

Seven things  
you need to know about

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# UPGRADING YOUR SCHOOL'S IT INFRASTRUCTURE

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**Dial a Nerd**

# 01

## KNOW WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

Often name brands get mixed up with the actual solution you are looking for; for example, Pencilbox is a school management software, but it is not the only product that can perform this task, and is not necessarily the most appropriate for your school's needs. Other examples are Parrot or Promethean (brand names) and interactive whiteboard systems (a product). In a market where many alternatives are available, it is important to know your options.



# 02

## **MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A COORDINATED SUPPLY CHAIN**

Constantly evolving technologies over the last few years means that many schools have different suppliers. With so many different suppliers alternating between themselves and offering disparate solutions, the results are often weaker networks prone to security leaks, unresponsive and generally inadequate to the growing demands of the school. Try to reduce the number of suppliers you deal with and make sure the lines of accountability remain clear.

# 03

## **MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A ROBUST INFRASTRUCTURE**

High-speed connectivity and top of the range servers and software (with all the capital investments they require) may end up underutilised or even become vulnerable to malware if they are not supported by the correct infrastructure. If in doubt, ask a professional managed services provider to audit your network and suggest an appropriate network architecture (firewalls, wireless access points, cabling and cabinets) to meet your school's needs. Decentralised networks and haphazard cabling are often the legacy of multiple temporary solutions that eventually pile up creating bottlenecks.

# 04

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT IS ESSENTIAL

If you are about to migrate your entire school infrastructure to a cloud solution or you are planning to adopt new school management software, maybe you are overhauling your entire network infrastructure and introducing interactive whiteboards in every classroom. These are tasks that you don't want to approach randomly. Correct project management, in partnership with a trusted provider, will ensure the project is efficient, delivers on time and remains within the budget. You want to implement successfully the first time and avoid tedious snag lists. Have a clear set of goals and expectations but be ready to adjust them based on new requirements as the project develops.



# 05

## **REQUEST AN ACCOUNT MANAGER**

Having a person you can call who will coordinate all aspects of the migration / upgrade plan is extremely important. This is critical to make sure deliverables are in place and adhered to, it helps to maintain clear lines of communication with the provider. All projects sooner or later encounter obstacles and challenges; this is the person you will need to work with to make sure plans get back on track.

# 06

## **DO A POSTMORTEM**

Once the project is finished it can be very valuable to analyse the difficulties you encountered and how they were resolved, to match the final results with your initial goals and expectations, and have a clear plan to maintain and support the new configuration. A professional managed service provider will ensure you have blueprints of your network.

# 07

## **IMPLEMENT AN SLA (SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT)**

This is a document between yourself as the school's IT representative and your service provider. In it you can ensure any future issues can be dealt with rapidly and efficiently, as well as agreeing on a response time. Network remote monitoring is important to ensure minimum downtime and timeous implementation of necessary security patches.