

# Business Strategies for Small Business **Productivity**

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# Introduction

Productivity and growth go hand-in-hand for small businesses—the more productive a business is, the more it can grow. For many small business owners, however, productivity often takes a backseat to the many tasks that need to be accomplished in a day, leaving them no time to focus on growth and strategy.

For small businesses, the key to productivity is working smarter, not harder. Small business owners must maximize their time, their resources and their money to enable greater productivity among their employees and help their business expand into new markets.

Strategies for productivity in 2020 and beyond should include technologies that can help save time and money. The right mix of technologies can enable small business owners to take a more intelligent approach to running their business, improving efficiency, productivity and, ultimately, the bottom line.



# Tools and Strategies for Cost Savings

**Every penny counts in a small business, so managing costs effectively should be a priority. From creating and keeping a daily budget to reducing energy costs, small businesses must scrutinize how much they spend to ensure they're maximizing every dollar.**

## **LEVERAGING THE CLOUD**

Cloud-based applications can help small businesses take advantage of the latest technology for a small subscription fee. These can range from financial dashboards or budgeting apps that show daily spending and highlight areas ripe for saving, to project management apps to keep project owners and employees on track to meet important deadlines.

Such technology can be especially useful for small businesses that are

completely or partially virtual. Many small business owners recognize the benefits associated with a virtual workplace including increased flexibility and better work/life balance among employees, not to mention the savings associated with not having to rent office space. A virtual office also expands the field of potential employees, since they can work anywhere virtually. Technology—especially cloud-based services such as Voice over Internet



Protocol (VoIP) and subscription-based applications—can support a virtual office and ensure all employees have the tools and services they need to be most productive.

#### **SMART ENERGY TECH**

For small businesses that work out of one or two locations, smart technologies can help keep costs down by helping manage energy conservation efforts. Smart light switches can turn off the lights automatically when there is no movement or be turned off remotely. Smart thermostats, meanwhile, can

be set to increase the temperature accordingly when employees are in the office and reduce the temperature when no one is in the office.

#### **4G LTE BACKUP TO KEEP RUNNING**

Additionally, small businesses must ensure their employees can remain productive even in the event of a power or system outage. Having a backup for communication outages, such as 4G LTE Internet backup to keep information flowing, can help businesses stay online and available to customers even when their systems go down.

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# Tools and Strategies for Time Savings



**Small businesses not only need to manage their money effectively, but also their time. And for small business owners who must wear many hats, time is money. Owners and employees must work more efficiently to maximize productivity and get more done in the day.**

## MANAGEMENT AND MEASUREMENT

Ensuring employees stay on task and projects stay on target is essential in small businesses. Cloud-based workflow management software can help small business owners meet their goals and keep projects on track, no matter how large or small. Employees, meanwhile, can see all of the tasks assigned to them, the status of those tasks and where they fit in the overall project, helping them prioritize their work and manage time more effectively.

Likewise, business management software provides an overall view of the business,

enabling small business owners to track and monitor various types of business data such as social media analytics, sales numbers and marketing KPIs. Business management software can integrate with customer relationship management (CRM) solutions, resource planning tools, financial management and other applications to provide a single-pane-of-glass view of the business, enabling small business owners to see areas of opportunity and spots for improvement.

## BRIDGING THE GAP WITH AUTOMATION

Recognizing there are only so many hours in the day, a number of small business owners are turning to automation to help them accomplish important yet rote or regular tasks that take up valuable time. Apps designed for an emerging class of “citizen developers” are making it easy for them to create their own apps to automate

tasks and improve their productivity. For example, [IFTTT](#) (If This Then That) is a free service that enables users to “connect” apps to perform tasks, such as automatically tweeting Instagram photos as native Twitter photos rather than tweeting links to improve their social media presence. Hootsuite, meanwhile, enables users to send targeted emails automatically by setting filters, posting schedules and more.

Other critical yet time-consuming tasks are increasingly being shifted from in-house to third-party services to keep small businesses running efficiently even without qualified specialists. For example, cloud-based antivirus and security monitoring tools can eliminate many manual security-related tasks and help networks from malware and cyberattacks, so small business owners can focus less on their network security and more on improving their bottom line.



# Tools and Strategies to Keep Employees Connected

**Many small businesses rely on a workforce that may or may not be in one central location. Employee flexibility can be a critical element in the success of any small business, as the ability to react to and address customer needs is paramount. Businesses need to be able to support employees and their devices no matter where they are and what devices they use.**

## **STAYING CONNECTED WITH UC**

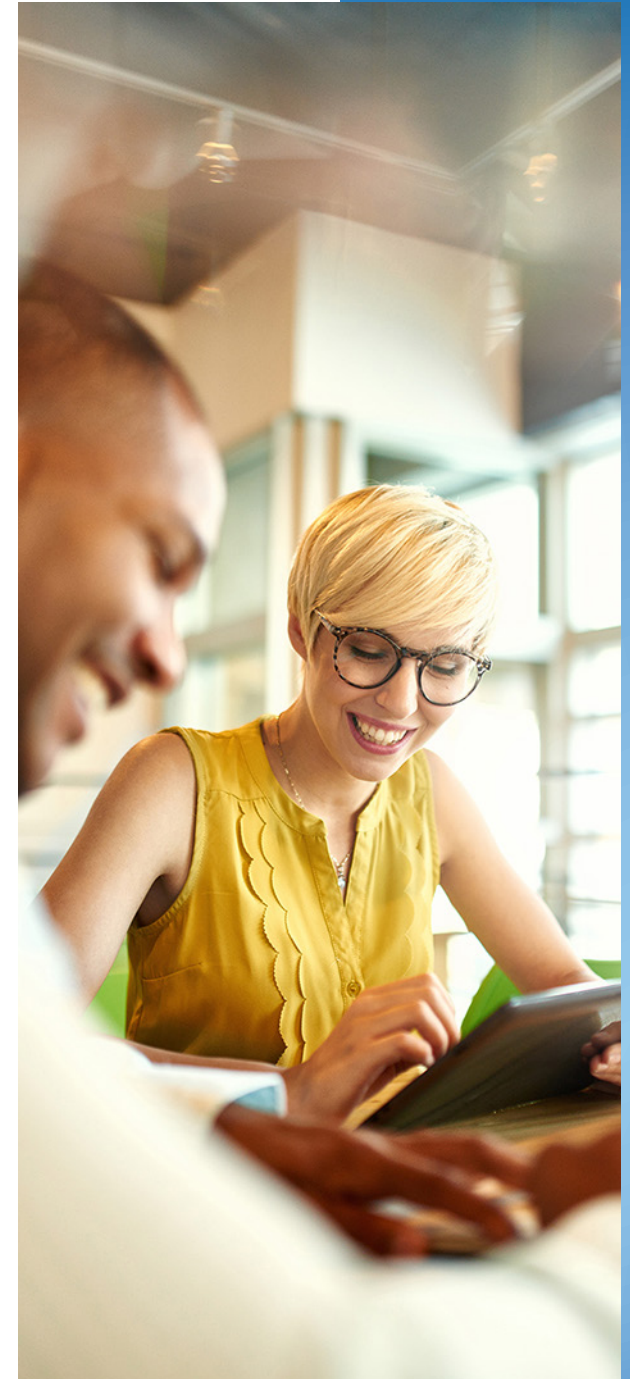
A cloud-based unified communications and collaboration system is a must for small businesses, whether in centralized or distributed locations. Such systems can keep employees connected anywhere with one business number for both their desktop phone and their mobile device, and offer features such as auto attendant to ensure calls are answered at any time.

Real-time messaging apps such as [Slack](#) can encourage immediate interaction among employees, helping to improve overall communication and reducing the chance of missed or misinterpreted information. Many of these apps also enable file transfers and the ability to highlight particular conversations,

making it easy to access information quickly and providing a record for future uses, including audits.

## **CRM IN THE CLOUD**

Cloud-based CRM systems let small businesses leverage the same customer service capabilities as the big brands but on a level that scales with them. A cloud-based system means customer information is always up-to-date and available, so employees can view historical data and make more informed decisions in addressing customer needs with little or no delay—which not only improves productivity but also can help foster customer loyalty.





# Tools and Strategies to Support Work/Life Balance

**For most small business owners, there is no such thing as a day off. Even when the business operates on a 9-to-5, Monday-Friday schedule, there is no shortage of tasks to keep owners busy well past closing time. Achieving work/life balance can be impossible without the right tools to help.**

## **BEING THERE, EVEN WHEN YOU CAN'T BE THERE**

One of the most stressful prospects for small business owners is making sure the business is operating smoothly when they're away. That includes ensuring calls are answered and customers are attended to when they enter the business. Technologies such as call management and video monitoring can help small business owners "keep an eye on things" and enable "business as usual" while they're on the road or enjoying some time away from the office. Video monitoring also can help improve the physical security of the office or store and can help decrease employee theft.

Connectivity for all devices, too, is an important element in helping small business owners manage things while they're away from the office. When the network isn't working, employees aren't working, and productivity is limited. Having a reliable network with always-on connectivity can remove some of the time and worry for small business owners and achieve some much-needed downtime.



## Conclusion

Small business success depends on growth, and growth depends on productivity. However, time and the sheer number of tasks that must be performed in a day can test the productivity levels of even the most efficient small businesses.

Small business owners should look for ways to help their employees work smarter, not harder, to improve productivity. Advances in productivity can be achieved with the help of technologies, tools and services designed to help small businesses accomplish more with fewer resources, improving efficiency and productivity to achieve a healthier bottom line and greater success in 2020 and beyond.



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