nuisance rather than a competitive business tool. You probably hate spending money on technology and like to hold off upgrading or replacing your computers until it's absolutely necessary.

What really matters to you is generating more revenue, keeping costs down and staying profitable.

**So, here is our list of 5 cheap and effective initiatives you can do to squeeze extra value out of your existing computer system:**

1. **Upgrade your broadband connection** Most new clients we meet are still running an internet connection based on ADSL. There are faster broadband plans available that run at faster speeds than ADSL (for instance ADSL2 can be up to 20 times faster than ADSL), and many providers have plans that are CHEAPER than what you're paying now. For the price of a new \$100 modem, you could experience faster internet speeds at a lower cost.

**Best practice:** Ring your current ISP and ask about your upgrade options. If they don't have any for you, then consider changing providers.

2. **Set up an intranet site** If you are running any version of Windows Server 2003 on your fileserver (including SBS 2003), then you have a free internal internet site, that you can use for document management and displaying important information to your staff. Its called SharePoint and provides your business with a great location to store all your company wide information, like standard forms, procedures, OH&S requirements, company announcements, common contacts and resource booking tools.

**Best practice:** The IT provider who set up your server should have configured your intranet site for you - type in <http://companyweb> and hopefully your default intranet site will appear – if not you will probably need a specialist to spend an hour or two setting it up for you.

# NETCARE

## HELP DESK

3. **Make more use of the features in Outlook** Almost every business uses Microsoft Outlook, but most people only use it for email. Outlook provides a number of additional features that are sitting there waiting to be used – like appointments, standard signatures, resource bookings, out-of-office settings, shared calendars and rules for sorting incoming emails.

**Best practice:** Spend some time learning how to make more effective use of Outlook – buy an Outlook for Dummies book, or ask us for a free copy of our own How-To guide.

4. **Consider introducing Windows phones for key staff.** If your email system is based on recent versions of Microsoft Exchange, then the latest Windows-based mobile phones are simple to connect into your computer system enabling you to receive emails when you're out of the office. Plus when you enter a new contact or change a phone number in Outlook, it automatically makes the change on your phone as well. These days, your clients (and indirectly, you staff!) expect quicker response, and having access to emails when key staff are out of the office can very quickly increase productivity.

**Best practice:** Most businesses have a plan in place with one of the major carriers that enable them to get “free” handsets when its time to renew the contract. We suggest that next time you get that sort of call from your telco, that you purchase a couple of Windows –based phones (Palm Treos and i-mates are two brands we like).

5. **Extend the life of your existing server by one year.** Not many IT hardware providers like to admit this, but all servers, especially name brand ones, should easily last for four years, provided the software is installed professionally in the first place and that the system as a whole is maintained regularly and well.

**Best practice:** Deferring capital expenditure for one extra year is a big benefit – as long as you also protect against hardware failure by extending your hardware warranty for the 4<sup>th</sup> year. This can be done at any time with leading vendors like HP and IBM.