

## Best Practices in PC Life Cycle Services

Leslie Fiering

PC life cycle services extend from acquisition to disposal. Failure to take a holistic view of PC life cycle services will raise total cost of ownership.

## ANALYSIS

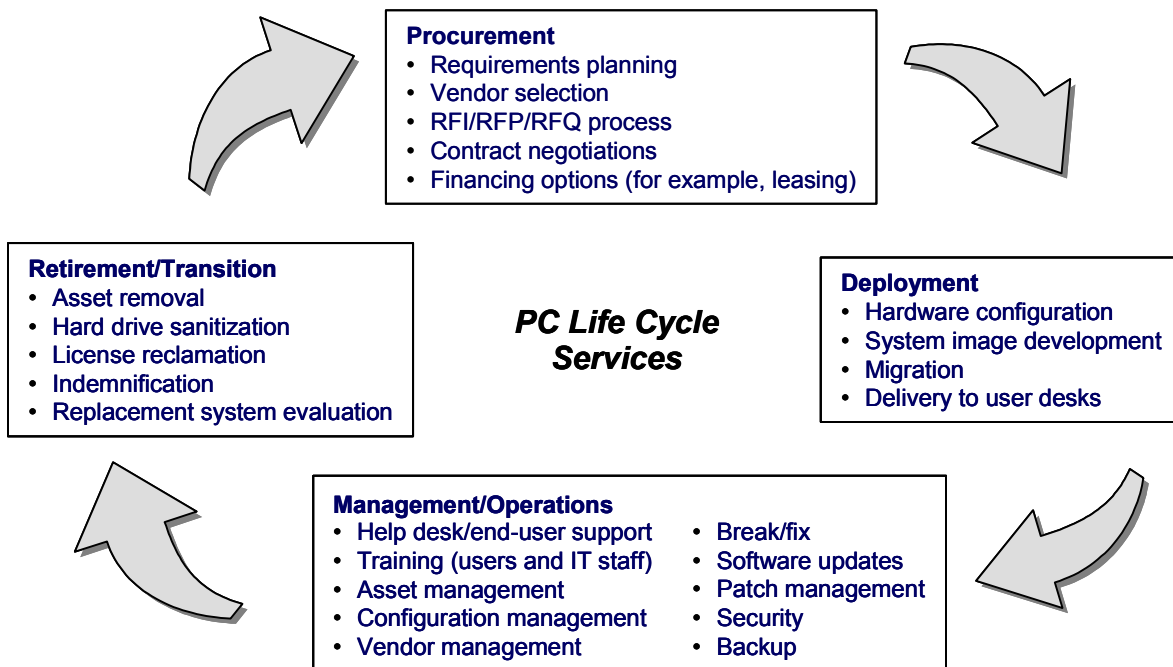
Failure to take a holistic view of PC life cycle services can lead to inefficiencies, duplication, omissions and, ultimately, unnecessary cost — essentially raising total cost of ownership (TCO). Organizations must make a realistic assessment of their requirements and map these against both in-house capabilities and PC suppliers' core competencies to provide the full range of life cycle services.

PC life cycle services refer to all the processes, tasks and people required to keep PCs functional and maintain user productivity during the lifetime of PC hardware and software. The life cycle services start just before the PC acquisition phase and continue through disposal and transition to the replacement platform. These services can be supplied in-house, by PC vendors as part of the original acquisition deal or by third parties.

As the name implies, PC life cycle services should be viewed cyclically. Many of the phases in the PC's life cycle will blend into each other. For most businesses in developed economies, new PCs are bought to replace established systems. Replacement planning affects when old systems will be ready for retirement as well as budgetary requirements for procurement of the new systems.

Different organizations will define the discrete life cycle services differently to fit their own organizational needs. However, it is useful to think of the services in terms of stages of a PC's life: procurement, deployment, management/operations and retirement/transition (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. PC Life Cycle Stages and Associated Services**



Source: Gartner Dataquest (March 2006)

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This collection of research describes best practices in delivering a number of key PC life cycle services.

PC purchase contracts are an important part of the procurement stage of the PC life cycle. Writing effective PC contracts requires planning, time and a team-based approach that goes beyond lawyers. A well-constructed purchase contract goes beyond standard boilerplate terms and conditions to document how charges will be determined, how contingencies will be managed, and what will the responsibilities be of each party. "How to Craft Best-Practice PC Purchase Contracts" by Frances O'Brien provides the necessary guidance.

Managing software configuration throughout the life cycle of a user's system has grown into a strategic role within IT organizations. Other support pressures will continue to change what will be needed to complete the life cycle. Fortunately, as "PC Life Cycle Configuration Management Evolves" by Mike Silver and Ronni Colville demonstrates, the focus and associated enhancements from PC configuration management vendors have also broadened to meet these needs.

Every hour of end-user training and IT professional saves at least five hours of lost user productivity to the enterprise. The type of application, the sophistication of the end-user audience and the geographic distribution of the end-users all create different training demands. Different training delivery mechanisms are the most appropriate in specific situations but each comes with its own pros and cons. We explore the processes for developing best-practice training services in "Untrained Users Cost More to Support Than Trained Users" by Leslie Fiering and Bill Kirwin.

While sound maintenance processes are essential for both desktop PCs and notebooks, the challenges are far greater for notebooks, which have higher failure rates as well as more expensive and lengthier repair incidents. Since companies issue notebooks to improve worker productivity, usually to more highly paid knowledge workers, minimizing user downtime is a critical goal in "Best Practices for Notebook Hardware Maintenance" by Leslie Fiering.

Deciding how long to keep a PC has direct impact on virtually every stage of the PC life cycle. The decision to replace PCs cannot be based purely technology factors but also needs to include business and financial considerations. According to "How Long Should Organizations Keep Their PCs?" by Mark Margevicius, the decision may be different depending on whether it is being applied to retiring the current installed base or projecting the useful life of new and future purchases

Disposal comes during the retirement phase of a PC's life cycle. However, lack of clear policies or poorly designed processes can expose a company to various risks. In the event of litigation or investigation, the company disposing of the PC bears the burden of proof for showing that appropriate procedures were followed for disposal. Best-practice PC disposal processes provide an audit trail documenting the serial-numbered inventory of disposed PCs, certification that proprietary and personal data has been removed and made unrecoverable, and transfer/reuse of software licenses, where applicable. These best practices are elaborated in "Creating a Process for PC Disposal" by Frances O'Brien.

### **Recommended Reading and Related Research**

"How to Evaluate International PC Price Bids" — Make a thorough analysis of the elements of international PC price proposals. **By Frances O'Brien**

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