



MORE MONITORS, LESS TIME: TWO WEEK PAYBACK

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“The payback is two weeks and the ‘cool’ factor is immeasurable,” remarks Raymond Roberts, CEO of Chantilly, VA based Citizant (formerly Cairo Corporation), a government IT services firm focused on citizen-focused projects. “If it’s good enough for Bill Gates, it’s good enough for us.”

Roberts is referring to Bill Gates claim that he is more productive because he has 3 monitors tied to his personal computer, reducing the time and motion to minimize and maximize applications all day. For those of you with information workers, the time savings can be significant. And the price of flat screen monitors has dropped significantly, to the point that redeeming three box tops off Cheerios will get you a 19” flat screen! Maybe not that cheap, but close.

DOUBLE REVENUES

This is all part of a bigger drive to increase worker productivity i.e. finding ways to double revenue with the same number of workers since there aren’t any workers to hire in the first place.

As I travel the world, most recently hanging out in Perth, Australia, where unemployment is measured in negative percentages, the number one challenge for growing companies is finding talent.

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And since more and more work is information based, a good place to start in improving productivity is on the desk top. This is where Roberts focused a few months ago, placing at least two monitors on everyone's desk. Windows comes with the built-in ability to drive two displays and Roberts chose identical displays to minimize problems in setting up the displays. The set-up is literally minutes using Windows extended desktop feature.

"It's just more real estate for your desktop. Us old guys with bad eyes can keep Outlook up and running on one monitor and use the other for the primary work – like Word or Excel," explains Roberts.

THREE SCREENS

His accounting staff has three monitors, requiring a special box (the \$299 TripleHead2GO is the most popular). "They have Outlook on one, Costpoint (their ERP system) on another, and then Excel or Word on the third," describes Roberts. For Gates, he has Outlook on his left screen, whatever he's working on open on the middle screen, and his browser open on the right screen.

One warning I've received from those that have two vs. three screens – with two screens you have to make sure you're not developing back or neck trouble from having your head turned slightly one way vs. the other. It's critical to rotate your chair so that you're facing the screen straight-on. With three screens, the key is having whatever you're working on residing on the middle screen.

It can also be tricky navigating your mouse across the two or three screens and managing your various applications across the multiple screens. Many people swear by the downloadable \$39.95 application called UltraMon, which released a version for Microsoft Vista March 31.

SAVINGS

“The bottom line is that we think we are saving 15-20 minutes per day of people’s mouse- and click-time, maximizing and minimizing applications that normally laid one on top of another. Think of the cut-and-paste motions that people go through all day long with copy function to store and paste to drop into other applications,” explains Roberts.

“My proposal guy is totally pumped over this and claimed it’s saving him hours per day with the cutting and pasting of boilerplate language from document to document. He wants 3 of them – and I will get the third for him.”

As Roberts figures it, 20 minutes savings X the 30 people he has at his headquarters office (over a hundred of his team are in the field working projects) is 600 minutes a day, at an average cost of \$ 1 per minute of labor cost is \$ 3000 per week. At \$ 200 per extra monitor times 30 people, the \$ 7000 investment (add in a few extra monitors and boxes for power geeks and accountants) and the investment is covered in 2 to 3 weeks.

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WORST CASE

Notes Roberts, “Worst case scenario – we save 2 minutes a day per person (which is ridiculously low...right?) and the breakeven factor shifts from a ROI of 2 weeks to 20 weeks. Any process that makes my company more effective and profitable in 20 weeks is still a great investment!”

“And worst, worst case scenario – there is no productivity benefit. No time and motion improvement or return. My people are pumped and they boast about how they have two monitors. \$200 per head to improve morale – the ‘cool’ factor alone is priceless.”

Business case closed. Roberts’ people are more productive. It’s an easy decision, inexpensive, and something you can do immediately.