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Great Lakes Geek Guest Column

**Getting a Jump on IT Spending for 2010
by Siamak Farah, CEO of InfoStreet****1. The OS Is Irrelevant!**

As the battle of operating systems (OS) wages on between Apple and Microsoft, many businesses feel caught in the middle, unclear of which system to choose.

Once a side has been chosen, there is still the ever-present (and recurring) dilemma over which version to choose - not to mention the potential nightmare of migration! (e.g., Should we migrate from XP to Windows 7; What pitfalls, if any, might we encounter?, etc...).

Consider, instead, going OS neutral. With the growing popularity of Web-delivered software (also referred to as Software as a Service - or SaaS), companies can relieve themselves of a tremendous headache by relying on experts who deliver always-up-to-date applications via a simple Web browser.

This path allows employers to avoid worries over software updates, PLUS, you have the added benefit of being able to "take your desktop with you" (as you can login to your desktop from any computer in the world with a browser and Web access).

2. Ditch the Servers

Perhaps the most significant line item of any IT budget is the costs of hardware (servers); And the hidden cost associated with this occurs when the IT department is pressured to estimate the right size.

Assuming a large growth path, many servers must be ordered in advanced to be ready to support the growth. Should downsizing be in the cards, then one needs to plan on decommissioning servers which are hard to dispose of, as they often are worth a fraction of their purchase price. SaaS takes the guesswork out of your budget.

In the same fashion that one does not think about the cell phone infrastructure and just orders or decommissions cell phones based on the number of employees, IT managers, can always have the right amount of server power and be poised for growth with SaaS providers.

3. Give Your Employees a (Virtual) Key to the Office

The average American now works longer hours than even our overseas counterparts. If your company makes use of next-generation SaaS tools, your employees can have ANYTIME/ANYWHERE access to their desktop, allowing them to work remotely and during off-hours if that is what is necessary to get the job done.

We've found that by making remote access to ALL aspects of the work environment easy for our employees, they have become infinitely more efficient - many log-in to check for urgent issues before starting their morning commute and check-in again in the evening - from home. This type of employee dedication can help propel a company from being just a player in their industry to being THE PLAYER.

4. To Thy Own Client Be True

Okay, perhaps that isn't how the saying actually goes however the sentiment is valid. In this day of aggressive competition, it's important to use every tool and advantage you can afford to keep in touch with your clients (and have a reliable means for including personal details and generating automated follow-up reminders).

CRM (customer relationship management) software is not new,



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however the leaders in this industry charge more than a pretty penny for their tools. Consider one of the "optimally-sized" versions (such as StreetSmart's Web-based CRM) that can be literally a fraction the cost and which offer the core functionality you need.

Don't be left without such a valuable tool just because you've heard CRM software can be too price prohibitive.

5. Automate Your Protection

Every industry has its own set of compliance rules and best business practices. However, many companies overlook one of the most basic - yet most crucial - practices: email archiving. This simple step can offer tremendous piece of mind and protection.

Investigate automatic email archiving software which has the potential to serve as the most affordable business insurance you have ever had. Such software works invisibly in the background to back-up ALL employee email, protecting your company from accidental or intentional email deletion.



Siamak Farah is founder and CEO of [InfoStreet](#), a provider of IT and productivity Software as a Service (SaaS) and developers of the popular StreetSmart business software.

His years of experience as a software developer affords him unique hands-on technical knowledge, while his work at NeXT Computer, side-by-side industry visionaries like Steve Jobs, gives him the marketing and management insight that has helped propel InfoStreet's growth year-over-year.

A member of the Society of Industry Leaders, Siamak is a frequent speaker at conferences that focus on the Internet and SaaS such as ISPCON, INBOX: The Messaging Industry Event, the Layered Technologies Pact conference and more.

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