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Connect with customers

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tomorrow's opportunities—whether it is their [customers migrating to mobile](#)

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The study was conducted online by Harris Poll on behalf of Salesforce, Nov. 17-28, 2016. To download the Salesforce “2016 Connected Small Business Report,” click here: <https://www.salesforce.com/assets/pdf/smb/Connected-Small-Business-Research-Report-2016.pdf>

Key Report Findings

The majority of small business owners are responsible for their companies' technology buying decisions—and they are price sensitive.

More than 80% of small businesses (83%) do not have an IT staff; and 73% of small business owners are responsible for purchasing technology for their businesses. For small business owners, the most important factors in purchasing technology include price (74%), convenience (43%) and compatibility with their current infrastructure (37%). Technology accounts for 15% of small business owners' annual budgets on average, mostly going toward hardware (46%) and financial software (33%), such as accounting packages.

“While small businesses are optimistic about the economy and cities where they work, this study shows there are huge opportunities for them to leverage technology to supercharge their businesses,” said Jamie Domenici, VP small business marketing, Salesforce. “There is a common misconception that CRM, automation and other technologies are too complex for small businesses, but in fact, they're easier to use than ever and can help them work smarter, save time and connect with their customers in new ways.”

Most small business owners still rely on outdated tools and processes when it comes to connecting with their customers.

For tracking customer information, small business owners primarily use email (44%) and spreadsheets (41%)—and the numbers are similar for managing sales

opportunities. For customer service, more than half of small business owners (51%)

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Newer technologies, such as business process automation, analytics and artificial intelligence (AI), are still nascent at small businesses.

Less than half of small business owners (49%) are taking advantage of business process automation—primarily automated billing and finance (69%). Only 21% of small business owners are using business analytics or business intelligence software to measure their businesses. Despite the hype around AI, 61% of small business owners said their businesses are not ready, citing it is too complex for what they need.

While the economy is a concern, small business owners would still be likely to start a business in today's climate.

Not having enough time in the day (35%) and the impact of the economy (34%) are among the top business-related issues small business owners face. However, nearly 3 in 5 small business owners (58%) say they would still be likely to start a business in today's economic climate, and 75% of small business owners believe their city is a good place to start a business.

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