Best Practices & Guidelines

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

FAQs

- When should a computer be rotated out for a new one?
- What happens if I don’t rotate an old computer after 4 years?
- What if I can’t afford a new computer after 4 years? What other options are there?
- What should I do if I can’t rotate out my computer due to specialized equipment?

When should a computer be rotated out for a new one?

A computer should be rotated after approximately 4 years of service. Historically, technical support for both hardware and software from vendors stops after approximately 4 years. After that point, there is no longer the ability to receive support, software patches, and/or fixes for problems with that version of hardware or software.
What happens if I don’t rotate an old computer after 4 years?

After the 4-year mark hits, a couple of things will start to occur:

1. Over time your computer may have an increasing number of software titles installed and many newer software titles have increased requirements for hardware. Both of these may cause the computer to run slower, particularly on older machines. Installing new software and keeping the software patched, or up-to-date, is crucial to make sure the computer is better protected from viruses and other security threats.

2. Hardware will eventually start failing. At some point the cost of repairs to old hardware will exceed the value of the computer and/or be more expensive than just buying a new computer.

3. Once the computer operating system software can no longer be upgraded or patched, for security measures the computer will be removed from the network in order to keep the rest of the network and other computer hardware secure from potential viruses and attacks coming through this un-patched computer.

What if I can’t afford a new computer after 4 years? What other options are there?

There are certain pieces of hardware for some 4+ year old computers that can be upgraded to make the computer run smoother and more efficiently. Depending on when the computer originally purchased, replacing the hard drive, adding additional RAM, and/or adding a new graphics card may be options to explore. In order to figure
out if any of these three options are a good solution, consult with a Learning and Technology Services (LTS) staff member.

Upgrades of existing equipment are a quick fix, but in the end just prolong the overall problem. The best practice is to develop a rotation plan and then try to level-load that budget over a 4-year cycle if possible.

What should I do if I can’t rotate out my computer due to specialized equipment?

Computers that are connected to specialized equipment or running specialized software sometimes cannot be rotated on a 4-year cycle due to the extreme high cost of updating the specialized equipment or specialized software that the department or college simply cannot afford every 4 years. It is encouraged that the department or college work closely with IT Staff from LTS to develop a plan that makes sense for updating the computer, specialized equipment, and/or specialized software over a longer period of time.

It is important to note that once the computer operating system can no longer be updated to the latest secure version, the computer must be removed from the network in order to prevent any security attacks from infecting the computer and the rest of the network infrastructure and associated hardware on campus.

These are some of the more popular questions asked when faced with the challenge of creating a computer rotation plan. If you are in the process of trying to create a rotation plan, please be sure to contact LTS for help. We are here and happy to help you through the process including consulting, planning, purchasing, and installation.