**Isaac M. O'Bannon** • Jan. 04, 2012



Building a successful small business is a great accomplishment, one that often requires dedication, long hours and persistence. Thomas Edison's quote about genius being "one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration" holds true for

entrepreneurship, whether building a better mousetrap, developing more desired

ability to not only adapt to change, but to manage those changes strategically. To proactively seek out the "better, faster, smarter" ways of production or service, and to keep the customer experience at the forefront of decisions that might affect them.

What are these tools? Where can you find them? The answer to the first question, of course, is that there is no shortcut list of hardware, technology and apps that magically help every kind of client. The answer to the second question is all around us. There are literally thousands of technologies geared toward the small business market, which can make finding the right fits challenging.

In this article, I highlight a few business-focused gadgets that I think can have a dramatic benefit to some of your business clients, and I identify the types of businesses that each one is best suited to, along with how it can help.

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## Square Card Reader & App ([www.squareup.com](www.squareup.com))

**Target Small Business Type:** Small retailers and service businesses wanting a simple and mobile way to accept credit and debit card payments.

**Overview:** Consumers are continuing the long trend toward electronic payments instead of carrying and using cash. Whether grabbing day-to-day items, making larger purchases or charging expenses, there's no doubt that paper money is losing its popularity and the days of the paper check are numbered. This means that small businesses really must accept plastic in order to be competitive. Whether it's a traditional store, kiosk at the mall, taco truck, consultant, plumber or a yard maintenance service, having the ability to quickly and securely accept payments takes the headaches out of invoicing and gets the revenue into the business' bank immediately.

Until recently, a small business wanting to accept electronic payment cards was

**Potential Benefits:** Square makes it easy to accept credit and debit cards, and provides reporting into formats that can be imported into common small business accounting systems. The card reader and app are free and there are no contracts, with pricing for the service based on a flat add-on fee of 2.75 percent of each transaction where the card is scanned. If a card number must be manually entered, the fee is 3.5 percent plus 15 cents.

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# Fujitsu ScanSnap S1100 (scanners.fcpa.fujitsu.com/scansnap11/s1100.html

**Target Small Business Type:** Mobile business professionals who need a scanner during their travels, including full-sized documents, business cards, receipts and invoices.

**Overview:** We've often cited various ScanSnap models as being beneficial to tax and accounting firms, helping them make the move to a paperless environment and client engagements. However, these benefits aren't limited to just this profession, and many small businesses are joining the less-paper movement. I've seen ScanSnaps in doctor's offices, retail stores and even gas stations, which shows that virtually all types of business are realizing that digitizing documents makes them more accessible and organized.

The same is true for the ScanSnap S1100, the smallest fully-functional scanner on the market that includes one-button PDF creation. At less than 10 inches long and two inches wide, and weighing in at less than one pound, the device is a great fit for any mobile business professional, whether a frequent flier or a road warrior. It can scan in full-color and has the ability to reproduce full-sized documents or smaller items in

under 7.5 seconds, plus it can even scan plastic cards such as IDs. The device is Mac

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# Toshiba Mobile Monitors (us.toshiba.com/computers/accessories/mobile-monitor)

**Target Small Business Type:** Another great tool for mobile business professionals who don't like sacrificing their multi-monitor productivity when on the road.

**Overview:** More and more business professionals in many industries are accustomed to using multiple monitors at their workstations. The productivity boost has been proven, and can be a definite drawback when a user is relegated back down to a single laptop monitor. But being mobile doesn't have to mean giving up multiple screens.

The new USB Mobile LCD monitor from Toshiba is designed specifically to act as a second (or more) monitor for mobile professionals. About the size of a tablet device and weighing under three pounds, the monitors are easy to pack and offer a 14-inch diagonal screen with up to 1366 x 768 resolution. By pulling power from the laptop or desktop computer via a USB cable, it doesn't need a power cord or batteries. Plus, the monitors come with an included, custom-fitted carrying case that doubles as a fold-out stand.

**Potential Benefits:** Whether making presentations or grinding away at day-to-day tasks while on the road, working on a single laptop screen can feel like going back to the stone age for productivity-focused professionals who are used to having two, three or even more monitors at their workstation. The Toshiba Mobile Monitors not only offer a compact and simple USB plug-and-play option for adding monitors, but

the included case/stand is also a great addition. Retail pricing is about $199 at major

functions.

**Overview:** For those businesses with mobile sales representatives or leaders who give presentations to dozens or even hundreds of people at the same time, an easily portable professional projector is a must-have. The New PowerLite 1750 packs high-quality performance into an airport-friendly design, featuring XGA and optional WXGA resolution, 2600-3000 lumens of color and white light output, with 1024 x 768 native output. The long-life UHE lamp is rated to last up to 4,000 hours.

The projector connects to laptops, desktops or tablets via a simple USB connection or via optional HDMI and wireless input, or can be used with USB memory devices such as flash drives, for PC-free presentations. It also includes closed captioning functions, a built-in speaker for audio, has horizontal and vertical keystoning, and comes with a carrying case for easy portability and protection.

**Potential Benefits:** The 3.7 pound PowerLite is great for business professionals giving demonstrations and presentations while on the go, and its multiple connectivity options can be a fit for virtually any user. The PowerLite 1750 starts at $549.

Technology

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