

# Computer Installations Plus

## A brief overview about our group of companies

*We're directing all of our pro-active marketing towards business owners who entertain a legitimate desire to grow the overall profitability of their businesses.*

**Computer Installations Plus (Peterborough) Limited** was formed in 1988 to assist small and medium sized businesses in implementing accounting software, and training clients on its use. Computer Installations Plus is a member of The Results Management Group and as such provides an important support service for many of the group's clients. However all clientele do not necessarily use the services of Pelton & Co. or The Results Management Group. We currently offer a variety of products and services including:

- ✓ Hardware and network installation, upgrades and support
- ✓ Software needs analysis
- ✓ Accounting software installation and upgrades
- ✓ Data conversion and repair
- ✓ Custom report writing for management reports

**Pelton & Co. Professional Corporation** is a full service public accounting firm and a partner of The Results Management Group and Computer Installations Plus. It's our aim to make this company one of the most innovative companies in the industry and one of the best places to work.

Pelton & Co. offers a variety of accounting and related services to the business community.

- ✓ Corporate and personal income tax preparation
- ✓ Income tax planning
- ✓ Financial statement preparation
- ✓ Bookkeeping
- ✓ Financial forecasts
- ✓ Business Plans

**The Results Management Group** was created in 1998 to offer profit building consultative services to the same target market as the other member companies in the group. In general terms we work with clients on business goal setting, strategic planning and activity measurement with a view to helping our clients create businesses that work. Our services would include

- ✓ Strategic plan development
- ✓ Business plans
- ✓ Assistance in implementing plans previously developed

Our three companies typically service one of the largest business markets (in terms of volume) in the world - namely the small to medium sized enterprise.

## **A little bit about our philosophy**

We are seeking to be recognized as one of the best service providers in our market area. It follows then that we would need to be in the top 5% of service providers in order to achieve that.

We're looking to achieve that by ensuring that the systems that drive our clients' information, keep pace with the expanding requirements of their operations as they grow their profitability!

To do that we've realized that we need to:

- ✓ Provide an appropriate level of service to our clients who seek our assistance when their systems fail, and
- ✓ Provide aggressive proactive advice to help those clients minimize their unscheduled downtime.

## **What businesses need from their computer systems**

We recognize that service businesses should focus on their customers' "wants" and for a number of years we did that. We've observed, however, that electronic technology and therefore its use is changing so dramatically, that many good businesses tend to focus on the wrong things when it comes to their computer systems.

More recently we've focused on the needs and helping business owners understand their real needs, with the result that generally our clients have seen a marked improvement in the overall reliability of their systems.

Our research on businesses that we covet as clients has identified some key concerns that businesses tend to focus on in their computer systems.

- ✓ Predictable performance or network reliability
- ✓ Controllable costs
- ✓ Common sense efficiencies
- ✓ Appropriate level of security both within the enterprise and against violations from outside the enterprise
- ✓ Transparency after the service process is completed
- ✓ Support from a trusted supplier or service provider
- ✓ Ability to generate meaningful information

## **What businesses don't like about IT professionals**

We've also identified some common problems that businesses have with their IT professionals that are not particularly positive.

- ✓ Poor communications in the form of
  - Too much technical jargon

- Talking down to customers and making them feel inadequate
- Inadequate phone system
- ✓ Failure to meet completion deadlines
- ✓ Forcing users to work with techie conventions rather than user protocols
- ✓ Poor cost estimates and delivery deadlines
- ✓ People turnover
- ✓ Unsatisfactory completion processes
  - The desktop looks radically different after the techie leaves
  - The latest shareware tech toys show up without permission from the user
  - Incomplete testing after the job is finished

These items are not outlined in any particular order. In fact as we considered their ranking we realized that such ranking was virtually impossible, because so many “techies” present a number of these characteristics on virtually every client contact! Wow!

Let’s take a brief look at each of these issues!

## **Communications**

It’s true that in virtually any specialized field of endeavour some discussions and explanations require the use of a certain amount of technical jargon in order for the discussions to have some meaning. However, we would suggest that excessive reliance on technical jargon implies that the technician doesn’t necessarily understand the information she/he is providing.

We’ve found that in order for our clients to appreciate the value of some of our activities, they need to truly understand the highlights of the dangers and pitfalls that need to be avoided. They also need to develop a fundamental understanding of benefits of particular strategies, especially when some of those strategies are actually devised with longer term benefits in mind. We attempt to do that by using basic every day analogies wherever possible.

We make every effort to learn enough about our clients’ biases to provide the appropriate amount of explanation in terms that they understand. Based on the feedback from our clients we’ve been pretty successful in our efforts to do that.

We recognize that your time is valuable. We know that because we believe that our time is valuable too, and we certainly don’t feel inclined to waste it. Consequently we make every effort to deal with phone queries when you call. We don’t always have qualified technicians available but when they’re available you’ll be able to talk to them when you call.

## **Meeting delivery commitments**

To say that it always happens would not carry much credibility. To say that it seldom happens would be more realistic.

## **Working with protocols**

We recently had the opportunity to work with another IT specialist while he was configuring a client's new network on recently acquired replacement hardware. The project involved upgrading an existing network along with the existing hardware. In other words people had been working with an existing setup with usernames and passwords that they were familiar with. When it came time for the IT specialist to set up all that information on the new system it would make sense that he would consult all the users to obtain all that information . . . . not!

If you can believe it users were merely assigned numbers, and passwords were developed out of the personal history and experiences of the IT, with absolutely no relevance to the users.

## **Cost estimates lower than final costs**

Have you actually compared pricing from mass retailers to one of our quotes? Invariably, our quote will be higher . . . . until you consider the impact of configuration and set up at your location. Realistically our prices are still probably higher but only marginally. Why is that? Many service providers work under the false impression that if they quote low and get in front of a client, they will be able to wow them with their expertise and push up the price at that point. That may be true in some cases. We are of the opinion that our customers need to know as accurately as possible what the full price will be before they purchase . . . so that they can properly finance it.

It's fair to say that we've become fairly experienced at configuring mail order computers for customers that chose to buy a machine elsewhere because it was cheaper. After we finished setting up the machine, configuring it, and attaching it to the internet, our client made the appropriate observation that they would have been better off buying from us in the first place.

Wherever possible we quote one price to deliver and set up your computer. Granted we lose deals as a result but we're confident that the clients that we want to work with understand what they are buying and want an accurate estimate of their total costs.

## **The computer looks different after the 'techie' has been in**

How often does that happen? Many techies don't understand that the computer in an office is intended to be a tool that is useful. And it can only be useful if the people using it are familiar with it. So what happens when the computer has been in for service, and the desk top is not restored to its original look? Or you've noticed that your favourite utility program has been replaced with the latest shareware version that does "so much more."

In both these examples productivity is usually reduced at least temporarily. The user must reset all the shortcuts, and organize them in the fashion that they are comfortable with, and they need to learn the new utility software. In some cases the techie is so arrogant that they actually remove the old software.

Most IT specialists from other companies that we've had experience with consider that their work is finished when all the computers are in place, and are connected with each other. Things like internet favourites, and desk top settings are never restored so that the user can sit down and go to work. They always need to "fiddle" with everything over the course of the following few days in order to get their computer life back to normal.

## **Incomplete testing after the job is finished**

So the scenario that generally plays out goes something like this. You encounter a problem with some specific function on your computer. The technician comes in and repairs that function, and in the process **inadvertently** creates another problem. So the technician returns to fix that and something else happens . . . and on the story goes. Now this is not an uncommon occurrence especially in older machines or with machines that are new to the technician. When that happens, however, would it not be more valuable for both parties if you understood that we should remain on the job until you had completed some reasonable testing to ensure that the more common programs being used still function in the expected fashion.

While it may appear that we are not adding value at that point, it does take time, and in the event that unexpected things happen, it is less costly to make the changes at that time than it is to return.

## **Let's shift to the positive**

### **Predictable performance or network reliability**

The advice that we provide our clients is quite simply based on our experience about proven hardware and configurations that work. And the culture surrounding this goes back to our roots which were established 20 years ago.

As you know there is a significant amount of marketing campaigns for computers that are centered on price points. One only needs to listen to the radio, or open up the newspaper flyers on a weekly basis to see this weeks specials on computers. That's not what this is about. For every "best practice" set up recommended by the software or hardware manufacturers there are dozens of computer techies who will suggest that "they don't need that!" And they are right.

Our bias in this industry has always revolved around the applications, what they are used for, and the cost to the enterprise when things don't work. We recognize that not every small business either needs or can afford the "best practice" solution. You can be assured, however, that when our recommendations depart from those "best practice" solutions, the configuration has been tested in an environment at least as busy as ones that we are quite familiar with.

When you consider that for the first 10 years of existence we concentrated solely on the application (accounting, office productivity etc.) you can rest assured that unstable configurations merely represented an additional cost to us, and we learned to avoid them like the

plague. Now that we are concentrating on hardware and networking, we are even more diligent in avoiding them.

## **Controllable costs**

Have you ever had the experience of being low-balled by a slick car (or any commodity for that matter) salesperson. You know the type. They think you are just shopping so they give you an unrealistically low estimate so that when you are serious you will return. And when you do, the price goes up, or there is an intolerable collection of “additional costs.”

We’re not sure about you but we prefer to know the range of the investment that we need to make the first time, so that we can realistically assess our options.

When you get estimates or proposals from us you will get our best effort to anticipate all of the costs will be involved in your proposed installation. If you want us to preserve and transfer your data we’ll include that in our estimates. If you wish us to reconfigure your internet accounts and all those other little techie things that you take for granted until they’re not there, we’ll include that in the pricing structure of the estimate.

Realistically it can take as much as a day of time to reload all the application software on an active workstation, and good people need appropriate compensation. So we’re not about to snow you by trivializing important functions. That is simply not good business!

## **Common sense efficiencies**

Do you ever get the impression that building codes for, example, were established by those who stood to gain the most from applying such high standards. Many people have the same impression of “best practices” set out by hardware and software manufacturers. In considering those best practices, their application may seem to be overly onerous and costly to many. When we are configuring systems for small businesses, we always start with the best practice statements recommended by the manufacturers. In situations where we have experience with less costly configurations that in our view are effective enough for the requirements identified by our clients we will share those alternatives with our clients.

We’re not in the business to sell you more hardware. We’re in business to meet or exceed your performance requirements!

## **Appropriate security**

We recently had a demonstration in our office from a salesman who wanted to show us something on a website. We offered to go to one of our systems to log on, and he suggested he would just start up and see whether there was access to another wireless system in the building. Quite simply, the salesman went in to access the site that he wanted to show us, and the discussions progressed.

Our technicians took pride in the fact that he was unable to see our site.

Security is important at two levels, namely internal and external. We've worked with some fairly sensitive situations such that the right people have access to the proper data while being excluded from data that they should not have access to.

We also provide an offsite data storage service for small data bases, that is user invoked but automated once it is invoked.

## **Transparency after the service process is completed**

One of the significant costs of having your workstation replaced is to go through all the software and reset the various defaults in your applications such as Word and Excel. If it is important to you, we are quite happy to develop a schedule of each users default settings, and reset those defaults as we are reinstalling the software.

## **Support from a trusted provider**

We're not a big business, but yet we have all the risks of any larger business, just not to the same magnitude. We expect that you are much the same. We prefer suppliers that we know are giving us a fair price and good service. When we find those suppliers we're just as happy to not spend a lot of time requesting competitive quotes on regular activities. The only way we can be confident doing that is to test our relationships early, and establish the level of trustworthiness with our supplier relationships.

We seek to establish the same type of relationship with our regular customers. It cuts down on a lot of additional costs in the process and ultimately results in some combination of better costs and better service.

Do you expect that your organization will benefit from such a relationship with your IT services provider?

## **Ability to generate meaningful information**

At the end of the day this is what it's all about! You definitely need to process transactions, and that's important. We know however that what you can and do measure, you can manage. Measuring in itself does not do the job. We have access to a wealth of expertise in gathering and reporting appropriate management information.

## **Summary**

Computer Installations Plus is a mature organization that has survived the tests of time. While other organizations have come and gone over the past 20 years, we have continued to move forward in response to the market and the needs of our clients.

Our processes ensure that;

- ✓ You will have the equipment that you need to do the job
- ✓ It will be configured in an efficient and effective manner
- ✓ You will be advised of an appropriate maintenance schedule to keep it that way
- ✓ You will get a fair price for the equipment that you need, to do what you need done

At the end of the day what else do you require from your IT services provider?