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falling behind their competitors. If they try to muddle through with a cranky jalopy when everyone else moved up to the latest sports car, they may find themselves ...

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It's ever-evolving. While that's exciting for techies, it can be a headache for business leaders, whether they are corporate executives or small business owners.

Businesses periodically need to upgrade or replace creaky computer systems, or risk

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and staffing.

“The bar keeps being raised higher and higher in terms of how quickly and efficiently customers expect to be served.”

But weighing whether to invest a substantial sum in updated technology when other needs are pressing can leave management in a quandary.

Is it time to junk the system entirely and start over?

Can the current system be salvaged with just an update here or there?

Or is everything fine – at least for now?

“Frankly, unless they happen to work for a high-tech company, most business leaders probably don’t consider information technology to be one of their areas of expertise,” McMackin says.

“I’m sure most of them prefer to spend their time and energy on the other pressing matters. They look at the struggling IT system they don’t completely understand, and about all they can think about is the cost they are going to face to improve it. So they keep putting off a decision.”

Inaction can come with its own costs, though, she says, such as:

- **Low employee morale and production.** Employees will dread coming to work when they know they must do battle each day with troublesome technology. Employees want to arrive at the office, log in to the system and get to work. An outdated system leaves them frustrated and, what’s more, production suffers when the system works too slowly or freezes up.
- **Cybersecurity threats.** While technology is a great asset, it also represents a potential risk for every company. Hackers are hard at work looking for weak links

in everyone's IT security systems. An aging system provides a weaker defense

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McMackin says most companies with an aging system could benefit from an IT assessment that would help answer the questions that leave business leaders fretting.

"That would tell you how well your technology infrastructure matches up with the goals and needs of your business," McMackin says. "A good assessment will tell you if you are spending too much or too little, and can point out ways that you can gain the most leverage from technology."

But any decisions shouldn't be about technology for the sake of technology, she says. This isn't like consumers lining up to buy the latest gadget-filled cell phone just because it's the trendy thing to do.

"Businesses don't need something just because it's the newest and flashiest thing," McMackin says. "They need what will help them succeed with their bottom line."

Nicole McMackin is president of Irvine Technology Corp.

(www.irvinetechcorp.com), a firm that specializes in information technology solutions and staffing. She joined the company more than 10 years ago, initially serving as Vice President of Sales. McMackin has an established career in sales and management with a strong emphasis of account ownership within Fortune 300 organizations. She began her career in staff augmentation services with a locally based Orange County, Calif., company, where she was quickly recognized as one of the top performers throughout the nation. She has sold and managed multiple premier accounts, all while leading a large team of account executives and recruiters.

McMackin grew up in Southern California and is a graduate of the University of California, Irvine, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree. She sits on numerous boards, including the CHOC Children's Families in Need, Orange County Board of

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