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12-22-2010

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I have gone to the (Apple) dark side

My friends and colleagues will tell you I have gone to the dark side.

No, I'm not talking about my move into administration as the Interim Associate Dean for the College of IT. I am talking about my recent purchase and extensive use of my new Apple Macbook Pro, iPad and iPod touch.

I wish I had done this sooner.

I now enjoy booting my computer up in seconds as opposed to minutes. All my devices are backed up and in sync every day. I have not had a virus, adware or spyware issue in more than three months.

The only new apps on my computer are the ones I purchased, and so far those have all come free. I am now trying to completely disassociate myself from Microsoft.

When I said I wish I had done this sooner, I do know why I haven't. It is all caused by Microsoft's near monopoly on the business world.

I have worked in and taught in this business world since before the PC. I have seen Windows evolve from its horrible DOS beginnings. I have witnessed many an alternative operating system and productivity suite come and go.

Like it or not, we have all, for the most part, stayed with Microsoft. Oh sure, we all know a techie who has Unix or Linux on their PCs, but they are the minority and marginalized by the rest of us.

Apple has been around all these years, but it was considered a toy, for kids, or for the artistic. Apples have not been for real businessmen. After my last three fun and productive months I would have to declare those myths for Apples are over.

There are also official signs that Apple is making inroads into business. More than 7 million iPads have been sold since its launch in April. More than 65 percent of the Fortune 500 companies are deploying or piloting the iPad, Apple says. "We haven't pushed it real

hard in business, and it's being grabbed out of our hands," Apple's Steve Jobs says. "The more time that passes, the more I am convinced that we've got a tiger by the tail here."

I could not agree more. The iPad offers something to busi-

ness that it currently does not have. Android and other smart phones do not offer the size and usability of the iPad.

And once a business person sees the usefulness and consumer crave of the iPad, they will be inclined to look at their laptop and desktop decisions as well.

I've heard the anti-Apple arguments for years. In fact, I have uttered them to my students and clients in the past, but no more.

Apples are more expensive. Yes, they are, and worth every cent. My iPod touch screen is easier to view and clearer than my 21-inch monitor.

As I have gotten older, I have joked with my students I need to watch TV on a big screen. I would never watch video on my phone or handheld device. That was until Monday night when I watched the highlights of my Colts' victory on Monday Night Football on my iPod touch.

I wished the highlights were longer. It is that good. You get what you pay for, and Apple has always made a quality product, but I think it is now well worth the price.

Furthermore, business needs to put a price on productivity. I have been so much more productive now that I boot up, get my work done on my Macbook and shut down, all the while watching my PC boot, install updates, scan for viruses, reboot again, install updates necessary due to the last updates and reboot again, only to finish with the blue screen of death.

I can browse the web, open word, powerpoint, excel and adobe files all without a bit of Microsoft on my machine. I may get the new Office suite for my Macbook, but it will be my choice. I won't have to in order to be compatible and productive.

If you want to make some of your employees happier and more productive, try a pilot study of Apples in your business. I'm sure you will not regret it, and, no, I don't own any stock.

I just own an iPad. I never let it get out of my sight here on the dark side!

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Kevin Lee Elder

'No paper' offices benefit businesses, environment

According to Reuse.org, the average office worker uses 10,000 sheets of paper each year. When you multiply that staggering figure by the total number of



Jim LaHaise

employees at your business, it's easy to see the benefits of moving toward a paperless office.

The estimated number of office pages printed, copied and faxed annually in the U.S. actually peaked in 2007 at more than 1 trillion, according to InfoTrends, a Massachusetts-based market research and consulting firm.

Since that time, a growing number of businesses have been striving toward the paperless office model or at least making a serious effort to minimize paper whenever and wherever possible.

Going paperless has a number of benefits, from promoting environmental sustainability to minimizing clutter in your workspace. Here are a few easy steps you can take to move towards a more paperless way of doing business:

1. SWITCH TO PAPERLESS BANKING. Most banks offer e-statements, rather than traditional paper statements. To get started, simply log into your online banking account and click on the option to go paperless.

E-statements at reputable banks will always be both encrypted and password protected, offering a higher level of security than a printed-out bank statement with your detailed financial information traveling through the conventional mail.

Plus, you can pay all your business bills online quickly and easily, reducing the need for postage, envelopes and paper.

The estimated number of office pages printed, copied and faxed annually in the U.S. actually peaked in 2007 at more than 1 trillion.

2. SHRED OLD DOCUMENTS YOU NO LONGER NEED. The safest and smartest way to dispose of old files and documents is to shred them so private information — account numbers and credit card numbers — doesn't fall into the wrong hands. A portable office shredder can handle smaller jobs, while professional companies like ShredEx or Seacoast Shredding can help with larger jobs.

3. CONSULT WITH YOUR EMPLOYEES ABOUT HOW TO BE MORE EFFICIENT. After all, they are the ones who know where the most paper is being wasted. Seek input from office staffers about areas where the use of paper can be reduced and put those ideas into motion. They'll feel appreciated and part of the process.

4. BACK UP YOUR ELECTRONIC FILES. As your company makes the transition to a less paper-intensive environment, it becomes increasingly important to back up your electronic files.

Backup solutions can include additional hard drives, removable drives or Internet/off-site locations to minimize the risk of data loss in the event of a natural disaster or computer failure.

Whatever method you choose, have a system in place for regular, consistent back up of all your data and documents.

5. THINK BEFORE YOU SELECT THE PRINT OPTION. Do you really need to print that e-mail? Can you proofread your documents on the screen? Every time you choose not to print a document, you take a small step in the right direction. Old habits die hard, but if you can reduce the number of documents you print by 50 percent, that's a major accomplishment.

6. SHARE THE GOOD NEWS WITH OTHERS. By reducing paper at the office, you're doing your part to help the environment. Going paperless should also help you boost your bottom line.

Businesses can promote their efforts to reduce waste in marketing and PR campaigns and celebrate their successes with employees. Customers like to support businesses with a commitment to being eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable.

The banking industry is doing its part by offering paperless options to customers.

Paperless banking offers improved security because statements no longer sit in mailboxes, making them vulnerable to identity thieves. At the same time, paperless banking enables customers to detect and resolve fraud issues faster than with conventional paper statements.

Do your part to reduce the use of paper in your own office. After all, taking a few small steps can make a big difference.

As 2011 approaches, it's a great time to make going paperless a corporate New Year's resolution. You'll create a more streamlined office, reduce clutter, boost productivity, save trees and promote environmental sustainability.

That's one New Year's resolution you'll want to keep.

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