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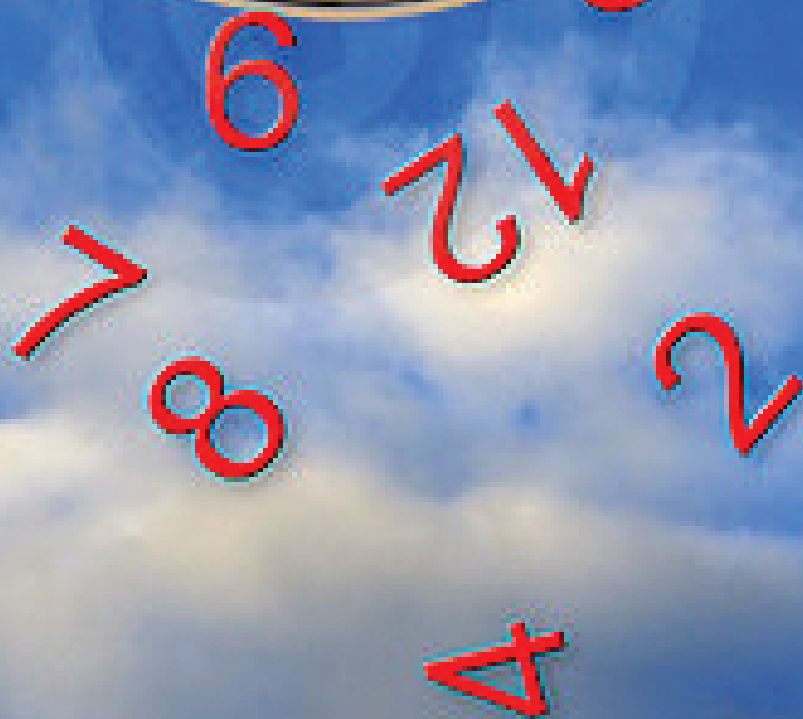
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ACCOUNTING & AUDIT

Ti-i-i-ime is on my side

While new technologies make us more productive giving us back time, the failure to adopt them can lead to missed opportunities.

Rene Lacerte • Sep. 17, 2013



From the Sept. 2013 issue.

Ti-i-i-me is on my side. Yes it is! Or is it? While new technologies make us more productive giving us back time, the failure to adopt them can lead to missed opportunities. So, when I started thinking about this column and learned that the September issue was about the cloud and what's next for small businesses in the cloud, this song popped into my head and seemed like a great way to make that point.

I am a big believer in efficiency. It is why I do what I do for a living. Creating solutions that make people more productive is the only way to give someone the precious gift of time. Giving it to businesses has been the focus of my career. I am not sure when I realized that the adage "Time is Money" is the backbone all small business productivity tools but it is. And it is especially apropos in the age of the cloud.

Here's why. Centralizing data is at the core of the cloud. With the data centralized, multiple applications can leverage the same data at the same time. This enables collaboration at the right level across people, systems and documents. That means mundane tasks can be eliminated, thereby creating efficiency. That results in less labor and less time and more money. That efficiency gives people time to think more strategically about their business. When that happens, you get even bigger returns on the time saved.

I believe that we are in the middle of a revolution of sorts when it comes to small business tools. It is hard to predict all the things that will happen but given the other topic in this issue, POS, let's look at one that is getting lots of attention: Credit Card Acceptance.

Since credit cards were invented businesses have had to go thru complex applications, buy expensive equipment, and spend lots of dollars on integrating their systems. That is all changing. Thanks to companies like Square, Shopkeep and Revel systems, it is getting much easier and cheaper to accept credit cards.

Square started the revolution by eliminating the need for expensive merchant equipment. All you needed was a dongle and a smart phone. Then they used the centralized data capabilities to approve applications real time. Now they have millions of merchants that have never ever experienced the hassle of setting up a merchant account. Imagine all the time saved and the creative thinking that their small businesses were able to pursue. Pretty cool!

While Square has focused on the sole proprietor, ShopKeep and Revel have focused more on the retail establishments using iPads as terminals. The graphical interface means no one has to learn to use the terminal, which saves time. The centralized data in the cloud though is more important in the long term. It allows businesses to seamlessly integrate their POS system with their accounting system. This is only possible because the accounting systems such as Intuit's QuickBooks, Netsuite, Intacct, and Xero, all have an open API architecture for sharing data to and fro. Again, the cloud is saving time allowing businesses to make more money.

Now here is the bad news. The cloud is new to all of us. That means changing a process and that means investing time to get started. This is the same challenge with anything new but can be especially challenging with cloud technology given the pace of change. Unfortunately, we all know that learning new things gets harder if you are entrenched in your old way of doing things. It helps to keep an open mind. So, oddly enough time work will work against you if you don't adapt to new technology.

If you wait to adopt the technology while some of your competitors jump right into it, they will continue to learn and try new things distancing themselves from you. We have lots of customers and the example that comes to mind is the owner of 35 fast food restaurants. When he started with us he only had 12 and his growth was stalled. He didn't have the capital nor did he want to expand his team to make growth happen. After he started using cloud solutions like Bill.com, he was able to grow and now has 35 restaurants. So the little bit of investment of his time, has paid off handsomely.

Now that you have taken the time to read this article, I hope it got you thinking about how time can be on your side. Oh, and for those regular readers, this isn't the first column that I have written using the Stones as inspiration and I doubt it will be the last!

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