

Small Business Matters

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52 TIPS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

#2: Embrace Technology

There are many ways small business owners can embrace technology in order to grow their business, bring efficiency to operations and realize cost savings. "There is a lot of technology that is finally accessible to small business," says Jay Mellon, CEO of AtNetPlus in Stow. "These technologies might not be new in general, but they are certainly becoming relevant for small business this year." Following are three tech trends to consider in 2015.

1 MOBILE DEVICES. Small businesses are already embracing the BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) trend that simplifies operations and cuts down on costs by allowing employees to use personal smartphones, computers and tablets for company business. The next step is for owners to reduce risk through Mobile Device Management (MDM) platforms. "This trend is becoming an intricate part of small business," says Mellon. "Because it creates blurred lines between



personal and business data, you need a larger mobile strategy. Owners need to create strict policies to secure their business."

2 CLOUD COMPUTING. "Cloud computing will continue its rapid expansion in small businesses in 2015," predicts Mellon. The

availability of cloud services such as Microsoft Office 365 provides elasticity for businesses and diminishes costly and disruptive changes to hardware capacity. "For small businesses, the flexibility and control of cloud storage for e-mail and other productivity software makes a lot of sense. Plus, you pay by usage, so it is easy to upgrade capacity without large out-of-pocket costs."

3 BIG DATA. Big Data (or business intelligence), is the ability to gain additional insight from your current business data to allow you to make better business decisions. From sales forecasting to CRM to inventory control, "Big Data allows you to harness the power of your data to make it 10 times stronger," says Mellon. "Until recently, you would need a particular expertise to mine this type of data, but the tools are now accessible to small business. Even the latest version of Excel has business intelligence tools built in."

New technology can be a real competitive advantage for business owners savvy enough to embrace it.

ASK THE EXPERT

"How Can I Protect My Computer Network from Social Engineering?"

Malware and related IT security threats like Social Engineering — a popular way hackers gain access to a computer network and its sensitive data — continue to increase at alarming rates. It is imperative that businesses take the proper steps to combat these increasingly stealthy threats.

Access is often gained through personal e-mail or social networking accounts by enticing employees to click on a link or attachment with juicy tidbits on a current event or celebrity news item. Once an employee clicks on the link, it allows the hacker to load malware onto your network. Malware is malicious software that interferes with normal computer function and can send personal data about the user to unauthorized parties over the Internet.

I recommend implementing multiple layers of defense, kind of like speed bumps, to protect your network from hackers. Anti-virus software offers great protection, but it is just as important to implement strict policies and processes for your employees. Computers



are assets of your company as much as a company car or machine tool, so the same rules should apply.

A few safeguards to consider:

- Educate employees on social engineering tactics and defensive measures.
- Install anti-virus software, firewalls, and e-mail filters and update them regularly.
- Set clear protocols on employee computer and technology usage, including rules

TIP

For more expert advice, check out [Linktunity](http://Linktunity.com), COSE's online tool that connects you to other business owners who can help you find answers and address your challenges (www.linktunity.com).

on accessing personal e-mail and social networking sites. Include protocols in all security and operations manuals.

- Employ a strict password policy that uses a combination of numbers, characters and capitalization and implement mandatory password changes every 60 to 90 days.

A full network security audit is also a wise investment to determine what products and processes to put in place to best reduce your vulnerability and protect your business.

STEVE GIORDANO, *President*
TeamLogic IT

What's Hot

Virtual Assistance for Your Business

Virtual staffing is a growing trend among small business owners for good reason. Today's technology makes it possible to outsource many operational duties, saving you time and money. Virtual assistants can be used to manage everyday tasks such as calendar management, outgoing client calls, CRM

updates, travel planning and social media management, freeing up time for you to focus your energy on running your business.

Without the physical infrastructure, equipment, and financial implications of a full-time employee, a virtual assistant can be the perfect

solution for business owners who need administrative help but aren't interested in adding staff. "A virtual assistant takes another layer of burden off the small business owner," says Sharon Toerok, principal at Toerek Law, who not only outsources the administrative duties of her firm, but also reception and paralegal responsibilities. "I've

used Zirtual and eaHelp and have been very pleased with both. You only pay for what you need and you can scale it up or down."

"The flexibility and virtual nature of the relationship makes it really efficient," says Toerok. "It's been a game changer for me."



January 12

Small Business Exchange

Best IT Decision We Ever Made...

"The best IT decision we made for our business was moving our applications and operations to the cloud. The cloud allows businesses of any size to realize the benefits of enterprise-grade systems that previously were only available to corporations and large entities. As a Managed IT services firm, FIT was an early adopter of cloud services as a way to be our own test cases for products that we knew clients would need. Since then, we have seen the rapid pace of migration to the cloud — from Office 365 to accounting packages to industry-specific tools and other software. We anticipate this trend continuing as companies leverage the cost savings, risk reduction, and flexibility that comes with this tech advantage.

Michelle Tomallo, *President & Co-Founder*
FIT Technologies

By The Numbers

61%

NEO TECH FIRMS WITH CLIENTS
OUTSIDE OHIO IN 2014
VERSUS 41% IN 2010.

SOURCE: 2014 NEOSA IT INDUSTRY STUDY

Connection Calendar

**LAKEWOOD CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE LUNCHEON WITH
U.S. REP. MARCY KAPTUR**

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16
11:30 AM – 1 PM

Brennan's Banquet Center, Cleveland
Price: \$15 Members, \$20 Non-Members
Register at 216-226-2900.

**NEOSA TECH THURSDAY
(NETWORKING)**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29
5:30 – 7:30 PM

The Oak Barrel, Valley View
Register at www.cose.org/events.

COSE ANNUAL MEETING

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26
4:30 PM

Music Box Supper Club

SAVE
THE
DATE!

Check out www.cose.org/events
for all the latest happenings.