

Technology Resources for Growing Businesses

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Use Technology as a Tool
to Grow Your Business

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Introduction

Of all the things you'll learn in this guide, the MOST important is that **technology is a tool.**

Develop a technology plan (or road map) that will help you decide what technology is useful for your business at specific points in your business growth cycle.

Technology is a tool in your business that can help you achieve greater efficiency with your financial management, marketing, customer relations, employee development and just about every other aspect of your business.

As you consider using technology in your business, always ask yourself, "Will the technology I am using or investing in, save time, save money, increase efficiency or enhance customer relations."

There's a lot of technology available that can be useful and even fun, but not all of it is the best use of your resources. There's no argument that digital cameras, PDA's, portable scanners and other gadgets can aid in increasing productivity in your business - but focus on the basics first.

Having a fancy PDA is no use if you're using 1987 computers in your office with 5 1/4" floppy disk drives.

Before purchasing any technology, consider what the **return on investment (ROI) will be for your business.** If the ROI will justify the purchase then buy. Remember, every benefit will not be upfront and clear or tangible. Some benefits might be intangible. They might not immediately increase revenue by \$500,000 per year, but might reduce the phone calls coming into your business, thus freeing employees to do other things, for example.

When considering ROI ask yourself:

1. What are my short and long term goals?
2. How will this technology help grow my business?
3. Is technology the solution, or do I need to change a business process?
4. How have other businesses similar to mine benefited from this technology?
5. What are the hidden costs such as support, installation, maintenance?
6. Is it within my budget?

As you use technology, don't forget your partners and customers.

If you've thrown out your fax machine and only use email but your partners and customers have thrown out their email and only use fax machines you are in for major problems. Keep your partners and key customers informed of any major technology changes to ensure your changes do not affect your business relationships.

Desktop Computers

The desktop computer is the life blood of most businesses. It's your daily work horse, your communications tool (and at times a spam reception box) and how you manage your finances.

Before purchasing a computer, **consider who will be using it and what functions the computer will be used for.**

If an assistant is using the computer for power multi-tasking, email, word processing, graphics editing, database creation and more then he should have a powerful computer system.

If an executive is using their computer for occasional email and web access, their task does not warrant them having a more powerful computer than the assistant.

When shopping for a computer, get as much RAM (256mb or more), processor speed and hard disk space (40GB or more) as you can. Peripherals like CD/DVD drives, sufficient ports (USB, firewire) are also important considerations.

These are only guidelines, you may need more or less powerful specifications

Don't try to save money by purchasing cheap, "no name" brands.

Purchase your computer from nationally recognized computer vendors to best ensure that the support you need will be around for as long as you own your computer.

There are differences between home PCs and business PCs. Often the home PCs are cheaper, made with less quality components and have less technical support.

Custom built PCs - PCs built by a local consultant, called Value Added Reseller or a "mom and pop" computer store are only as good as those who build them. If the custom built PC is built by a company that builds reliable PCs and provides excellent customer service and support, then go ahead and buy a custom built PC. But if after doing some checking you realize that this is a fly-by-night company, here today and gone tomorrow, or the PC's they build use low quality parts don't buy from them.

Ergonomics - Since you'll be using your computer for several hours a day it is very important to ensure you and your employees are using the computer in a comfortable environment. Your posture, the position of the mouse, how high the desk is, amount of lighting and other factors all play important roles in the proper ergonomics of a computing environment. Cornell University Ergonomics Web offers an encyclopedic resource of ergonomic information - <http://ergo.human.cornell.edu/>

Operating System

The computer's operating system (OS) (ie Windows 2000 or Macintosh) is the central nervous system of your computer and has the critical task of ensuring the computer's processor, hardware and programs work together. The operating system manages your printing, file management and many other crucial aspects of your computer's operation.

Microsoft Windows series of operating systems (Windows 95, 98, 2000, XP, NT) are the most popular operating system in use by businesses and consumers.

Apple Macintosh and Linux are two competing operating systems with significant market shares.

Linux is available as a free download or for purchase from resellers far cheaper than Microsoft's operating system. Linux is an "open source" software product which means it was developed for the free use and/or modification by the general public. Although Microsoft has the lion's share of the market in desktop computer operating systems, many businesses are increasingly using Linux to power their network servers.

Make sure you update your operating system so that it always has the latest information. Often times seemingly random computer problems are solved with a operating system update.

If you're buying a new computer, it'll probably come with Windows XP (maybe Windows 2000) preinstalled but Wal-Mart and other retails are offering very low cost computers with the Linux operating system built in.

Apple computer systems are very popular with those doing graphic and music work and in the education markets. Although both Apple and Linux will be functionally sufficient for any business use, it's best for small businesses to use Windows based programs and operating systems to ensure easy compatibility with the business community at large.

If you already have Windows 98/95 and the computer is working fine, you might be tempted to leave things the way they are. However, I would suggest that you visit Microsoft's Web site (www.microsoft.com/windows) to get a detailed overview of their operating systems and see what benefits you are missing by not using Windows XP or 2000 then you can make an intelligent decision if you want to upgrade or not.

Better security & multi-media support, increased stability (less crashes) and networking support are just a few of the benefits that Windows XP and 2000 provide over previous version of Windows.

If you have Windows 3.1 – you should definitely upgrade to a better operating system (and a new computer) unless there are very specific reasons for using Windows 3.1, such as an older application that does not have a Windows 2000 upgrade and can only be run under Windows 3.1.

Some points to consider when upgrading:

1. Older DOS or even Windows 3.1 compatible software may not work with Windows 2000 or Windows XP. Talk to the vendor of your programs to ensure they will work with the operating system you upgrade to.
2. Make sure your computer hardware is compatible with the operating system you want to run. Is there enough hard drive space and memory? Is the processor fast enough? Can you add a new hard drive or processor if needed? Is it cost effective to do so?

Software

Once you've got your computer and operating system established it's important to consider the software you'll need to actually run your business' computer.

If your software is not working properly, your entire computing experience will be at best frustrating and at worst disastrous.

Maybe your software is crashing often, causing your computer to shut down, or you find that you are losing data. Get these things solved first and here's some basic tips to consider:

1. Is your hard disk space low?
2. Do you have enough memory?
3. Do you need to perform file and disk maintenance (like defragmenting your hard drive)?
4. Is a program(s) causing a conflict with another program?
5. Have you updated the software?

There are thousands of different software titles you can purchase for your business. Each business, depending particularly on its industry and clients might need software specifically for those needs. Architects, car repair shops, plumbers, cleaners, real estate agents and etc all have software specific for their industry. However, there are some basic software considerations that most any business should have:

- Word Processor
- Spreadsheet
- Database
- Presentation
- Email
- Finance / accounting programs
- Backup software / hardware
- Contact Management

Word processor – ideal for preparing business correspondence and documents. Word processors are basic but powerful tools that can be used for writing letters, creating simple databases, and creating forms.

As with any software product, it's important that as you share your documents with others you ensure they have compatible software.

If you are using Corel Word Perfect for example and someone else is using Lotus Ami Pro you will have compatibility issues and find it difficult to read each other's word processed correspondence. Ensure you, your customers and partners all use the same software as much as possible.

Microsoft lists several dozen tips for its family of office products here
<http://search.office.microsoft.com/assistance/tips.aspx>

Spreadsheet - When you need to analyze numbers and get information from numerical data a spreadsheet is what you'll need. A spreadsheet can also aid in creating charts based on the entered data.

Many businesses use their spreadsheet for address books, customer records and other purposes as it's so easy to start typing data into columns. However a database or contact management software is often the better tool,

Databases - While a spreadsheet is the ideal tool for mining numerical data, a database is used for analyzing and managing alpha numeric information.

A database is the best tool for managing information about your customers, employees, inventory and other information. There are many programs that are built for managing contacts and etc – these are also databases but created for you so you do not have to create the database yourself and come with many more built in tools that you probably could not create on your own.

Maybe you have a list of 5,000 customers, a database can help you sort the information by last name, first name and other categories. Using a database you can easily extract a subset of information. Maybe you want a list of all customers in zip code 10429, with last names ending in "X" and who have bought 10lbs of rice.

Presentation - When giving a presentation or speech a presentation program is often used to help your audience more easily follow and remember your presentation. Corporate America is being bombarded with presentation, after presentation after presentation so it's important to make sure yours stands out and engages your audience.

Most business presentations contain bullet points of the speaker's presentation. Within reason and to fit your audience profile, why not add some pizzazz to your presentation and include video, audio, animation and other features that will make it easy for your audience to follow and remember your presentation.

Email - Email has become one of the main communication vehicles for businesses, but also a large waste of time due to spam. As you use email more and more, it's important that you learn how to use it most effectively and not let it control you.

Finance – Many small businesses manage their businesses with shoe boxes of receipts regularly dumped to an accountant, or use a spreadsheet to input financial data and provide that data to their accountant.

An accounting program is the best tool for the job, and can provide not only an easy way to manage your finances but give you much more insight into the financial aspects of your business. Integrating payroll, human resources management, sales, inventory and other features are often found in popular financial programs. These integrated solutions could be considered e-business solutions also.

Backup - Your hardware will fail. Data will get corrupted or otherwise unusable. It's very important to implement a reliable back up and recovery system for your data. When your data is not available to you, you want the peace of mind in knowing that it can be recovered and restored.

Contact and Sales Management - Being able to know who your customers are, how they interact with your business and keeping track of sales cycles are very important.

Contact and sales management tools will give you valuable insight into your business, your customers and your sales. These tools will help you increase margins, identify profitable customers, analyze unprofitable products and see trends and cycles in your business.

Hosted Applications - Hosted applications are computer programs accessed via the Internet using a Web browser. Instead of purchasing software from the store, opening the box, and installing the software to your computer via the CD, you "rent" the application as a service and often pay a monthly fee.

Benefits of using a hosted application

1. No worry about "upgrading" your software. When you access the application you are always using the "latest version".
2. You won't have to worry about installing a program update or any program.
3. You can access your data and the application from anywhere you can get Internet access
4. Your information is backed up automatically

Things to consider

1. Is the ASP properly securing your data?
3. What if the ASP goes out of business – what happens to your data and your business?
4. What if you can't get to the Internet and need your data/application?
3. What if there is a problem about your bill? Will the ASP cut off access to your data and the application?

Web services - Web services are programming tools that enable Web site data to talk to each other. A good example is a car rental company. If you book a car with the car rental company using their Web site, a web site using "web services" enables the car company's web site to seamlessly communicate with the Web site of an airline to enable you to easily make a plane reservation also. You should not have to re-enter data, but that information can be automatically transferred to the airline's Web site. This is just one example but there's many more practical business uses for Web services. Check out xMethods.org for some more examples

Maximizing your Software

Education - For the software you use most, you should learn how to use it as best you can. Not just enough so you can get by, but so that you can use it to its fullest potential for maximum business productivity.

Reading books and/or attending classes are two ways to improve your use of software.

Updates - In addition to regular program upgrades that software vendors sell, often times on an annual basis, at times they periodically create patches (or updates) for their products and give the updates away for free in many cases.

Discipline yourself or work with a technology consultant to periodically visit your software vendor's Web site and see what updates are available for your software. Before installing a software update, carefully read what new features have been added to the updated software and what "bugs" have been solved. Read the update information to be sure an update is for you. Interestingly enough some updates are not advisable and may cause instability to your existing software.

Securing Your Data

The data on your computer systems and networks can be harmed by a technology (lets say a hard drive crashes, or a virus attack) or human intervention (accidental data deletion or a hacking attack), but a reliable back up and recovery system can resolve this problem.

Viruses are malicious computer programs often designed to harm the data on your computer. Some viruses may do nothing but annoy you with messages, while other viruses steal data from your computer.

A virus can invade your computer via email, a web site, shared diskettes or other media and that's why it is very important to be very careful what you allow inside of your computer and networks.

To protect your PC from viruses and hackers install an anti-virus program and firewall on your computer system.

An anti-virus program will scan files and programs on your computer for viruses and prevent any found viruses from infecting your computer. A firewall will ensure only authorized data enters and leaves your computer.

Ensure these programs are frequently (at least once per week or more often) updated.

There are software firewalls that should be installed on each computer and your network server should be protected by a firewall appliance, a physical device, which will provide more robust protection than a software firewall.

Other solutions you may wish to implement to enhance your data security could include:

- Using hard to guess passwords (combine numbers and letters)
- Biometric devices (such as finger print or iris scanners)
- Physical locks to prevent unauthorized physical movement of your computer
- Encrypt important data to ensure that even if an un-authorized user gets your data they can't use it.

Adware and spyware - You may be browsing a web site and see an advertisement pop-up asking you if you want to download a free international clock or some other neat utility. After you download the utility you might notice that new web sites have been added to your "favorites" links or when you visit a web site to buy something you get a small ad letting you know you can buy the product cheaper. These are just a few of the symptoms of a computer that has been invaded by spyware or adware.

While ad/spyware programs might not harm your computer, they could be a security loophole and at the very least display annoying advertising that you don't want. Protect your computer from ad/spyware by installing an anti-ad/spyware program.

Internet Security

The Internet has been one of the most revolutionizing aspects of business in modern times – almost as significant in some ways to the telephone and electricity.

The benefit of the Internet is that it enables computers to communicate with each other in a network. Be it three computers in one office or 500 computers in three countries the Internet enables companies to communicate like never before.

The downside of the Internet is viruses, hackers, spam and malicious web sites can all wreak havoc on your businesses network – destroying your data, eating away at profits and wasting your time. These are problems your company simply can't afford.

Whether your business is in healthcare (a very regulated industry), retail, construction, law, government, finance or something else, it's vital that you protect your business from online threats.

Unlike large businesses, many smaller businesses do not have their own technology staff or fancy security plans and would rather buy a solution than build their own customer solution. This solution must be reliable, economical and powerful.

There's four main points of protection you must consider for your business' online security:

1. Individual networked computers
2. Local Area Network (LAN) and file servers
3. LAN with file servers and mail servers
4. LAN perimeter

Protecting individual networked computers, LAN servers, mail servers and the outer edge of your network (LAN perimeter) will ensure the most protection for your entire business.

When individual computer users access files on USB keys, exchange diskettes and download email, it's critical to ensure that each computer on your network has online security protection

Equally important is the protection of your network file servers and email servers. It's much easier to protect a few servers than 5, dozens or hundreds of individual computers. If a virus infects one computer you want to ensure that the infected computer does not infect your servers.

Perimeter network security is vital to ensure that all network traffic is scanned and protected. Users who access web based email such as Yahoo or Hotmail, your graphic designers who use "file transfer protocol" (FTP) and any and all other online resources need to be protected from viruses, malicious web site code and hackers.

It can be confusing to know what online security solution to purchase, so as you consider a solution here's a few tips to consider:

1. Is it specifically made for small businesses or is it a product made for large businesses that's simply stripped of some features and lowered in price?
2. Is it easy to use, deploy, manage and order?
3. The solution should be completely integrated and not force you to manually integrate your own solutions?
4. Is it affordable? Does it include support?
5. Do you get the same protection that larger customers get?

Mobile Computing

A well crafted mobile computing strategy will enable access to your company's data anywhere and anytime. It's important to remember that the physical security of your mobile device itself and more important the data it contains is even more critical when using mobile devices.

Buying a notebook computer - In deciding which notebook is right for you, consider:

- Is weight most important? Do you want the lightest notebook possible so you can carry it with you from place to place throughout the day?
- Do you need a desktop computer replacement? Will you only be taking the notebook from office to your home or only carrying it occasionally around with you? Do you prefer to have everything built into your notebook – CDROM, floppy drive, large screen and etc?

In general, the smaller and lighter the notebook, the more attachments and peripherals you'll need. In order to reduce weight, CD-ROMs, floppy drives and other attachments are often not built into ultra-light notebooks, but are attached to the notebook via "drive bays", docking stations, and/or cables.

Conversely, the heavier the notebook the more the manufacturer can have built into it. This increases the weight, but reduces the "gear" you have to attach and carry with you.

Personal Digital Assistants (PDA) - Personal Digital Assistants are hand held sized devices that provide a digital address book, to do lists, schedule and other miscellaneous tools. What sets PDAs apart from their "electronic organizer" precursors, is that PDA's are expandable. Thousands of software programs (games, business tools, audio/video, and more) can be added to a PDA and PDAs can be accessorized with digital cameras, keyboards, MP3 players, external storage and so much more.

Pocket PC or Palm? - You'll find PDA's in many different form factors and colors but all basically can fit in your pocket, have a color or grayscale LCD screen and the basic applications mentioned above.

The main differentiation between PDAs is their operating systems – Microsoft Pocket PC or Palm based. Palm Source and Microsoft license their respective operating system to hardware manufacturers that produce the actual PDAs.

The PDA you choose will ultimately be determined by the applications you require. If you need access to Microsoft based applications, especially for a corporate environment then Microsoft Pocket PC is probably best for you. However, all things being equal – you'll be happy with either type of PDA.

Smartphones and blended devices - There's an increasing number of mobile devices blending PDA and cell phone functionality. These devices let you talk on the phone, access your email and web sites. These devices are useful for those who want maximum portability and the least number of individual devices to carry, but still want their cell phone and mobile (wireless) data access.

Tablet PCs are used in specific vertical industries and are ideal for professionals who primarily need to view data in a tablet form factor. For example inventory management, survey entry, medical or financial management. See <http://www.smallbiztechnology.com/smallbizarticles/tabletpc.shtml> for a full article on Tablet PCs.

Remote Data Access

At the office, you have easy and full access to your files and programs. But once you leave the office, ensuring equal access to this important data is a challenge. Maybe you have a customer sales database that you access in your office. On the road, how can you access this database?

One very basic solution is to store documents on a **floppy disk drive, CD or even a mini USB flash drive** for transfer from office to home, hotel, client office or etc.

Although these media transfer solutions work for many scenarios, ensuring that data is synchronized on the computers you use can be a pain. If you edit data at a client's office you have to remember to save it to the disk or CD and then update every other location of where that data resides.

Using your **Personal Digital Assistant (PDA)** is another solution. You could simply use your PDA synchronization to transfer text files from PDA to PC. I use a portable keyboard to type articles on my PDA and then further edit them on a computer.

There's a huge market for using a PDA to access corporate data and these solutions are ideal for sales staff or executives that need access to databases or other information. Some solutions, like the one I use are very simple and your only expense is the cost of the PDA, while other solutions will be more expensive and require the services of a consultant.

FTP (File Transfer Protocol) is an Internet transfer service which enables you to transfer files from your computer to an online server and vice versa.

Emailing 5Mb (not to mention 50mb) files can clog the sender and receiver's email boxes. In some cases companies and definitely free email providers like HotMail and Yahoo limit the size of files that can be sent and received. If a client needs a large file fast, or there are many graphic files to send, using a courier or the US Postal service is not going to work but FTP is the best option.

Remote Control of your computer enables you to virtually "be in front" of your computer from a remote computer. What you see on the remote computer is an exact replica of the computer you have remote control access to.

Virtual Private Networks (VPN) enable remote computers to securely access a main (or server) computer via the Internet. When you log on to the Internet and access your email, company files and etc your connection is open for hackers to steal or at least view your data. A VPN encrypts the data as it goes over the public Internet by placing the data in a secure "tunnel" as it goes between your remote computer and the corporate server you are accessing.

Citrix is a company that sells a suite of solutions used by many larger companies which enables remote access to files and programs on corporate server computers.

Many large organizations, but also some smaller businesses, have several applications often on different platforms (Microsoft Windows, Unix, etc) that need to be centrally managed and remotely accessed. Citrix solutions let companies manage these applications, provide central logon and user access and enable access to them via a web browser.

Networking your office

Networking your computers will enable them to share programs, files, Internet access and peripherals. If you have two or more computers, and they are not networked, then you are missing out on the benefits and efficiency of collaborative computing.

The basic network is comprised of a central server, which manages the network security, file sharing, and other network functions. Individual user computers (called client computers), are then connected to the network via network cables (or wireless).

Several vendors are make "turn key" all in one server appliances with easy to manage and set up Web hosting, Intranet, email and other services in one box. These solutions are excellent for smaller businesses.

Securing your networking from un-authorized access is very important

Networks can be connected via cables. However, increasingly wireless networking, known as WiFi (wireless fidelity) is being implemented for greater flexibility – in the office and outside of the office.

A mix of wireless and wired networking is also very practical. For example, a wired network for most of your office work areas and a wireless network for your conference room and guest areas.

Outside of the office, wireless networking is on the upswing and enables you to get Internet access from almost any metropolitan area, including airports, business centers, Starbucks, McDonalds, hotels and etc.

Technology Consultant

Retaining a technology consultant will ensure that you can concentrate on your business – what you know best - while someone else spends time repairing, maintaining and strategizing about technology solutions for your business – what they do best.

The consultant who is good at upgrading computer systems, may not be the best person to design your Web site. The person who designs great Web sites, may not be the one to put together an e-commerce solution.

Some consultants prefer to only *advise you on* the best technology for your business and direct you to consultants for the actual implementation.

Always be on the lookout for technologists who can help your business grow - they are an invaluable resource.

Do not hire a technology consultant so you can remain clueless about technology. Even with a technology consultant at your beck and call, force yourself to subscribe to and read a few computer magazines such as PC World or PC Magazine so that you can have an overall understanding of the technology and terminology.

The consultant you use should know about or take the time to be familiar with your business and specific industry.

Technology Training

Training can be one of the most important aspects of using technology in your business for you and your employees. Some people are quick learners of technology and may only need a little time and a user manual. Others may be better off with some level of formal training and introduction into the basic use and functions of a product or service.

All of this technology is not worth much, if your employees are frustrated and afraid to use new technology.

Type of training to consider are:

- Self study with books
- Computer based training
- Instructor led training

Purchasing Technology

Once you do all the hard work of understanding the basics of technology and getting informed on what you need in your business, the next step is to actually spend the money and purchase the technology.

Walk in retail stores

Your local retail store is a great place for purchasing office technology accessories such as batteries, diskettes, paper, office equipment and etc. However, for purchasing the center pieces of your technology such as printers, computers and network equipment you'll find a limited selection and limited sales help.

Value Added Reseller (VAR)

A technology consultant or value added reseller is one of the best sources for purchasing your technology equipment.

Some VARs make their money selling technology products while some sell you the hardware/software at cost and make their money on installation services or a combination of the two.

If you are not sure of the technology you need, the smart way is to purchase the technology from a local technology consultant or VAR to ensure you are purchasing the right technology for your business needs.

Ask about trying out a demo version of products before you buy a full version.

Make sure you clearly understand how you will be getting support for the product – from the VAR or from the manufacturer or both.

Ask your VAR about getting low maintenance products so that you will not have to call them to your office for costly product maintenance. Some products are very easy to use while some may require the expertise of a consultant.

Direct from manufacturer/catalogue

I enjoy purchasing computer products directly from manufacturers and online retailers.

I know exactly what I want and usually know a sufficient amount about the product I'm purchasing before I make the final purchase. When the product comes I'm able to do whatever installation needs to be done locally.

Buying technology products online gives you a much wider selection of products than you'll find in a physical store and at times the products can be cheaper. Online you can more easily compare prices across a wide range of "e-stores" all at one.

The greatest disadvantage of purchasing online, and I've experienced this before, is that if something goes wrong with your purchase, and you have to return it, doing so can be quite a hassle. You've got to pack the product up, ship it to the manufacturer or online store, hope they get it, and wait for the replacement product or your refund. And I didn't mention that you may have to fight to have them pay for shipping.

Used technology

My notebook, one of my desktop computers, a foldable keyboard for my PDA, several of my PDAs and other technology I purchased all online and used. Buying used technology can be a risk, but I know a lot about the product I'm buying, I ask questions, consider who the seller is and TAKE A RISK, then a LEAP of faith and buy.

Buying used technology on eBay, Craig's List or some other resource can save you a lot of money. But if you get burned you can end up with your money stolen or products that were not as advertised.

So, if you KNOW what you are doing – test out the waters of used technology. However, if you are not sure of what you are doing, it's better to buy new technology from reputable technology retailing or reselling sources.

Telecommunications

It's important to ensure your telecommunication system has the features and stability that you need to present not only a professional image to your customers, but to enable better communication and flexibility.

There are *PC based telephone systems*, where the telecommunication control and user interface is all PC based. Unlike traditional analog PBX telephone systems, PC based telephone systems enable easier management and enhanced features.

Voice Over the Internet Protocol (VOIP) telecommunication solutions route your phone over the Internet – resulting in much lower telephone costs and features. If you have branch offices around the country or world, being able to place voice phone calls over your existing high-speed network can eliminate your long distance telephone charges. Many VOIP service providers provide low flat rates – many businesses like knowing what their phone bill will be each month.

Since each of your VOIP enabled telephones is assigned their own internet address, you can take it with you, plug it into a hotel (or just about any Internet connection) and have your phone ring – right where it's at.

Being able to manage all your communications in one place is also very convenient. Maybe you are expecting an important phone call. Well using VOIP you can see that call number 5 is the call you want to listen to first and not have to wade through all the voice mails preceding the call most important to you.

The Internet in Your Business

The Internet is a revolutionizing tool for businesses – and especially small businesses. This tool enables businesses to reach new customers, service existing ones better, communicate in more efficient ways, access information, and sell more products, and get information faster.

NOTE: Ramon Ray speaks four times per year at the Small Business Administration Service Core of Retired Executives (SCORE) Strategies for Succeeding in Business Seminars in New York City. Get details at <http://www.scorenyc.org>

Internet Access

Every business, no matter how old fashioned its products and services NEEDS not only access to the Internet but an online presence. Increasingly consumers are using the internet to find local products and services, if your business does not have some online presence and is not seeking out these customers - you will miss out on this growing opportunity.

The Internet can provide your business with a wealth of information that would not otherwise be accessible to you - or take several days to have mailed to you. From passport information, to tax rates, to court papers, legal help and industry news - you can find just about every bit of information your business may need via the Internet.

Ensure each one of your employees has their own email account and access to the World Wide Web on demand – whenever they need it. Of course there are very valid concerns of employees abusing their use of the Internet but there are software products that can manage and monitor this. However, the benefits of Internet access for businesses far outweigh the negative aspects in most cases. Write up an acceptable use policy for your employees Internet access.

Internet access using a standard 56kbps analog modem, is ok for email and occasional Web access. However, to experience efficient use of the Internet, I would recommend nothing less than a high speed Internet connection, like DSL or cable.

Email

Many businesses use AOL as their email provider and there's nothing wrong with using AOL to start off with. It is better than nothing. But if you are serious about running a business I would highly suggest that you get rid of AOL and get an email address with your own domain name (it looks so much better than joe516@aol.com)

Using email, both the sender and receiver have a visual audit trail of all communications and email is fast. It often takes minutes, if not seconds to receive an email message.

Make sure that each and every one of your employees, has access to their own email account, and can use it whenever they need.

Make sure you have a "signature" that goes out at the end of every email message. It should include your full name, business name, Web site, email, and if you choose tel/fax numbers and a short (2 - 3 line) blurb (or your tag line) about your business

Use the power of filters and folders in your email program. I use Eudora and have several filters set up for email I receive. Newsletters go to one folder, information about various companies goes into yet another set of folders, and business development issues go into another folder and etc. You can set up filters to automatically move email to different folders and you can manually sort other email that comes in.

Get "Make Your Email Program Work for You"
www.smallbiztechnology.com/smallbizarticles/emailtips.htm

Your Internet Service Provider can help you set up an email account or you can work with a local consultant to determine if you should have your own email server.

A wonderful source for viruses is via email attachments so be careful and get that anti-virus program.

Email can be a VERY powerful business tool – enabling you to enhance and increase your communication. I've found that email – more than the phone, fax or snail mail makes me more productive.

E-Business & E-Commerce

E-business is the systematic process by which all of your business units (payroll, accounts payable/receivable, human resources, marketing and etc) can seamlessly work together.

Inventory is tied into purchasing. Purchasing is tied into accounts payable and receivable. Payroll is tied into Human Resources.

There are many aspects of e-business and you may choose to implement a few pieces at a time and then do more. E-business can aid in integrating your processes to build relationships around your customers. Who bought what? When did they buy it? Why did they buy it? Should we lower prices? Should we raise prices?

Sales force management tools, customer relations, inventory control, marketing databases and etc are all part of an e-business solution. Although many companies have one or more of these tools already, if these business functions are not integrated its not an e-business. It's not a smooth operation.

E-business is much more than online selling – it's about connecting your business processes for more efficiency

E-commerce enables customers to buy products from you online. You do not have to spend millions and be like Amazon.com to start with e-commerce

Some e-commerce systems are very simple, while others are complex and feature rich.

Although selling products online can be challenging, it can be a rewarding experience.

Some things to consider when selling online:

1. Product fulfillment – will you do it yourself or outsource it
2. Customer service – very critical function
3. Security – can competitors or hackers steal your customer data
4. Back end – linking your online sales to your back office accounting and marketing systems

Once you have given consideration to these things you can then work on building your e-commerce presence, marketing it to customers and making money.

The Internet enables businesses to reach wide ranges of people, while personalizing the buying experience for each one, while dynamically and instantaneously providing information on inventory, best selling products, ideal prices, and more.

Selling your products and services to local customers in a retail store is good and millions of businesses thrive in local selling, however, successfully selling your products and services to even more customers, more efficiently, via the Internet, will increase your revenues.

Pre-Internet, for many businesses, selling beyond one's local borders, entailed establishing a) a substantial local presence in the new sales market b) creating a division to handle sales, fulfillment, and distribution c) not to mention a tele-sales, local sales staff, local laws compliance and customer support if necessary. However, with e-commerce you can sell around the world in minutes.

Establishing an e-commerce system for your business enables you to sell all over the world or just beyond your front doors walk in traffic at much less costs, since you can put the entire sales process online.

Customer service and quality should never be reduced or sacrificed for any reason. But in fact should be enhanced, taking full advantage of online customer support tools and services (online chat, email, discussion boards, order tracking, etc) but also enabling customers to CALL if they want to.

Uses for the Internet

Finding information

One of the most popular uses for the Internet is finding information.

Yahoo.com, Ask.com, Google.com and About.com are some of the best starting points to find information online.

The web sites of Federal, State and Local governments are an excellent source of information also. Fedworld.gov will point you to many federal government resources while Yahoo's government category will point you to many state and local resources.

Professional organizations and associations are wonderful resources for industry specific information.

When searching for information, remember, if you do not type your query correctly you can't get a good answer.

Communication and collaboration

One of the greatest service the Internet has brought to businesses is enhanced communications.

Having documents online in an Intranet (sales literature, files, digital books, etc) makes it much easier to get the information needed, is more economical and enables teams of people to more easily work together.

Email alone has saved companies millions of dollars and a lot of time, enabling near instantaneous communication and improved communication

Online meeting services enable remote users to more easily interact with colleagues all over the globe. Sharing documents, thoughts, notes, projects and etc in real time is only a click away. While face to face communications is important, often times showing prospective clients or employees an online presentation can also be productive.

Instant Messaging(IM) - IM is a valuable tool for instantaneous communication. If you're on the phone and need to ask a colleague a question – IM is very appropriate. Maybe you want to have a quick discussion with a colleague over seas or in the next building. Using IM will give you a fast answer while still enabling you to continue working. IM is also an excellent customer service tool. While your customer is shopping online you can give them immediate assistance. I've found this very helpful when shopping online.

Check out Inc Magazine's article about IM
<http://www.inc.com/magazine/20020701/24376.html>

and

<http://www.smallbiztechnology.com/smallbizarticles/im.shtml>

Online Marketing

Instead of or in conjunction with spending money on traditional advertising (radio, TV, print) businesses can take advantage of much more targeted and lower cost online advertising solutions.

The key to online advertising, just like traditional marketing and advertising is to:

1. Define your audience
2. Find the media they are reading
3. Create the advertising message
4. Place the advertisement
5. Track results
6. Refine

Online advertising, unlike any other advertising media is ideally suited for two things:

1. Personalization of the advertising message to specific audiences or individuals
2. Very specific tracking of the advertisement response, enabling the advertiser to continually refine and adjust the message

If properly implemented, online advertising, unlike traditional advertising, enables you to better understand detailed information about who is viewing your advertisement and custom tailor a message, sales pitch or anything else to that particular person or audience.

Types of advertising

Traditional banner advertising – this is the most common form of advertising where you see the colorful rectangular shaped online advertising on so many web sites

Text advertising – no colorful banners but plain text hyperlinks and a short message

More and more web sites are using advertising that includes audio, video and taking control of the entire web site or a portion of it for a few seconds.

Costs

Online advertising costs vary widely, but typically advertising is sold on a “per thousand” or CPM basis.

So a web site that gets millions and millions of individual page views would set a price of say \$50/cpm. This means you would pay \$50 for every thousand page views you wanted your advertisement to be seen on.

Where do you advertise

Most traditional advertising agencies have online marketing services that can help you find web sites to advertise on. These agencies often purchase, create and manage the advertising campaign for you.

There are several advertising networks such as Burst Media, Double Click, and others that sell advertising on behalf of Web site publishers. (See Internet.com’s advertising network list <http://adres.internet.com/advertising/networks/0,1401,,00.html>)

You could also do some of your own searching and directly contact the advertising sales person or web site owner if of a web site you would like to advertise on.

Affiliate Marketing

Another option you may wish to carefully consider is affiliate marketing, wherein you pay others to sell your products (or services) for you on their Web sites. For each item your affiliates sell, they get a certain percentage or flat rate of each sale.

Amazon.com has used a large network of thousands of affiliates, who get a percentage of every item sold, to sell its books and other products.

There are many companies who have set up turnkey systems to enable online retailers to easily set up their own affiliate programs. Before you rush head long into setting up an affiliate program do some research to make sure an affiliate program is for you.

Internet.com has a resource about Affiliate Marketing
<http://adres.internet.com/business/affiliate/0,1401,,00.html>

Affiliate Selling, Dr. Ralph Wilson
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0471381861/fccsmallbusiness>

Cost Per Click Advertising

Google’s Ad Words program and Overture are excellent and very economical ways to advertise your product/or service online. Instead of paying up front for an advertising campaign whose results you are unsure of, cost per click advertising (CPC) only costs you when someone clicks on your advertisement. Understand, because someone clicks on your advertisement and lands on your web site or product sales page – does not mean that they are going to buy. But at least they are a step closer in the sales process.

You select which key words you would like to trigger your advertisement and indicate how much you are willing to pay, per click, for the advertisement. Cost Per Click advertising is an ideal and

low cost solution for small businesses, however, ensure you fully understand CPC advertising before investing into this advertising method.

Newsletters

Electronic Newsletters are a low cost but very effective way to develop long lasting relationships with and extend your brand directly to your customers. Of course newsletters don't only have to be for customers but can be created for employees, company partners and others.

"E-zines", electronic magazines, or e-newsletters should contain useful information for your audience. Content that will make your newsletter an anticipated newsletter and not one that's quickly thrown in the trash will produce profitable results.

Within each email, you can place a "call to action" with links back to your web site announcing sales, new products or etc.

I can't say this enough – but newsletters are POWERFUL tools for building profitable customer relations.

Building Business Class Web Sites

Having a web site, even if it's only page, gives you an "outpost" in the online world. As more and more of your potential customers look online for products or services it's important that they can find you. You can do as much or as little as you want online.

Your web site can be a tool to get more customers, to satisfy the ones you already have (order updates, maps to your company etc), to enhance communication between employees and so much more.

Top 10 Web site musts

Below is an excerpt from an article, "Building Business Class Web Sites - 10 Web Site Musts", get the full article here: <http://www.smallbiztechnology.com/smallbizarticles/10websitemusts.shtml>

- 1) Focus on the customer
- 2) Have a plan
- 3) Easy to remember name
- 4) Easy navigation
- 5) Informative
- 6) Security
- 7) Easy customer contact
- 8) Fresh content
- 9) Be found
- 10) Be simple – KIS

Focus on the customer - It's so easy to get caught up in the excitement of building your web site that you FORGET ABOUT who the web site is for. As you're building your web site keep your audience in the fore front of your mind.

Build a web site focused on your customers and you can only succeed. Build a web site focused on yourself and you'll fail.

Have a plan - Building a web site, is no different than going on a journey. You're starting at point A and you want to get to point B. The only way you are going to get there is with a plan – or road map.

Easy to remember name - How many times have you heard a radio advertisement, or seen a television advertisement for a web site with a hard to remember name, one you could not pronounce or easily write down?

Easy navigation - Sometimes you visit a web site and it makes you sea sick. You regret going to the site. You get so confused your head starts pounding.

When people visit your web site make sure they can clearly and very easily find the information they need. You don't want to be too simplistic and have only two web links per page.

Informative - If you are going to promote your web site as a news site, or portal of knowledge then make sure your web is informative.

Building an information rich web site takes a lot of time and energy. But the rewards can be immense. Over time you'll find that your web site (and your company) will become known as a resource. The next logical progression, if you work at it is that a) customers will want to purchase their goods and services from you – you ARE the expert right? Then the press will call asking for your insight and opinion on various topics. This is free publicity for your business.

Security - If you're web site is going to be storing credit card numbers, personal information, customer lists and etc - you should invest in the security of your web site, commiserate with the value of that data and your business.

Easy customer contact - One of the most frustrating experiences in visiting a web site is not being able to communicate with the web site owners (be it sales, customer service, or etc) about a question (or comment) you have.

Successful vendors such as PC Mall, CDW, Amazon.com and many others have clearly labeled "contact points" on their web sites. Some have an 800 number clearly displayed on every page of their web site. Some encourage you to email them or use a web form. But either way - a contact method is provided.

One of the easiest contact methods, is to create a web form that will enable your customers to send you a message via your web site. The next step, which many more businesses fail at - is to respond in a timely fashion to your customers.

Fresh content - No one likes stale bread, cereal or milk - and your web site is no different. When visitors come to your web site, it's an added bonus when they see fresh information. Show me a web site built in 2001. If that web site has not changed one bit in 2003...I'm not so sure if I want to do business with them. Maybe they, like their web site are "dead" , or close to it.

If your web site is going to display news of any kind or serve as a "portal" it is even more important that the content you display is fresh - ESPECIALLY if you have dates next to the content!

Be found - Just because you have a web site does not mean that anyone but yourself, your web developer and your mother will know about it. Once your web site is built - you've got to market it and let the world know about it.

Be simple – KIS (Keep It Simple) - Last, but not least, as you build your web site, think with simplicity in mind. Don't try to cram the whole universe and everything about your business into it.

Who creates your web site?

You can choose to build your own web site and use a web site development program or an online web creation service. Or you can choose to hire someone to build your web site.

If you build your own web site consider:

- ?? It will be cheaper
- ?? Probably done faster
- ?? You'll have more control
- ?? It can be time consuming
- ?? the finished product may not look or function at an optimal level
- ?? it may look unprofessional

Hiring a professional Web developer:

- ?? more expensive
- ?? less control (a hired Web designer can do whatever you want, but they are not going to like you emailing or calling them every hour to change this or that during the process and especially not after the process unless this is built into the contract)
- ?? takes time (you may not be their only client, so you will be scheduled in)
- ?? very professional
- ?? less hassle
- ?? knows better color schemes, what makes your Web site load faster, and etc

Web log

Web logs, or blogs are frequently updated web sites displayed in a diary fashion and contains entries, called posts, organized by date. Another trait of a blog is that they often contain links to other web sites.

The power of blogs in business

http://www.intranetjournal.com/articles/200212/ij_12_16_02a.html

<http://www.inc.com/articles/2003/07/blogres.html>

Blogging for Business

<http://www.inc.com/articles/2003/07/bblogs.html>

Technology Marketplace

General Technology Resources

Smallbiztechnology.com
<http://www.smallbiztechnology.com>

Cnet.com
<http://www.cnet.com>

ZDNet.com
<http://www.zdnet.com>

PC World
<http://www.pcworld.com>

PC Magazine
<http://www.pcmagazine.com>

Inc.com/information_technology
http://www.inc.com/information_technology

Smart Computing
<http://www.smartcomputing.com>

SearchSMB.com
<http://www.searchsmb.com>

Small Business Pipeline
<http://www.smallbusinesspipeline.com>

Inc Magazine
<http://www.inc.com>

Webopedia
<http://www.webopedia.com>

Books



Technology Solutions for Growing Businesses, Ramon Ray

PC's for Dummies, Dan Gookin,

Essential Business Tactics for the Net, Wiley, Larry Chase and Eileen Shulock

Desktop computers

Dell
<http://www.dell.com>

IBM
<http://ibm.com>

Gateway
<http://www.gateway.com>

Hewlett-Packard (HP)
<http://www.hp.com>

Operating System

Microsoft Windows
<http://www.microsoft.com/windows>

Apple
<http://www.apple.com>

Linux
<http://www.linux.org>

Software

Office Productivity Suites
(Word Processing, Spreadsheet, Presentation, Database)

Corel Word Perfect Office
<http://www.wordperfect.com>

Microsoft Office
<http://www.microsoft.com/office>

Open Office
<http://www.openoffice.org>

Database

Microsoft Access
<http://www.microsoft.com/access>

Microsoft SQL
<http://www.microsoft.com/sql>

MySQL
<http://www.mysql.com>

File Maker
<http://www.filemaker.com>

QuickBase
<http://www.quickbase.com>

Email

Qualcomm's Eudora
<http://www.eudora.com>

Microsoft Outlook
<http://www.microsoft.com/office/outlook/default.htm>

Netscape Communicator
<http://www.netscape.com>

Mozilla Thunderbird
<http://www.mozilla.org>

Accounting / e-Business

Intuit Quick Book
<http://www.quickbooks.com>

Best Software Peachtree
<http://www.peachtree.com>

Microsoft Money
<http://www.microsoft.com/money>

Netsuite
<http://www.netsuite.com>

Microsoft Great Plains
<http://www.greatplains.com>

ACCPAC
<http://www.accpac.com>

Icode Everest
<http://icode.com>

IBM
<http://www-306.ibm.com/software/>

Back up

Veritas
<http://www.veritas.com>

Computer Associates
<http://www.ca.com>

Dantz
<http://www.dantz.com>

@Backup <http://www.backup.com>

Virtual Backup
<http://www.virtualbackup.com>

LiveVault
<http://www.livevault.com>

Contact and Sales

Maximizer
<http://www.maximizer.com>

SalesForce.com
<http://www.salesforce.com>

FrontRange Goldmine
<http://www.goldminesw.com>

Best Software ACT!
<http://www.act.com>

Microsoft CRM
<http://www.microsoft.com/crm>

Quickbooks Customer Manager
<http://www.quickbooks.com>

Data Protection

Anti-Virus

TrendMicro
<http://www.trendmicro.com>

McAfee
<http://www.mcafee.com>

Symantec Norton Anti-Virus
<http://www.symantec.com>

AdWare / Spyware

Lava Soft
<http://www.lavasoftusa.com>

Spy Bot Search and Destroy
<http://spybot.safer-networking.de/>

Firewalls

Symantec
<http://www.symantec.com>

McAfee
<http://www.mcafee.com>

ZoneLabs
<http://www.zonelabs.com>

Sonicwall
<http://www.sonicwall.com>

Checkpoint
<http://www.checkpoint.com>

Mobile Computing

Notebook computers

Dell
<http://www.dell.com>

Gateway
<http://www.gateway.com>

Hewlett-Packard
<http://www.hp.com>

IBM
<http://www.ibm.com>

Sony
<http://www.sony.com>

Toshiba
<http://www.toshiba.com>

Personal Digital Assistants *Palm*

Palm One
<http://www.palm.com>

Sony (Sony will be moving out of the US and Europe PDA markets)
<http://www.sony.com>

Pocket PC

Toshiba
<http://www.toshiba.com>

Hewlett-Packard
<http://www.hp.com>

Casio
<http://www.casio.com>

Tablet PCs
<http://www.tabletpc.com>

Combination devices (phone, PDA, email, web)

Danger Inc Sidekick
<http://www.danger.com>

Research in Motion (RIM) BlackBerry
<http://www.rim.net>

Remote Data Access

USB Flash Drives
<http://www.usbflashdrive.org>

FTP
<http://www.cuteftp.com>

Remote Control

Gotomypc.com
<http://www.gotomypc.com>

Lapl原因
<http://www.lapl原因.com>

Remote Explorer
<http://www.remotexplorer.com>
I'm In Touch
<http://www.01communique.com>

Log Me In
<http://www.logmein.com>

PC Anywhere
<http://www.symantec.com/pcanywhere>

Virtual Private Networks

Microsoft
<http://www.microsoft.com/vpn>

Sonic Wall
<http://www.sonicwall.com>

Check Point
<http://www.checkpoint.com>

Networking

Computer Servers

Dell
<http://www.dell.com>

IBM
<http://ibm.com>

Gateway
<http://www.gateway.com>

Hewlett-Packard (HP)
<http://www.hp.com>

Server Appliances

Emerge Core IT IN A BOX
<http://www.emergecore.com>

Nitix
<http://www.nitix.com>

Network Operating System

Novel Small Business Server Suite
<http://www.novell.com>

Microsoft Small Business Server
<http://www.microsoft.com/smallbusinessserver>

Reading - "Small Business Networking for Dummies",
IDG Books, Glenn E. Weadock

Printers

Hewlett-Packard
<http://www.hp.com>

Lexmark
<http://www.lexmark.com>

Epson
<http://www.epson.com>

Xerox
<http://www.xerox.com>

Dell
<http://www.dell.com>

Consultants

Word of mouth referral is an excellent way to find consultants but here are some possible sources also:

Independent Computer Consultants
<http://www.icca.org/findaconsultant.asp>

Rent-A-Geek
<http://www.rentageek.com>

Microsoft
<http://mcsppreferral.microsoft.com>

Hewlett-Packard
<http://www.hp.com/cgi-bin/usa/locator.pl>

IBM
<http://www.ibm.com/solutions/us/>

Training

Learning Tree International
<http://www.learningtree.com>

New Horizons
<http://www.newhorizons.com>

Buyer Zone
<http://www.buyerzone.com>

CDW
<http://www.cdw.com>

PC Mall
<http://www.pcmall.com>

Amazon.com
<http://www.amazon.com>

CompUSA
<http://www.compusa.com>

Radio Shack
<http://www.radioshack.com>

Purchasing Technology

Staples
<http://www.staples.com>

Office Max
<http://www.officemax.com>

Circuit City
<http://www.circuitcity.com>

Auctions

eBay.com
<http://www.ebay.com>

uBid.com
<http://www.ubid.com>

Telecommunications

BizFon

<http://www.bizfon.com>

Alitgen

<http://www.alitgen.com>

Avaya

<http://www.avaya.com>

Artisoft

<http://www.artisoft.com>

Virtual PBX

<http://www.virtualpbx.com>

TalkSwitch

<http://www.talkswitch.com>

Yahoo Guide to telephone systems

<http://smallbusiness.yahoo.com/bzinfo/resources/refs/buyersguides.php?c=Telecom+Equipment>

Avaya

<http://www.avaya.com>

7Vonage

<http://www.vonage.com>

M5 Networks

<http://www.m5networks.com>

VirtualPBX.com

<http://www.virtualpbx.com>

Gotvmail

<http://www.gotvmail.com>

Internet Resources

Internet Service Providers

Earthlink
<http://www.earthlink.com>

Find more ISP's with Cnet
http://webservices.cnet.com/html/aisles/Internet_Access.asp

Web Hosts and Domain Registration

GoDaddy
<http://www.godaddy.com>

Hypermart
<http://www.hypermart.net>

Interland
<http://www.interland.com>

Communication / Collaboration Tools

Intranets.com – excellent intranet service
<http://www.intranets.com>

Liveoffice.com - tools for your web site
<http://www.liveoffice.com>

Quask.com – tool for creating powerful online forms
<http://www.quask.com>

Blogger.com – service for web log creation and management
<http://www.blogger.com>

ConstantContact.com – online newsletter management and distribution
<http://www.constantcontact.com>

Online business & marketing Information

WilsonWeb.com
<http://www.wilsonweb.com>

Clickz.com
<http://www.clickz.com>

Marketingsherpa.com
<http://www.marketingsherpa.com>

Pay per click advertising

Google.com Adsense
<http://www.google.com/adsense>

Overture.com
<http://www.overture.com>

Advertising network

Burstmedia
<http://www.burstmedia.com>

DoubleClick
<http://www.doubleclick.com>

24/7 Media
<http://www.247media.com>

Web site creation
(in addition to the portals below)

Microsoft Front Page
<http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage>

Hot Dog Sausage
<http://www.sausage.com>

Macromedia Dreamweaver
<http://www.dreamweaver.com>

NetObjects
<http://www.netobjects.com>

Blogger.com
<http://www.blogger.com>

Small business portals

Microsoft bCentral.com
<http://www.bcentral.com>

Smallbusiness.yahoo.com
<http://smallbusiness.yahoo.com>

Smartonline.com
<http://www.smartonline.com>

Conclusion

Wherever your small business is located leverage technology as a tool to grow your business.

Technology can help you save money, increase revenue, get new customers, enhance your financial management and be more efficient.

There's many technology solutions to the problems you might have but they key is knowing which solutions are right for you. Often times you won't even know you have a problem, so be vigilant of any warning signs from your employees, customers and partners.

Retain the services of a good technology advisor who can advise you on which solution is right for you.

Remember, all the best technology in the world can not help if you have bad hiring practices, employees with bad attitudes towards customers, do not know market your business and other basic business issues.

All the best in using technology to grow your business!

Ramon Ray, Technology Evangelist, Smallbiztechnology.com

Have questions? Contact me at Smallbiztechnology.com – I look forward to hearing from you.