

The Hidden Cost of Business Laptops

Why Device-Centric Models No Longer Scale



Most IT leaders can quote the price of a business laptop. Few can quote its true cost over three years.

This paper outlines a total cost of ownership (TCO) analysis for mid-range, high-end, and GPU-enabled business laptops. The findings show that the purchase price accounts for less than half the real cost. Ongoing costs, like

software, support, maintenance, security, and logistics, compound over time and silently drain IT budgets.

As enterprises face rising pressure to onboard users faster, reduce hardware dependencies, and scale securely, traditional device-centric models are becoming a liability. It's time to rethink the economics of delivering work.

Total Cost of Ownership: What the Numbers Say

Over a 36-month lifecycle, the non-purchase costs of a business laptop are:

195.5%
of the purchase
price for mid-
range devices

117.5%
for high-end
laptops

178.8%
or GPU-enabled
machines

Laptop Type	Purchase Price	Non-Purchase Costs	36-Month TCO	% Over Purchase
Mid-range	\$1,150	\$2,248.00	\$3,398.00	195.5%
High-end	\$2,000	\$2,350.25	\$4,350.25	117.5%
GPU-enabled	\$3,000	\$5,364.13	\$8,364.13	178.8%

Non-purchase costs include software licensing, endpoint security, help desk, international shipping, repairs, and hardware management.

What's Driving Up Costs?

- **Software Licensing:** OS, antivirus, remote monitoring, and in some cases, specialty GPU applications
- **IT Support:** Setup, troubleshooting, help desk, endpoint agents
- **Security:** Endpoint protection, Data Loss Protection (DLP) tools, and Cloud Access Security Broker (CASB) agents

- **Device Logistics:** Shipping, imaging, Return Merchandise Authorization (RMA), and refresh cycles
- **Global Deployment:** International shipping and support inflate cost and complexity

The result? Organizations end up spending 2–3x more than the laptop's price over its useful life and that's before factoring in productivity loss or downtime.

The Problem with Device-Centric Work Models

For years, companies have accepted the overhead of managing hardware as the cost of enabling work. But that approach no longer holds:

- Teams are remote, global, and fluid.
- Contractors and third-party users need short-term access fast.
- IT is under pressure to do more with less—while improving security.

Device-centric models don't scale. They cost too much, take too long, and introduce too many risks.

A Simpler Model: Deliver Work, Not Devices

Modern IT teams are shifting toward a browser-based application delivery model that removes the need to ship, manage, or secure endpoints.

With Sonet.io, enterprises can:

- Deliver any app to any user instantly, via browser
- Eliminate hardware provisioning and support
- Secure access with built-in zero-trust policies
- Reduce TCO by up to 10x compared to traditional device strategies

Side-by-Side Cost Comparison

Category	Device-Based	Sonet.io
Initial Setup	Imaging, shipping, config	1-click browser access
Hardware Refresh	3-year cycles, RMA	Not needed
Endpoint Software & Licenses	Paid per device	Reduced – most endpoint tools optional
Support & Help Desk	High, ongoing	Minimal
Security Stack	Multi-tool, expensive	Built-in DLP, zero-trust, session recording
Deployment Time	Weeks	Under 1 hour
Onboarding Users	Days or longer	Seconds
Cost Transparency	Variable, hard to predict	Flat per-user pricing

Note: Application licensing (e.g., SaaS, productivity tools) is assumed equivalent across both models. Endpoint software (e.g., EDR tools like CrowdStrike) may still be used in a browser-based model but are no longer required for secure access or app delivery.

Final Takeaway

You're not just buying a laptop. You're buying a long list of hidden costs and operational complexity.

By moving away from device-centric models and embracing browser-based application delivery, IT leaders can cut waste, boost agility, and simplify operations—all while enhancing security and control.



Work Securely From Any Device

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