Nonprofit Tech News

Evaluating your nonprofits computer needs

By: Jennifer Flaten

Not so long ago, when it was time for a non-profit to replace an aging or obsolete desktop computer, the only option was a new desktop. Now, a non-profit must choose between a replacing the desktop with another desktop or making the switch to laptop computers. How does a non-profit decide which to choose?

On the surface there doesn't appear to be much difference between a laptop and a desktop, mechanically they are about the same, but laptops offer portability. The portability aspect is a major deciding factor for many non-profits. In fact, for many non-profits the laptop is fast becoming a necessity not a luxury.

Still, replacing all the desktops in an organization can represent a significant amount of money, which is why an organization should take the time to carefully evaluate their needs before making the switch. According to Robert Stack President & CEO Community Options, his organization made the decision to switch to laptops based on a careful analysis of their business model. Since, his employees spend a majority of their time in the field a laptop is the most efficient tool for the task.

While his employees have access to Blackberries and other mobile devices, Robert believes nothing beats a laptop for entering field notes. In addition to taking notes on the laptop, the laptop offers field workers greater flexibility, they don't need to rush back to the office to send an email or file a report. All that can be done in the field with a laptop.

In addition to convenience, a laptop can help employees achieve a better work life balance, since a laptop makes it much easier to bring work home. Chantel Atkins, of the Rhythmic Lounge, agrees for her it is all about "efficiency and effective communication. " Laptops are the standard for her and she feels they should be for the majority of businesses who have similar goals because "they allow you to run your business in a way that allows you to be successful on the go." She points out that "If your business takes you out of the office then with a laptop customers/members don't want to wait all day or all night for answers to their important questions."

Unfortunately, that same portability gives people the impression that laptops pose a greater security risk. While it's true laptops are easier to steal or leave unattended in a cab, there are extra steps a non-profit can take to keep the laptop secure, such as multiple passwords and extra security programs. Of course, desktops haven't fallen completely to the wayside, they still have their place in some organizations, but as laptops become smaller and even more affordable, more and more non-profits will make the switch.