



**C**lose your eyes for a moment and try to envision a world without technology. Can you see it? No computers, no telephones and no Internet. Think of how your organization would change without technology. Could you offer the same level of service? Would you be able to get the information you need? Could you conduct your business?

When it's well planned, technology can make our lives easier and our businesses more productive. Technology can help us organize, communicate, plan and explore. It is the lifeblood of an organization.

Given its importance, technology should rank high on any executive's priority list. But the truth is that technology planning is a scarce commodity. Most organizations address technology only when problems arise, such as when:

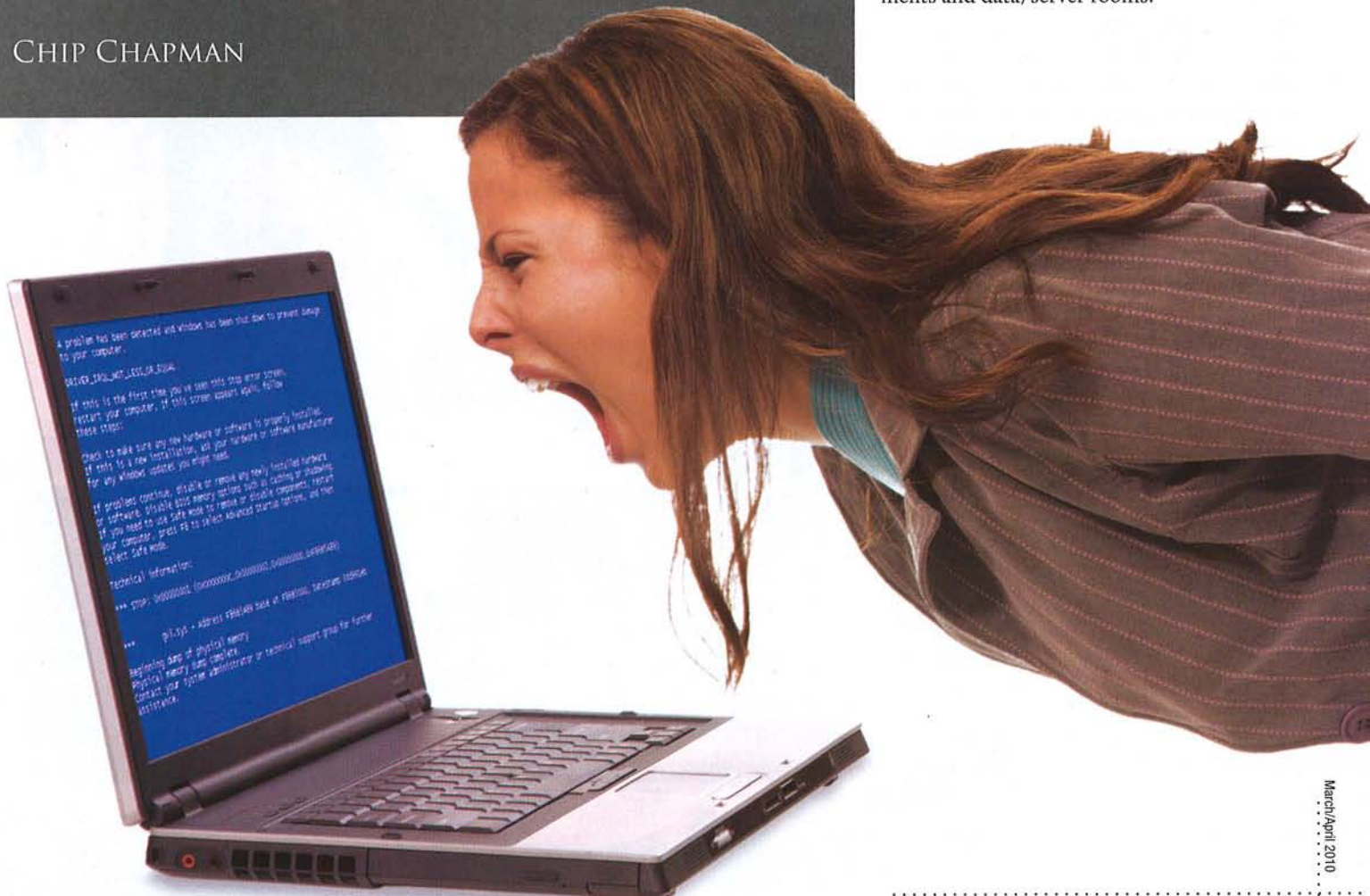
- A server crashes and no one can access vital data;
- Those in charge of the office move wonder who will have the network and computers "up and running" in the new facility; and
- New equipment doesn't just plug in and work like expected.

Today's technology systems are complex and integrating them requires careful planning. That plan must start with the technology infrastructure—that is, the cabling, cabling pathways, power capacity, heating, ventilating and air-conditioning requirements and data/server rooms.

# Technology Happens

## if You Don't Plan for IT

CHIP CHAPMAN



**Did technology “happen” at your facility?**

Too often, technology happens. We order the latest and greatest software or hardware only to realize the existing network won't support them. We add new cabling without figuring out what was at the end of the old stuff. We decide to upgrade the system and realize the tiny closet at the end of the hall isn't big enough to hold the equipment racks but we cram them in there anyway. Soon, you have a data room that doesn't look ready to meet the demands of a modern workplace.

Failing to plan technology always costs a premium. Is it cheaper to plan to buy the right equipment for the infrastructure at the new office or retrofit the space to make the new stuff work? Do you get a better result if you squeeze the server room into a broom closet or build adequate space from the start?

The message is clear: Plan technology before technology happens or you'll be left to untangle the mess. Many times building owners and architects think they can deal with technology later. That's an expensive mistake.

**Plan your technology S.P.A.C.E.**

When business owners talk about technology, they often only think about computers, phones, copiers or the Internet—or perhaps about specific applications that allow them to operate their businesses. Like you, they often have a particular problem that needs immediate resolution, and rather than lose more time and money thinking about how this decision may impact their other systems, they often buy a quick fix just to get by.

However, in today's world there are many more systems that you should consider and integrating them can be extremely complicated. These systems ensure the safety and comfort of your customers, the productivity of your employees and the operational efficiency of

your facilities. They should and must work together seamlessly to optimize building, security, communication and information technology (IT) systems.

Ask yourself: Is it time to integrate our technology S.P.A.C.E. systems? This includes:

- Security and access control;
- Phone and paging systems;
- Audio video systems;
- Computer networks; and
- Electronic building control systems.

If you agree that it makes sense to properly integrate all or some of these systems, then you must start with a solid foundation or infrastructure that will support your facility's technology needs today, as well as allow for future growth and applications.

A well thought-out technology plan can show you how to leverage your existing technology investments and create a true return on investment. It will also help you understand the total cost of ownership of all your future technology investments.

**Plan IT and save money**

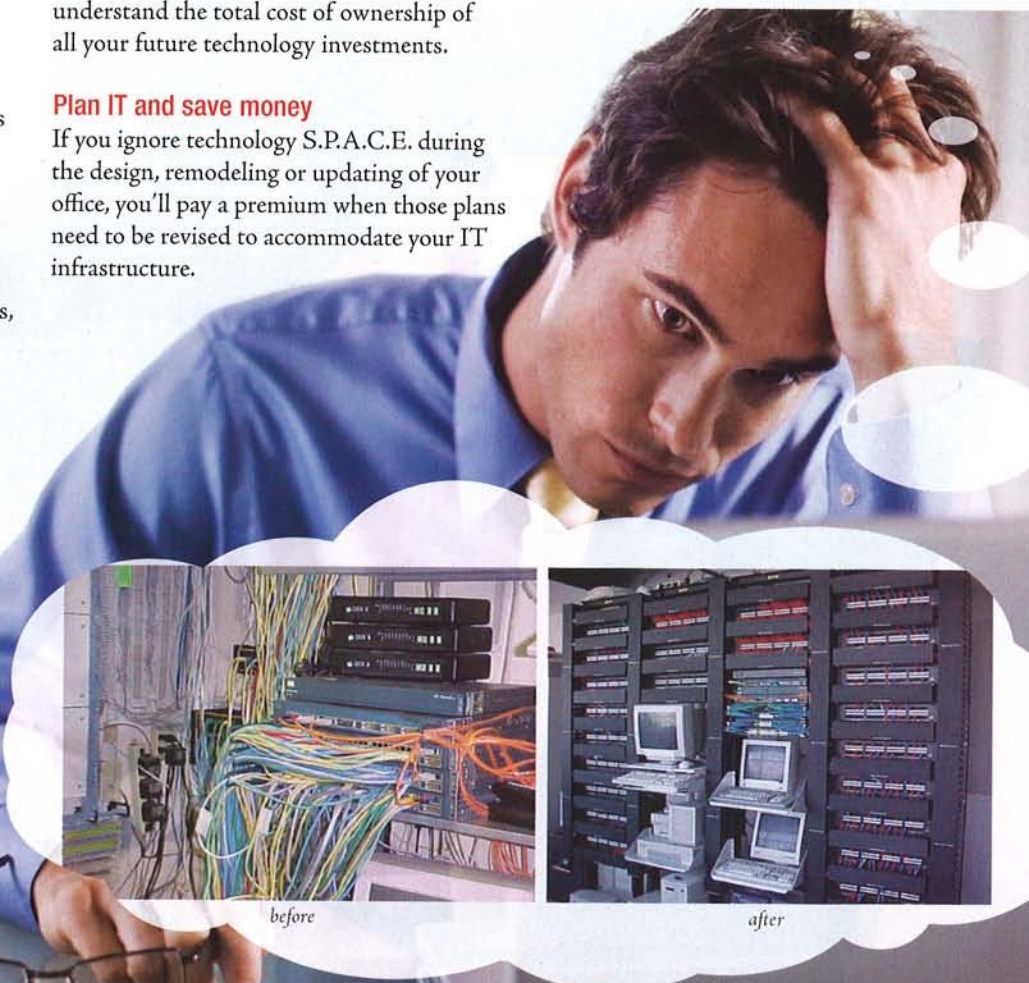
If you ignore technology S.P.A.C.E. during the design, remodeling or updating of your office, you'll pay a premium when those plans need to be revised to accommodate your IT infrastructure.

The costs increase if changes are made after construction or installation has started.

Technology infrastructure is usually the least-expensive part of an overall project—running about 7 to 12 percent of the total system cost. But it can become the most expensive part if it's not well-planned. Without enough physical space, for example, equipment can overheat or overload circuits, creating a fire hazard. More problems are in store if the wrong cable is used, if it's installed incorrectly or if a low-quality product is used.

If you're building or renovating office space, you've probably hired professional contractors including an architect, general contractor, project manager and electrician. Maybe you're managing on your own. Either way, you'll soon find technology on your to-do list.

If you follow the advice of most contractors, you won't finalize decisions about technology until the end of your project when it's time to install FF&E (furniture, fixtures and equipment). Even then, the contractors may



ask that the technology part of FF&E is up to you, the owner or lessee.

Sound reasonable? Not really. Waiting to address technology as part of FF&E makes about as much sense as constructing a new building from the roof down.

If you want technology to work for your business—and you don't want to pay a premium for it—you must plan for a solid technology infrastructure from the very beginning of your project.

Unfortunately, business owners wait to hire professional technology consultants until it's time for FF&E. By then, it becomes very expensive to fix problems that could have been prevented including:

- Improper cooling for IT equipment;
- IT infrastructure that doesn't support your technology needs;
- Code violations due to improperly installed cabling; and

- Outlets in the wrong locations or configured improperly.

While some parts of technology could be considered part of FF&E (i.e., computers, phones and video screens), these modern tools only work if the proper infrastructure is in place.

If this sounds complicated, that's because IT can be. Sometimes, corporate IT staff can manage this planning. However, more often a qualified technology consultant brings a broader perspective and range of hands-on experience to the table.

**How IT is meant to be**

Most business owners will admit what they don't know about technology and recognize

the value of a reliable, fast and sustainable system. Those who have hired a technology consultant as part of their building or remodeling team will also admit that early technology planning is critical—reducing stress and costs for everyone.

Imagine your world with a high-performing technology plan in place. Proper S.P.A.C.E. planning creates a safe and orderly environment. Computers and phones are in sync and information is shared instantaneously with employees and customers alike. Your organization is capitalizing on its investment in technology and that's just how you planned IT to be. **FMJ**



Chip Chapman is president and co-owner of Integrated Building Systems, a technology design-build contractor in Columbus, Ohio. Chapman has more than 26 years of experience as an entrepreneur, business owner, speaker and author on the subject of technology S.P.A.C.E. planning. He has helped businesses large and small to plan and integrate technology while building, updating or relocating their offices. Go to [www.TheOfficeMovingGuide.com](http://www.TheOfficeMovingGuide.com) to receive Chapman's free white paper offering insider advice, checklists and timelines.

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