

HOW TO INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY TO SAVE MONEY AND TIME



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All schools have to invest in technology – but how often do they think in terms of saving money and resources as they do so?

With school budgets being squeezed and purchasing power curtailed, now more than ever schools need to make their funds go further and ensure every penny is used wisely. Managers have become experts on seeking value for money and finding new ways to do more with less. But with a huge emphasis on learning with technology, how do schools justify their outlay on not only the devices used by teachers and students, but also non-teaching solutions that are crucial to running the school's systems efficiently? Often, such expenditures are the first ones to be sacrificed in the face of cuts, which provides a tick in the box for those managing the budget spreadsheet – but at what wider cost?

Invest to save

Just as some schools advocate student technology projects with a large initial outlay (e.g. spending on tablets so that students can access e-books instead of having to buy expensive textbooks), it's wise for them to consider other ways that investing in technology can not only help manage their devices and use them to maximum efficiency, but can enable them to save money and resources to boot.

When investing in software, a good tip for schools is to look carefully at not only what the product offers, but also its licensing structures. There may be cases where cumulative pricing means that schools in

multi-academy trusts or partnerships can boost their spending power by purchasing the software not individually for each school, but for the entire group.

The shift to thrift

So how can technology help schools to save money in practical terms? Being well informed makes for more accurate decision-making – so, by having a wealth of up-to-date device data available, school technicians can have their finger on the pulse when it comes to ensuring efficiency on software spending. For example, schools can monitor application use to analyse patterns and see which PCs are sitting around idle or only getting minimal use, or which applications are installed but rarely accessed – the value of these can add up significantly. Managers can then make a judgment on whether it's worth renewing those licences when the time comes – and in the meantime, they can be redeployed to individuals or departments who will make full use of them. The same is true for hardware that can be upgraded rather than be replaced. If your school can collect data that gives you a window on where to reuse and recycle – plus reduce your spending – then it's a shrewd way to save.

Efficient management of a school's assets saves not only money, but time too. Keeping the network secure and reliable using manual procedures is a time-consuming, on-going task. If technicians can save time by using a solution that automates tasks and works proactively by alerting them to potential faults or security issues, disruption to staff and students from downtime can be minimised and learning can continue uninterrupted.

Switched on

Let's talk about energy usage. We're all good at turning devices off at home to prevent large bills, but in the workplace or school, somehow this activity is regarded differently. An energy monitoring tool can calculate and provide a summary of energy used and wasted by PCs left powered on out of school hours. It would be tedious – not to mention time-wasting – for technicians to go around the school

at the end of the day to turn machines off manually. It's so much more efficient if, based on the energy monitoring data collected, they can set Power Management policies for selected PCs to automatically power off at a specified time at the end of each day – and then back on again the next morning.

The same principle applies for printing. High paper and toner costs are an unfortunate reality for many schools, but if technology could tell you where the bulk of those costs were being generated and allow you to set printing limits to enable you to slash that spend, then so much the better.

Value for money

What sort of solutions can schools use to achieve these kinds of savings? An option that is certainly worth exploring is an IT asset management (ITAM) system. More often heard of in corporate circles, ITAM solutions are now a smart choice for schools, given the amount of technology that they have on site. In addition to core functions such as gathering detailed hardware and software inventories, change tracking and software licence management, there are now dedicated packages available for the education sector which not only allow schools to simply manage and keep track of all of their technology, but also to achieve a return on their investment by maximising the efficiency of that technology whilst delivering a cost-effective, safe and productive environment which plays its part in enhancing learning outcomes.

