



Consider Technology as Part of Your Budget Planning



As you are planning your budget for fiscal year 2010, you are likely conducting some form of review of your office needs. Your focus will likely be toward staple items that are needed every year such as forms, toner and postage, personnel and overhead. While those basics are essential for sustaining your operations, fiscal year planning should also include a technology review to ensure the systems that sustain the municipal functions remain technology proficient.

We all know technology is accelerating faster than we can adapt to it and deciding to spend monies to embrace these technologies puts pressure on already strained budgets. On the other hand, some technologies will actually realize savings over existing methods.

By examining your current technology infrastructure, you

may well find that it has become inefficient, ineffective, cumbersome and difficult to support – problems that hinder operations and that will worsen with time. Waiting until the situation turns critical only makes its resolution more expensive.

The main question, then, is not whether to proceed but how to proceed. Both the needs of the municipality and the trends of technology must be taken into account. Here are some factors to consider when developing technology plans.

Software Compatibility

Thinking about buying a new computer? It's not so simple anymore. Gone are the days when you could simply copy a program to a new computer and run it. Software has evolved to operate in a more integrated manner, necessitat-

ing it to communicate extensively with the hardware, network and software components in its environment. This transformation introduces many benefits, but also the potential for compatibility issues. Differences in operating systems, database engines and software versions can all give rise to conflict.

Upgrades must be positioned to consider the impact of fitment to network parameters, department connections and operability with older versions of application software. This means that upgrades need to occur in an orchestrated rather than a piecemeal fashion.

The initialization of a new computer will often require strict setup procedures to operate with internal application programs and network components. If you are unable to do this yourself, your technology plan should include allowances for professional services.

Security and Accessibility

The present computing environment consists of a series of security layers and passwords that require adherence to internal policies, managed by network administrators. Technology planning therefore requires the input and recommendations of skilled professionals for all networked software, with permissions and access rights determined for each user.

Considering Vendor Needs

With the inherent complexity of modern computing it shouldn't come as a surprise that if a computer's purpose is to run a specific vendor supplied software application that their input should be included as part of your technology plan. Failing to do this may result in wrong choices and headaches that could have been otherwise avoided.

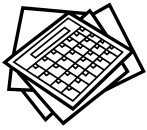
Disaster Recovery

Every technology plan should include a plan for disaster recovery. Point has frequently emphasized the importance of backing up your data and developing a disaster recovery plan. How exactly that is to be achieved depends a great deal upon the application itself.

Each application has its own set of rules and procedures pertaining to the backup process. Key questions to answer are how the administration of the backup is to be handled and by whom, how the integrity of a backup can be tested, and what are the hardware needs.

Budget for Technology

Budgeting time presents an ideal opportunity to take stock of your technology needs. These needs should be considered and incorporated into an overall plan that includes allowances for technology enhancement.



Calendar of Events

Date(s)	Event	Location
Dec. 10, 2008	MCTA Holiday Meeting	Hogan Campus Center College of the Holy Cross 1 College Street Worcester, MA
Jan. 22, 2009	MAAO Winter Meeting	Lombardo's 6 Billings Street Randolph, MA

2009 Motor Vehicle Excise Commitments Schedules

The start of the new motor vehicle excise year is approaching for Massachusetts municipalities. Shortly, Deputy Manager Gina Nascembeni will be sending a schedule out to all Point excise software customers indicating the timeframe in which they can expect to receive their commitments. Anyone who does not receive the commitment within two weeks after the end date specified in the schedule should contact Gina at 1.800.368.9538 ext. 110.

Administering Delinquent Boat Excise Penalties

For some Point customers, boat excise is an integral part of their billing software. While similar to motor vehicle excise, boat billing has its own set of rules that include tax based on boat length, time allowed for payment, and delinquency penalties.

Once a boat bill is marked as delinquent, not only does a demand fee apply but there is also a secondary penalty of \$20.00 that gets assessed according to the DOR's Division of Local Services guidelines pertaining to issuance and collection of boat excise.

To accommodate this secondary charge, Point has added some code to allow boat excise commitments to be flagged with a new charge code of BP for boat penalty. In order to implement the use of this penalty charge, however, your system will require a simple program update from Point Software. To obtain it, contact Customer Service at 1.800.368.9538.

Once the update is made, you will be



able to add the penalty by using the boat penalty (BP) flag code. You may issue a demand notice including the interest, demand and penalty charges when at least two days have passed from the boat excise due date. Those notices will then include the demand fee and the penalty amount consistent with boat excise.

For more information on boat excise bills, refer to Informational Guideline Release (IGR) No. 04-211. You can find it on the Web at http://www.mass.gov/Ador/docs/dls/publ/igr/2004/igr04_211.pdf.

Tech Tips

When you think about it, the business card is truly a remarkable invention. It is so basic, yet it is an indispensable, universal communication tool in the world of business. Its highly portable form is capable of efficiently transmitting vital contact information to the bearer, enabling a dialog to quickly ensue between the recipient and the giver of the card.

As with so many other communication mediums, the business card has been transformed by the Internet. The 1990s saw the introduction of the vCard – an electronic business card used to exchange the same information found on a traditional printed business card while yielding the benefits of a digital format.

Chances are you have the ability to send, receive and use vCards, built right into your e-mail software. Here's how to exercise that ability in Microsoft Outlook.

To send a vCard:

1. In your **Contacts** folder, locate the contact whose information you want to send as a vCard.
2. Double-click the contact to open.
3. Select **Actions > Forward as vCard**.
A new e-mail appears with the vCard (.vcf) file attached.
4. Add an e-mail address to the "To" line and send.

To add the information from a vCard you received to your contacts:

1. Double-click the vcf file attached to the e-mail you received.
2. Select **Open it** then click **OK**.
3. Click **Save and Close**.
A new contact is added to your Contacts folder with all the information from the vCard.