

Have You Updated Your Technology?

by Gary Haworth, CPA

One of the biggest challenges facing every small business owner is trying to keep your business current with technology. Unless you are a true “tech geek”, it is a formidable task. Not only is it difficult to stay informed of the newest changes, it can be extremely expensive to implement them.

As an owner, you have many hats to wear. Be willing to encourage your staff and advisors to assist you when it comes to possible technology changes in your business. If prompted, they will provide you with the knowledge and insight needed to make the right decisions as it relates to your particular business. There are times you need to be at the front of the line. Changes needed to maintain your competitiveness with the competition in your industry or location need to be the priority and the focus of your attention. Changes that are a “convenience” can be secondary decisions, but could be very important in making you more efficient and productive. Don’t procrastinate when it comes to helping your staff be better!

A few “old” technology items that should be a mainstay in any business today:

Dual Monitors

Consider having dual flat screen monitors on all workstations. You may need to install another video card and some special software. If you don’t have newer workstations, more RAM (memory) and faster processing speed may be needed as well. But it is worth every penny.

Anyone who has used dual monitors will never go back to one! The productivity gains available by being able to use multiple applications in a more efficient manner is enormous.

Triple monitors or even quads are becoming more popular, but it may be overkill for most small businesses.

File Servers / Networking

If you have multiple workstations in your business, hopefully you have already realized the necessity of networking them together. In order to

be efficient, it is imperative you are able to use shared information between users. It also allows you to have the appropriate back up systems and firewalls in place to cover all of your operations. Stand alone workstations can be very dangerous to your business unless you have strict controls and procedures in place.

Paperless

“Paperless” means just that... Less Paper. It doesn't necessarily mean No Paper. Most businesses will still need to maintain some paper records and reports, but the more you can store electronically, the more efficient you will be. The key is to have procedures in place that keeps your records in a structured paperless electronic “file cabinet”. Done correctly you will be able to find everything quicker and easier than the old “paper” files. Make sure you have very good backup systems in place included duplicate backups and offsite storage of backups.

Remote Desktop Processing

The internet may be the single biggest change we all have experienced in our businesses. We use it in so many different areas of our business lives – research, advertising and marketing, checking out competition, verifying employee information, blogs, networking, web-based software, etc. Using remote desktop allows you to “be at work when you're not”. There is a number of different software available that allows you to remotely access your workstation at the office to monitor the activities taking place in your absence and to work, as if you are there. It has also allowed us to have employees be able to work from home, on the road, or even be able to keep key employees we may have lost in the past.

The above “old” technology should be part of most businesses at this point. If you aren't currently using them to help make you and your staff more efficient or productive, you could be hurting your business. Treat “technology” as your friend – not your enemy!

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