

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This month's question is: I am thinking about replacing my office/design computers. Should I also replace my network software? How do I ensure that all the data files are available to the new computers?

These are interesting questions and have many answers depending on your current software. First, I'd like to say it is a good idea to replace or upgrade your computer's operation system (i.e. Windows 98) on a regular basis to keep up with the latest improvements in the software. Moving up to Windows XP Professional can dramatically improve your productivity and the computer's reliability. There is a down side to this move and it is that some older computers may not have the hardware requirements to run Windows XP Professional. But this isn't a big down side as new computers are relatively inexpensive. I would like point out that you should be using Windows XP Professional in a business environment as the Home version does not have the security or networking capabilities of the Professional version.

Now to the network software question, it should only be replaced if you're using older, unsupported versions. By this I mean client-server software such as Novell Netware 3 or 4, or MS Windows NT 3.51 Server. If you are using MS Windows NT 4 Server, you should think about replacing it as it will no longer be supported after the end of the year. If you are using a peer-to-peer network (two or more Windows computers connected together without a dedicated server), you will be replacing your network software when you replace the computers.

As for making sure all of the data files are available to the new computers, it can be done in a number of ways. One is to use some kind of backup system. These will either use floppy diskettes, tapes, CD-RWs, or even DVD-RWs to store a copy of the data files on. You should backup the data before removing the old computers and then restore it once the new computers are in place. Another way is to install the new computer where the data files will be kept on the network and copy them from the old computer. Once the files are copied, the old computer can be removed from the network. This method works well if you're replacing your computers a few at a time.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer to, please forward them to me. My email address is meggert@wi.rr.com, my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.