

Should My New Office Computer be an Apple?

Hi fellow solos,

I bought my office computer back in July of 2011, and my secretary's computer back in April of 2010. Computers seem a bit slow to me, but seem to be working. how long do you keep your office desktop computers?

Also, I am thinking of switching from PC's to apple computers. I am a patent attorney, can apple's handle everything a patent attorney would need to do, like logging on to private pair at the USPTO, EFS filing at the USPTO, ePCT, using apple Word that is compatible with client's PC Word, Adobe, etc? Are apple's worth the additional expense? Thanks.

Not directly on point as to your question, but still worth watching:

David Lee - I'm Starting to Hate Apple

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdRpgWYWCZg>

Eugene Lee, California

I have an iPhone and an iPad, but I wouldn't buy a Mac. You pay a substantial premium for a computer that is underpowered compared to a similar PC. And although it runs MS Office, the Mac has always been like the neglected stepsister in the Microsoft family--Word and Outlook have annoying functionality differences because the Mac OS isn't Microsoft's focus. And frankly, Apple's edge in design elegance and simplicity seems to have largely withered away since Jobs died. The Mac Touch bar is pretty much useless, and anybody who's seen the iTunes program--on Mac or PC--can tell you that Apple programmers put out their share of clusterf_ks too.

As for the age of Mike's computers--an 8-year-old computer will still run most programs fairly well these days, but you are probably approaching the end of the useful life of those machines for everyday work. Better to get replacements where you can plan a transition to the new machines before you are scrambling to replace an old PC with a fried motherboard.

Kevin W. Grierson, Virginia

I'm a big Mac fan, but I also run Windows in virtualization. I don't know if I'd recommend it to long time Windows users - many who have trouble with the switch.

David A. Shulman, Florida

6 years ago, I had the same question. So, I bought a used Mac off eBay, knowing that I could see it if I didn't like it. Within 10 minutes of using it, I told me secretary we were going to be a Mac office.

We both love Macs. The only issue is family law specific programs that run on Windows and QuickBooks. If you can live without patent law specific programs or QuickBooks, I say give it a try with a used Mac. Look for one that has a transferable Apple Care warranty. If you hate it, sell it on ebay and you be out a hundred bucks or so. If you love it, welcome to the Mac Lawyer Family.

Anthony S. Alpert, California

If you are feeling adventurous, your best bet is always to build a PC.

It's a matter of sticking pieces together. There's a good buy guide out there: <http://www.logicalincrements.com/>

Anything in the "Good" to "Great" range will be more than you need, as that site is mostly meant for gamers. You can save a ton of money doing this.

Dennison Marzocco, New Jersey

Michael, everyone who uses QuickBooks for Mac hates it, so I never tried it.

Anthony S. Alpert

You might want to look at QBOnline.com. I converted a couple years back from QB desktop (which was a pay once, use for years deal) to QBOnline (which is a monthly pay deal). Despite the higher cost, I would never go back. QBOnline offers online automatic syncing in the background with your bank accounts and credit cards, and that alone has saved me many hours of bookkeeping each month. Also, you can just give your bookkeeper/CPA account access and you never have to email another "accountants copy" of QB again.

They just go in as and whenever they need to.

Eugene Lee

Several (10?) years ago, when I first opened my own office, I used QuickBooks for Mac.

The version that was available at that time was not directly compatible with Quicken for Windows (which my accountant used). As a result, I had to save the output of QuickBooks for Mac to some other format (I don't now recall

what), and my accountant would have to import it into Quicken for Windows. Then we would have to reverse the process to get the revised information back onto my system.

I don't know that any information was ever lost or corrupted, but it was not seamless.

I have no idea if the integration between the two platforms has since improved (as it has, for instance, with Microsoft Word).

Brian H. Cole, California

I second this - at my consulting firm we used QBOonline almost from the very start. Made it pretty easy to access and integrating with our accountant/bookkeeper was trivial.

Disclaimer: Still never been a lawyer at Microsoft or any other company

Ben M. Schorr, Washington

" I am thinking of switching from PC's to apple computers "

Why? That is necessary info to get any advice.

Anyway, before you start, you should try to spend a couple of ordinary days tracking what you do. how often do you use programs; how often are you working with the OS; how often are you using shortcuts; etc.

You should also identify anything which you want to change when you have new PCs, whether it's "move all fields online" or "interact better w/ my iPhone" or anything else.

You should also specify whether you'll have professional help for the install and setup of the new boxes.

But at a base level I will say that switching is likely to be more difficult than you expect, especially if you use multiple programs.

As for age: yes, you're due for a replacement.

Erik Hammarlund, Massachusetts

One other thing to consider--unless you have subscriptions for the software programs you mention, even if they have Mac versions you will likely have to buy them again in addition to buying the computers unless you want to run Windows on the Macs.

Kevin W. Grierson

I don't keep computers longer than five years. If the only problem is slowness, you might want to try using SSDs instead of he's. That's probably where the slowdown is.

Lesley Hoenig, Michigan

I'd also recommend an SSD. I added one to my laptop and it seems twice as fast. I've never added a hardware component (memory, whatever) to a computer that had such a huge effect.

But Lesley's also right that a computer much more than 5 years old should probably be replaced before it breaks when you need it.

Kevin W. Grierson

Motherboards always seem to be the thing that dies for me.

Lesley Hoenig

The more popular that Macs get, the more they are targetable. But it's true they are a bit less vulnerable, if that's a main concern.

Personally I prefer a tower workstation PC. The size makes for efficient cooling and they are often fairly quiet. Also they have plenty of room to install additional hard drives and memory. I understand Apple's desire to control hardware interactions but you can get around that to a reasonable degree by buying a PC which is preconfigured with your preferred OS and graphics hardware. There's never a problem adding memory (I have 16G) or drives (I have an SSD RAID and a few more drives, all user installed at low prices.)

I have had great luck w/ HP business refurbs. For example, here's one with a 7th generation i7. It costs \$650 (no that is not a typo.) The chip was only released in Q1 /17 so it can't be too old. If you spend another \$600 on upgrades you will get to the second-cheapest imac equivalent (\$1250) but you could add four 250G SSDs in RAID format (yay!) and a \$300 monitor, and you'll have a much nicer machine.

HP z240 W10P-64 i7 7700 3.6GHz 1TB SATA 16GB(2x8GB) DDR4 2400
DVDRW Rfrbd TWR WS

Erik Hammarlund

I like to build my own computers. Best bang for the buck. My son still uses the rig I built back in 2009 for \$1300 and it still plays all the latest shooter games with ease (with upgraded graphics card of course)

Gene Lee

I've become a huge Mac fan. My first MacBook Pro lasted about 8-9 years.

Now on my second. Sometimes I have to work on Windows, but I absolutely hate it.

Aztek Steve Terrell, Indiana

I thought there was a QuickBooks for Mac version being sold?

Michael Blake, Connecticut

The why, is it seems I am often battling conflicts between software programs on my PC system, and dealing with viruses/antivirus, unwanted 3rd party downloads. My understanding is that the MAC computers seem to have fewer conflicts, and less virus issues.

As an associate attorney, I went from a PC office to a MAC office back in 2000, and the transition for me was painless. However, now that I am a solo, I am the responsible person for the computers (except when I hire a third party to set up my computers or fix things I cannot fix), so switching to MACs will probably be more painful since I will be the first line computer guy.

I use QuickBooks, word, PowerPoint, adobe pro, outlook calendar-email-contacts-notes on a daily basis.

Michael Blake

Case in point about conflicts. I have not been able to log into the USPTO electronic business center for two weeks because something was wrong with my PKI certificates. Turns out, this was all caused to my antivirus program preventing me from getting Java updates. So, I had to figure out how to turn off my antivirus program, update java, and then I was able to fix my PKI certificates! Spent HOURS and HOURS on this problem! ARGGG!

Michael Blake

