

New Year's Resolutions for IT

By **MJ Shoer**

December 25, 2011 2:00 AM

As we rapidly approach the new year, I hope you will enjoy a wonderful holiday season with family and friends and get to enjoy some restful time.

The holiday season is also a perfect opportunity to review your IT plans for the coming year.

If you have capital needs, the end of the year is a great time to make capital investments. Most companies are able to take advantage of the Section 179 deduction to fully write off your capital expenditures made in the current year.

Obviously, you will want to discuss this with your accountant to ensure you are able to take advantage of this, but the end of the year is typically a great time to refresh IT hardware or pre-pay some capital IT projects so you can realize the tax benefits in the current year and have the projects queued up and ready to implement in the new year.

The change of the calendar year is also an excellent time to revisit any regulatory requirements you have to satisfy as well as your internal IT policies.

An annual review is essential to ensure you remain in compliance with any regulations you are covered by. It is also an excellent time to review your internal policies and make any necessary updates or modifications.

As you move into the new year, have you thought about your IT needs? Do you have a plan to address aging system, be they hardware or software? Have you thought about how the cloud may be able to enable to business to be more nimble and responsive to your markets needs? One thing we all know about IT is that it is in a continual state of evolution. It's important that you keep abreast of technical developments and how they may impact your business.

Many developments offer businesses, both large and small, an opportunity for competitive advantage. You want to leverage these opportunities before your competitors do and gain the first mover advantage. However, you don't want to pursue this at the expense of being on the bleeding edge of new technologies. It's always best to let new technologies go through one or more revisions before implementing in your own business. Let others work out the kinks so you will be able to benefit from a mature solution.

As it relates to the ever growing volume of data that business have to deal with, the new year is a wonderful time to evaluate your data retention policies for everything from e-mail to your databases. Be sure you have appropriate archiving policies and procedures in place to keep the necessary amount of active data available to your users while also maintaining a readily accessible archive of historical data to meet your e-discovery needs. Year end offers a great reminder to purge old data from your active systems. When you do this, be sure you still maintain the data in some form of long-term, accessible storage, just in case you should need it.

A few other New Year's resolutions for IT are to revisit your data protection, disaster recovery and business continuity plans. The best time to review these plans are when you don't need them, so please don't wait until you have an emergency to find out if your plans are viable.

Don't forget to keep it simple. Complexity is not necessarily a sign of a robust IT infrastructure. Oftentimes, simplicity is best and helps ensure a stable and reliable network.

Finally, think about being more "green." Older infrastructure consumes more resources. Keeping your technology current will help you be more green and many technologies drive green innovations, so as you evaluate new technologies, don't forget to consider their green impact.

As my last column of 2011, this is a perfect time to express my thanks to all of you who regularly read my column. I appreciate your comments and feedback over the years and I truly hope I have evolved this column to continue to provide value you. Please continue to share your thoughts and don't be shy, if there is a topic you are interested in, please let me know. My very best wishes to you this holiday season. See you in 2012!

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