

## Getting the Most from Technology Solutions

There's no question about it. Technology has the power to facilitate communication and drive sales. It can increase revenue and broaden your marketplace. Properly utilized, it can maximize your employees' productivity, and bring your company's projects in under budget and ahead of schedule.

Unfortunately, there is a flip side. When technology solutions for the workplace are not carefully thought out and implemented, they can frustrate and discourage your staff, leaving thousands of dollars of techno-power either under-utilized, or completely abandoned.

Incompatibilities. Problems with connectivity. Sketchy tech support. User error. These are only a few of the things that can thwart the effectiveness of a technology solution in your workplace. To bring about maximum efficiency, think about leveraging technology in 3 important areas: hardware, software and peopleware.

Most people are familiar with 2 of these 3 areas: software and hardware. Item #3, however, is the glue that holds the entire solution together, and is very often either overlooked or undervalued: peopleware.

- **Software**

Pre-packaged or custom-built, these are the programs that power your solutions.

- **Hardware**

The equipment that runs the software that powers the solutions

- **Peopleware**

No matter which hardware and software vendors you choose, technology is ultimately driven by human beings. Like the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain in the scene from the famous movie are people managing the machinery and applications. No matter how sophisticated your solution is, at the end of the day, you will continue to rely on people to leverage the investment you have made in technology.

Time after time, companies purchase powerful technological solutions, focusing on only the software packages, and the hardware needed to run them. Peopleware—that all important knowledge needed to leverage the solution effectively—is almost completely ignored.

The result? A frustrated workforce who cannot share information, collect data, gather files or communicate effectively with one another. And a frustrated owner or manager who must account for a line item in the budget with a very poor ROI.

What's a company to do?

- Do a Needs Assessment to determine a hardware transition plan for updating new equipment. Because technology changes so rapidly, it is difficult to see more than 2 years ahead.
- If you choose to have a software solution specially designed for you, be aware of the tendency to “over-build”. Off-the-shelf or custom-built, most companies use less than 50% of the functionality a software package offers. Always remember the end user. Software not only needs to be effective, it has to be intuitive and easy to use. Keep it basic.
- To get the most out of the hardware and software, we’re back to where we started: “peopleware”. Start by figuring out what you know, and what you don’t know. Do a Needs Assessment to determine where your staff’s strengths are, as well as where the gaps and weaknesses are. From there, you can build your training program for best results.
- This training will show a quick return on your investment if you customize their training program to their specific needs. Employ 6-hour training sessions, and 2-4 hour refreshers to bring your “peopleware” up to par. Using a pre-test and a post-test will measure outcomes.

Give your staff the training they need, and the combination of the right hardware, software and peopleware will take your business far.

### ***Getting Your Mailings Noticed with The 3-3-3 Rule***

To get your marketing materials opened, consider the 3-3-3 rule.

The first “3” pertains to the 3 words about mailings to always remember: Appearance is Everything.

Think about it. Each of us receives dozens of pieces of mail at our homes and offices every day-- that’s hundreds of pieces every single week! Use color and texture to make your piece “pop”.

The second “3” stands for 3 seconds. That’s all the recipient spends looking at the outside of your mailing. Research shows that most will trash it after 3-5 seconds if it doesn’t catch their eye for some reason. Take a few extra minutes to make sure your mailer stands out in the crowd—it’s well worth the effort.

Try the following to make the most of the 3 seconds of attention the outside of your mailing gets:

- Avoid using plain envelopes—a colored mailer suggests customization.