Management Magic

by

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This purpose of this column is to provide useful how-to information on self-management topics that will help the reader work smarter, not harder

To Buy Or Not To Buy Technology – That Is The Question!
"Technology is defined as what wasn't around when you were born."
 ---- Author unknown

From the 22-caliber rifle to the modem, technology has always helped us expand our reach and hit our targets more successfully. Your attitude towards technology is a key factor that is most likely to affect your success. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the introduction of new technology. By paying attention to your communications needs and new technology as it becomes available, you will be ready to evaluate any new technology that appears to offer an economical and effective way to streamline your work. Technology is changing rapidly. To keep up requires a constant learning and a commitment to never-ending improvement. Technology is just a tool and should be managed like any other tool.

I depend on technology to run my professional speaking and consulting business. Technology I use daily includes: personal digital assistant (Palm), top of the line laptop computer (which I consider a three year disposable), laser printer, color printer, Internet, software (including ACT, WORD, Excel, PowerPoint, Quicken, Reflection), fax machine, telephone company technology (such as Memory Call), voice mail, e-mail and modems.

Technology can be a double-edged sword when it comes to making life simpler and working smarter (time management). How do we make good decisions about when to purchase new technology? Two questions to ask when considering new technology are:
1. Will the technology have a pay back in six to twelve months?
2. Will the value the technology adds directly impact your top goals or your employer's top goals?

You can determine whether you need it or not by asking the following questions:
1. Will it reduce expenses?
2. Will it increase revenue?
3. Will it save time?
4. Will it increase productivity?

If the answer to all of the above four questions is no, don't buy it now! If the answer to any of the above four questions is yes, you will want to evaluate the real costs of buying and using any new technology by answering the following questions.

Ask these basic questions before buying:
1. Is it very new or has it been around? How long has it been around?
2. How much will maintenance and supplies cost? Having someone else install the technology may be a bargain. Did you include that cost?
3. How long will it take me and my team to learn to use it? Good advice here is to double your estimate!

4. Will I need to continue to use the old manual system also?
5. Will I need to purchase additional furniture, phone lines, accessories, etc.? Do I have the physical space for this technology?
6. What is the real life of the device under the conditions that I will use it?
7. Will the company be around in the future for service?

Software: Appropriate software is essential to using computers effectively. It is now common for software companies to update software frequently. Often there are "bugs" and problems with new software. Frequently these new software versions are not major revisions yet cost you substantial dollars to upgrade to the latest version. Before upgrading wait until the "bugs" are corrected. Determine if the upgrade has major or a minor revision. If it is only minor revisions, you may want to wait and upgrade at the next revision. Revisions are often only a way for the software company to sell more software. If it was not for the potential sales to those who always upgrade to the latest version, the software company might wait until a major upgrade.

Conclusion and summary: Any technology your purchase is closer to obsolescence the moment you remove it from the box in your office than most other investments. However, if we always use the wait and see attitude, we will be a dinosaur using old technology that isn't as good. Inappropriate technology is costly. There is a balance! Make certain that you are not getting way more than you need or less than you really need when you purchase technology.

Use your time effectively when making a technology decision. Make certain that you are not procrastinating. Most of us are not clear enough about our business plan and technology can become a false hope of solving our problems.

Bottom line. The bottom line consideration is to invest in your goals or to distract from your goals? That is the question? Technology is just a tool and should be managed like any other tool.

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