

LANDSCAPE

For me, there is no more abominable task in the world than breaching the doorstep of a car dealership. Why? Because I'm not only fearful of being taken to the cleaners by the slippery salesmen, but—not knowing the difference between a cylinder and a valve—I also dread the prospect of revealing my total ignorance in front of complete strangers.

Many of you, we suspect, feel the same way about computers. Terms like *Read-Only Memory*, *28,800 baud* and *Pentium chips* confound you.

"There are enough reasons—time management, people management, materials management and communication—to have a computer," says Peter McCormick of TurfNet Associates. "And hardware is becoming affordable. I went into a computer store last week and saw a great little computer for \$895."

If you haven't joined the computer revolution yet, but might want to try, here's a step-by-step guide:

- 1) Put your checkbook in your pocket and bop on down to your local computer store.
- 2) Find a sales clerk in the hardware section where all the monitors and keyboards and stuff are displayed.
- 3) Tell him you want a "PC-compatible computer with a Pentium chip." That kind of machine will allow you to run a wide variety of programs at fast speeds and should not be outdated for at least—oh, say six months.

If the sales clerk hits you with some doubletalk about "megahertz," just remember that the higher the number, the faster the processor (100 Mhz seems to be a watershed speed nowadays).

You will probably *not* want a Macintosh computer, unless you're going to be using it at home and the kids will be using it, too. Macintoshes are

easier to use than PCs, but fewer business programs are available.

4) Tell him you want Windows '95 software. Actually, the computer will probably come with a wide variety of software, from games to screen savers—much of which you'll probably never use.

5) Tell him you want at least 8 "megs" (that's "megabytes," or thousands of computer bytes) of "RAM" (Random-Access Memory). Eight megs should be enough to allow you to access multiple computer programs at one time, but if you can afford 16 megs, get them.

6) Tell him you want "a hard drive with at least 500 megs," which is pretty standard today. This is the total amount of memory, in bytes, that your computer can store. Many new machines come with up to 1.2 gigabytes, or 1,200 megabytes; but if you're not going to be running complicated graphics, you don't need that much.

7) Tell him you want a machine with at least a "14,400 bps (or baud) fax/modem." This will enable you to access online and Internet information with a reasonable amount of speed. If you can afford a 28,800 bps fax/modem, get one.

8) Tell him you want a "4x CD-ROM drive," which is a machine that reads digital compact disks like the ones you play on your stereo system. ("ROM" stands for "Read-Only Memory," which means you cannot record to the disks, only play them.) Four-x means quadruple-speed; if you can afford an 8x, get it.

9) Give the nice man your check—which in no case should be more than \$2000, more likely around \$1100-\$1600.

10) Before leaving the store, sign up for computer classes. They cost a little extra, but without them, you might be lost.

One last suggestion—and it's more of a warning: do *not* get caught spending hours and hours in front of your computer. You still need to get outside and talk to your employees, visit customers and check out the turf and shrubs.

A computer is nothing but another tool, like a spade or a cellular phone. You can use it to educate yourself, to provide some of your needs, and to make you a better manager. But it's no substitute for what you're already doing right. **LM**

How to wire yourself without getting electrocuted



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