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technologies often streamline otherwise tedious tasks, allowing businesses to work smarter.

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How would you or your client like to place this ad in the Employment Section of your local newspaper?

Help Not Wanted:

Our accounting department doesn't need another person to keep up with the Excel spreadsheets or do data entry. We've been paying \$40k for this job, but now we have a system that is so efficient at handling our processes that we eliminated a position. *Do not send your resume.*

ALL SYSTEMS GO FOR A RESTAURANT GROUP

A restaurant group with 25+ locations said they eliminated just such a position when their new business management system got up and running. It wasn't part of their plan, but it was a direct result of eliminating so much manual work that there was no need for the position. That type of help was no longer needed.

For the restaurant group, the system came first and then the reduction in workforce. That's not the picture we see in companies where the economic downturn has resulted in a drop in sales and the inevitable layoffs that follow. The work must still be done. Some businesses will just pile more on the folks still there, but forward-thinking companies will see this as an opportunity

to fine tune their processes and look at upgrading, replacing and revamping

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had no clue of what was in stock, what was a big seller or which clients bought what.

The answer was clear: They needed to get a handle on their inventory, and it had to be a system in which they could have a high level of confidence. As it turned out, the investment in an integrated business management system with inventory control was less than it cost to keep Bob on the payroll for another year. It also automated their knowledge, which made them much less vulnerable to the comings and goings of employees. The unexpected side benefit to them was much improved customer service because they knew immediately what was in stock. Now they use the system to forecast needs, which has also reduced their inventory carrying costs and improved the bottom line.

Strong internal systems will always help a business do more with less, but it doesn't always have to be based on technology. An improved system can be just good old attention to detail and old fashion analysis.

INVESTIGATIVE ACCOUNTANT STRIKES GOLD FOR A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

Consider the case of the health care provider who really wanted to keep all their people during what they hoped was a temporary drop in business. They encouraged their team to use their downtime to look hard at all the many aspects of their business and see what efficiencies or savings they could identify. An enterprising accountant decided to pull out the files filled with the thick phone bills that come each month and do an analysis at a level that had probably never been done. Bingo!

On the company bill they identified an extra phone line they had been paying for that was no longer needed. On the cell phone bill, they discovered monthly charges for a GPS add-on that enabled users to find local restaurants or businesses

when they were traveling. That was fine if they needed it, but many of their

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Finally, there was the case of the local hometown bank. Customer service and customer acquisition is the lifeblood of the banking industry, and with the bad news in banking this regional player saw an opportunity. Going back to its roots, the bank decided to target customers of the larger banks with a focus on their customer-friendly atmosphere and variety of services. Unfortunately, like their larger counterparts, they too had to make do with less after some layoffs.

Their bank officers and managers knew they were dropping the ball on selling their mix of bank's products to new and existing customers. With less staff, they needed a better way to target and track prospective customers and build on their relationships with prospects and customers so they could improve their sales and bottom line.

What they needed was a systematic way to help prospects and customers better take advantage of the bank's offerings that could bring value. They found their answer in ACT!, a lower-cost contact management system that brought the structure and process flow they needed. With information documented and organized, they were able to make up for less people by using technology to do more targeted marketing and follow-up that was fine-tuned to the individual needs of their prospects and customers. It worked and business improved. So too did customer satisfaction.

THE HELP MAY ALREADY BE RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU

Tough economic times are always a wakeup call for businesses to build efficiencies and fine-tune processes. Improving internal systems should always be a priority, but it seems to be less so when times are good. Well, it has our attention now. So take the opportunity to help your clients find the goldmines in their business

operations by looking at all aspects of their operations for ways to save money

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