

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

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Small Business Technology Survival Guide

The **Small Business Technology Survival Guide** is your guide to using technology strategically in your small and growing business.

With technology swirling all around you, advertisements being blasted through and at your eyes, buzz words being made up daily and dot.com this and dot.com that being created and failing weekly....YOUR small business needs a guide.

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Introduction

Technology and your small business. You can't live with out it. You can't live with it.

Back to the Basics

Technologies every small business should have

Back to the Future

An overview of 3 technologies that are important for growing your businesses

Creating a technology literate business

Technology's no good if no one knows how to use it

Leverage the Internet to grow your business

The Internet won't come to your business - you've got to bring your small biz to the 'net

Conclusion

Embrace technology. Don't run from it.

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Introduction

What is a growing business? When you first hear “growing business” you may think I mean that you’ll zoom from a one bedroom apartment with 10 staff to a multi-building, 2,000 staff enterprise.

That’s not what I mean by “growing business”.

A growing business is a business that is generating revenue and profit, has a steady and growing client base, maturing and professionally growing employees and an energized management team. (Note: you may *choose* to limit your client base to stay smaller and serve your customers better.)

There’s a lot of other things that I could throw in to define a “growing business” but what I want to stress is that you can be a “small” (in size) 10 person business for 10 years, making money and enjoying life - but still be a growing business.

What’s a small business? There’s all kind of definitions floating around about what a small business is. According to the National Federation of Independent Businesses, “More than half of the businesses with employees employ fewer than five people; Nearly 90 percent employ fewer than 20 workers.”

Common business operations such as finance, marketing, human resources and law are all enhanced with proper uses of technology. And this is what the Small Business Technology Survival Guide is all about. Pointing you to the tools you need to use technology to grow your business.

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Back to the Basics

Technologies every small business should have

There's a lot of technology being touted by technology vendors and the media that you would do just as well to stay away from. There's no argument that digital cameras, PDA's, portable scanners and other gadgets can aid in increasing productivity in your small business - but focus on the basics first. There's no use having a fancy Hand Spring Visor if you're using 1987 computers in your office with 5 1/4" floppy disk drives.

What I want to give you here is some guidance into the technologies that you should have, and ensure that your partners and staff are using them as efficiently as possible.

Email: Email is vital to increasing the communications capabilities of your small business. You may say, "well we have email". But if it's AOL, or you have only one email account for 4 employees, or email is only available from one PC, or maybe 6 PC's can only use one telephone line at a time...then you need to really "have email"

Make sure that each and every one of your employees, has access to their own email account, and can use it whenever they need to.

Email enables your small business to more easily connect with others across the street or around the world. Email will enable you to increase your network of small business professionals. Email will increase the efficiency and flexibility of your staff. Instead of saying, "call me when you fax it", or having to take the time to get your voice mail, take notes and call back the caller, to only have to leave your own voice mail for them and then have the process repeated by the other party....email cuts down on all of this.

If you don't have **your own domain name**, a "yourname@your-business-name.com", then you should. It's much more professional and memorable than joesfishshop@hotmail.com!

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Smallbiztechnology.com suggested email programs:

Qualcomm's Eudora (free) <http://www.eudora.com>

Microsoft's Outlook <http://www.microsoft.com/office/outlook/default.htm>

Email management appliance

INTEL's InBusiness Email Station http://www.intel.com/network/smallbiz/inbusiness_email.htm

Email tips and strategies

- Make sure you have a "signature" that goes out at the end of every email message. It should include your full name, business name, Web site, email, and if you choose tel/fax numbers and a short (2 - 3 line) blurb (or your tag line) about your business

- Use the power of filters in your email program. I use Eudora and have several filters set up for email I receive. All email newsletters go to one folder, information about various companies go into their respective folders, business development issues go into yet another folder and etc. Filters can be set to automatically move email to different folders or you can do it manually.

Get "Make Your Email Program Work for You"

<http://www.smallbiztechnology.com/ctrmj/emaitips.htm>

Internet access: Ensure all of your employees have access to not only email, but also access to the Internet in general - don't restrict it to email only. Like you, I would also be concerned about my employees wasting time playing games, chatting or doing other "non-business" activities with their Internet connection. However, overall you'll find it better to give your staff Internet access, monitor its use if you must (there are technologies that make this quite easy to do), and establish a clear corporate policy of how the Internet should be used.

It's better to have than not.

The wealth of information and collaboration that the Internet provides, makes it a must have small business tool.

Smallbiztechnology.com suggested Internet Service Providers:

Most Internet Service Providers have relatively decent service however

Earthlink <http://www.earthlink.com> is rated as one of the best

Find more ISP's with Cnet

http://webservices.cnet.com/html/aisles/Internet_Access.asp

Local Area Network (LAN): Some of you reading this, may wonder, "what small business does not have a LAN?" You'd be surprised. So, for those small businesses that have 2 or more computers, and do not

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

have them connected together in a network, do so. Creating a LAN is not very expensive and will enable your staff to share computing resources with one another. Be it sharing files between computers (no more floppy disk exchanges) or sharing one printer between 10 computers, and other things.

For a small 2 computer LAN, consider a simple "peer to peer" network that connects the computers to each other. For larger networks you should use a "client-server" system that consists of a server (main computer) with client computers connecting to the server computer.

For your client server LAN you may choose to buy a computer as to be use as your server and install a "network operating system" - NOS. The NOS will take care of network functions such as user authentication (password control for example), file and printer sharing and other tasks. Some NOS's have other services built into them such as email management, Web site creation tools, PC based faxing and etc while some NOS's do not.

Many vendors are making "turn key" all in one small business servers that contain a small (in size) computer server and bundle a network operating system with many several features as described above.

Get a full listing of these integrated servers at:

<http://www.smallbiztechnology.com/ctrmj/integratedsmallbizservers.htm>

Smallbiztechnology.com tips and recommendations for small business LANS

Creating a LAN for your small business requires several components:

Server computer (the main computer that other computers (clients) are connected to)

PC's from Compaq <http://www.compaq.com>, Dell <http://www.dell.com>, Hewlett-Packard <http://www.hp.com>, IBM <http://www.ibm.com>, Gateway <http://www.gateway.com>, Micron, <http://www.micron.com> or your local *trusted* computer consultant may build you one

Network Operating System (software residing on the server computer to control the network)

Novel Small Business Server Suite <http://www.novell.com>

Microsoft Small Business Server <http://www.microsoft.com/smallbusinessserver>

Hub (small box that connects the wires from your client computers to your server)

No particular preferences

Network Interface Card (NIC) (an expansion card used to connect your computer to a network)

No particular preferences

Ethernet cable (cables used to connect your PC's)

No particular preferences

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Backup and Anti-Virus protection solutions It's inevitable that one day you'll lose data. A proper back up plan and anti-virus program will prevent you from permanently losing data. Data can be lost through accidental deletion, a virus, intentional theft or corruption of data and other means.

In May 2000, I accidentally deleted a folder in my Eudora email program called....."Business Development". This one folder, which I had backed up, contained a year or two worth of contacts and information on individuals who were valuable (current, past and potential) partners to Smallbiztechnology.com .

How did I accidentally delete it? Well Norton Anti-Virus 2000, doing its job quite properly, had found a virus in the particular folder and since it couldn't fix the virus proceeded to quarantine the folder until I could examine it further. I went over to NAV to repair the infected file that NAV had quarantined, but for some reason NAV could not repair the file. So forgetting that the file " bizdev.mbx" was my Business Development folder in Eudora, I deleted the file!

After I hit delete, I realized I deleted the wrong file! (quarantined things are wisely NOT put in the recycle bin) and confidently went to restore the file (from the previous day's backup). HOWEVER, guess what....the previous days back up was also problematic. What I needed, thanks to the virus, was the Bizdev.mbx file from a few days ago.

However, lo and behold I had been doing a FULL and Daily backup of my data - since I was lazy. This meant that every day, Veritas <http://www.veritas.com> (a great backup program) over wrote my data cartridge a full back up of that day's information.

What I should have done and what you should do is the following: On Monday (or day 1) make a full backup, on day 2 back up only those files that have changed from the pervious day 1, on day 3 back up only those files that have changed from the previous day 2 and so on, until probably the 5th day, or the 30th or 10th day - depending on how paranoid you are.

Doing this will ensure that you have access to the freshest data for the longest period of time WHEN something goes wrong.

At a minimum, periodically back up crucial files to a floppy disk. The best method is a systematic back up of all data files (not programs - you can always restore those from the original CDs) to a backup tape or other device.

Smallbiztechnology.com suggested backup and virus programs

Backup software:

Veritas Backup Exec <http://www.veritas.com>

Computer Associates <http://www.ca.com>

Backup hardware:

you can back up your data of to different kinds of media (CDROM, tape and etc)

Hewlett-Packard <http://www.hp.com/storage/selection.html> has a nice tool to help you decide which method works for you.

Virus programs:

Symantec Anti Virus <http://www.symantec.com>

MacAfee Anti Virus <http://www.mcafee.com>

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Office productivity software is a must have for every small business. I guess you're saying, "I have Word Perfect, Word, Excel, PowerPoint or MS Access." Well that's good but only a start.

Having these programs and using them productively are two different things.

Make sure you regularly update your software applications. These updates, fixes and/or patches are usually freely distributed via the software vendor's WEB site and will help reduce any "bugs" or crashes that you may be experiencing.

Once you've got all your software in order it's very important to make sure that they are working together properly. It does no good to have the latest and greatest software if they're not working together.

Let's say you have 500 customer names in your database. If you have to print labels out, then stick them on envelopes, and then generate static, plain, boring, un-personalized letters you're not strategically using technology. You should be able to seamlessly integrate your database with your word processor. This will increase your productivity, save you time, and give you more flexibility. Not to mention making you look more professional to your clients and business associates.

In addition to the basic office software you may have, it's important to have a nice set of utilities you can rely on. Let's say someone sends you a Lotus Freelance Graphics presentation and all you have is Microsoft PowerPoint!! Now what? Get a free copy of the Freelance presentation viewer from Lotus (lotus.com)

What if you get a UUENCODED file (you know those long, funny looking, weird character emails) via email. How can you convert it to a format you can read?

Make sure you have a copy of a utility to decode these files. Check out Aladdin Systems products <http://www.aladdinsys.com/register/> to help with "weird" email attachments, zip files and etc.

Smallbiztechnology.com small business software recommendations

Basic Business Productivity Software Suites

Corel Word Perfect Suite <http://www.wordperfect.com>

Microsoft Office Suit <http://www.microsoft.com/office>

Lotus Smart Suite <http://www.lotus.com/smartsuite>

Download free, or trial software from

<http://www.download.com> or <http://www.shareware.com>

Online retailers:

PCMall.com, CDW.com, Staples.com, Officemax.com, Officedepot.com

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Back to the Future

An overview of 3 technologies that are important for growing businesses

Broadband - high speed Internet access

Many small businesses access the Internet via a regular, analog, 56K (or less) modem. If you're just downloading a few emails a day, then an analog modem is fine. If you're the cook, bottle washer and waiter in your small business then you may still be able to get by with a 56K modem. HOWEVER, accessing the Internet at faster speeds, 500kbps or more will greatly "speed" up your work and enable increased productivity while using the Internet. With a 56K modem - real time video/audio collaboration is not practical. However, with a high speed Internet connection, you won't have to rent a video conferencing room at Kinkos ever again. Those with slower modems cringe at downloading large (1MB or more) files and often hesitate to send large files. Broadband 'net access makes these fears a thing of the past.

I got some insight about broadband options, from Nick Braak, a New York City based DSL and Business Broadband connectivity consultant and business editor of the website DSLreports.com.

Firstly, I should point out the chances of a small business having all three as an option is somewhat remote, at least at this point in time. This may change in the future, though probably not this year.

Cable: *Shared architecture. Slows down as more people use it = unreliable throughput. Almost exclusively a residential option, not generally available for businesses. Most systems prohibit the use of servers on the system (web, mail etc.). Little official support for sharing or networks. No choice of ISP, the cable company is the only choice. Designed primarily for web surfing and broadband entertainment. Prone to security problems (though this is getting better).*

Wireless: *Virtually no availability right now. A more viable option next year, perhaps. Coverage and real world experiences unknown at this time. Will be offered mostly where other coverage is not possible. Smaller players may deploy in limited markets. Big companies will use as a fill in option.*

DSL: *Best choice for business. Non-shared by design. Systems generally delivers rated throughput. Allows wide choice of ISPs. Phone company DSL not good for business, systems designed to prevent and prohibit the running of servers and sharing, some auto disconnect after periods of inactivity. SDSL is the choice for business, ADSL is for home use and "surfing". SDSL has same upload and download speed, required for file transfers, web serving etc.*

In all cases THE CHOICE OF INTERNET PROVIDER IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE UNDERLYING TECHNOLOGY. Virtually all the problems and frustrations that users experience are with the service aspect of the providers. Business users should do their homework and not be swayed by promotional offers, unrealistic claims or slick marketing. Don't get locked in to a contract of more than a year, the landscape is sure to change and all of these technologies should be viewed as interim solutions.

NOTE: Even if you have a broad band connection, make sure you retain a regular modem and Internet Service Provider's services in the event your broadband connection does not work!

Hosted applications - software via the Internet

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Instead of purchasing the latest copy of a human resource application on a CDROM, then 30 days later downloading from the software vendor a software patch to fix some problem, then 1 day later you call the software vendor, your PC vendor, and/or your VAR to try to fix the problem - you can use a hosted application.

I'm sure you've seen cryptic errors like this before:

"DLL conflict at memory space number XV00000078H1 in module humanresapp.vxd. System resource conflict at X822:00dh"

Hosted applications make these problems a thing of the past. Instead of installing software on your local PC and possibly experiencing all or some of the problems mentioned above, you just go the hosted application on the WEB (<http://www.elite.com> for example), logon and begin working. The application and user data are securely stored on the servers of the application service provider (ASP) .

Hosted applications are accessed via your Web browser. It's that easy. Just type www.the-hosted-applicaiton-Web-Address.com and your all set.

I would not suggest you throw away all your programs and start using hosted applications. The market is just starting up, so there will be various problems as it matures. However, in the coming months more and more programs will be available online.

Smallbiztechnology.com hosted application resources

<http://www.apps.com>

<http://www.aspnews.com>

<http://www.aspisland.com>

<http://www.aspreview.com>

<http://www.aspstreet.com>

<http://www.webharbor.com>

Mobile computing - computing solutions so your office is always with you

The world of mobile computing may be one of the most complex and difficult to understand environments. You've got to not only figure out how to have access to your data while away from the office, but how to do it properly. It makes no sense to edit a client proposal in Virginia, only to not be able to properly distribute it to your staff in your main Miami office when finalized!

Cellular phones are no longer just devices for the spoken word. Now you can get email, and other information. While some devices have only access to certain custom content, other phones allow full access to the World Wide Web

Pagers are also maturing and some models have more than just 2 buttons and a screen. My RIM Interactive Pager has a QWERTY keyboard, 6 line screen, enables me to send email, access Web sites and more.

Of course hand held personal computers and digital assistants are more than just glorified organizers. The Palm (Palm Pilot and Handspring Visor), Psion and Windows CE (Pocket PC) PDA's are increasing in functionality and options, enabling a wider range of applications, data access, and expandability.

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Notebook computers are faster, lighter and more powerful than ever before. With a docking station, they can often easily replace a desktop computer!

Your wireless solution should enable you to productively work away from your office, and access necessary information that's in your office, and collaborate with your employees and partners.

There's several Web based collaboration tools that can help you establish a "virtual office". Check out www.hotoffice.com, www.agillion.com, and www.intranets.com

Smallbiztechnology.com mobile computing solutions resources

<http://www.mobilecomputing.com>

<http://www.mobileinfo.com>

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Creating a technology literate business

Technology's no good if no one knows how to use it

All of this technology is not worth 2 hills of beans if your employees are frustrated and scared to use new technology. Don't forget your partners and customers. If you've thrown out your fax machine and only use email. If your customers and partners have thrown out their email and only use fax machines....you are in for a major problem.

Explain to your partners, customers and employees the benefits of embracing technology. Show them how technology is making you more productive.

Many people, especially your staff may be scared that they'll lose their job if they can't adapt to new technology. They may be scared that technology will replace what they used to do, or that they won't be able to use the technology that you want them to. Help them understand that you are there to help them and you want them to succeed, because if they succeed then you will too. (Of course if after a few months, they're just NOT GETTING IT.....you may have to let them go or assign them to other tasks)

There's several options you can use to train your employees:

A) Self study. You throw me a book and I'll learn on my own as I go along. Some people can learn this way but some can't.

B) On site training. This method is kind of expensive, however, you may need to bring the education to your office as time or other circumstances prevent the employee from going to the education

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

C) Off site training. A cheaper alternative to point on site training is to have your employees take classes in an off-site training facility. Here they can "get away" from the office, concentrate on the task at hand and take advantage of the latest training resources in the facility

D) Computer or web based training is another alternative, but is similar to self study type training, in my opinion. With PC based training employees can learn at their own pace, in their own time and in their own privacy.

It may not hurt to tie their training in to some incentive based pay or perks!

Smallbiztechnology.com recommended solutions

There's thousands of training solutions that small businesses can take advantage of so just hope over to Yahoo and check out their computer training category:

http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Business_to_Business/Computers/Industry_Information/Training/

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Leverage the Internet to grow your business

It's no longer a fad.

There's so many dimensions, twists and turns to this topic that I could not begin to share them all with you. However, over the years, I've realized that there's 2 ways to think. A 'net centric point of view, or a non 'net centric point of view.

For example, in the old days, way back in the 1990's when you wanted a document from the government, some annual report from a company, information about traveling, or other information - the first place you would turn to was the yellow pages or call directory assistance to find the phone number of the company or agency responsible for the information you needed.

However in the year 2000 when almost every company worth its salt has a Web page and email address, the 'net centric action would be to visit the company or agency's Web site and retrieve the information.

Small business Web site stages

- "Brochure-ware" web site: very simple, basic company information
- Feature rich (chat, discussion board search engine, etc), advanced web site: informative, interactive enables you to push information out and have Web visitors to send you information
- E-Commerce enabled Web site: this Web site enables customers to purchase products on your Web site

Note: Within these categories there's varying levels of advancement. For example, some "brochure-ware" Web sites may be one page, others may be 10 pages.

There's several aspects to an E-Commerce Web site also. Fulfillment of the product(s) may be done manually with you printing out orders and manually entering them into your inventory and financial systems. Or the entire process, a TRUE e-business, may be fully automated and seamlessly integrated into your back office functions.

How do you create a Web site:

- *hire a company or someone* to build it for you (expensive, but the only route to go if you plan to create a feature rich and professional Web site)
- use an *online building tool* (from free on up; a good option to start out with, but as you grow and want extra functionality you'll need to use an alternative solution)
- purchase a *software program* that you can use to build your Web site (if you're willing to learn and use the program, using a robust Web building program can give you a very good Web site at little cost)

When thinking of **getting information to your customers**, think 'net centric. Instead of faxing or mailing them information - as much as possible push the information to them via email or via your WEB site.

Remember, because it's on your WEB site does not mean it has to be publicly accessible. The information can be password protected and encrypted.

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Instead of answering standard questions to new customers or partners over and over again, why not create an email address that automatically responds with the information they need. If several times a day people are calling to ask for your street address and driving directions. Why not create an email address called address@yourcompany.com. Each time someone needs your address, they can email "address@yourcompany.com" address and the information can be emailed to them in seconds.

Another trait of a 'net centric business is that **information is shared** as much as possible. The Internet enables rivers of information to flow between employees, customers, and partners. Instead of the weekly sales report residing only on one computer, or in one office. Instead of faxing or mailing (or even emailing) these reports to the appropriate persons, an Intranet (an internal "Internet" not accessible to the public) can enable multiple parties to collaborate and use the information seamlessly.

The 'net is also an ideal place for **business and personal networking**. Via a myriad of discussion lists and discussion boards on just about any topic, you can find like minded small businesses that can help you and share their experiences with you and you with them. From personal experience, I've also been amazed at the deals one can make with others, often site unseen, in using the Internet.

See email deals <http://www.smallbiztechnology.com/ctrmj/emaildeals.htm>

You may be chatting away in the "North Carolina, small medical practice discussion board" on some WEB site and explain that you want to know the best way to maximize space for your medical business. Lo and behold an architect in North Carolina may see

your post and offer to help you in exchange for some discounted medical service for his own staff.

This is the power of the 'net - finding other people to do business with, make deals with or just exchange information - all with the purpose of mutually growing your business.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention something about **using the Internet to advertise** your business. I'll be very brief as there are many resources available for you to gain broader and more detailed insight into this topic.

There's many WEB sites and email discussion lists catering to thousands of different audiences, in every aspect of life and culture.

Internet advertising is often cheaper than traditional advertising such as direct mail, radio, TV and print. In addition advertising on the Internet enables you to more accurately target your advertising, measure its results and track its effectiveness.

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Smallbiztechnology.com Internet Resources

First check out <http://www.website101.com> then....

Internet Web site/ebusiness and Advertising Resources

Discussion lists:

I-Sales <http://www.audette.com>

Online Advertising <http://www.o-a.com>

I-Advertising <http://www.i-advertising.com>

Information

<http://www.WilsonWeb.com>

<http://www.clickz.com>

<http://www.ibm.com/e-business/>

<http://www.microsoft.com/biz/solutions/ecomm/default.asp>

<http://www.iab.net>

Creating your Web site

Online Web creation tools

<http://www.bcentral.com>

<http://www.bigstep.com>

<http://www.bizblast.com>

http://mypage-products.ihost.com/usa/en_US/ (IBM Home Page Creator)

Web Site Creation Programs

Microsoft Front Page <http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage>

Sausage Software HotDog <http://www.sausage.com>

List of Web site Creation Programs (or HTML editors)

http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Business_to_Business/Computers/Software/Internet/World_Wide_Web/HTML_Editors/MS_Windows/

List of online Web building tools at Yahoo:

http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Business_to_Business/Communications_and_Networking/Internet_and_World_Wide_Web/Online_Store_Builders/

Personal and business networking and development

<http://www.Topica.com> - thousands of discussion lists and ezines

<http://www.OneList.com> - thousands of discussion lists and ezines

<http://www.frankelbiz.com> - small biz development

<http://www.fastcompany.com/cof/> - Fast Company's subscriber "support" group

Purchasing Technology

So you want technology solutions but how do you get them?

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

This final part of the Small Business Technology Kit, I want to give you some guidance on how to purchase computer technology products.

There's several venues you can choose:

- 1) A computer consultant/VAR
- 2) Via an online retailer/1-800 number/catalogue
- 3) You can walk into a computer store and buy your PC

Computer Consultant

If you need a complete and robust technology solution - a computer consultant or value added reseller (VAR) is who you want. Some 800 number retailers or computer stores offer small business installation and support also - but these are often outsourced to a local VAR in any case.

A good VAR is crucial for any growing small business and should be highlighted on your Rolodex or PDA. You are not expected to be a technological expert but having a trusted and experienced consultant available to you will be indispensable to your small business' growth.

Online retailer/1-800 number/catalogue

I enjoy purchasing computer products via this method. However, I know exactly what I want and usually know a sufficient amount about the product I'm purchasing before I make the final purchase.

Buying technology products online gives you a much wider selection of products than you'll find in a physical store and at times the products can be cheaper.

Online you can more easily compare prices across a wide range of "e-stores" all at one.

The greatest disadvantage of purchasing online is that if something goes wrong with your purchase, and you have to return it, doing so can be quite a hassle. You've got to pack the product up, ship it to the e-tailer, hope they get it, and wait for the replacement product.

Some traditional retailers like Staples or OfficeMax sell online and offline and may allow you to return products purchase online, offline.

Traditional retailer

Nothing can beat the experience of walking into the store with money and exchanging it for something that you can actually see, touch and carry out.

If you are not sure what you want and are not familiar with computer technology it's probably best to get what you need from a local, brick 'n' mortar retailer.

If something goes wrong at least you can just hop into the car or train and return the product - or have someone come and fix it. If something goes wrong with your online retailer purchased item, the hassle of sending it back is enough to ruin your day.

Most major computer brands offer onsite support for their products, but sometimes getting the help you need can be a trying experience, fraught with delays.

The assistance rendered at traditional retailers as with online retailers varies from person to person.

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Some of the sales staff may moonlight as computer consultants and be able to expertly guide you into the right technology purchase. Others may be students majoring in philosophy who know nothing about technology other than what a CD-ROM looks like.

Smallbiztechnology.com buying technology recommended resources

Finding a consultant TIP: When searching for a consultant find out what their expertise is. Just because she can design Web pages does not mean she can install networks. Because he can design a Web page does not mean he can develop an e-commerce solution. See their previous work, get references and ask friends for suggestions

Microsoft solution providers

<http://mcspreferal.microsoft.com/default.asp?menupath=http://www.microsoft.com/biz/mcspreferal/>

Hewlett-Packard consultants

<http://www.hp.com/cgi-bin/usa/locator.pl>

Online / 800 No. retailers

CDW 800.840.4239 <http://www.cdw.com>

PC Mall 800.607.3282 <http://www.pcmall.com>

Walk in "brick" retailers

CompUSA <http://www.compusa.com> 800-8-Direct

Radio Shack <http://www.radioshack.com>

Staples <http://www.staples.com> 800.333.3330

Office Max <http://www.officemax.com>

Circuit City <http://www.circuitcity.com>

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

Conclusion

Excellent technology integration and development will propel your business forward and enable you to advance in the new economy.

You may be a box manufacturer in Tennessee. You may be a high powered tax lawyer in Manhattan. Maybe you have a small marketing company you run out of your Idaho home. You could be in Australia designing advertising for some local clients. Maybe Tokyo is your home and you have a local restaurant that you want to expand. London may be cold, but your factory is humming with excitement. Wherever your small business is located at - embrace technology don't run from it.

Remember - technology vendors need to make money, just like you do, so they are going to send a steady stream of advertising at you wanting you to spend money on as much technology as possible. You may hear about this business and that business becoming an "e-business" and all sorts of other nice sounding things.

However, slow down (not too much though), take a deep breath and analyze what technology will provide the solution and efficiency that are required for YOUR small business.

You may not even know what technology solutions are available to you. Ask your consultant to perform a technology audit for your small business. This audit should give you an overview of ways technology can help improve various aspects of your small business.

Make an informed decision - Read (PC World (pcworld.com), Smart Business (smartbusinessmag.com), and Small Business Computing, Home Office Computing (smalloffice.com) are great places to start. **Talk** with your fellow small business colleagues and friends. **Consult with** an experienced small business consultant.

You may decide to implement a technology solution, step by step, piece by piece. Or you may choose to "bite the bullet" and implement a drastic technology upgrade to your small business. **Whichever solution you decide on, it's important that you wisely embrace technology, don't run from it.**

Small Business Technology Survival Guide

I hope the **Small Business Technology Survival Guide** has been of some help to you.

Was it?

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