

## Top Ten Tips

In today's competitive global marketplace, the need to focus on the tools that will assist you to grow your business is mission critical. The digital world has brought not only tremendous opportunity to seek out new markets and scale operations, but it has also increased your propensity to compete within the global arena within your genre of business or service. Your ability to incorporate the new wave of technology into your business plan will help you to bridge the gap and provide local solutions to global markets.

Here are some of the top technologies that will increase your productivity and lower your costs so you can focus on what's important to your business: increasing sales.

### 1. **Operating System Optimization**

This is a broad area that deals with anything that helps your operating system run smoother and faster (start up faster, shut down faster, etc). A few suggestions for your operating system include: A "post-it" software program for memo's that go directly on your desktop. This will save you wasting paper and losing important notes that you've jotted down. Another consideration is extra security software which nowadays comes in the form of a USB flash drive that you can configure to work as a key that locks and unlocks your PC.

### 2. **Productivity Software**

For productivity, there are various project management software programs that provide templates to keep track of the admin side of your processes so that everyone in your business is on the same page and you don't waste time dealing with communication breakdowns.

### 3. **Accounting Software**

Let's embrace the technology era! Why waste hours of creative output on mundane tasks that are better left to a computer? There's software that will fit virtually any small business's needs: some as specific as hotel-orientated, or restaurant orientated financial planning software. Everything is included to help you deal with your finances, invoicing, payroll, tax returns, and general budget management.

### 4. **VoIP Phone**

Nowadays there are VOIP options that mean cheaper dialing options for international as well as local calls. They offer various phone line packages including bundles that provide customizable voicemail, 5 way calling and all the bells and whistles. Often cheaper than a regular landline company, there's very little that should be making you choose NOT to use Voip. When considering your cell phone as well, you should be choosing a model that will be easy to synchronize with your office technology systems so that you can keep everything in check.

## **5. Mobility and Connectivity Gadgets**

If you're one of those people that likes to have your office with you wherever you go (and if you're starting up a business, you'll be doing this anyway) then you may want to consider some of the latest gadgets from Palm or RIM which function like a mini laptop, provide email capabilities and a remote desktop solution (complete with full keyboard and USB adaptors!). The Archos PMA is another great option that even has a wireless adaptor so you can get online as well as a 40gig harddrive to give you maximum office-to-home portability. Additional functionality such as GPS and multi-media viewing can be integrated into your phone, so connecting you work and leisure has never been easier.

## **6. Design Software**

Ignore all the rumours about Photoshop being too complex for you, it's the type of software that works at any literacy level, so you can continue building your knowledge until you're a pro. This software is a powerful tool that puts at your fingertips the power to change logos, design graphics, and tweak existing images plus a myriad of other things. If you're in any way considering doing your own marketing, you'll want this, or something similar. With a little practice, you'll be able to customize all your design elements and make your business stand out.

## **7. Social Media Networking**

Get connected! If you want to generate buzz about your business or you want to meet prospective clients and future business contacts, then social networks are the way to go. Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and their spin-offs all have their benefits, most of which lay in the fact that they offer you lots of publicity options and networking from the comfort of your own computer desk. So create a profile that reflects what you're looking to gain from those networks, and watch your contact list grow.

## **8. Website**

So you're going to need a website- it's inevitable. It's the window that the outer world (your customers) have into your inner world. It represents you and connects you. It acts as a vehicle to future clients and bridges gaps with existing ones. So with it being that important, you're going to have to research it A LOT. Your web hosting and domain name is pretty essential. You need to make sure that with your web hosting you're being offered as much as you need to get your business off the ground. Ask yourself how many email accounts you need (as some web hosts only provide one), how much file space will you need (will you be having a lot of image/file content?), how much bandwidth will you need (will you be transferring a lot of content to your viewers?) and what kind of stat's are represented (you want to know who's coming to your site, and where they're coming from, how often they're staying, what they're looking at, etc.). Make sure you have a list of your "MUST HAVES" before approaching a web hosting company, so you don't get flustered and are sure of your needs in order to choose the best package.

**9. E-Commerce / Online Marketing**

If you're starting your own retail business and haven't got the resources or the knowledge to make an online shop, you might want to consider these platforms. Places like myshopify.com and etsy.com offer solutions by providing you with a customizable templated store front, and tons of options so that once you set up shop, you're making revenue immediately: and they don't charge extortionate fees for the privilege

**10. Advertising solutions: Search Engine Optimization**

Take a look at search engines to help drive sales. Today's search engines such as Google and Yahoo! Search Marketing offer cost effective ways to get your products in front of your customers. Email marketing has also become very popular, so it might be worth while investing in some email marketing software to keep your existing client list interested and updated on your products or services.