Operating systems vendor lock-in

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Question 1. Add content and Proof Read,

The major determining factors in the viability of such a vast change are

compatibility and cost. A major upgrade such as this affects all software

packages currently in use. Therefore, software compatibility among

operating systems is crucial. Linux may not even have software available for

our particular needs. For instance, a Linux office version like Open Office

may be adequate for word processing, but not for use with another package

like adobe or other third party application. We may be out of luck.

Equivalent open source software is usually available, it just is not as easy as

Microsoft right now. By using Microsoft you have standard platform for all

users in your office and worldwide. This is the opposite of Linux, which has

multiple distributors delivering similar, but not the same products. This is

where many concerns originate. Just because something is cheaper doesn't

always mean it has the competitive advantage. Software price is just one

factor, as other factors prove to be more significant. Primarily compatability,

standardization, ease of use and reliability. Because of these aspects,

Microsoft still has the advantage. What the future hold is uncertain, in terms

of new

applications and products from other vendors, which will be compatible with

our current

Microsoft applications.

Much of the decision on vendors is based on the needs of our organization.

We use

Adobe and other third party applications frequently, so we cannot do without

them. If another vendor were to have available, compatible applications or

solutions, this might

get our attention. Even if the solutions are presented as compatible, we

would need to

have a ' trial period,' so that we could fully evaluate the application's ability

to meet our needs. We would require adequate technical support, to help us

troubleshoot and answer

any new questions that would arise. Still, a trial period might not give us an

adequate picture of how the application or solution would function over a

longer period of time.

The best solution might be a long term trial period, for one or two machines,

assigned

to the employees who are able to adapt to such changes more quickly. In

other words,

those with more technical savvy would be chosen for the trial.

Beyond compatibility, functionality and utility are important. The new

application must function in the same manner as our current Microsoft

products. Functionality can

be described as how well the application works and how well it meets our

needs. If

there is one task that we might be prevented from completing, in adopting a

new application or solution, we would lose functionality and create more

challenge in our

workplace.

Utility, or the ability to change or alter its function over time, is also

important. Some applications are used for one purpose, then another is

identified. This would also be a requirement of a new solution. In order for

the costs associated with installation and implementation to be worthwhile,

the application should provide multiple uses and those that we may deem

useful in the future of our organization.

Costs are also important in changing software applications or solutions. A

new vendor would need to offer the same features, functionality, utility and

compatibility for

us to even consider a new product. All else being equal, costs would need to

be similar.

As our organization receives discounts, we would expect a new vendor to

match this

benefit in pricing. That may be difficult, as our current package is part of an

agreement

that was made in the initial decision process. The new vendor could buy out

our current agreement, if extremely interested in our business.

Costs also include implementation. A new vendor would need to offer this, as

well

as troubleshooting for any issues that occur during the changeover process.

Some vendors possess more knowledge in this than others. For this issue, we

would likely contact current and previous clients to identify any possible

areas of concern. We would

read technical reports and white papers as well. They usually contain all the

specifications for running particular software applications or solutions. This

would be

an essential part of our decision making process as well. Associated with

costs are guarantees or warranties on vendor products. Any new application from another vendor

would require at least the same support and guarantees.

Finally, accessibility and customer service should be provided at a similar level as our

Current software support. A situation may arise in which we would need additional

features or packages rather quickly. Installation and implementation takes time. Therefore, we would expect a new vendor to meet our requests in a timely manner. Other

emergency problems may involve systems or networks. If, for some reason, we would need to reinstall or reload applications, immediate service might be required.

All the factors mentioned above would need to be considered in choosing a new

software application and vendor. Viability and cost are the two most important aspects.

Without viability and reasonable cost, the other features do not matter. If the new application is not compatible with current systems and applications, there is no sense in

considering the other aspects. The same applies to costs. If they are not comparable,

given the comfort level with our current software vendor, there would be no further consideration in making a change.

Question 2. Proof Read Only.

In regards to my organization, we are most comfortably locked into software

packages and our dependency on Microsoft Windows is the most obvious.
We are solely a Microsoft Shop, except for a few rogue machines in our
organization. The cost of switching operating systems for our organization
would be major. Primarily, environmental changes would lead to need for
retraining in multiple areas. Foremost,
our technicians would need training on new systems, in order to run them
officially
and securely. Regular users would be forced to learn the new operating
system including the changes made to software packages running on the
new operating system. Valuable time will be spent on training. This would
result in a decreased productivity, due to the
considerable learning curve for many users

As for hardware costs, in our organization this would not be severe . The
hardware infrastructure is compatible with most operating systems. Costs
would be determined primarily on man hours spent, setting up and
configuring systems to efficient levels.
The software costs would be extensive. Many of the software packages in
use are only compatible with Microsoft. However, many useful open source
software packages can be found for free, that are compatible with Linux and
Unix, possibly offsetting total cost operating systems switch.
In our case, this is where Microsoft strategically uses differential pricing to
keep our business. As an educational institution, we receive substantial
discounts for all Microsoft products. This beneficial situation is an important
factor in our decision to stay with Microsoft and compatible software
packages. Most of our current software products have been purchased at a

fraction of the cost of what the private sector must pay. This makes it easy for us to continue our allegiance to Microsoft. Otherwise, we may have seriously considered a change to Linux a long time ago.

Having a tight budget would have forced our hand. For a rival operating system to get our organization to switch would be a difficult. There are too many obstacles, mainly because the cost savings benefit is not there, for educational institutions. Cost cutting is reason to consider change, however it does not make sense for us.