# Toronto Magazine

## Proposal to Upgrade Office Computers to Laptops

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# Executive Summary

**Purpose**

The purpose of this proposal is to upgrade the *Toronto Magazine* office computers (10 desktops and 3 laptops, of which 2 are currently not working). The computers are almost five years old and in need of upgrading. Upgrading will improve workflow, productivity, and office morale, while decreasing repair costs.

**Background**

With more and more of our content aimed at the magazine's website instead of the monthly print edition, we need to be able to get articles written quickly from the field versus having to constantly travel back to the office to write and file stories. This was an issue five years ago when the computers were last upgraded. At that point, laptops were considerably more money than desktops and there was not enough money to purchase 10 laptops. Instead, 10 desktops were purchased along with 3 laptops. These desktops are now slow and out of date. Some of the hard drives are sluggish. There is a constant worry that drives will crash. Furthermore, the computers are running an old version of Windows. Only one of the three laptops is currently functioning; the other two crashed in the last year. Reporters are not happy about having to return to the office to write and file stories. Some of them have resorted to bringing their own personal laptops but they are frustrated and do not think they should have to do this.

**Key Findings**

Five years ago, the last time computers were upgraded, laptops were nearly twice as expensive as desktops. Today, the price of laptops has come down to nearly the same price as desktops. A comparable Dell laptop is only about $100 more than a desktop. Therefore, with our budget that is allocated to again buy 13 computers, we can instead buy eight laptops and five desktop computers for the same price. We do not need more than eight laptops because on an average day there are never more than eight reporters in the field, including our reporting interns.

**Results**

By having enough laptops for all our reporters working outside the office, we will achieve several objectives:

•Increase the speed by which articles can be filed from remote locations
•Increase the speed by which we can post new content to our website
•Boost productivity and morale, decrease costly travel time

The five new desktop computers will also greatly benefit the graphics and ad layout department (one full-time employee and two part-time employees) as well as the full-time editor (myself) and the two part-time assistant editors. Also, we now have four interns. Two work on Monday and Wednesday and half of Friday. Two work on Tuesday and Thursday, one or two nights a week and do some website updates from home on the weekend. They always have issues trying to find a computer to work on, whether they are in the office or in the field. By upgrading the current computers, we will be able to keep a few of the old computers that are still in good working order (including the current working laptop).

# Introduction

**Purpose**

The purpose of this proposal is to explain why *Toronto Magazine* should use the budget of $7,000 allocated for 13 new Dell desktop computers to instead buy eight Dell laptops and five desktops.

**Background**

Unfortunately, in the current changing media environment sales of our print edition are shrinking at an alarming pace. This has led to a paradigm shift in how *Toronto Magazine* publishes the bulk of its stories. Most of our content is now uploaded to our website on a daily basis. While reporters are still responsible for writing print content, most of their time is spent in the field putting together small stories that can be quickly put on the site. Due to our lack of laptops (we currently only have one functioning laptop out of three), reporters are forced to either use their own laptop or run back to the office to write and file stories. This is creating havoc among the reporters and the editorial staff. Furthermore, our desktop computers are old and in need of replacement. The graphics team is constantly having issues with the slow speeds of their two desktops. The best option is to split the allocated budget into fast laptops and fast desktops. This is now possible due to the much cheaper price of laptops compared to five years ago when we last upgraded our computers. At that time we realized we could not afford more than three low-end refurbished laptops, so we stuck with desktops.

**Organization of the proposal**

This proposal will include the following descriptions:

• The current situation
• The solution
• Alternate solutions
• Evaluation of solutions
• Conclusion

Two appendices are included:

• *Appendix A* is the email that the publisher and owner of *Toronto Magazine*, Joey R. Bell, sent to the staff six weeks ago asking us to come up with a solution to our computer issue to present at the next staff meeting, which is scheduled to take place at the end of this month.

• *Appendix B* details the results of a staff survey I conducted to find out the office opinion on the computer situation.

# Description of Situation

1) The office has 10 aging Dell desktops (seven for the reporters and editorial staff and three for the graphics and ads department) and three laptops for reporters working outside the office, two of which no longer work. We have too many employees and too few appropriate computers. The computers are also too slow.

2) Six weeks ago the publisher send the staff an email letting us know that $7,000 has been allocated for upgrading our aging computer infrastructure (see *Appendix A*). He asked for our input at the next staff meeting. As you know, Mr. Bell is very hands off, as he trusts us as professionals to run the magazine. He is leaving it up to us to come up with a plan for the upgrades.

3) Reporters have been complaining for some time that it is difficult to constantly return to the office to write and file stories or to upload content to the *Toronto Magazine* website. This is now a daily problem. Given traffic congestion, some reporters have resorted to using their personal laptops or even using Internet cafes or libraries (both of which they should not have to be doing).

4) The situation is getting more urgent. Michelle, the senior member of the graphics team, ran a scan of her computer last week and it found numerous sector errors on the hard drive.

5) Since our network server is only one and a half years old, there is no need to replace it.

**Implications**

Besides the frustration of working on slow computers, the main issue is one of productivity. If reporters have to continually return to the office to write stories, then the amount of content we are able to put on the website every day suffers. Furthermore, the longer we wait to upgrade our aging computers, the more chance we take of crashes. Already, two of our laptops are no longer working and Michelle is worried her computer's hard drive is on its last legs.

The implications of not upgrading are serious enough that the publisher has agreed to allocate nearly $7,000 for upgrades even though we have been struggling financially for the last few years as print has taken an increasing backseat to online.

Fortunately, with these upgrades, we will be able to focus much more on the *Toronto Magazine* website. Not only will reporters be able to write stories from the field but on a day when we need more writers, the editorial team will be able to work remotely as well. During the first two weeks after our print edition is published, there is not very much editing to do. Myself and the other editors will sometimes have enough extra time to contribute stories to the website. But this is only possible if we have enough laptops.

**Constraints and Special Requirements**

•We need to stay under budget. The publisher sent me a second email explaining that the money allocated is all the extra money that is available. There is simply no way we can go over budget.

•The graphics team will soon need to update their layout and illustration software. There is no additional money in the overall budget allocated for this purpose. If we can stay under budget in our computer purchases then we can use the extra money for their software upgrades. I have spoken to them and they explained that it is essential to buy the upgrades so that our fonts and file formats are compatible with the printer's software and hardware.

**Criteria for the Best Solution**

The best solution needs to take into account several factors:

•The increased focus on our website and daily stories from the field

•The need to have faster computers, whether desktop or laptop

•Cost not exceeding  $7,000

•Enough computers for our increased number of staff

•We need to do what is best for the magazine but we also need to ensure that our staff is happy and in agreement with the plan

# Description of Solution

I propose that we purchase eight Dell laptops and five Dell desktops. This proposal meets the following objectives that match the criteria for the best solution as described in the previous section.

**Objective 1**: To allow the reporters to write, file and upload their stories to the website while working outside the office. This is necessary to a) increase the amount of content on our website and b) reduce the frustration of having to return to the office to write stories, as there is currently only one working laptop available.

**Objective 2**: To upgrade the magazine's aging computers.

**Objective 3:** To give the graphics team three new fast computers so that they can have the proper tools to do their work.

Furthermore, a survey of the staff suggests that my solution will meet the needs of the majority of the magazine's employees (see Appendix B).

**Implementation of Solution**

I have spoke to *Toronto Magazine*'s IT specialist, Mike Smith of Smith IT Consultants. He has agreed to the same deal we had five years ago when we last upgraded the office computers. Once I inform him of the Dell computers we wish to purchase and give him a cheque for the cost, he will purchase the computers through a source he knows who offers a 15 % discount on bulk business purchases in exchange for signing an exclusive two year Dell service contract, which we took advantage of five years ago. This worked out well for us when we had to send in some of the computers for repairs. He will also bring the computers to the office and set them up for us, integrate them into our network, do any necessary software upgrades and make sure everything is running smoothly. In exchange, we will give him a series of ads in the print magazine and on our website at a significantly reduced rate. The ads are the same as five years go so there is no need for the graphics team to take time out of their tight schedule to design anything new.

**I propose we purchase the following computers:**

### Dell Vostro 3460 Laptop – $549.00

Features:

- •3rd Generation Intel® Core™ i5-3230M processor (3M Cache, up to 3.2 GHz)
- •14.0 inch High Definition LED Display (1366 x 768) with anti-glare
- •6GB Dual Channel DDR3 SDRAM at 1600MHz
- •Graphics card: Intel® HD Graphics 4000 Vostro
- •Weight: 4.92 lbs (This is over a pound lighter than our current laptops.)

(For more info see: http://www.dell.com/ca/business/p/vostro-3460/pd.aspx?oc=V3460_CD2E)

### Dell Vostro 270 Desktop – $499.00

Features:

- •Intel Core I3-3220 processor
- •Windows 8 Pro, 64bit
- •4GB DDR3 SDRAM at 1600MHz
- •500GB Hard Drive, 3.5", 7200rpm, SATA
- •Intel HD Graphics

(For more info see: http://www.dell.com/ca/business/p/vostro-270/pd)

**All the specs of both computers are significant upgrades over our current five-year old models.**

## Cost and Budget

*Table 1* shows that we can purchase these computers and come in under budget.

**Table 1: Cost of new computers**

| Computer | Cost | Cost Minus 15% | Total Cost |
|---|---|---|---|
| Vostro 3460 laptop x 8 | $549.00 | $466.65 | $3,733.20 |
| Vostro 270 desktop x 5 | $499.00 | $424.15 | $2,120.75 |
| | | **Total + HST:** | $6,614.96 |

This total cost comes in at almost $400 under our $7,000 budget. That is enough money for the urgent software upgrades the graphics team has requested.

### Plan of Action

If we agree upon my proposal at our next staff meeting, I will personally oversee the computer upgrades working alongside Mike, our IT specialist. I will provide regular updates to the publisher and the staff through group emails.

### Schedule

The operation will last approximately one month from time of order to time of arrival. During that period, our current computer setup will not change. If any unforeseen computer issues arise – such as a hard drive crash or a system failure – Mike has agreed to bring in one or more older but fully functioning loaner computers he has stored in his warehouse. He will install the appropriate software that we need at no charge.

## Benefits of the Solution

•New, fast computers

•Enough laptops to allow our reporters to work remotely from the field

•Three new desktops for the members of the graphics team

•Two new desktops for the full-time editor (myself) and the two part-time editors who are never in the office at the same time

•Increase in productivity and morale

•Cost effective

# Alternate Solutions

1) We could buy only desktops. If we chose this option and purchased 13 desktops, we would have almost $800 left over. Therefore, we could potentially buy more than 13 desktops or use the $800 for something else (see Table 2).

2) We could simply buy 10 laptops and no desktops (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Alternate solutions**

| Computer | Cost | Cost Minus 15% | Total Cost |
|---|---|---|---|
| Vostro 3460 laptop x 10 | $549.00 | $466.65 | $6,855.09 |
| Vostro 270 desktop x 13 | $499.00 | $424.15 | $6,230.76 |

# Evaluation of all Solutions

**Result if the proposed solution is adopted**

If my proposed solution is adopted the following will occur:

•With laptops the reporters will be able to work remotely as much as they need. They will no longer have to rush back to the office to write stories, file stories and upload content to our website. They will be more productive and happier. There will be less frustration. This will increase productivity. This is especially important given that our website is increasingly our main revenue source as it becomes harder to make money from our monthly print edition.

•With new desktops, the graphics team will be able to work more efficiently and more comfortably with larger monitors. Their old computers are on their last legs. They will be happier and more productive.

•With new desktops, the two part-time editors and myself will have faster computers with larger monitors. This will make editing easier.

•New computers mean that we will no longer have to deal with aging computers that are sluggish and less and less compatible with new software upgrades.

•Will will come in slightly under budget. The remaining money will be put aside for the purchase of the graphics team's urgently needed software upgrades.

**Results if the alternative solutions are adopted**

If 1) is adopted and we buy only desktops, we will have the same situation with reporters having to rush back to the office to write their stories and upload them. This is no longer feasible. Most of their job is working remotely. They no longer have the time to spend long periods in the office.

If 2) is adopted we will face several problems:

• We will not have enough new computers for all the staff. We will have to keep using some of our old, obsolete computers. This is dangerous because they out of date and due to heavy use they will eventually crash.

•We would be left with approximately $150 of the budgeted $7,000. That is not enough to buy the upgrades the graphics team needs.

•This solution is wasteful because we do not need 10 laptops. There will never be more than eight reporters working remotely from the field. On slower days that number could be five or six.

•The graphics team needs new desktops because they need the larger monitors for layout and design work. They cannot work efficiently with small laptop screens.

**Result if no solution is adopted**

Our office computers are old. Two of our three laptops are no longer working. The senior graphics computer's hard drive is functional but damaged. The rest of computers are also five years old and may crash at some point in the near future due to constant use. It will be very hectic to have to replace each computer individually without prior notice and we will not receive any bulk purchase discount. So this will cost the magazine additional money we cannot afford. This is not an option given our financial situation at present.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

*Toronto Magazine* needs to upgrade its computers to eight laptops and five desktops for four reasons:

•Our current computers are five years old and are starting to have hardware issues. Two of our three laptops no longer work.

•Our reporters are wasting valuable time travelling back to the office to write their stories and upload content to our website using our office desktops.

•We do not have enough computers for everyone now that we also have four interns.

•The graphics team needs faster desktops with larger monitors in order to efficiently use the latest software. They will have to upgrade to this software in the near future in order to stay compatible with our printer.

**Recommendation**

For the above reasons I propose that we purchase eight Dell Vostro 3460 laptops at a cost of $549.00 each and five Dell Vostro 270 desktops at $499.00 each. I have detailed how we can get a 15 percent discount on the computers. The total cost of $6,614.96 comes in under the $7,000 computer upgrade budget that the publisher, Joey R. Bell, has set aside. We need this cushion in order to use the extra money to purchase the software upgrades for the graphics team's computers.

This solution will solve the following issues:

•It will upgrade our five-year old computers that are out of date and beginning to fail.

•It will make life easier for our reporters in the field. They will be able to add content to our website and file stories remotely. This will improve morale, cut down wasteful travel time, and improve productivity.

•It will give the graphics team new, faster computers with bigger monitors so that they can perform their jobs more efficiently.

•It will give myself (the full-time editor) and the two part-time editors new computers with bigger monitors. This will make editing easier and will improve accuracy and efficiency.

•It will allow the reporting interns to have a dedicated computer.

For the above reasons I am recommending that we implement my solution to upgrade our existing staff computers, minus the network server which is newer and not in need of replacement.

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to read my proposal. I look forward to speaking to all of you at our upcoming staff meeting where we will have the chance to discuss the solution I have detailed.

Sincerely,

Dan Verbin
Editor, Toronto Magazine
Dan_Editor@TorontoMagazine.com

# Appendix A

Below is the email sent by Toronto Magazine's publisher, Joey R. Bell, that outlines the budget we have for upgrading our computers.

Hello staff,

It has come to my attention that our computers are in desperate need of upgrading. As most of you know, we have not been doing well financially in the last few years due to the shrinking print magazine market and the general sluggishness of the economy. I have managed to find cost saving measures that have resulted in no layoffs. Unfortunately this has left us with little discretionary money.

I understand that we cannot be productive without working, modern computers. Fortunately, I have found a way to free up $7,000 to purchase 13 new computers.

Please discuss this matter with Dan in order to find the best configuration of computers to purchase.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to drop by my office once I return from vacation next week.

Dan will be passing around a survey to get your thoughts. Please fill it out as soon as possible. Thank you.

We will take up this matter at the next staff meeting. I look forward to seeing all of you there.

Yours,

Joey R. Bell

Publisher, *Toronto Magazine*

# Appendix B

I conducted a survey of the editorial, graphics, and reporting staff. Below are the survey and the results.

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**Reporter and Editor Survey**

1-Do you think we need new computers?

2- Would you rather have a new desktop or a new laptop?

3- Do you have any issues with purchasing our new computers from Dell? (We will likely get a 15 % discount like we did last time.)

Please feel free to add any additional comments in point form.

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Results:

| Question 1 | 10 yes, 2 no, 1 on vacation = majority in favour of new computers |
|---|---|
| Question 2 | 8 yes, 4 no, 1 on vacation = a result that works with my solution |
| Question 3 | 12 no, 1 on vacation = majority in favour of Dell computers |
| Results | A strong majority in favour of my solution |

\*\*The interns were not allowed to take the survey. As unpaid employees, they do not have any formal say in the financial issues of the magazine. However, they were informally consulted. They all agreed that we need new computers and that laptops would be best.\*\*