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TECHNOLOGY

BEST PRACTICES: Implementing Dual Monitors

From the 2008 Tax Season Survival Guide

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From the 2008 [Tax Season Survival Guide](#)

A few years ago, tax and accounting firms began the process of installing a second monitor for each employee. And so far, the experiment is a success. Firms report that the addition of a second monitor increased the productivity of their employees. Now, some firms are considering the addition of a third monitor to their desktops, and some have already gone that route. The process of installing a second monitor is not complicated. Your computer's ability to run a second monitor depends on the operating system and the graphics card.

Desktop Computers

The computer's operating system is the first item to be considered. Windows XP provides support for dual monitors. If you look at the Display Properties in the Control Panel, you will notice a setting called "Extend My Windows Desktop on this monitor." This feature allows the user to run independent sessions on two monitors.

The graphics card installed in your computer must also support dual monitors. Most graphics cards provide support for at least one analog monitor. You will recognize this as the 16-pin blue connection on the back of your computer. To

support two independent monitors, the card must have two monitor connections. These connections may be analog, Digital Visual Interface (DVI) or a combination of both.

Finally, and most obviously, you must have two monitors. The standard monitor sold today with desktop computers is a 17” LCD panel. LCD panels range in size from 15 to 23 inches, and provide the connectors for analog and DVI interfaces. It is important to match the connectors available on the graphics card with the connectors available on the LCD panel.

Laptop Computers

If you are using a laptop computer, you have a few more options to consider. It is possible to have dual monitors by using only a single LCD panel. The laptop user can use the laptop’s display as one monitor and an external display as a second screen.

However, a second option exists for laptop users. The laptop can be used with a docking station and be connected to two LCD panels. This option is more expensive but provides the user with two identical monitors that are consistent in size and performance.

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