

10 TIPS

FOR USING TECHNOLOGY TO RETHINK YOUR BUSINESS



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The Los Angeles Regional
Small Business
Development Center
Network

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*You've got questions.
We've got answers.*

How are you using technology in your small business? Sure, you probably use a computer and a mobile phone, but are you truly harnessing the power of technology to help your business grow? Here are 10 ways technology can re-energize your business to help grow your customer base, improve productivity and increase efficiency.

- 1 PUT YOUR BUSINESS IN THE CLOUD.** Popular cloud storage services like Dropbox, Microsoft SkyDrive or Google Drive store your documents and data online (rather than on your computer's hard drive), keeping information secure and letting you access files anywhere, from any computer. Use the cloud to create different folders for different projects or team members; collaborate with employees, contractors or partners; and share files or images that are too big to email.
- 2 MARKET WITH SOCIAL MEDIA.** Does your business depend on local customers? Use social media tools to drive traffic to your door. Get listed on Yelp!, use a social check-in tool like Foursquare, and list your business on Google Places so people can easily find you and get directions to your location. Do you provide a service like plumbing or landscaping? Get listed on Angie's List. Always encourage customers to leave reviews after visiting your store, using your services or finishing a meal in your restaurant. To keep all your listings up to date, use a service like Locu that lets you manage all your online business information in one place.
- 3 REACH OUT WITH EMAIL.** According to Convince and Convert, last year 44 percent of email users made at least one purchase based on a promotional email. Once customers opt-in to receive your emails, send a monthly newsletter, alerts about sales or new products, or special offers. Email success is all about frequency and follow-up. Contact your local SBDC to get help setting up an email marketing account and determining the best way to reach out to your customer base.
- 4 SELL ONLINE.** Do you have a retail store? Expand your customer base by selling your products online, either through an ecommerce website of your own, or through larger online marketplaces such as the Amazon Marketplace, eBay or Etsy. Do you own a restaurant? Use an online service such as GrubHub, Seamless or iMenu360 that lets customers place orders online for pickup or delivery.
- 5 ENHANCE CUSTOMER SERVICE.** Save customers time and hassle by answering their most frequently asked questions on your business website and voicemail. This can include maps or directions to your business; hours of operation; information about shipping and returns; menu items and specials; or whatever customers ask you most.
- 6 CONNECT WITH PROSPECTS AND PARTNERS.** For a smart alternative to time-consuming and costly business trips, use solutions like Skype, GoToMeeting or WebEx to hold voice conference calls or video conferences with customers and clients.
- 7 GET ORGANIZED WITH PROJECT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE.** If your small company outsources to contractors, tracking who's doing what and when can be a major headache. Simplify things with project management tools like BaseCamp, Zoho or Asana, which let you create and assign tasks, collaborate on projects and track everyone's progress.
- 8 SIMPLIFY SCHEDULING.** Does your business require setting appointments with customers? Eliminate phone tag by using scheduling tools like FullSlate, Genbook or BookFresh, which enable clients to schedule their own appointments online at their convenience.
- 9 UNDERSTAND YOUR CUSTOMERS.** Got a website? Great! Now sign up for Google Analytics (it's free) and get reports that show where your website visitors are coming from — including what sites drive them to yours, what cities they live in, how long they spend on your site, what pages they look at and more.
- 10 GET PAID INSTANTLY, ANYWHERE.** Do you serve customers at their homes or offices, or sell products on the go at farmers' markets or events? Mobile payment tools such as Square, Intuit GoPayment and PayPal Here, which work with your smartphone or tablet computer, make life easier for both you and your customers by letting you accept non-cash payments on the spot.



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