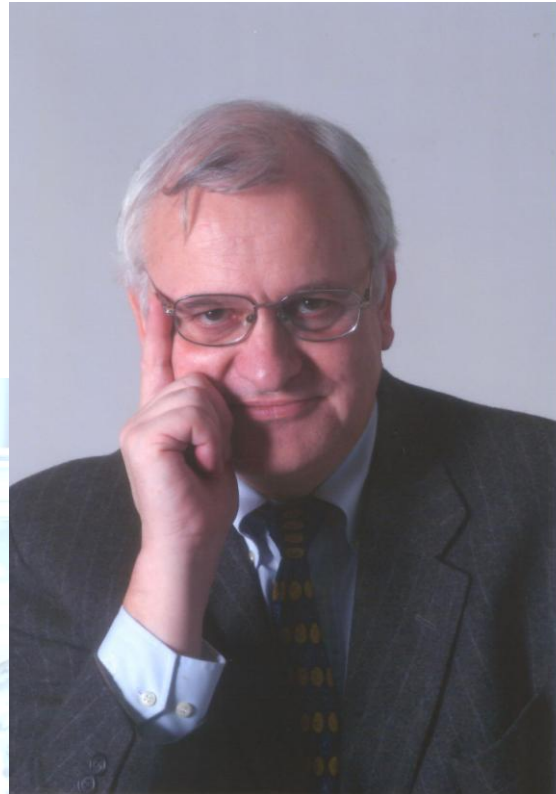


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ITMatters

In this regular column Charles Zealey of ITSolve covers all aspects of business and personal computing. If you have a question about IT matters, email it to Charles on itmatters@itsolve.co.uk



Credit Crunch?

It's about a year now since the much discussed "Credit Crunch" started to hit the economy. Gradually over the past year spending has been cut back as the pressures began to make themselves felt. What is the best way to save money in the IT department? Can it be done or is it a false economy?

Defer expenditure

The easiest way is the oldest. Simply defer spending. You were going to replace the server this year? Leave it for another year. Do you really need that new laptop? Probably the old one will soldier on for a while yet. For sure, the software supplier would like you to upgrade. But will the extra expenditure prove worthwhile?

A new lease of life

May be you need to do something to improve the performance or usability of a machine? If so consider upgrading rather than replacing. It is often true that the single most cost-effective way of improving a machine is to increase the amount of memory; but you might want to consider increasing the disk capacity or a monitor upgrade.

Software costs

One area where it is possible to save literally thousands of pounds is software. There are hundreds of software packages available as free downloads from the internet providing a whole range of functions from office applications, to email clients, database servers, and even complete operating systems. These are often in the form of so-called open-source packages. You will of course be concerned about the quality of the software and the availability of support. As with most things quality can be variable, but in the main it will match or even exceed that of comparable 'paid-for' products. If you are considering a major software purchase or upgrade you should at least look at the available open source packages.

Time to reflect

It may actually be that the credit crunch, unwelcome though it is, gives you the opportunity to review some of your IT costs and enables you to lock in recurring savings for the longer term as well as the short term. If so it will have done you a favour.

Charles Zealey is a consultant working with business professionals helping them to improve their organisation's productivity and effectiveness with the use of Information Technology. Typically a return on investment can be achieved with 6-12 months. To access help sheets go to www.itsolve.co.uk/HelpSheets/. For a free half-hour consultation on business IT issues phone 01635 869863 or email lisa@itsolve.co.uk.

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