

How to upgrade your IT infrastructure **with confidence**

Maintaining your IT infrastructure is an essential requirement - but understanding what to upgrade and when can be a real challenge

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How to upgrade your IT infrastructure **with confidence**

Maintaining your IT infrastructure is an essential requirement - but understanding what to upgrade and when can be a real challenge. Many business owners and managers put off upgrading for as long as possible. Yet for anyone determined to provide the best possible service to their customers and stay ahead of the competition, failing to upgrade simply isn't an option.

Letting your business plod along with an outdated infrastructure is a huge risk. Not only will it inevitably lead to the kind of performance issues that can either slow down or completely stop operations, it also makes you an easy target for hackers. Old software and operating systems present huge security risks, leaving business-critical data wide open to cyber-crime.

So, why do so many business leaders put their companies at risk by delaying IT upgrades? It all comes down to a few common attitudes and ideas that stop them upgrading with confidence.



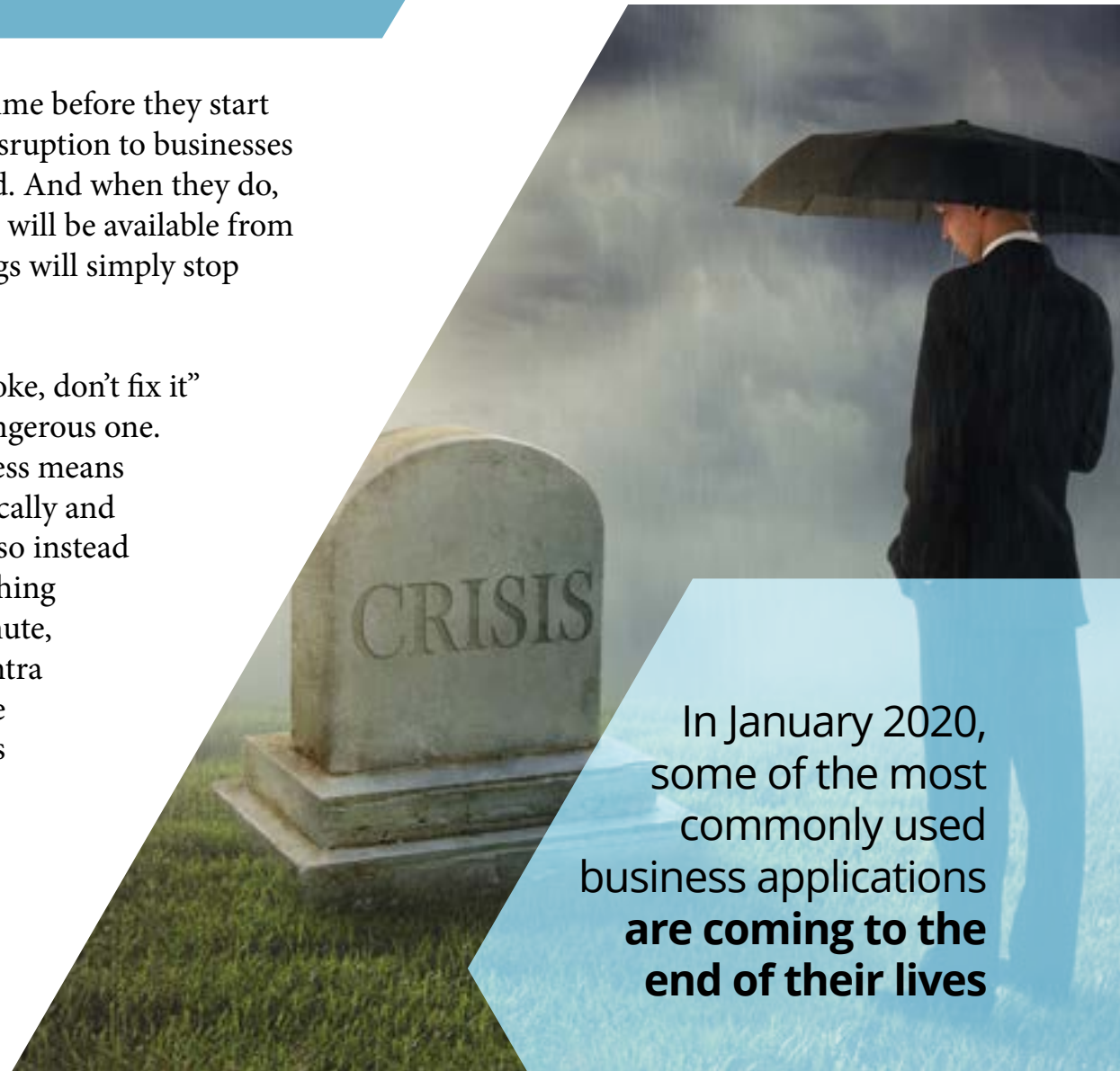
“If it ain’t broke, why fix it?”

Any change is going to mean at least a brief period of discomfort while people get to grips with a new way of working. Coupled with the perceived costs of an upgrade, people are often reticent to take the plunge; particularly if everything still seems to be ticking along nicely. But the trouble with technology is that it has a way of letting you down at the most inconvenient moments, and that’s especially true when it’s going out of date.

In January 2020, some of the most commonly used business applications are coming to the end of their lives. Small Business Server 2011, Windows Exchange Server 2008, Exchange 2010, Windows 7 and Office 2010 are already past their prime, but in less than 9 months’ time they will be completely obsolete. Even if they look fine now, it’s

just a matter of time before they start causing major disruption to businesses all over the world. And when they do, no more support will be available from Microsoft – things will simply stop working.

The “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” approach is a dangerous one. Success in business means thinking strategically and being proactive, so instead of leaving everything until the last minute, change your mantra to “if it will make things better, let’s do it”.



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Fear of change ("Who Moved My Cheese?")

Human beings are said to be born with just two fears; the fear of falling and of loud noises. But as we grow, we learn to become fearful of all sorts of things, including change.

Being faced with an unfamiliar situation takes us out of our comfort zones and puts us into that "fight or flight" mode that produces sweaty palms, palpitations and sleepless nights. Whether it's moving house, changing jobs or having to give a big speech to a room full of people, change really freaks us out.

Fear of the unknown puts many people off making big business decisions like upgrading their IT infrastructure, and it was beautifully illustrated by Spencer Johnson in the motivational business book *"Who Moved My Cheese?"*.

The story features four characters; two mice called Sniff and Scurry and two people, Hem and Haw. They all live in a maze and are constantly on the lookout for the one thing that makes them happy: cheese. When the humans find a corridor full of the stuff, they build their entire lives around it, becoming arrogant and complacent in the process.

Meanwhile, the mice have continued to look for different sources of food, working together to find new stashes of cheese to keep them going should anything go wrong.

When the supply in the corridor inevitably runs out, the mice aren't surprised. Having mentally prepared, they've already got plenty of other options to fall back on.

The humans, on the other hand, haven't been so smart. Hem is furious, demanding "who moved my cheese?". When Haw suggests they move outside of the corridor to look for another source of cheese, Hem feels so hard done by and scared of the unknown he refuses to budge.

Haw faces his fears and sets off on an intrepid adventure, finding plentiful amounts of cheese along

the way. But Hem remains crippled by fear and stays in his corridor, starving in the process. Haw writes a series of messages for his friend, including "If you refuse to change, you can become extinct", "What would you do if you weren't afraid?" and "When you move beyond your fear, you feel free."

The moral of the story is that change happens, and the only way to avoid starvation is to be open to new ideas. By upgrading your IT infrastructure you'll be able to enjoy a more flexible, productive way of working that facilitates new initiatives while staying ahead of changing market conditions. And most importantly, you'll be keeping your business alive.

Change is inevitable, especially in the fast-moving world of computers. Business leaders who embrace new technology and aren't afraid to step out of their comfort zones go on to thrive, while those who remain suspicious of change get left behind.



Lack of knowledge

Like any business decision, it's important to understand (and be able to justify) the reasons behind an upgrade. But keeping track of every little aspect of your IT infrastructure is no mean feat, particularly if computers aren't really your thing.

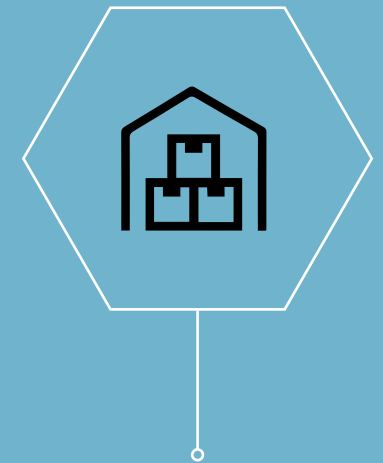
Depending on the size of your organisation and your business model, you'll need to consider all sorts of different devices outside of the office as well as on-site. Not only will you need to keep all your desktops up to date, it's important to make sure mobile phones, tablets and laptops are all part of the upgrade process too.

Changes in IT happen pretty much every day, and there are no hard and fast rules for how to how to schedule all the changes needed for all hardware and software

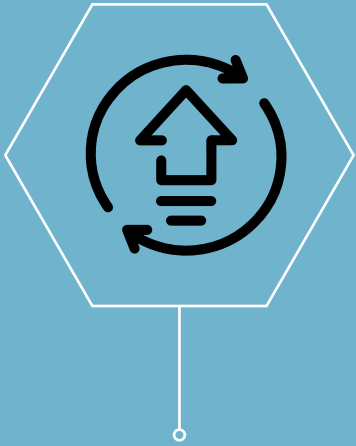
in an organisation. Some upgrades can be done automatically and remotely, while others are done in response to threats, system glitches and applications coming to the end of their lives.

As a general rule, hardware will need to be replaced less often than software, but you can never be complacent. Even if you're not a whizz with computers it's important to anticipate problems and keep an eye out for new tech to help your business move forward.

The successful management and monitoring of your IT assets starts with a detailed inventory. **If you haven't already, draw up a list of all your current hardware and software, including:**



- Operating systems (to find out which you're using, click the start button, type "computer" in the search box, right click, then click "properties")
- Servers
- Desktops, laptops and mobile devices
- Central processing unit, hard drive and memory capacity
- Year of purchase
- Software installations
- Warranty expiration
- Support contracts



Once you've completed your list and you know how old your existing software and hardware is, you'll find it much easier to determine which items you need to upgrade first.

Then, you'll be able to consider your options and work out which of the following options are best for you:

1. Upgrade key components. The cheapest option, this is a temporary solution that can offer a quick fix if you're on a tight budget by adding more memory, processors, hard drive and networking equipment.
2. Buy new hardware. It's a costlier option but replacing your hardware can give you up to 5 years' more time to play with and significantly speed up your work processes.
3. Move to the cloud. With 88% of businesses now using some form of cloud computing, this is by far the most flexible and up-to-date way of working. Under the cloud model, everything from storage to servers is all hosted online, giving users the freedom to work anywhere with an internet connection. And because it dramatically reduces the need for expensive on-site hardware and maintenance, it offers huge cost savings.

...which leads us nicely to:

A large, stylized graphic of a house with the word "UPDATE" written vertically on its side. The house is composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent shapes, creating a layered effect. The word "UPDATE" is in a bold, white, sans-serif font, oriented vertically along the right side of the house's facade. The background is a dark blue gradient.

Cost

One of the biggest reasons people put off upgrading their IT infrastructure is a fear that the costs will outweigh the benefits. But upgrading – particularly when it comes to cloud based solutions – can actually save a fortune over time.

Moving to a full or part cloud allows businesses to dramatically reduce their capital expenditure, saving substantial costs on equipment, software and infrastructure. Because additional processing power and storage space can be rented over the internet instead of having to be installed and upgraded on-site, there's no need to spend big money on servers and other cash-heavy hardware.

There's also significant savings to be made on maintenance, licensing and renewal fees too, not to mention IT staffing costs.

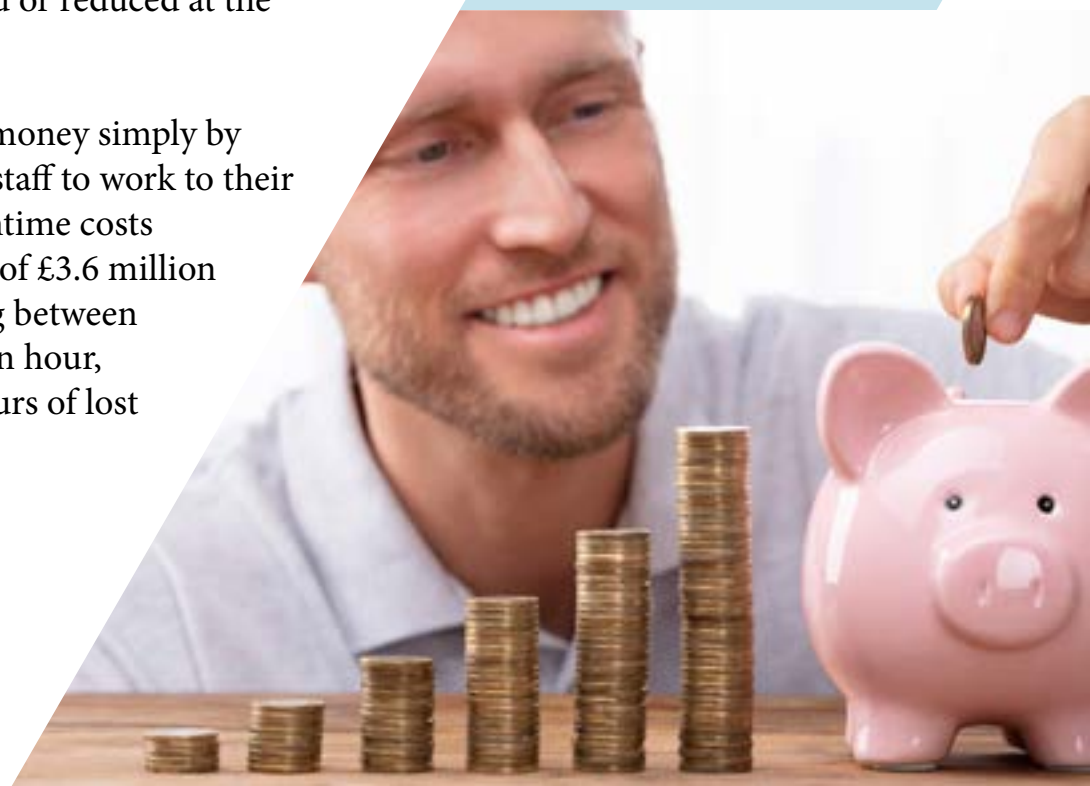
Cloud computing also opens up a whole new world of opportunities in which staff can access their work documents any time,

any place. Gone are the days when people downed tools at 5pm on the dot and didn't think about work again until 9am the following morning. Today's workplace is mobile and efficient, with projects collaborated on and documents edited on the way back from meetings or from the comfort of the family sofa.

Cloud computing also allows businesses to quickly scale up or down according to need. Before, organisations would have to buy in extra technology and manpower during busier periods, using capital that could be better used elsewhere. Today, resources can be added or reduced at the touch of a button.

Upgrading also saves money simply by enabling systems and staff to work to their optimum levels. Downtime costs companies an average of £3.6 million every year, or anything between £4,300 and £258,000 an hour, accounting for 545 hours of lost staff productivity.

Upgrading
also saves
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Stress-free upgrades

Infrastructure upgrades clearly offer huge advantages in terms of productivity, costs, growth and security. But implementing all the necessary changes isn't easy. Your best option for a stress-free, seamless upgrade is to enlist a reputable MSP who can manage the process from start to finish.

By working in partnership with a trusted expert, you'll be able to make an informed decision that will help you get the most out of your IT infrastructure for years to come.

Upgrading your IT infrastructure is one of the greatest things you can do for your company, and any costs will prove themselves to be well worth it over time.

By ensuring your system is not only fit for purpose, but also enables your people to do their jobs as efficiently as possible, you'll be keeping your business competitive, reliable and responsive.

It's important to remember the critical role that IT plays in your organisation, supporting all operations and processes. Keep it up to date and you'll improve your company's efficiency, service and security.

To find out more about how to upgrade your IT infrastructure with confidence, contact us today for a no-obligation consultation.

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