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QUALIFICATION GUIDELINES

For Networks to be covered under The NetTech's maintenance agreement.

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Qualification Guidelines

The NetTech Maintenance Plan

PURPOSE

The NetTech provides a comprehensive maintenance plan that provides peace of mind for our customers by knowing that their network will be available, and that The NetTech will be there in case something does happen.

The NetTech can offer this service cost effectively by relying on the highest industry-standard of networking in collaboration with the customer. This document describes the minimum requirements for a network to be eligible for coverage. Of course, The NetTech will be happy to help our customers to bring their network into compliance with these guidelines; such work will be billed on an hourly basis or as a fixed-price project.

UPDATES

This document is subject to revision from time to time.

Updates to the qualification guidelines will generally be made for important reasons, and should be implemented. However, networks currently covered under a maintenance agreement will not be disqualified due to later changes of this policy. The NetTech will work with the customer on a case-by-case basis to implement or waive any updates.

OVERVIEW

The overriding principle behind these requirements is to establish a well-maintained, reliable network that will serve the customer well. As a general rule, this requires employing high-grade commercial hardware, software and configurations instead of consumer-grade equipment.

WAIVERS

The NetTech realizes that each customer is unique, and some customers may not be able to meet all requirements immediately. For this reason, waivers of specific requirements may be available at The NetTech's discretion, as long as the overall quality is not compromised.

Resolving issues related to a waived requirement will generally be billed as hourly work in addition to maintenance contract fees, even if they ordinarily would be covered under the maintenance agreement.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Hardware

All hardware must be covered by the highest available manufacturer's or vendor's warranty or service plan. Equipment that cannot be covered by a warranty or service plan (due to age or because the vendor does not offer such plans) will generally not be eligible for The NetTech's maintenance plan. Exception: new equipment purchased from a The NetTech-approved vendor may be covered for a period of three years (five years for servers) from initial installation even without such a service plan.

Where software vendors offer such lists, all hardware must be on the vendor's hardware compatibility lists for all software.

Workstations

All hardware must be sufficiently powerful to run their respective operating system. The minimum requirement for Windows XP Professional is a 1.5 Ghz processor and 1 GB of RAM. The minimum requirement for Windows Vista Business or Windows Vista Ultimate is a 1.5 Ghz and 2 GB of RAM (4 GB recommended).

Servers

The minimum requirement for Windows Server 2003 (any version) is a Quad-Core processor and 2 GB of memory – 4 GB recommended. Windows Server 2008 (any version) requires at least 8 GB – 24 GB recommended.

All servers must be configured with a PCI-based hardware RAID controller and a minimum of 3 hard disks configured in a RAID-5 array. Hardware RAID on the motherboard is not acceptable, since in case of a disaster, it cannot easily be installed in another server (sometimes called a "forklift migration").

Peripherals

Peripherals, such as printers, scanners, cameras, etc. must be covered by a current manufacturer warranty or be no more than one year out of warranty. The NetTech will not provide repair service for such equipment.

All equipment must be supported by the vendor with drivers for the appropriate operating system.

All networkable peripherals (printers in particular) must be configured on the server. Individual workstations must not connect directly to shared printers.

Software

All software must be in a current support period from the respective vendor. A support contract is recommended. Beta, trial or pre-release software will not be covered.

Operating Systems

The NetTech will support current business-grade 32-bit versions of Microsoft Windows (currently Windows XP Professional, Windows Vista Business or Windows Vista Ultimate). The NetTech will begin supporting Windows 7 two months after general availability of the final non-beta version.

The NetTech will provide support for all current versions of Windows Server (currently, Windows Server 2003 and Windows Server 2008).

Home Versions

Please note that **The NetTech is unable to support home versions of Windows (Windows XP Home, Windows Vista Home Basic, Windows Vista Home Premium)**. The NetTech will assist with upgrading workstations to appropriate business-grade versions. Customer should be aware that this upgrade is a very involved process and requires an expensive upgrade license from Microsoft. It can be more expensive than repurchasing a computer preconfigured with Vista Business or XP Professional.

Please note that due to limited support from software vendors, **The NetTech currently cannot support 64-bit operating systems for end users**. The NetTech will support 64-bit operating systems for servers.

Application Software

The NetTech will provide support for current versions of major application software (such as QuickBooks 2007 or later, Microsoft Office 2003 or later), as well as current versions of most other application software. No more than two different versions of the same software will be supported; it is strongly recommended that all copies of software be identical.

All software must be certified to run on the appropriate version of the operating system. Please note that many versions of Quickbooks are not certified to run on Microsoft Windows newer than Windows NT.

Application software must be able to run without problems using non-administrative user accounts. In Windows Vista, requiring administrative privileges is easily identified by the UAC dialog (also known as "annoying nag screen").

Some versions of Quickbooks require administrative access. For this reason, The NetTech prefers Peachtree Accounting or MAS 90. Current versions of Quickbooks that no longer have this requirement are acceptable.

The NetTech realizes that at times, a business depends on software that does not meet this requirement. The NetTech will work with the customer to either find alternative software, or waive the requirement. Please be aware that such a waiver may require potentially far-reaching exclusions from The NetTech's maintenance plan, including limitations on disaster recovery.

Node-locked software

The NetTech cannot provide support for "node-locked" application software due to the complexity of license management. This is software that includes some form of licensing that prevents it from being easily uninstalled on one computer and installed on another. Examples for such software include some versions of Adobe Acrobat, as well Bay State Consulting's Transaction Pro Importer. Software that uses a hardware dongle is acceptable, as is software that uses a reasonable other licensing mechanism, such as Microsoft's activation technology.

Network Configuration

The network must be configured as a Microsoft Active Directory domain according to Microsoft Best Practices. Exception: when using a Samba-based server, the network must be configured as a Samba/NT domain.

All workstation configuration management must be server-based to the maximum extent possible, using GPOs, server-based printer drivers, etc.

Backup Policies

Customer must perform regular, at least weekly, full backups of the server, and test these backups to ensure that in case of a disaster, a restore will be possible. When feasible, the backups should be configured to allow a bare-metal restore to dissimilar hardware. Backups must be written in a standardized file format.

Licensing Requirements

All software must be properly licensed and the licensing documentation must be available. Proper licensing includes:

- Customer purchased a sufficient number of licenses and used each license only as many times as authorized.
- Customer purchased the appropriate type of license. Software must not be designated as Home, Student, Educational, not-for-profit, government, not-for-resale, or come from a subscription such as Microsoft Action Pack, Technet or similar unless the customer qualifies for it.
- When using upgrade licenses, documentation for the software that the upgrade is based on must be maintained.

Volume licensing programs should be used whenever available and reasonable.

Networking Equipment

All networking equipment must be business-grade. Equipment that is often described as "home" or "SOHO" - usually available at local electronics or office supply stores - is generally not acceptable. Equipment must be adequate for the intended network speed; on a Gigabit network, all equipment must be rated for Gigabit. Examples for brands that are generally acceptable are Cisco (except Linksys), Juniper or Sonicwall. Brands that are generally not acceptable include Linksys, D-Link, Netgear, AirPort, TrendNet.

"Rogue" switches or routers to "split" a single Ethernet port into multiple ones are not acceptable.

Security Requirements

All security hardware and software must be SonicWALL brand with a current support contract, and have all appropriate security services subscribed to (at a minimum, IPS and Gateway Antivirus – in most cases, Comprehensive Security is recommended).

All The NetTech-supported networks must use current Sonicwall Client/Server Antivirus/Firewall software, configured according to industry best practices.

The NetTech realizes that there are other excellent brands of security equipment. The restriction to SonicWALL ensures that The NetTech can provide the required expertise for maintaining optimum security.

The NetTech will not support Norton or Symantic security products.

Permissions

End-users must not have administrator rights on workstations.

Wiring Requirements

All wiring must be using CAT-5e or better cable, installed by a qualified contractor. Wiring should not run parallel to power cables due to the possibility of interference and signal degradation.

All cables must run in straight runs from the Ethernet port to the network switch. Spliced cables.

There must be enough Ethernet ports to serve all equipment. In most cases, this means at least two Ethernet ports per user – three if a VoIP phone system is used. Connecting multiple Ethernet devices using a “rogue” switch is not acceptable. The reason for this requirement is that such rogue switches are often cause for network problems, and make diagnosing and repairing such problems much more difficult.

Wireless Requirements

Any wireless access must be on a network segment firewalled from the main network. Wireless access points should be SonicWALL brand; consumer/SOHO-grade wireless equipment is not acceptable.

The wireless network must use the highest-grade encryption available unless it is intended for public use. If intended for public use, firewall policies must prevent access to the wired network.

NON-TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Adding new devices to the network

There must be a written policy establishing which devices can or cannot be connected to the company network, both wired and wireless, and what these devices are or are not allowed to do. This policy should cover company-owned as well as employee-owned and other equipment, including laptops, iPhones, Blackberries. Note: The NetTech’s monthly service fees may vary with the number of devices connected to the network.

Management Support

The NetTech wants to be a trusted partner for our customers. To ensure success of the maintenance plan, it must have full management support. Management and employees should understand the importance of each one of these policies. Management, with The NetTech assistance, should communicate these guidelines, and their reasons, to employees.

Policies

Customer must implement computer use policies consistent with industry best practices. This includes personal use policies, privacy policies (such as, informing users whether or not their emails will be monitored), password policies (requiring a password change every 30 days and prohibiting password reuse; enforcing reasonable password length – eight characters minimum - and complexity – at least three of the four classes of characters in each password - , prohibiting sharing passwords, prohibiting maintaining a “master list” of passwords). The NetTech recommends occasional security audits.

All software installation must be performed by The NetTech, or with The NetTech's authorization and according to The NetTech's standards.