Effectiveness

Special Feature

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The U.S. Government's Small Business Act defines small business as "one that is independently owned and operated and which is not dominant in its field of operation." While the definition varies based on industry, SBA's Small Business Size Regulations has established basic size standards.

As of August 2008, these standards define small Certified Public Accountant offices as having revenues less than $8.5 million. Beyond this number, there are more than 20 million small companies with no employees. Many of these companies
are your clients. When looking at your own small business or the small business of your client, a fundamental question is this: Is it "small"'
because it has yet to grow bigger or was the business bigger and the economy has driven the business down? Whether you are on the way up or you have been downsizing, the need for technology tools remains.

Lots of things make a small business unique. One of the best things is the lack of committees that are required to make decisions about tools that can support and assist the enterprise. A corollary to this statement is that often the specific knowledge needed to make the decision is outside the company. That is absolutely okay. At no time should any size organization feel that the only right answers are within the enterprise. It is often called the fear of "not invented here" syndrome, or NIH. Where good ideas come from is less important than recognizing good ideas and acting upon them.

We all know that size is not always a fair measure of the effectiveness and

these categories — PC vs. Mac, Verizon vs. AT&T, Yahoo! vs. Google, etc.

This article will introduce a few tools that may not yet have crossed your radar screen. The diversity of these products reflects the many differences of what each of us may need. Some of these applications and services make our work more efficient; others are designed to specifically support what can help clients with their activities. In all cases, whether any of these tools can help you will be determined by your independent analysis. Most of the products have a free demo period so you can try before you buy.

Most successful entrepreneurs don't just take risks; they seize the opportunities to make things more efficient and do things more effectively. As you review these products, make sure you remain focused on your basic competencies and what you need to enhance them. If you primarily provide IT consulting, implementing tax-related applications may not be a value-add for your clients. The key is to acquire and build where you can and want to grow. Yes, sometimes thinking outside the box works very well. It is up to you to determine the balance between staying where you are and bringing in the new. Making the choice to be in any business, big or small, delivers you options about making more choices.

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Zip Notes

www.zipnotes.com

My handwriting has to be large to be read, even by me. Thus, the standard sticky note often provides too small a space for the note I want to attach to pages. One option is to go to the office store and buy three or four different size sticky notes and keep them all handy. However, along comes Zip Notes with the

idea that a sticky note can be small, medium or large without having to buy

IDFreeze Identity Protection from Trusted ID

www.trustedid.com

Too many people are getting their identity stolen. The cost of losing your identity is high — in time, dollars, aggravation, stress, and very often the collapse of your personal or business credit. The bad guys never care who they hurt, and their next victim is already in the pipeline. One of the ways to protect yourself, your family and your business is with IDFreeze.

The key is to prevent any-one from using your Social Security number for a credit application or from making purchases using your personal information. It's easy for any-one to get your name and home or business address. Specific numbers for Social Security need to be protected. Certainly, you should NEVER give the full number over any telephone or e-mail solicitation. The IDFreeze program detects any use of your Social Security number or even the attempted sale of your account numbers.

This company offers 24/7 on-call protection to answer identity theft questions and, if you become a victim of identity theft, provides resources to help you restore your identity. They support this with a $1,000,000 service warranty. For $8.25 per month per individual and $15.83 per month per family, the value of this service is to save the pain and aggravation of having to reclaim your identity.

Why is it a good idea? Bulletproof vests help save people's lives. Social Security numbers, once stolen, can disrupt one's life to the point that it will be like getting shot and being very hurt. Protection is unfortunately needed.

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filing of forms to the IRS and SSA, print all extra copies needed, and deliver receipts and confirmations to all parties. The cost is $4 to $5 per form. Importing directly from QuickBooks is an option.

Why is it a good idea? It's one more way to reduce paper and deliver more effective services to clients.

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Bill.com
www.bill.com

Bill.com is a web-based SaaS application that automates the business tasks surrounding bills being paid. This is an accounts payable system on steroids. Managing the paper — receiving the bill, processing it, getting the bill paid, and then doing the analysis for what has been paid — is a process every company must do. Typically, for a small business, this is one of the least managed areas within the organization.

Accountants often provide bookkeeping support for small businesses. Helping sort out the details surrounding accounts pay-able can be very helpful, especially because the work can be done online from any computer with Internet access. There is time to be saved and accuracy to be gained. Moreover, the data can be summarized and linked to the company's accounting system.

Why is it a good idea? Implementing business tools that help clients organize and manage their finances is always appreciated.

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SpeedTax MANAGER from SpeedTax

For sales tax to be computed accurately, it is a requirement to maintain knowledge about every taxing jurisdiction through-out the United States. Currently, there are more than 13,000 such taxing jurisdictions, which may appear to be too many. With a web-based application, the tax rates of the thousands of taxing authorities is maintained in one place by one group. In addition, any regulatory reporting required by individual locations is properly handled. This can further be complicated by nexus rules that assert that any business done in a state can subject that company to sales tax regulations. This is not an easy application to maintain. In addition, computing even local sales tax can be a significant expenditure of people time to get the job done right.

Why is it a good idea? Small businesses need help with sales tax compliance, as it is pure overhead. Programs like SpeedTax help avoid the risks surrounding the failure of a sales tax audit.

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Government Resources

www.SSA.gov & www.SBA.gov

The government is here and wants to help is one of the axioms that is often joked about. Indeed there are many things that the government does not do well. On the other hand, the websites for the Small Business Administration (SBA) and Social Security Administration (SSA) have lots of lists and tools that the small business can utilize for learning, planning, leading and more. Starting at the home page, there are extensive links and search capabilities to locate the information being sought. The content covers a range of data to assist start-ups with compliance for various regulatory requirements (health, Patriot Act, tax, et al) to ideas for green initiatives.

You'll find videos, audio podcasts, lists of local resources and a large

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Most Valuable Accountant Program from ADP

www.smallbusiness.adp.com/accountants/pdf/MVAProgram.pdf

ADP is the granddaddy of all service bureau operations dating back to the days before personal computing (that has to be old). ADP's MVA program is a set of products, tools and resources designed specifically for the accountant and their small business clients.

Through this program, you can gain access to a wide range of applications that can assist in the work that you do for your clients. This includes numerous business support services such as payroll processing, tax and compliance programs, worker's compensation programs, and employee management from the hiring to retirement to benefits program management. ADP also provides services for records retention management, tax compliance and research. These services can only be obtained through the accountant. Thus, your client cannot contact ADP and cut out the accountant.

Why is it a good idea? Using a service bureau means that you do not have any program installation and program maintenance to perform. You can be assured that all new regulations are implemented timely and well tested before you have to put them into use.

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Client Appointment Manager from Atlas Business Solutions

www.abs-usa.com

The first question to ask is, "Do you keep a schedule at all?"

A single-user license is $295; multi-user licenses start at $395 for a two-user license, and the cost per additional user is $100! You can try it before you buy.

Why is it a good idea? When you're busy, you need a good process that can keep you on target for meetings and in synch with your associates and clients.

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NETBOOKS

www.NetBooks.com

Small businesses have many of the same needs of larger concerns, but often have one person wear-ing the many hats of bookkeeping, marketing, sales, finance, etc. NetBooks was specifically designed for these "true small businesses," the five million owner-operated, self-funded companies in the United States, giving the entrepreneurs a more consolidated management system for running their businesses.

Offered as a software-as-a-service (web-based) system, NetBooks is a total business management and accounting program, providing bookkeeping, sales management, customer and vendor relationship management, inventory and production, shipping and financial reporting functions. Also, the hyper-secure web-based system offers users the ability to access company information and perform work from anywhere. The program was developed by one of the initial developers of QuickBooks, and supports both PCs and Macs.

Why is it a good idea? It provides true small businesses

negative contributor to poor cashflow is a growing base of late pay receivables. Well, what if placing a little sticker on your invoices could get those bills paid in half the time? Believe it or not, it can — if the sticker tells the recipient that you report to Dunn & Bradstreet (D&B). D&B, is one of the leading business information providers, and its reporting is often considered in business negotiations, much as credit scores are.

D&B also gives users of this system a free payment performance analysis, and free credit reports each month.

Why is it a good idea? By using D&B's Trade Exchange system, which integrates with QuickBooks, small businesses share their A/R data with D&B. The stickers on the invoices let business customers know that their payment behavior is being monitored by D&B and that their credit worthiness could be affected by their payment histories.

Technology