BCS Technology Review

"Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier, and More Profitably"

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Microsoft® Authorized Education Reseller

The Costliest Mistakes I See A Lot of Companies Make

We recently completed a fairly large project for an elementary school. We basically replaced all of their servers and network equipment, which were past their useful life and in some cases out-right failing.

A school is much like a business where downtime can seriously affect its "bottom line" which is to educate kids. Unlike the days when I went to school, computers have replaced pencils and papers as the tools educators use to administer their school.

Schools go through an extensive bidding process for a project such as this. Cost is one consideration, but it's not the only one. Typically there are 4 to 6 categories that they consider when choosing a provider to do this work; not the least of which is the ability of the provider to properly install a lot of equipment without a lot of down time.

In this case, we won the bid. Why? Firstly, I believe or qualifications and experience were superior to the competition. But in this case our bid was lower than the rest. Substantially. Over 50% lower. That is not a typo.

How is that possible you may be wondering? Did we use second rate equipment? No. We used Cisco exclusively network for the network (we are certified partners), HP servers (partners), and Microsoft Software (also partners).

While we didn't see the other bids other than the cost, this is why I believe we were so much lower:

Planning: Proper planning prevents mistakes and rework. Rework is expensive (especially for the customer). Also, we plan for the unforeseen. For example, if there was a problem with a new server, we had the old one fully backed up and 'preserved' to put back in if something went wrong.

Training: In our world, training means more than learning how to do things; it means that you need to prove it to the manufacturer. They call this certification. For example, we are a Certified Microsoft Authorized Educational Reseller (AER) which means we can sell Microsoft Software at a discount of about 80%. While it's true that this substantial discount is only available for accredited academic institutions (and their staff), our partnerships with our other vendors allows us to offer discounts to businesses as well.

Component Selection: If you needed a reliable fuel efficient car to commute to work, would you buy a Hummer? Not likely but this is what I see a lot of companies do when it comes to technology. We deal exclusively with reputable manufacturers that serve the small and medium business (and educational) market. For example, Cisco is known for its products that are used by large corporations, but they also make a line of products for the small and medium market that they call "Cisco Small Business Pro". This line offers the same quality and support as their expensive "Enterprise" line but without a few features that are simply not needed by smaller companies. And the warrantee is the same as, or in some cases superior to their more expensive products.

This can all be summed up in our mission statement:

"***To provide our clients the correct technology products, properly installed, and to keep them healthy.***"

Economic News:

Arizona Billionaires, Az Republic, April 2012
The largest fortune in Arizona by far has been amassed by a tire company!

1. Bruce Halle	Founder Discount Tire	$4.2 billion
2. Bennett Dorrance	Campbell's Soup heir	$1.8 billion.
3. Bob Parsons	Founder Go Daddy	$1.5 billion.
5. John Sperling	Founder of University of Phoenix	$1.2 billion
4. Peter Sperling	Son of the University of Phoenix	$1.2 billion.

MasterCard, Visa warn of cardholder data breach, AP Business Writer
NEW YORK - MasterCard and Visa said Friday that they had notified issuers of its credit cards of a potential breach of the security of customer accounts. Visa blamed a third company for the error.

Trading of the stock of Global Payments Inc., which processes credit card transactions, was halted after published reports said it was responsible. The stock fell 9 percent for the day before trading was stopped.
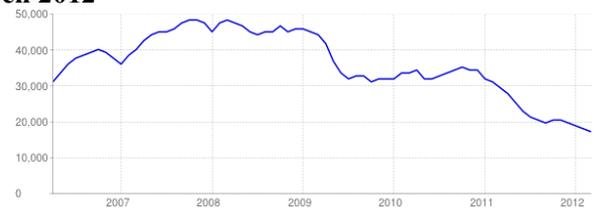
Walmart chairman, wife donate $27.5M to ASU, The Republic, March 2012
Arizona State University's Global Institute of Sustainability has received a $27.5 million gift from the Rob and Melani Walton Fund of the Walton Family Foundation.

ASU said it will use the money to address problems and create solutions in such areas as energy, water, climate, urbanization, social transformation and decision-making.

Fewer homes are for sale in Phoenix area, The Republic, March 2012
A surge in buyers and a drop in foreclosures have left a shortage of houses for sale in metro Phoenix, according to a newly released report on the state of the housing market.

The shrinking inventory has prompted bidding wars and pushed up home prices in many communities.

Arizona's Feb. jobless rate unchanged at 8.7 percent, The Republic, April 2012
As Arizona's busy tourist season hit its stride, the state's employers created 42,600 more jobs in February compared with the same month a year earlier.

The modest surge of new jobs, a gain of 1.8 percent, benefited almost every jobs sector, from Arizona's beleaguered construction industry to the growing private-education/health-care field.

IT center to bring 460 jobs to Tempe, The Republic, April 2012
Maricopa County and the state are investing $4 million in a bid to bring more than 400 new high-wage jobs to the Valley.

The county Board of Supervisors on Wednesday approved a $1 million grant to Silicon Valley Bank, a commercial bank based in Santa Clara, Calif., to open an information-technology operations center in downtown Tempe that, over seven years, would create 460 jobs with an average annual salary of at least $88,000.

Private Facebook trading dries up as IPO looms, CNET, Mar 2012
The window for trading pre-public Facebook shares has closed as investors' anticipation for the social giant's IPO ramps up. If you missed the opportunity to grab these shares (or didn't qualify to make a purchase), you must now line up with the hordes of general investors who will be buying this stock on the public exchange.

The financial data company PrivCo reported that the final secondary auction of Facebook shares closed at $44.10 a share, pegging the company value at $104 billion. Whether Facebook trades up or down from that point when the shares start trading is an open question, and regardless, shares acquired at these auctions will be locked up and unavailable for trading until the lockup period expires; 180 days is typical for IPOs.

Product Highlight: Microsoft Volume Licensing

A lot of our clients find it difficult to manage all the licenses that they use every day throughout their organization. For example, if you purchase Microsoft Office with your computer, it's probably an OEM license. This type of license goes with the computer and can't be legally moved to another machine. The owner must also maintain the license "media" (the disc or card that came with it) and the invoice for the purchase to keep everything legal.

For businesses that have more than just a few computers, the responsibility and work required keeping track of this can become a problem. In these cases, BCS recommends a volume license (or what some of us in the industry call a "real" license). Simply stated, a volume license makes it easier and more affordable to run software on multiple computers within an organization.

By acquiring software licenses through Microsoft Volume Licensing programs, you only pay for the software license. This eliminates the need to track all the boxes, cards, and invoices and purchasing in volume often reduces cost and provides more customized purchasing options and improved software management.

In the case of some Volume Licensing programs, you may also purchase Software Assurance. Software Assurance (SA) has been a part of Microsoft's licensing offerings since 2001. While occasionally perceived as an "insurance policy" to deliver access to free software upgrades, SA has expanded greatly since its introduction and is now widely viewed as an essential ingredient for maximizing the value of Microsoft volume licensing purchases.

Software Assurance comes with these great features:

> **New Product Versions**: With New Product Versions, every Microsoft product license that is covered by Software Assurance can be upgraded to the most recent version. This helps simplify procurement since customers don't have to purchase a new license in order to upgrade products covered by SA.

> **E-Learning**: E-Learning helps employees gain skills to be more productive with their current software, or get ready for new software versions with online training developed by Microsoft experts.

> **Home Use Program:** The Home Use Program (HUP) provides licensed employees access to a low-cost copy of Microsoft® Office Professional Plus 2010 and other applications to install and use on a home computer during the term of a customer's Software Assurance coverage.

In other words, you get support from Microsoft and BCS along with your product, and you can update your entire office and organization with the latest copy without extra costs.

For educational institutions, Microsoft has some fantastic programs with huge discounts (80% or more) and great benefits. Schools should NEVER pay retail costs for software, ever. (Shameless Plug: BCS is authorized by Microsoft to sell software to schools at educational pricing: most IT companies aren't.)

So the next time you are considering buying 5 or more Microsoft licenses, you may want to consider a volume license. It's often cheaper and will make your life easier.

We Love Referrals:

Can we buy you dinner and send you to the movies? How about make a donation to your favorite charity in your name? Earn rewards for referring new customers to BCS.

BCS Loaner Program:

Did you know that BCS offers equipment for free loan to our Managed Services clients such as:

1. LCD Projector
2. 24 Port Switch
3. Netbook
4. Conference Room (seats 6)

Technology News:

Google self-driving car chauffeurs legally blind man, CNET, Mar 2012
Google yesterday released a poignant video demonstrating the potential of its self-driving car.
In the short video, a man walks out of his house and gets behind the wheel of one of Google's robotic cars, a Toyota Prius equipped with an array of high-tech gadgetry including radar, lasers, and cameras.
The car takes the man, Steve Mahan, for a ride including visits to a Taco Bell and the dry cleaners without him needing to touch the steering wheel or pedals. Midway through, Mahan says he is legally blind, having lost about 95 percent of his vision.

With Bump Pay, sending money is easier than ever, CNET, Mar 2012
Owe your friend $20? There's no need to go to an ATM. Just bump him the money.
Starting today, sending money can be easier than ever with the launch of Bump Pay, a new iPhone app from the makers of the popular contact and photo sharing service Bump.
For Bump Pay to work, both you and your friend need to have the app and a PayPal account. And the first time you use it, you have to enter the e-mail address for your PayPal account and your PayPal password.
But then, sending the money is as simple as typing in how much you want to send, bumping phones, and then confirming the transaction.

Phone buyers getting smarter, USA Today, Mar 2012
The smartphone continues to edge out traditional cellphones as the mobile device of choice, but there are hold-outs among buyers.
Nearly half of U.S. mobile phone subscribers, 49.7%, now own smartphones capable of streaming video, texting, downloading apps and other computer-like functions, according to Nielsen's latest survey of mobile subscribers. That's up sharply from 36% a little more than a year ago.

Have you backed up your data today? CNET, Mar 31 2012
Now in its second year, World Backup Day was created by Ismail Jadun, a biology student from Youngstown State in Ohio who saw the need for it after reading comments on the lack of backup awareness on social news site Reddit. "I was just a college student who was looking for something interesting to do," Jadun said. Turns out there was a need for it, too.
A recent Harris Interactive online survey found that only 7 percent of respondents backed up their data on a daily basis, while 23 percent said they performed backups every month. Considering that people create and generate 1.8 zettabytes (!!) of data per year, that puts a lot of info at risk.

AT&T promises biggest launch ever for Lumia 900, CNET, Mar 2012
AT&T and Nokia are bringing out the big guns when they launch the Lumia 900 next month.
"At all levels, this is a notch above anything we've ever done," AT&T device head Jeff Bradley said in an interview with CNET, noting that includes the launch of the iPhone.
The $99.99 price makes it the most affordable flagship phone AT&T has ever offered. Bradley would only say Nokia was being aggressive with the price accordance to its strong push to get into the U.S.
"We're going big," Bradley said. "We're really bullish."

Misplaced data leave 800,000 Californians exposed, CNET, Mar 2012
Electronic files containing the names, Social Security numbers, and other private data about 800,000 California adults and children were there one minute. And the next, they were gone.
A spokesman for the state's Office of Technology Services told the AP that it believes the container holding the devices wasn't properly secured and fell out during transport. The incident highlights just how easily data can be lost, despite the protections that are put in place.