

Ring in the New Year with Old Technology[®]

The new year has arrived. Did you include technology resolutions in your self-improvement package this year? One of the most sensible resolutions you can make is to get some old technology. That is right, old technology—not used, but not the latest and greatest.

When the new fiscal year arrives in the technology industry, merchants want to unload last year's models, often at a substantial discount. Inventory must be reduced because the shelf space is needed for the newer, better, more expensive models.

More often than not, last year's model is perfectly fine for what you need to do this year. So consider buying last year's technology and find yourself some bargains.

Some specific suggestions:

Get an "Old" Palm

Those who have not tried Palm computing don't know what they are missing. Chris at my local Franklin Covey store tells me that the new, high-end Tungsten W is about to debut at a price of about \$700. It doubles as a cell phone and has many great features. The Tungsten T came out in October of 2002, and will continue to be in hot demand at \$450. If you want your Palm to double for phone duty then spring for one of these, otherwise...

Pick up a Palm Zire for \$100. Its only real limitation is that it only has two megabytes of memory and cannot be upgraded. This limits you to about 2,500 of your tasks and 5,000 of your addresses, which frankly, should be enough for most people, even lawyers.

Need more power? Then pick up a Palm 130, which not only boasts eight megabytes and a color display, but can accept an expansion memory card if you need more space in the future. For \$200 it will do the trick for most people.

Need spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations on the road? Consider the Palm m515, which has a special operating system designed to speed up PowerPoint and spreadsheet performance. You should be able to find it for a reduced price of \$300.

Not only are you likely to cover your current handheld needs for less money, but you won't sink too much money into a technology that is rapidly advancing and being pressured by new Tablet PCs and other Palm-sized competitors.

Upgrade Your CD Burner

CD burners or CD-RW drives as they are sometimes known, have improved substantially. 3.5-inch disks are not installed on many newer machines because the cost of burners has dropped so significantly. In fact, with DVD burners now being installed on many machines, you can get a good CD burner for a song. You can find them from free (after rebate) to about \$100. Watch the Sunday newspaper circulars to find great deals on these drives.

If a computer you are using only has a CD-ROM drive that will not burn (the fancy word for saving something to a CD), or you are still using a slower 8x or 12x burner, consider upgrading now. A chain store currently lists a Sony 52x internal CD-RW drive for just \$89, for example. By upgrading, you could see a huge speed increase when you back up your office data and when you burn your favorite music.

Buy Last Year's Desktop

If your main function is word processing, e-mail, and spreadsheets, you can go a long

way with a computer built in 2002. You can get refurbished machines at some computer dealers for a great price. You can even find new desktop computers that include free shipping for under \$500 from some brand name websites. Many of the computers we looked at had 40 gigabyte hard drives, that when coupled with a CD burner, will carry you a long way into the future. If you're not ready for a new computer but would like more space for your files, consider upgrading to a larger hard drive, as those too are rapidly dropping in price.

Look for Updated or Soon-to-Be Updated Software

Paint Shop Pro, a popular and powerful image editing software program, has had version 7.x out for over a year. In retail stores you can sometimes find a copy for as little as \$30. It will probably be updated soon (and there will be a price jump).

Say you currently use McAfee Antivirus software but want to switch to the Norton Antivirus program. Often owning your existing software (McAfee 2002) will qualify you for a competitive upgrade rebate on the competitor's newest software (Norton 2003). So you may be able to purchase a copy of an earlier version of qualifying software, and then buy the competitor's upgrade version and have a lower net cost than simply buying the full new version.

Buy a 1-2 Mega Pixel Digital Camera

The standard has moved to 3.1 Mega Pixels and is on its way higher as 5 Mega Pixel cameras become more affordable for those who need the additional picture quality. The main advantage of the higher Mega Pixel cameras is that they store more detail about the pictures you take, allowing you to reproduce them in larger sizes. If all you want to do, however, is to snap photos, make small

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digital video clips, and print at 8.5 inches or smaller, you'll probably be very happy with a 1 or 2 Mega Pixel camera. These cameras are generally available from \$100 to \$250. As color printers have improved, you can print great looking photos using just a 2 Mega Pixel camera and a fairly affordable color inkjet printer. The cost of reproducing your digital photos is generally the photographic paper and the ink. On the other hand, you can take 50 pictures and only print your two favorites then burn the rest of them to a CD.

Web Cams Are Affordable

Web cams, small cameras that attach to your computer, have dropped substantially in price. Most web cams, which usually connect through a fast USB port, take still shots (in decent light conditions), and most allow you to connect to another computer via the web for a video conference of modest quality. One of us picked one up for free after rebate recently, and they can be easily found for between \$20 and \$50. ♦



Jeff Kirkey is the program attorney at the Institute of Continuing Legal Education in Ann Arbor. Mr. Kirkey plans ICLE's substantive law seminars, and he develops and teaches technology training seminars. He also helps develop content

for the ICLE website. He has lectured frequently for ICLE and other organizations and has published numerous articles on the Internet and on law office automation. He is a chapter author of ICLE's Internet and Technology Guide for Michigan Lawyers and a council member of the Young Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Michigan.



Don Passenger is a judge in Grand Rapids District Court. A moderately advanced computer user, he has frequently taught computer skills to other judges and attorneys at seminars sponsored by the Grand Rapids Bar Association, the Michigan Judicial Institute, and ICLE, including the highly acclaimed "60 Tips In 60 Minutes" program often presented at the State Bar Annual Meeting. Mr. Passenger also teaches in an adjunct capacity for the computer information department at Davenport University.

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