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Computers for Staff

My assistant starts work on Monday, and I need to get her a computer ASAP.

Do most of you purchase fairly inexpensive computers for your staff? Also, is there any specific spec that is critical? I know sufficient memory is important, but I have never run out of memory on any of my computers thus far.

Generally it isn't an issue of running out of memory, the computer will start swapping memory for disk space on your hard drive as a substitute. What happens is that programs tend to operate very slowly and will occasionally crash due to low memory conditions and issues with swapping. Increasing memory, especially with memory being so low cost, will give you the most bang for your buck.

Duke Drouillard

There are two kinds of memory. Hard Drive memory - 40+Gigabytes is standard, then there is RAM memory. That makes the programs go, and you need at least 512 MB or better 1GB of RAM.

No need to buy top of the line, but might need to network your computers to make it easy. Geek Squad or other computer group might be best help if you don't have a client who does computer work. Most people who do computer work for a living can set up a simple - but safe - network.

Good luck.

Ted A. Waggoner

Duke's response was fine, as far as it went.

These days the push is on to get new computers with the latest operating system from M$...one of the various flavors of Vista. Many folks knowledgeable in the field say to avoid Vista at this point, for a variety of reasons.

A number of manufacturers will still let you buy a computer with Windows XP as the OS. My suggestion is to go online and scope out prices, configurations, etc. A minimum should be a Pentium chip in the 3.0 GHZ range or a Core 2 Duo processor. A gigabyte of RAM. 160 gigabyte hard drive. After that it's kinda up to you. If you're going to be networked to this machine, be sure to get a network interface card too. An alternate

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form of networking can be done wirelessly, but using ethernet cable is probably preferred for a number of reasons. A quick perusal of the Dell Small Business site shows a low end Vostro mini-tower from $319, however, by the time you get it to a reasonable office machine, you're closer to $700.

And waiting to order a computer 3 days before your assistant arrives is cutting it too close. Don't buy something just to get something as you will probably come to regret that choice.

Tom Simchak

Whoa, that's a bit high of a minimum! Or maybe it isn't, depending on what the assistant will be doing at the computer. My guess is that those specs are way above what's needed for any office assistant, unless she'll be doing a lot of photo or video work. If she's reading email, looking up stuff online, and using Word she could easily use a 2ghz with maybe a 60gig HD, 512 gig RAM minimum.

Steve O'Donnell

I think of it in a slightly different way. I am buying a computer for me for use by my staff. That may give you a different standard to use in making your purchase.

Paul Hogan

Depends entirely upon what she's going to do with the machine - Word and Outlook? Or is she going to do more advanced things?

Generally speaking I agree with the advice for Windows XP Pro (Make sure it's Pro!) and a minimum of 1GB of RAM. You probably won't find a hard drive smaller than 60GB on a new computer and that should be fine. Any modern CPU should do fine as well - just find the sweet spot on the price. If it's $10 to upgrade to the next faster processor then I'd do it. If it's $100 I don't think I would. Don't fear the AMD processors if that's a better bargain -- I have some AMD machines alongside my Intel machines and they run just fine.

Don't forget a monitor. 19" flat panels are cheap today.

Ben M. Schorr

Thanks for all of your helpful responses. I waited until I was absolutely swamped to hire an assistant, so now I'm having to do things in quick fashion...

O.K., but remember: if you don't have time to do it right, when do you have time to do it over? Do you have an IT consultant? If so it may be worthwhile to delegate this task to them. Especially considering that they

can probably do it better and faster than you can and I'll bet your billable rate is higher than theirs.

Ben M. Schorr

I don't mean to convey that I "don't have time to do it right." I spent countless hours reading reviews and researching all-in-ones and computers before I purchased mine and both have operated flawlessly and are the best I have ever had! I was simply trying to determine (based on others' experiences) the computer requirements that would be necessary for my assistant's computer as I want her to have everything she needs, but I don't want to spend a lot of money on a system with more than she needs...

Sure, I understand. Of course almost any modern computer will probably be more than she needs. For Word and Outlook I think any modern PC with at least 1GB of RAM and Windows XP Pro will be fine.

Best wishes and aloha,

Ben M. Schorr

Depending on how old 'your' computer is, it might be better to buy something new and powerful for yourself and rotate your machine to the assistant.

Steve O'Donnell

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