

The iMac₅₁₂ Classic

iMac as a Business Tool

The iMac is a very good consumer computer product. The best that I have used in a long time. What about businesses needs?

The iMac, the Windows Terminal, the Thin Client and the Net PC

The iMac is similar to the specifications of what the computer industry calls a Net PC. The Net PC is an idea along the lines of the Windows Terminal or Thin Client but with an Operating System and hard drive. The Net PC would run all applications on the Net PC but would store the applications on the file server. The iMac differs from the Net PC spec as it will store its applications on the local hard drive or the file server.

The Windows Terminal and the Thin Client is used like a terminal, no hard drive and no robust Operating System. Only keyboard key presses, mouse clicks and what was on the display would be sent to / received from the Thin Client. This works well as the total bandwidth of the Thin Client is 1/10th the bandwidth requirements on a PC.

Enough technical talk, how will the iMac help my business? The major concern in IS ships today is Total Cost of Ownership(TCO). How much will the computer “really” cost after a period of time. This includes support people costs, replacement costs and the initial purchase cost.

Simplicity Shootout test results

Remember the commercial “Simplicity Shootout”? It features a second grader & a dog against a MBA from Stanford University setting the iMac and a PC. That is great for consumer comparison. Most large businesses are setting up Windows NT Workstation 4.0 instead of Windows 95/98.

The iMac took a total of 8 minutes 15 seconds.

The PC took 14 minutes and 51 seconds to just power it up. The total with Windows 95 loaded is 27 minutes and 39 seconds. You get the idea.

Simplicity Shootout with Windows NT Workstation 4.0

What about Windows NT Workstation 4.0? How long does that take costing businesses money and time? Well lets see.

Loading Windows NT Workstation 4.0 on any PC

Time	Task
0 Minutes	Start Windows NT Workstation 4.0 install - Boot with the floppy disks which came with it.
13 Minutes	Enter OEM license number and the Emergency Disk - very useless if you don't update it after every change to the NT system
16 Minutes	Load TCP/IP networking drivers and select the network card drivers
22 Minutes	Finish loading Windows NT Workstation 4.0

Loading Windows NT Workstation 4.0 - Pre-installed on a Compaq PC

Time	Task
0 Minutes	Start Windows NT Workstation 4.0 install - Turn on the PC and the Compaq pre-install program will load it up for you.
12 Minutes	Enter OEM license number and the Emergency Disk.
14 Minutes	Load TCP/IP networking drivers - the network card was done for you.
32 Minutes	Finish Loading Windows NT Workstation 4.0

Whew! All done. Since the Compaq loads the special Compaq display, sound and system enhancements it is 10 minutes longer. Both tests were done on an Intel Pentium II 300Mhz PC, 32MB RAM, 4.0 GB hard drive, Matrox graphic card and 10/100 Ethernet card.

Results

The iMac took less time plus had some applications already loaded! Saving IS shops 14 - 24 minutes on the average. If you add in the 14 minutes for PC setup, you are saving 28 - 38 minutes per computer! **These numbers equate to about \$200 (U.S.) savings per computer you setup, reducing TCO.**

The PC setup person would walk away and do something for 12 minutes, but when they returned they would only be about 4 minutes into it. The NT installation will ask you to do things all the way through the setup. I have setup a PC in 1 hour by doing that.

As long as the computer does the required tasks, most people who use them are not really concerned if the OS had pre-emptive multitasking, 16/32 bit protection against crashes, etc. They are if they experience crashes a lot, which I have found out after 1 month of use the iMac rarely crashes.

Running Windows NT on the iMac

By using several different solutions the iMac can run PC applications. Software emulation lets your iMac run PC applications directly on it, similar to a Net PC. Using a thin client server lets you run Windows applications like any thin client would.

A popular Windows emulator like Virtual PC from [Connectix](http://www.connectix.com/) (<http://www.connectix.com/>) lets you run Windows NT Workstation 4.0 on the iMac. It runs applications like a Pentium 166 or so. Many game speed testing utilities rate it about a Pentium 60, but most business applications which businesses run would not need that kind of video output. If it does, perhaps a Mac version of the application would work as good as the Windows.

A popular Windows Terminal server is MetaFrame from [Citrix](http://www.citrix.com/) (<http://www.citrix.com/>), this addon to Microsoft's Windows NT Terminal Server 4.0 lets the iMac run NT 4.0 applications on the server while sending key presses, mouse clicks and display updates over the wire. As fast as any Windows Terminal or Thin Client, while adding the Macintosh applications capability for as much as most robust Windows Terminals.

With the built-in 100BaseT networking of the iMac, adding the iMac to a Windows world is very effective. You can run the same e-mail, workgroup collaboration, and special applications businesses need.

Re-installing the OS

As a network administrator I have the task of setting up PCs along monitoring the network. I know the fun of reloading a PC from scratch. The iMac's recovery CD makes a reload just that easier. You can start the install and walk away knowing that in 20 minutes or so the iMac is back in tip-top shape.

None of the current business PCs that I have seen and worked on have that capability. So with this you can reload and walk away to do more productive tasks.

Costs

Everyone knows that the iMac costs \$1,299.00. But do they realize that a comparable Intel Pentium II 300Mhz PC with any 15" monitor costs almost \$1,999.00 for a name brand PC? Cheaper PCs are out there, but is the quality of the product worth more than the time it takes to fix it?

No. If the business pays someone to support 140 PCs, his entire salary is figured into the TCO equation. Sounds expensive to me, unless you can get a quality professional employee who does not mind being taking advantage of. Businesses can get any figure for TCO giving enough calculations and exceptions.

The bottom line

My opinion is with the iMac simplistic setup, this is the PC that businesses have been waiting for. With the iMac's capability to run Windows, run Mac specific applications, stability and price; businesses can focus on the issue of doing productive work done.

Costs can get sticky while figuring out TCO, the bottom line is the computer can be a time saver or a time waster depending on where you put your money into.

Thank you for your time!

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