

## Double your Productivity with a Second Monitor?

As independent agents we are always looking for a way to increase productivity to drive revenue and improve customer retention. Could adding a second monitor to your computer really double your productivity? A study conducted in 2003 entitled 'Productivity and Multi-Screen Displays' by NEC-Mitsubishi, ATI Technologies and the University of Utah revealed that multiple monitor computing increased productivity and usability for computer users. "Overall it was found that users were ten percent more productive and increased errorless production by eighteen percent using multi-screen configurations. In addition, it was found that multi-monitor configurations can positively impact employee morale, making users feel more comfortable with their ability to complete tasks by allowing for quick navigation and higher task focus."

At our agency we began discussing dual monitors shortly after the initiative to reduce paper in our office. Our goal was to maximize the benefits of our imaging system. Since imaging documents we needed to provide our users with an easy way of viewing these images without the need to print out the document.

After doing research and testing we decided to begin the rollout of the second monitor to the desktops. The monitors were deployed, a ten minute training session was completed and the users were off and running. We explained to them that the primary purpose for the second monitor was for pulling up images. During the first few weeks we surveyed the users and found out that they had used the 2<sup>nd</sup> monitor to pull up images, and were pleased to see they were using the additional monitor to view company websites, watch for important emails, prepare proposals, compose letters, and get creative with the agency management system. They were easily mastering multi tasking on multiple screens. We have seen the productivity increases in the users that have dual monitors and are speeding along to make sure that all of our power users have a dual monitor setup by the end of spring.

How much is this additional technology going to cost for a 10% productivity increase? Setting up a computer with a 2<sup>nd</sup> monitor is relatively straightforward. You need a video card and a second monitor, and it helps if you are using Windows XP. We have found that the dual monitor install goes smoother on our machines running XP than machines running Windows 2000. In our office we purchased dual head video cards which are designed to handle multiple monitors and 15 or 17 inch flat panel monitors. When installation time is factored into the equation you could spend roughly \$450 - \$500 per workstation, which would cost less than two dollars a day per user. When this solution saves the user 10 to 15 minutes during the workday you would make up the costs in a year. A ten percent productivity gain would save your users forty eight minutes on an average workday!

Challenges that we encountered during this project were minor. The most vocal comment heard from the users, "A second monitor is going to take up too much space on my desk.", however, once the second monitor was in place and the user had some time to adjust to the change, the benefits overcame the space issue. Issues with remote administration and some older DOS based applications were also discovered, but the improvement gains far outweighed the issues presented.

The second monitor gives users the ability to increase the amount of information in front of them to quickly take care of tasks. The technology to support dual monitors is not only affordable; it has become a standard in the workplace. Adding a second display to your power user's PC is a must for any agency that is managing documents electronically. Okay so maybe you won't double productivity by adding a second monitor to your desktop, but then if you were twice as productive what would you do after lunch?

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