

Don't Change Horses in the Middle of the Stream_v01

I'm back... Lets chat about it from a diff POV. This pilot project is only for 10 people. What would be the next best device we could use as a vault? Maybe a refurbished laptop? Refurbished AIO? A new Android Tablet?

Recalled memory

Given what testing turned up with the A14 boxes (Android 12 relabeled as 14, 32-bit, and a 2022 security patch), stepping back to compare options makes sense. For a 10-person pilot, I'd rank them this way:

1. Refurbished business laptop (best fit). This is the only one of the three where you can make the air gap physical rather than just a setting. On most business laptops, Dell Latitudes included, the WiFi/Bluetooth card is a small removable module, so you can pull it out and the machine simply has no way to reach a network. You already know the Latitude line, you already run Linux Mint, and Mint gives you full-disk encryption at install time. It's portable, has its own battery for power blips, and a refurbished Latitude in the \$150–250 range is plenty for storage duty. Buying all 10 as the same model matters more than which model: one set of instructions, one spare-parts plan, and your teachers only need to learn one machine.

2. Refurbished AIO (workable, but fights your own rule). AIOs are solid for a fixed workstation, and you already use them that way. But they're bulky, need wall power, and the WiFi is often built onto the board where it can't be removed. You decided earlier that you need things you can physically pick up and move yourself, and an AIO works against that for anything you'd hand out to 10 people.

3. New Android tablet with a microSD slot (weakest as a vault). It's cheap, portable, and friendly for less technical people, but the air gap is only as strong as airplane mode, which anyone can switch off. MicroSD cards are also among the least reliable storage for something meant to hold valuable files long-term, and budget tablets carry the same risk you just ran into: specs and Android versions that aren't what the box says. A tablet could still be a good companion device, say for the AI assistant idea, just not the vault itself. (I'm assuming "TFT slot" meant a TF/microSD card slot; let me know if you had something else in mind.)

So for the pilot, I'd go with 10 identical refurbished laptops, WiFi cards removed, Linux Mint with encryption turned on, and data moving in and out only by encrypted USB drive. That also gives your teachers a very concrete, easy-to-explain story: "this machine physically cannot go online."

Will these vaults live with the 10 participants at home, or stay at a central location where people bring their files?

Thank you for the sound advice. My life has always seemed to be two steps forward, then one step back... I need more time to think...

Take all the time you need. And for what it's worth, the step back this time was actually a win: you tested 10 boxes before committing to 100, and testing caught the problem before it cost you real money. That's exactly how a pilot is supposed to work.

When you're ready, we can pick up with your questions, the vault location, or turning the best practices list into a doc. Whatever comes first.

You are right... Thanks

You're welcome. Rest up, and come back whenever you're ready.