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Thinking about a new Computer? Consider These Things

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If you have a computer with a hardware problem (unreliable hard drive, or a battery that doesn't hold a charge), or a computer that is so old that it just doesn't seem worth any more maintenance dollars, a new computer may be just what the doctor ordered. (I, acting as my doctor, have often prescribed one of these.) Keep in mind that buying the computer may be the easiest step in replacing your computer. Making and then executing the plans for the transition may be harder to accomplish. There is great joy in getting and having a new computer, but there are things to keep in mind and plans to be made before you leave the old computer and start using the new one. You may have to answer questions like: what peripheral components will you keep; what software are you using that you are dependent on; what procedures do you do regularly that you will have to continue, like backing up your data and/or system.

If you are replacing a desktop, you might have more things to consider. With a desktop, usually the main chassis is replaced and the peripherals like the display, keyboard, mouse, and any special equipment, remain. And it's probably the special equipment, like an old scanner, an old printer, or an external storage device, that may need the most consideration. If you are replacing a laptop or an all-in-one, most of the peripherals are in the new package, like the display, keyboard, mouse, and storage devices, but you may still be using an old scanner or printer. If you need to hang on to the older devices, it may be the driver for that device that may become the issue. (A driver is a small software program that links the peripheral hardware with the Operating System, and it is specific to the operating system. For example, a driver for Windows XP cannot be used on a Windows 10 system.) Most of the drivers for commonly used equipment are included in the Operating System, so they will be loaded by the operating system when needed. If a device is very old or very unusual, the driver for that device may have to be obtained from the original equipment manufacturer, or it may be on the distribution disks that came with the equipment, or it may not be available for the new operating system at all. (If the device is very old, or if the new computer's CPU is very different from the one that is being replaced, (64 bit vs. 32 bit) the driver may not be available.) I mention this because I had a Label maker connected to my original desktop computer that I used to make simple labels. When I replaced my desktop, I had to go back to the manufacturer to get a new driver, and then download the label maker program and install it on the new computer.

Once you have considered the hardware situation, it's time to look at the software. Besides the Operating System, which more than likely will come with the new computer, most computers will need to have some software of the "Office" kind, to do word processing and spreadsheets. If you have purchased Microsoft Office and you have the

distribution disks, you are probably set. If you don't have access to Office, there are two free software suites available that are quite compatible with Office, Open Office and Libre Office, both of which can be downloaded from www.ninite.com. Additionally, most computer users will expect to hop onto the internet and take advantage of the many servers out there. This is basically accomplished with a browser such as Chrome, Edge, or Firefox. Edge will come with Windows 10 and the others can be easily downloaded from www.ninite.com. And don't forget, you'll want to save your "favorites" or "Bookmarks" to be used with your new browser.

Backup software might be the next area to investigate. If you use a software program that you have purchased like Acronis True Image for your data or system backup or GoodSync for your data backup, make sure it is compatible with your new system and that you have the installation material. If you use free software such as SyncToy for your data backup, make sure you know how to get it from the Microsoft site. Before you replace your computer, make a list of all the software that you have on it, so you will know what to install on the new computer. For all purchased software, make sure you have the installation disks, or the information needed to download the software. For all the free software that you have loaded on to the computer, like Malwarebytes, SuperAntispyware, Revo and CCleaner, again make sure you know where to get it. Many of these can be gotten from www.ninite.com. If you don't remember where you got a program, try to Google the name and find the manufacturer's website. And as always, make sure you are careful when you download anything from websites with which you are not familiar.

So, once you have the Operating System needs, your back-up needs, your basic software program needs, and a browser for surfing, under control, it's time to look at some of the regular activities that you perform with your computer, like managing your finances, or shopping at Amazon, or transferring your pictures from your camera or smartphone to your computer. If you own the software that you use for these tasks and you have the disks, again you are probably all set. (One of my regular activities is to transfer my pictures from my camera to my computer. Recently when I replaced my desktop computer, I found that I couldn't get the program that I was depending on for this activity, Picture Gallery, because Microsoft had stopped supporting it and removed it from their download site. I'm still looking for a similar program to do this on my new computer. Hopefully, this will not be your experience.) So, with positive responses to all of the above listed considerations you are probably ready to get that new computer. Oh, and if you want some help in deciding what computer to get, think about taking our "Buying a computer" class, given in the computer lab. Good Luck with your computer replacement project.