

Personal computers for small business

Personal computers (PCs) make it economically possible for small businesses to acquire electronic data processing systems and equipment. To assess the need for a computer system, first analyse your existing manual systems. You should then be in a good position to decide if a computer could improve your existing business systems.

Many small businesses are active users of computer communications – email and the Internet. An even greater number use PCs for bookwork, to issue accounts and statements and to help with marketing and correspondence work.

A computer program can simplify a great variety of business processes, such as transaction records (cash and receipts), monthly statements, reports, placing orders via email with suppliers, inventory stock level reports, maintaining customer records and communicating to name just a few possibilities. You can even integrate your IT and communications by automatically forwarding details from your emails to your mobile phone.

The development of information technology covers a range of advances: computer hardware (the box and screen) and software (programs required to run your business), improved voice and data communication options and the Internet.

How far you can take advantage of these developments depends on the type of business and how you want to operate.

Identify and meet your business needs

Seeking and purchasing computer systems for your business can be a major decision. Before you begin it is worthwhile to consider the impacts this may have on your business.

- Will it increase your productivity?
- Will you be able to reach greater geographic or demographic markets?
- Will it reduce the running costs of your business?
- Will it enhance the level of customer service you will be able to provide?
- Will you be better able to manage your business processes?
- Will customers be able to access your business via e-mail or the internet?

Learn computer skills

You could consider attending TAFE courses or workshops or seek help from public and private providers or IT communications consultants. Find someone you can trust who is experienced with computers and has the time to show you the ropes. Talk to other business people who are happy with their IT systems and ask them what they use and how effective it has been for their business. Talk to your accountant about the needs of your business.

Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information about these issues:

- Benefits of e-commerce
- How to buy a computer