This Issue:

What You Need to Know About Technology Upgrades

Even if we'd like it to last forever, business technology can't possibly do so for a number of reasons. Due to the fact that businesses and their technology are constantly upgrading and changing, it's almost a certainty that you'll have to upgrade your technology at some point, whether it reaches its end-of-life event or just simply becomes obsolete for your organization. In fact, failing to update your infrastructure from time to time can have serious negative side-effects for your business...

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About Directive

We are a technology consulting firm specializing in technology implementation and management for businesses. We're known for providing big-business, Enterprise-Level IT services to small and medium-sized businesses.

Visit us **online** at:
newsletter.directive.com

As we look back upon the last year, we anticipate continued success in the coming one. Thank you for allowing us to work with you.

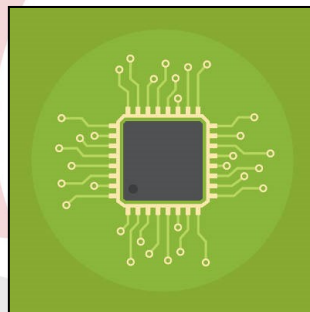## Small Businesses Using Emerging Technologies to Get Ahead

If your business uses technology to be more productive and efficient, you know that as soon as you buy a piece of new technology, there is another one right behind it that has more power, or better features. This is true for consumers as well. This constant innovation is what has made technology a viable option for many small businesses. After all, if computers hadn't been innovated on constantly, they'd still be the size of a room (or wouldn't exist at all).

The cool thing about technology is that, just like a combination of ingredients go into a recipe, constant innovation of technology ultimately creates new technology. Today, we will go through four emerging technologies that any small business can deploy to help them build a more efficient and productive business.

The Cloud

Cloud computing may not be seen as emerging by many industry professionals, since it has been around for a while, but it is growing at a remarkable rate. According to Gartner, the worldwide public cloud services market's projected growth is a whopping 21.4 percent from 2017-to-2018, with every cloud sector showing substantial growth.

Obtaining the Right Tools Is Extremely Important for Businesses
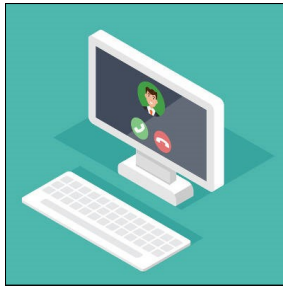
Your business' technology infrastructure is built from hardware, and this hardware needs to be properly managed if you want to succeed. The first step to this is to acquire the proper hardware, but for businesses that don't have dedicated in-house IT departments, even this is challenging. Outsourced hardware procurement is a solution to this dilemma, and we'll explain how it works.

What Major Hardware Does a Business Need?

First, let's discuss what kind of hardware a business might find itself wanting. All of the major components of a network are included here, such as server units, desktops, workstations, laptops, and networking cables or components. Basically, any large piece of complex machinery that makes up your organization's computing infrastructure can be considered a major piece of hardware. However, these kinds of hardware vary

"Social media marketing is about identifying the essence of engagement." - Edgerank Checker

VoIP Is the Leading Choice for Business Communications

Few technological assets are as important in today's business world as a working telephone solution of some sort. While its form has changed considerably over the years from a traditional handset terminal to a desktop application or mobile device, its functionality remains largely the same. In some ways, it's even better and more improved, offering unprecedented opportunities for businesses to revamp their entire communications infrastructure.

Voice over Internet Protocol, or VoIP, can provide an exceptional ROI if it's implemented properly. In fact, you might find that it's time to ditch your old service provider and invest in a more dynamic solution like VoIP.

Out With the Old

If you're still relying on traditional telephone solutions to communicate with your internal or external contacts, then you're making your job much more difficult than it needs to be. Some businesses still rely on traditional telephone lines that are limited in both scope and scale, making growth and flexibility borderline impossible in the process. Adding new users and telephone lines becomes a major problem--one that any organization that hopes to achieve growth cannot withstand.

Therefore, the logical course of action is to consider how your business can move away from telephone providers toward a more dynamic solution. Considering how your business would need to run new telephone lines and set up new terminals for every new user, adding new users is difficult. Furthermore, services tend to be bundled together, like television, Internet, and telephone. How many of these does your business actually need? If they are packaged together, you could be paying for services that you don't, in all actuality, even use. This is a waste that can be done without.

In With the New

VoIP allows for dynamic new telephone features that your business will find helpful not just in the short term, but the long run as well. VoIP uses your Internet connection rather than your telephone lines to function, meaning that any device using your Internet connection and a VoIP application can work as a telephone. It's one way your business' employees can get work done on their own terms.

Furthermore, since you're only paying for your Internet and VoIP solution, your organization is saving money by not paying for services that it doesn't use. It certainly beats paying for 60 channels of cable without having a need for them. You can instead use that money to invest in other features for your VoIP solution that you wouldn't get otherwise, like instant messaging, video chat, and so on. It's the ideal communication solution for a growing business that wants to build a solid foundation for the future. To learn more, reach out to us at 607.433.2200.

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Obtaining the Right Tools Is Extremely Important for Businesses

considerably from one-another, and without adequate knowledge, it could be easy to accidentally acquire the wrong hardware--or, rather, hardware that doesn't help your business flourish.

How About Minor Hardware?

Hardware includes so much more than just the major machines that make up a network. In particular, the minor hardware solutions your organization uses can often pass by unnoticed or underappreciated. Things like a computer mouse and keyboard are no less important for your employees'

productivity than a workstation or monitor. If you want to get the most out of your workday, acquiring the right hardware will play a key role in accomplishing this.

How Hardware Procurement Helps

It's safe to say that the big box retailers aren't on your side. They don't know your business and its needs inside and out the way a managed IT provider or internal IT department does. Professionals who know the best way to use certain kinds of hardware, as well as the specs and capabilities of each machine, will be able to help you get the most

out of your hardware assets. To this end, working with a managed IT provider can prove to be fruitful. Since a managed IT provider like Directive works so closely with your organization, you can know without a doubt that your business is working with someone whose goal is meeting its exact needs.

To learn more about hardware procurement, reach out to Directive at 607.433.2200.

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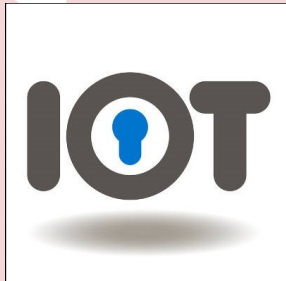# Small Businesses Using Emerging Technologies to Get Ahead

(Continued from page 1)
Most businesses today have begun to utilize cloud services in one way or another. Services like Gmail, Microsoft Office 365, and Amazon Web Services, provide small businesses cost-effective alternatives to purchasing hardware and software outright; and, today many software developers offer their software as a cloud service, including completely-hosted tools for communication, collaboration, productivity, administration, and even security.

Niche Software
Every business uses software for administration. Whether it's for managing a complicated supply chain, for inventorying products, or simply for paying employees, software makes running an efficient business possible. Today, more developers are creating tools designed to help even the smallest of businesses do business their way.

Even the smallest businesses can justify the expense of software that will increase their ability to bring in revenue, manage the work they have, or keep their company and client's data safe. If a decision is precarious for a big company, it is exponentially risky for a small business. For this reason, specialized software, designed to solve (or help manage) specific problems are good options when trying to fill the gaps created by management software.

The Internet of Things
When you run a business, cost seems to just pile up. The Internet of Things, which is essentially the strategy of putting sensors in every product (to make them smart), can actually work to save any business money. Typically this technology can be used to cut costs associated with energy usage, waste accumulation, and managing inventory levels.

The IoT can also be beneficial in the management of your organization's security. Smart locks, digital surveillance cameras, and RFID Tags for merchandise are only three examples. With morel smarter "things" being added each day, small business owners need to keep their eye on the IoT market to ensure that they aren't missing out on some useful and affordable technology that could potentially put their whole organization in a more advantageous position.

Automation (with A.I.)
Since people have begun to automate processes, namely over the past 50 years, productivity has skyrocketed. Today's small businesses depend on automation in many of their...

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Securing Your Business from the Internet of Things

Now that the holidays have come and gone, you might have a couple of new gadgets in your home or office that connect to the Internet. Depending on what these gadgets are, you might have a serious security issue sitting right in front of you without realizing it. Some devices that don't normally connect to the Internet--also known as Internet of Things devices (IoT)--aren't as secure as you'd like them to be, particularly in a business environment.

Users who don't understand these security issues could unknowingly expose your business to threats. Internet of Things devices are notorious for their security faults, but in reality, these issues aren't caused by the user. Some might place the blame on them for not doing their due diligence when acquiring the device and thinking about it in the workplace scenario, but the fact

remains that the user can't do much about it even if they wanted to.

This is primarily because many of the security faults found in Internet of Things devices comes from the fact that developers don't really design them with security in mind. Think about it this way--the devices were made by those who have been making appliances (or whatever the device happens to be) for a long time, but they are just now getting involved with the actual software that allows for Internet connectivity. Therefore, they are less likely to make a device with security in mind compared to its functionality.

> *"Now that the holidays have come and gone, you might have a couple of new gadgets in your home or office that connect to the Internet."*

In particular, these devices are vulnerable to threats that would ordinarily be patched by the developer, but the thing about Internet of Things devices is that patches aren't easily administered to these devices, if at all. It's the

responsibility of both the developer and the user, as failure to respond to this threat will mean that the Internet is less secure overall. Some have suggested making this kind of support required by the developer, including automatic updates and unique default passwords, but it is clear that there is a significant amount of work that needs to be done.

Businesses need to implement measures to keep IoT devices from becoming a detriment. Whether they want them to or not, employees will end up bringing in devices that can connect to the Internet, so business owners need to implement a policy regarding these devices. Going forward, a Bring Your Own Device policy that outlines how these devices are used and what data they are allowed to access will be critical to the success of an organization. To learn more about how to protect your business from IoT devices, reach out to Directive at 607.433.2200.

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Can You Stay Productive In the Face of Constant Distraction?

The modern office is filled with distractions, and that's to say nothing about the everyday user's life. With so many devices and notifications interrupting focus for users all over the world, it's more important than ever before to have a strategy for how to deal with these issues and become as productive as possible in the workplace. Today, we'll be discussing some of the biggest distractions in the workplace and how your employees can overcome them.

The Reality

The modern workplace is a shifting environment. If businesses don't adapt to the changes, they could potentially be left behind by the times, or worse--subject to countless distractions that are a result of this shifting environment. Some of these issues are created by the employer through the use of open-office environments designed to reduce the costs of housing employees in the workplace. While this achieves the desired goal, the end result is often less productivity due to the constant distractions that plague the open office. Employees could find themselves more stressed out and less motivated--not the ideal situation for

anyone working for your business.

Some might get the idea that this happens because the employees aren't trained to thrive in such a busy workplace environment, as evidenced by a poll from Udemy in which 66 percent of respondents claimed so. If you feel your staff suffers from productivity issues, then you should look at the underlying causes of this. Asking them can help you see it from their perspective. You'll see a lot of the same answers: too much noise, overcrowded office, and even too much technology that they don't understand. As surprising as this might sound, it's important to keep it in mind.

Staying Social

Even workers that enjoy working side-by-side with others are finding that there are still ample opportunities to be distracted. Employees have near-constant access to social accounts thanks to your business' Wi-Fi connection, meaning that you'll need a content filter and mobile device policy in place to limit how much your employees can access these time-wasting accounts. It's likely that employees will, more likely than not, see this as a detriment to their personal agenda and not as a benefit to your business

or their productivity. While social media can be helpful for marketing and other purposes, it can also lead to users compulsively checking their devices, cutting into productivity.
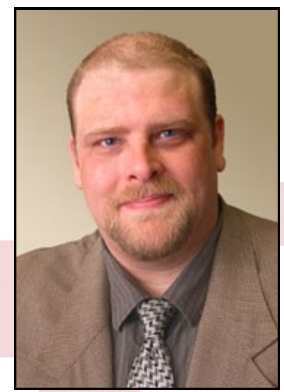
Distracted Staff

Even the smallest distraction can influence productivity for an extended period of time. Some users can take up to a half-hour or so to refocus on a task. Of course, even periods of time that are supposed to be in the workday for breaks, like lunchtime, can inadvertently create distractions; without them, however, productivity suffers even more. One example of a situation that an employee could consider a distraction is a staff meeting. While they are necessary, they themselves are often full of distractions, and pulling employees away from their work for distraction-filled meetings is sure to both frustrate and stress out your busier employees. If employees suffer from productivity breaks, they might overstress themselves into overproducing to compensate for the time lost. This leads to a lower quality of work performed as a whole. According to Udemy, 34 percent of workers found...

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