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MAGAZINE

For and About Bay Area
Real Estate Professionals

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A PAPER
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How to Generate Quality Leads Inexpensively

Jasmin Rhoades
Top Pro Agent

SEPTEMBER 2009 | EAST BAY

By Darrell Gray

Five MORE Ways to Save Money on Your Computers and Phones

If you've acted on the five money-saving suggestions in our last column, you're already richer by over \$100 per month. Below are even more ways you can keep your money securely in your pocket rather than letting it line someone else's.



Darrell Gray

1) Send even the biggest files electronically—Thanks to our collective love of pictures and graphics, it's now very easy to create files that are too big to go through the Internet "pipes." Rather than resorting to FedEx or burning disks and messengering them, check out large file sending services. We love YouSendIt.com, which lets you securely upload a file of up to 100MB and send it to multiple people, for free. All the recipients have to do is click on an e-mail link and download the document.

Rough cost savings: \$18 or more per document

2) Switch to an online payroll service—Conventional payroll services are expensive. Cutting checks, making tax deposits, and filing tax forms yourself is a nightmare that can easily end in a meeting with the IRS. That's why we like online payroll services from companies like Bank of America. All you have to do is input the gross pay for each employee. For roughly \$20/month they do all the heavy lifting, including creating paychecks, calculating withholding, making direct deposits, and filing all state and federal tax forms.

Rough cost savings: \$50+ per month for a small company

3) Buy a refurbished PC—Are you at the point where your PC is so old and slow that you have to replace it, even though you don't want to spend the money? "Refurbs" are a great

solution. Most of these computers are brand new returns. Someone ordered a personalized computer, got it, decided they wanted something different, and returned it with only a few keystrokes on the odometer. Others are very lightly used. Either way they come with a warranty and a much smaller price tag. You can find them on Dell, HP and other PC manufacturers' websites.

Rough cost savings: \$200-\$400 per computer

4) Use open source applications—For virtually every "can't live without it" piece of software, there's an open source equivalent that's available free. Open source programs are at least 90% as good as their "Wow, I can't believe it costs that much" commercial equivalents. There are open source apps for CRM (SugarCRM is a good one), for all office applications (Open Office), for financial management (TurboCash or Compiere) and for industry-specific needs (OpenDent for dental offices)

Rough cost savings: Hundreds, depending on your situation

5) Dump your fax machine—Now you can save money and free up office space by getting rid of your fax machine. There are lots of great online alternatives like MyFax and RingCentral. For the very cost conscious, some companies offer limited free services. If you are willing to pay a little more to avoid spam, there are monthly options starting at \$ 9.99.

Rough cost savings: \$20 per month

Darrell Gray is the President of Networkistics, an IT firm that specializes in providing technology solutions and services to growing businesses. He has over 20 years experience in information technology, hardware, and software engineering. You can reach Darrell for computer and technology advice at Darrell@Networkistics.com or 925-249-9900. www.Networkistics.com