

Secret Order of the Mac

Dollars and Sense

A financial services firm adds up the numbers and finds that Macs are the most cost-effective solution.

Rishi Srivastava didn't set out to convert his office to a Mac shop. The CIO of Quantal International, a 25-person risk management company in San Francisco, was looking for ways to save money. To his surprise, he found that upgrading all the desktops in the office to Macs would help him do just that.

Srivastava was a long-time Mac fan, and his company had an OS X machine for testing the custom software it produced. Otherwise, though, the office was populated with Windows systems. "Traditionally, we have always been a Microsoft office," Srivastava says. "We need to use Outlook, Office, and other Microsoft programs."

Meanwhile, Apple had started using Intel processors, allowing Macs to run Windows, and in early 2008, Srivastava decided to take another look. Adding up the numbers, he determined that Macs were more than price-competitive than PCs. While an average off-the-shelf PC can be substantially less expensive than a Mac, compared to a PC outfitted with high-quality parts — like a comparably fast graphics card and processor — the Mac came out ahead. "I found Macs to be similar in price and much bet-



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ter in performance," he says. "It was a business decision, purely about cutting costs."

Thanks to their high-end hardware, Srivastava figured, Macs wouldn't need to be replaced as often as Windows boxes, increasing return on investment and reducing capital expenses. Employees who wanted to switch could move to OS X and get their work done — but, since Macs can also boot in Windows 7, they could still run their old programs if

they needed to. "We didn't want to spend a lot of time trying to migrate users," Srivastava explains. "Macs support all our legacy products, and everything just works."

The CIO began by setting up one iMac, and then another two around the office — and suddenly everybody wanted one. Today, Microsoft Office Mac 2010 is the software of choice, and only Human Resources remains on the Wintel platform. "People are thrilled

with the performance and the ergonomics, and the way the iMacs look," he says. "After a couple of deployments, I started to get requests from people wanting to know if they could also have iMacs with the next upgrade."

In fact, Srivastava chuckles, the office's iMacs have already become something of a badge of honor — an obvious status indicator, like a private parking spot: "It's a little distinguished to have one." ■