

B(IT)² INFO SOURCE

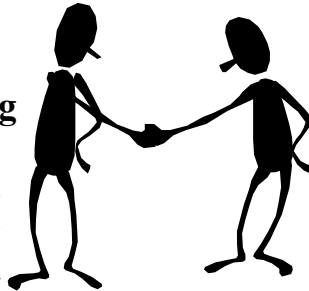
A collaborative publication of the top small business IT Consultants in San Diego

FIRST QUARTER 2003

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The Value of IT Outsourcing



Professional firms have for some time now, relied heavily on outsourcing part or all of their needs. These have ranged from outsourcing small projects, like implementing a time & billing system or upgrading one's software and complete back-office hosting.

A closer look indicates a pattern of reasoning for most of the outsourced work. They can be summarized as follows:

- Cost of labor is the biggest component
- The need for a dedicated, experienced and highly skilled work force for the long term
- Operation and management overhead reduction
- Cost of training

While a number of companies were outsourcing their IT needs, others hired contractors to fulfill their needs. By hiring contractors, they were able to get a highly skilled work force for short periods without having to bear all of the overheads associated with regular employees. With contractors however, one still has to provide them with the tools, infrastructure and office space.

As a result of some of the court's decisions in the recent past on contractor/employer relationship, contractors are no longer as attractive

as they once used to be. Contractor and employee relationships have been challenged by the IRS for tax withholdings and by contractors themselves for

benefits extended to other employees of the company. The courts have decided that in most cases, common law would uphold the rights of a contractor vis-à-vis those of other employees. On the other hand, some firms have used their own professionals with IT expertise to manage or resolve all but the most difficult issues. The problem here, of course, is the loss of that professional's billable hours to a client job. Additionally, sometimes the underlying problem is made worse creating more downtime or higher costs when outside help is called in.

There has been a steady increase in moving IT work to an outside firm. With a good Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place, outsourcing can produce more expert IT solutions while reducing costs and downtime leaving professionals working on what they do best.

Outsourcing provides other benefits over and above average cost savings and skilled work force. It forces groups and teams within the company to more clearly define their roles. It

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HELPFUL LINKS:

- Find wireless hotspots: www.80211hotspots.com
- A slightly technical site for small businesses <http://www.smallbiztechtalk.com/>
- San Diego Telecom Council <http://www.sdtelecom.org>
- Microsoft Office Tools <http://www.office.microsoft.com/assistance>
- Fredette Systems & IT Consulting <http://www.fredette-it.com>

Important Tip: Monthly Maintenance Requirements for PCs

If you use PCs in your business, you probably depend on them to function every time you need them. New PCs can run without flaw for many months without any maintenance. But it is important that certain actions be taken on a monthly basis to ensure continued flawless functionality. For a relatively low cost, an IT consultant can do the following:

- Make sure that your anti-virus soft-

ware is up-to-date

- Maintain a regular backup schedule and test the ability to restore your data
- Ensure that Microsoft security updates have been performed
- Check for hardware and software compatibility issues.
- Make sure you have adequate disk space

B(IT)² ◀ Dave Peiser, Peiser Solutions

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necessitates the introduction of processes, goals and expectations within the organization to effectively utilize the outsourced resources.


- The value proposition for outsourcing could be summarized as follows:
- Direct cost savings to the bottom line
- Reduced overhead and management
- Availability of highly skilled workforce with no cost of training
- Improved communications and processes
- Off load non-value-added work to focus on core competency.

B(IT)² ◀ Clifford Kaiser, Kaiser & Associates

Microsoft Office: The Next Generation

The next release Microsoft Office software will only work on Windows XP and on Windows 2000 operating systems that have Service Pack 3 installed. Office 11 won't be designed for installation on PCs running Windows ME (Millennium Edition), Windows NT, Windows 98, Windows 98 SE (Second Edition) and Windows 95. New features expected to make it into Office 11 might require more advanced technology and security than what's available in older versions of Windows. However, Microsoft could shift its plans if it receives overwhelming feedback from customers.

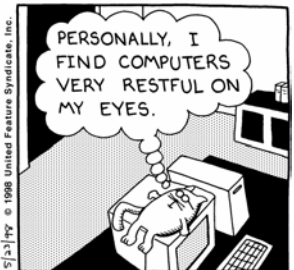
B(IT)² ◀ John Fredette, Fredette Systems



Browsing the Internet?
Instead of using the Back and Forward arrow buttons in the toolbar, hold down the Alt key and use the arrows on your keyboard to do the same thing!

“To go forward, you must backup.”

- Cardinal Rule of Computing



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Is Power Protection worth the Expense?

Power protection for small business computers is often considered a low priority, even though it can actually provide cost savings and potentially save a business from a catastrophe.

Hard costs can add up quickly, as PC hardware can be damaged by brown-outs, blackouts and power surges and spikes, causing more frequent service and system replacement

The minimum protection recommended for any PC is a **surge suppressor**. These often come in the form of a power strip, and business-grade products include equipment protection warranties.

A more robust device is an **Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS)**. A UPS not only provides surge suppression, but also keeps your computer running if there is a blackout, giving you time to save important documents and shut down applications. These units can also be configured to automatically shut-down your PC or server in case no one is in the office.

B(IT)² ◀ Dave Peiser, Peiser Solutions

Virus Update:

What is a virus, anyway?

A virus is a piece of code (computer language) that attaches itself to files on your computer or creates new files, and can cause your computer to do something that you don't want it to do.

How do I get a virus?

You get a virus when you activate the code by opening an infected file. It works a lot like how your body reacts to viruses. When you come into contact with someone who has a virus, you can choose to walk away and will not be exposed to the virus. However, this is fairly impractical (and rude!) so you will likely choose to stay and talk, and allow your immune system to pick up the slack and fight the virus. If your immune system is successful, the virus will not be able to actively attack your body, and you won't get sick! Computer viruses are very much the same. You can be exposed to a virus in many different ways; the most popular today is through

email. It is important to never open any attachments that you are not expecting, but even people you trust can send you an infected message without their knowledge. This is why it is so important to have an immune system on your computer, more commonly known as Anti-Virus software. This immune system works in the background to protect your computer against virus attacks!



Jdbgmgr.exe threat is a HOAX!

You may have received an email that warns you that if you have this cute little teddy

bear icon on your C: drive, you have a virus that will activate itself in 14 days. In actuality, this is a valid Windows system file. So don't worry, you can ignore this email, and keep the cute teddy bear on your system!

B(IT)² ◀ Anna Luksich, Kaiser & Associates

*email your virus questions to John@fredette-it.com

Internet Connections

a little more on the "techie" side of things

Dial-up

Dial-up connections use a modem and a telephone line. Speeds are typically much slower than 56Kbps even with a 56K modem.

Cable Modem

Cable modems provide access via a cable TV network. Speeds average between 3Mbps and 4Mbps - about 50 times faster

than a 56K modem!

DSL

DSL is an always-on, dedicated connection with speeds somewhere between that of a cable modem and a T-1 line. However DSL is not available in all areas. Speeds run up to 3.2Mbps however you can choose from a number of speeds. And because you won't be sharing bandwidth, your speed is constant.

Leased Lines

Leased lines come in two configurations: T-1 and T-3. T-1 is the most common and what is usually meant by "leased line." A T-1 line offers a data transfer rate of 1.5 million bits per second. A T-3 line is much faster, at 45 million bits per second.

A leased line is a dedicated connection, meaning that it is permanently connected to the Internet. Leased lines are pricey. They typically are used only by companies whose business is built around the Internet or who need to transfer massive amounts of data.

B(IT)² ◀ John Fredette, Fredette Systems

"I think there is a world market for maybe five computers."

Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943

Looking for Software to manage your contacts?

Outlook XP (Microsoft Corp.)

You may already own Outlook, since it is included in all the Microsoft Office Suites. Outlook provides an integrated contact, calendar, task and notes database. Merging Word documents with contact info is straightforward. If you need to manage projects or tasks that are not necessarily client-specific, you may find Outlook to be more beneficial than ACT!

B(IT)² ◀ Dave Peiser, Peiser Solutions

TIDB(IT)S:

Microsoft Office XP – Which Software Suite should I buy?

Microsoft offers several different Office XP Suites that can be purchased either pre-installed on a new computer or from a retail store. Here's a quick rundown on your choices:

	Pre-Installed (OEM)		Retail Stores		
	Small Business	Professional with Publisher	Professional	Standard	Developer
Word (Word Processor)	X	X	X	X	X
Excel (Spreadsheet)	X	X	X	X	X
Outlook (Email, contacts calendar)	X	X	X	X	X
PowerPoint (Presentations)		X	X	X	X
Access (Database)		X	X		X
Publisher	X	X			
FrontPage (Website Creation)					X
Sharepoint Team Services					X
Developer Tools					X

B(IT)² ◀ Dave Peiser, Peiser Solutions

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

A preview of next quarter's main article

As your business grows, handing off aspects of it makes sense. Information Technology may be one of the first areas you would like to offload. It may be to get a new system up and running or troubleshoot and tweak an existing system. In either case, offloading your IT needs can make life much easier for you.

You should be able to hire any IT consultant that appeals to you, as long as you are sure they can do the job. A consultant may have worked on big projects, but that doesn't mean much if they can't help you in the area you need.

Ask for a referral - at best, names of spe-

cific individuals. It may have been a particular person that made the consulting job so successful - not necessarily a firm itself.

Get References - Getting other businesses to go into depth about their experience with a certain consultant might not be easy, but if you hear lots of praise, you may have found yourself a winner.

Gauge the consultant's enthusiasm and give as many details as possible about what you need. Both you and the consultant need to feel that you're well suited for the partnership.

B(IT)² ◀ John Fredette, Fredette Systems



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