Purchasing: UWEC Computer and Other Technology Rotation Planning

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Computer and other technology-related rotation and planning can be a challenge at times. This document addresses some of the popular questions that get asked when creating a rotation plan for UWEC owned computers and other technology items.

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UWEC owned computers and monitors

Q: When should a computer be replaced?
A: If the computer in question was purchased within the last three years, it should have been purchased with components that would allow it to be used comfortably for 5 years. However, 4 years is the preferred life of a computer system. If the computer was purchased over three years ago it should be considered for replacement within the next year. Newer purchases standardized on 16 gigabytes of memory and solid state hard drives, which combined provide a significant performance increase that should sustain normal use for several years.

Q: When should a computer monitor be replaced?
A: The life of a computer monitor is a bit different and generally speaking could have a life through maybe two computer replacements. The main issues that come up that necessitate a monitor's replacement are the monitor hardware failing, the quality of the image diminishing, or it lacks the necessary connectors for what it needs to be connected to. Because monitors generally can have a longer useful life, we discourage the purchase of all-in-one (AIO) model computers since you are essentially forced to replace everything each time.

Q: What can happen if a computer is not replaced when recommended?

A: Several things are of concern with aging computer hardware:

- Hardware failure: Generally speaking, all UWEC owned computers come purchased with a 3-year warranty on most components. After that, it is on a department to pay for any hardware repairs if LTS does not have any spare components in stock. Hardware failure is also the main cause of data loss and why you are strongly encouraged to store all of your data in OneDrive or a network drive.
- Software fatigue: Over time more and more software is generally loaded onto a computer, which can slow performance. As new software versions come out they often have increased hardware requirements. Your computer can be imaged with a fresh copy of the operating system any time you like to help with the clog of software built up over time. This process can go much faster if you already store all of your data in OneDrive or a network share. Again, this helps ensure the chances of data loss.
- Security patches: The operating systems loaded onto computers are also limited to properly run and receive security updates on hardware back to a certain age in many cases. Security patches aren't limited to just software either and do impact some of the hardware components themselves. If either the operating system or software that controls a hardware component in a device are no longer able to receive security updates, that device must be surplus or removed from the campus network to protect the rest of the devices on the network.

Q: What if our department can't afford a new computer when replacement is recommended?

A: For some situations, it may be possible to upgrade an internal component of a computer to give it some new life, and it is generally affordable to do so. Although this will correct the immediate problem it still prolongs the real issue of not having a funded computer rotation plan as part of your department's overall budget for all computers. LTS can work with you on developing that plan by sending a message to LTS Consulting (ltsconsulting@uwec.edu) asking for assistance.

Although it is highly competitive and limited funding, for technology that directly supports curriculum, those departments can apply for Lab Modernization grants to help with technology replacements.

Q: What should be done if a computer can't be replaced due to specialized equipment used with it?

A: Computers that are connected to specialized equipment or running specialized software sometimes can't be replaced on the preferred 4-year cycle due to the extremely high cost of updating that software, or the vendor doesn't offer updates that run on newer hardware and operating systems.

If the computer or software can't be updated to comply with security requirements, it will need to be removed from the network. LTS will work with you to determine if any other options exist.

Rotating other UWEC owned

technology

Technology can mean many things, but LTS is primarily concerned with computer-related technology and audio/video equipment. We also include devices that are considered an appliance that has some sort of embedded software that operates it that can be updated with vendor patches.

It is much more difficult to determine the useful life you can expect from these other items. Generally speaking for audio/video equipment, you should expect it to function for 8-10 years under most circumstances, unless the vendor has provided a different recommendation with justification of why upfront. Some of the specialized equipment on this campus has been running for decades and is still relevant today.

Surplus of computers and other technology

In short, ALL technology must be surplus by LTS. View the Surplus of Technology knowledge base article for more information around the surplus process and policy in place. To schedule surplus technology pick up, email the LTS Help Desk at helpdesk@uwec.edu. Be sure to include the location of the items and label surplus items clearly.