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# SAN DIEGO ITC INFOSOURCE

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## 10 Tips for Hiring a Computer Consultant

As business-related technology becomes increasingly sophisticated and complex, many business owners, office managers and systems operators are turning to independent computer consultants to develop high tech business solutions that keep a company ahead of the competition and ensure their operation has the tools and training needed to run smoothly and efficiently.

But how do you go about finding and hiring a qualified consultant who understands your business needs?

The Independent Computer Consultants Association (ICCA), a national not-for-profit organization which promotes ethical professionalism within the industry, offers these 10 tips for choosing a consultant:

1. Be wary of the consultant who attempts to 'snow you' with technical jargon. A consultant should be able to explain things clearly in terms you can understand. You should feel comfortable with your consultant and believe that he or she has your best interests at heart.

2. Listening is a virtue. A consultant should listen to your needs and objectives, before offer-

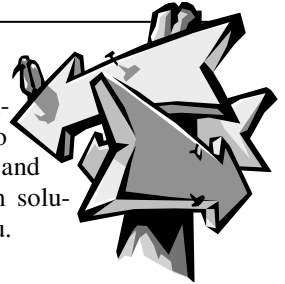
ing solutions. A consultant's primary task is to understand your needs and translate them into system solutions that will work for you.

3. Check references carefully. It is not necessary that a consultant has done exactly the same work for someone else, but it is important that his clients are happy with the results and continued service.

4. Ask about the consultant's relationships with vendors. Vendor ties often mean that the consultant has better access to the technical support needed to complete projects. Some vendors offer extra training and technical support to consultants with whom they have an on-going relationship.

5. Inquire about the consultant's objectivity. Ask the consultant to specify any special allegiances or financial incentives tied to computer products. The ICCA code of ethics specifies that as independent computer consultants, members do not have undisclosed interests in client deci-

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## HELPFUL LINKS:

- Find wireless hotspots: [www.80211hotspots.com](http://www.80211hotspots.com)
- A slightly technical site for small businesses <http://www.smallbiztechtalk.com/>
- San Diego Telecom Council <http://www.sdtelecom.org>
- Microsoft Office Tools <http://www.office.microsoft.com/assistance>
- Symantec Reference Area for Hoaxes <http://securityresponse.symantec.com/avcenter/hoax.html>

## Important Tip: A Word on Passwords

Whether you use a password of "123", or a password 18 characters long, remember that your password system is just a small part of the entire security of your network.

Passwords alone will not keep someone from your data if he or she wants to gain access to it. Password cracking programs first try all words in a dictionary, names in a phone book, and other common reference materials, throwing numbers and special characters into each of the words it guesses. Therefore, the strongest passwords are those with a mixture of num-

bers, letters (upper and lower case), and characters. However, 15% of even strong passwords can be cracked within a few hours.

Bottom line: though you cannot rely solely on a password system to secure your data, it is important to assess your security needs, identify your risk level, and match every layer of security to the standard that you set. Your data is only as secure as your least secure layer, so make each layer as strong as possible.

B(IT)<sup>2</sup> ◀ Anna Luksich, Kaiser & Associates

## Windows XP Home vs. XP Pro - What's the difference?

With around a \$100 difference between the two versions of Windows XP, many business owners rightly ask why they should spend the extra cash for the Pro version. While we routinely recommend the Pro version to ensure getting the best performance from your business PCs, here are the main features you get **only** with the Pro version:

- Remote access to your computer via the internet or a corporate network
- Ability to log into a network or server that is managed by a Windows "Domain"
- Protection of sensitive data in files and folders. The Encrypting File System (EFS), allows you to protect your files from being viewed by anyone other than you.
- More robust options for backing up and restoring data
- Advanced networking for multiple PC environments
- Internet Information Services (IIS) lets you host and manage personal Web sites
- Support for multiple-processor and multi-monitor systems
- Support for multiple languages **B(IT)<sup>2</sup> ◀ Dave Peiser, Peiser Solutions**



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## Windows Terminal Services: Centralization Reduces Management Costs

In a standard networking environment, applications are installed on each individual workstation, and those applications access data that is stored on a main file server. Because data is centralized in one place, it can all be backed up and secured in a single location, and users know that they will find what they need in one place.

Terminal Services is a feature of the Windows server product that allows companies to centralize applications as well as data. This solution can reduce IT costs significantly by creating only one place to install and maintain applications, and a single point of hardware maintenance and upgrades.

**B(IT)<sup>2</sup> ◀ Anna Luksich, Kaiser & Associates**

“Computer /nm./: a device designed to speed and automate errors”

### When is a virus not a virus?

#### Virus Update:

How many times have you received an e-mail from a well intentioned person warning you about the latest devastating virus and that you should forward the warning to everyone you know? Or that if you forward a particular e-mail to everyone in your address book, Intel can keep track of it and Microsoft will pay you \$203.15 for each e-mail sent over a two week period? Or tries to persuade you to delete a legitimate file from your computer such as Jdbgmgr.exe which was explained in the last issue of **B(IT)<sup>2</sup> InfoSource?**

These e-mails are hoaxes. A hoax usually gets mailed in chain letter fashion describing some devastating, highly unlikely type of virus. Hoaxes are detectable as having no file attachment, no reference to a third party who can validate the claim, and by the general tone of the message.

The worst part about receiving these e-mails, in my opinion, is all the cc's of everyone else it was sent to that are left in the

e-mail from a bazillion other forwards.

If you get an e-mail like this, don't forward it. If you are genuinely concerned about a potential virus threat, contact your IT Professional and they can let you know if your concerns are founded.

**W32.HLLW.Lovgate.C@mm** is a worm that contains mass-mailing and backdoor functionality. To replicate, it creates it's own e-mails, adds infected attachments, and then e-mails each infected message. The body of the e-mail contains one of the following messages:

“Send me your comments ...”, “Test this ROM! IT ROCKS!”, “Adult content!!! Use with parental advisory.”, “Test it 30 days for free.”, “I'm going crazy... please try to find the bug!”, “Send reply if you want to be official beta tester.”, “This is the pack ;)”, “This is the last cumulative update.”, “I think all will work fine.”, or “Check our list and mail your requests!”

**B(IT)<sup>2</sup> ◀ John Fredette, Fredette Systems IT**

\*email your virus questions to [dave@peisersolutions.com](mailto:dave@peisersolutions.com)

(Continued from page 1) 10 Tips

sions, and are objective in their recommendations for each specific client situation.

6. Determine who the consultant's backup will be. Discuss up front who will complete the project if something happens to the consultant. Many smaller consulting practices have agreements with colleagues or through their associations to provide backup for them.

7. Consultant Accountability. Regular status reports are a good safeguard against the unexpected. They should keep you up-to-date on the consultant's progress, as well as the costs being incurred.

8. An hourly or daily rate doesn't tell the whole story. An experienced consultant at a high hourly rate can usually justify that rate by producing value in a lot less time than a lower priced consultant. Plus, a good job will lead to lower maintenance costs in the future.

9. Membership in a computer association adds legitimacy. Consultants in organizations such as ICCA pledge to uphold a high business standard and are often backed by professional liability insurance. ICCA, for example, functions as a nationwide business support forum composed of nearly 1,500 member firms. Through the network, a consultant is able to obtain business and technical support to provide the best possible service. Consultants also exchange referrals to help clients find a proper fit between their needs and a consultant's expertise. Association involvement demonstrates a dedication to professional development, which is essential to staying on the cutting edge of the computer industry.

10. Ask how long the project will take. The consultant should be able to give you an idea of the time that is involved. This is what he or she will base the cost estimate on. Make sure you also establish a way for the consultant to notify you of delays.

**B(IT)<sup>2</sup> ◀ Dave Peiser, Peiser Solutions (ICCA Member)**

### Firewall Necessity on the Web

Firewalls are a necessity in a networking environment if any computers on a LAN connect to the internet. A firewall filters packets – both inbound and outbound -- and decides whether or not to let the information pass. This prevents unauthorized access to internal resources from an external source. It may also be configured to disallow certain types of information from being retrieved through the internet. Other features that a firewall can provide are reporting and auditing capabilities. Firewalls can be set up on a network through hardware or software.

Keep in mind that a firewall isn't a cure-all for all potential threats. Computer viruses attached to email cannot be stopped with a firewall. A firewall should be part of a larger security plan. Keep abreast of news about security holes in your everyday applications and keep them updated with appropriate software patches.

**B(IT)<sup>2</sup> ◀ John Fredette, Fredette Systems IT**



### TIDB(IT)S:

Leave your mouse behind and start using keyboard shortcuts to become more efficient in Windows ...

ALT + Esc = Switch view from application to next open application	Windows key + E = Windows Explorer
ALT + Tab = Switch between windows	Windows key + F = Search
ALT + Space + X = Maximize window	Windows key + R = Open Run Dialog box
CTRL + A = Select all	Windows key + M = Minimize all Windows
CTRL + C = Copy	Windows key + Break = System properties
CTRL + X = Cut	F5 = Refresh the active window
CTRL + V = Paste	Tab = Move forward through options in dialog box
CTRL + Esc = Display Start menu	Shift + Tab = Move backward through options in dialog box
CTRL + Shift + Esc = Task Manager	
Windows key + D = Hide/Display all windows	

**B(IT)<sup>2</sup> ◀ John Fredette, Fredette Systems IT**

**“Obsolete – Any computer you own”**

- Computer Terminology

### Wireless Networks For Business

Many businesses have decided to save the cost of running network cables through the walls or on the floors of their offices in favor of installing a wireless network, also known as “WI-FI.” A wireless network is relatively easy to install, and can allow everyone using the network to share an internet connection, connect to a server, and share files. The security of a wireless network is controllable if the appropriate network settings are utilized. You can even provide internet access to your visiting clients, without giving them access to your confidential information. **B(IT)<sup>2</sup> ◀ Dave Peiser, Peiser Solutions**

**McDonald's jumps on WI-FI Bandwagon**

McDonald's announced ten stores in Manhattan will begin offering one hour of Wi-Fi high-speed Internet access to anyone who buys a combination meal, and plans to extend the program to 300 McDonald's restaurants in New York, Chicago and a yet-unannounced California town. "You can come in and have an extra value meal and send some e-mail," says a McDonald's spokeswoman. McDonald's joins more than 400 Borders bookstores, hundreds of hotels and a couple of U.S. airports where Wi-Fi access will be available by summer. **B(IT)2**◀

**Flat-panel Monitors to surpass CRT Displays**

Flat-panel monitors for desktop computers are expected to surpass traditional cathode ray tube monitors in revenue this year. Declining prices have sparked a surge in demand for flat panel, or LCD, monitors, said Jennifer Gallo, analyst for IDC's PC Displays and Projectors research service.

This year, flat-panel monitor revenue worldwide will likely come to around \$20.4 billion Gallo said. **B(IT)2**◀

**Peiser Solutions Update**

▶ **Class A.C.T.**, a non-profit organization which offers educational outreach programs to local school classrooms, selected Peiser Solutions to provide **technology classes** to students at Pacific View Elementary School in Encinitas. The students are learning how to create web pages that focus on the Encinitas Community and their school. Instruction includes sessions on the use of Microsoft FrontPage as well as using sounds, video and digital photographs on a website. The teachers involved are Judy Leff, Danner Petty and Victor Flake.

▶ **The Carlsbad Inn Beach Resort** contracted with Peiser Solutions to perform a **wireless survey** as a first step in providing high speed wireless internet access (**WI-FI**) to guests of the facility. The resort aims to attract more business clients with this capability.

▶ **Crystal River Gas & Electric** called on Peiser Solutions to analyze and tune its Windows 2000 server-based network.

▶ **The Scripps Clinic Laser Vision Center** recently received one-on-one

training from Dave Peiser on the use of **ACT!** contact management software.

▶ **Hunter Chase & Company**, a provider of expertise and services in real estate investment banking and structuring of tax advantaged investments, renewed their IT maintenance agreement with Peiser Solutions for support of their server, network and computers.

▶ **Peiser Solutions** will be providing a new educational **seminar** entitled "Virtual Office - Working Remotely" to be held June 11th. Please call 760-632-0068 for more info.

▶ **Peiser Solutions** works with businesses who want the best technical solutions and support. In addition to general business computer and network support, they are currently focused on providing wireless networking in offices and homes, client & contact management solutions and one-on-one software training. For information about Peiser Solutions, visit the website at [www.peisersolutions.com](http://www.peisersolutions.com) or contact Dave Peiser at (760) 632-0068.



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