US Small Business Administration Learning Center

Office of Entrepreneurship Education

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Business Technology Simplified Online Course

Transcript Full

Slide i– Title Slide

Business Technology Simplified

Module 1: Using Technology to Simplify the Day-to-Day

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Slide ii– Copyright and Co-sponsorship statement

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Slide 1 – Business Technology Simplified: Module I

Using Technology to Simplify the Day-to-Day

Welcome to "Using Technology to Simplify the Day-to-Day."

This is the first of three modules in the *Business Technology Simplified* online course, adapted from the book published by Microsoft Small Business and the US Small Business Administration's Office of Entrepreneurship Education.

To download the free eBook, click on the link at the bottom of your screen.

Users can receive an SBA Certificate of Completion after finishing all three modules.

In this module, we will cover some basic technology tools to help you run your business more efficiently.

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Slide 2 – Module Outline

This module consists of three main sections:

Benefitting from Current Desktop Technology
Using Technology to Save You Time, and
Upgrading Your Accounting Practices

Use the navigation pane on the left to navigate throughout the module, or to return to this page.

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Slide 3 – Benefitting from Current Desktop Technology

Are you spending too much time on administrative tasks? Do you want to move on from paper-and-pen processes to a computer but you're not sure where to start? Are you afraid that you'll have to become a geek or hire expensive information technology (or IT) resources?

In this section, we will discuss some basic desktop tools and technology that will help you streamline everyday processes for your business.

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Slide 4 – Small Business Example

After earning a degree in cosmetology, Lisa Esposito opened Avenue You, a specialty boutique offering exclusive beauty products.

Lisa had grown up watching her father establish a thriving chain of retail beauty stores. With Avenue You, Lisa was continuing the family's line of business, while redefining it for the modern marketplace. Avenue You became a successful retail boutique.

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Slide 5 – A Modern Concept, Run the Old-Fashioned Way

Although Lisa's business was current, her business practices were anything but. Lisa rang up sales on an old-fashioned cash register and used handwritten receipts. She tallied the daily sales in a paper notebook and manually entered the numbers into her paper-based accounting system.

The process was inefficient and error prone, making sales and inventory hard to track. Lisa also frequently lost notes about customer requests and supplier issues.

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Slide 6 – A Little Goes a Long Way

Lisa solved these issues when she joined forces with her younger brother, Brian.

Though not a technology expert, Brian had enough experience with computers to appreciate the potential of technology to drastically improve business efficiency. But without the budget to hire an IT staff, Brian knew that he needed to find simple, straightforward systems that he could implement and manage himself.

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Slide 7 – Choosing the Right Technology for Your Business

If you don't have a background in IT, don't worry. You're not alone. Even without a robust staff of dedicated IT professionals, you can implement the right technology that will not only help you run your business more easily but also be remarkably easy to install and use.

At its simplest, IT means a personal computer (PC) with a basic desktop made up of a few pieces of core software:

Desktop operating system. The desktop operating system (such as Microsoft® Windows® or Apple Mac OS X) is the foundation for how you use a computer. It lets you organize files, control your hardware (such as your mouse, keyboard, and printer), and run software programs.
Office (or productivity) tools. Office tools (such as Microsoft Office, OpenOffice.org, and Google Docs) include a range of programs that at the most basic level let you manage your e-mail, contacts, and calendar and work with documents, presentations, and spreadsheets. They are typically available as a suite of tools. Some even include basic programs for databases, digital notebooks, graphics, and even desktop publishing to create your own marketing brochures and other graphical documents.
Browser. A browser is your window to the World Wide Web, enabling you to visit Internet sites, view other online content (such as images and videos), and access and use Web-based services. Common examples include Microsoft Internet Explorer®, Mozilla Firefox, and Apple Safari.
Security software. For any computer that will connect to the Internet, download e-mail, or otherwise exchange files with other computers, security software is essential to help protect it from malicious software (or "malware," including viruses, worms, and Trojan horses), hackers, and other threats. Your desktop operating system should include some built-in security features, such as a firewall and spyware protection (spyware software installs itself on your computer and collects personal information about you without your knowledge). Security software helps protect against malware that gets past your firewall—for example, malicious e-mail attachments or downloads that trick you into believing they are harmless.

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Brian & Lisa's Technology Solution

Let's see how Brian and Lisa used technology to maximize their business's efficiency.

They installed two computers, one in their retail shop and one in their main office, complete with:

Desktop operating system. Brian chose a current operating system for fast, reliable performance and a simpler experience. An updated operating system also protects their systems against viruses, malware, and hackers.
Security software. Brian supplemented the built-in protection of his operating system with security software that offers comprehensive malware protection with automatic updates to keep the software current, leaving him confident in the security of his data and systems.
Office productivity tools. Brian and Lisa's office productivity tools have become the core tools that they use to manage their business. With the e-mail program, they can process orders efficiently and easily keep in touch with customers and suppliers. Spreadsheet software lets

them track daily sales, monitor their inventory, and even sync with shipping vendors to eliminate the need to manually type addresses. They use the writing and presentation programs to build documents and presentations that look professional and help them share information—such as updates on new products or store processes—with customers, vendors, and manufacturers.

Since adding the new equipment, Lisa has seen her days run more smoothly and her staff's operation become "exponentially more efficient." They save upwards of 70 hours per week on day-to-day tasks. This has helped Lisa focus more of her time on giving customers the personal attention that keeps them coming into the store.

Brian and Lisa have built a much more efficient model for their business that not only gives them more time with their customers, but also helps them deliver better service.

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Using Current, Standardized Technology

By just implementing some simple and easy-to-use IT equipment and tools, you can transform your productivity, doing away with many manual processes and gaining greater efficiency and reliability as a result.

Remember to keep your systems up to date. The most recent operating systems provide faster and more reliable performance—not to mention better power management options, minimizing the environmental impact of your technology.

Plus, when you start with the most recent software available, if you decide to add new software a few months or a year down the road, you'll have the best odds that it will work well with your system.

As an added measure, remember to standardize the technology you use throughout your business. This will make maintaining current systems, as well as installing new ones, noticeably more efficient. What's more, standardizing makes it easier for employees to share files, since they will all be using the same software versions.

For more information on the benefits of standardizing your business's technology, contact your local SBA office for a copy of the printed version of *Business Technology Simplified*. Or, to download the free eBook, click on the link at the bottom of your screen.

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Using Technology to Save You Time

Are you finding that basic common tasks are taking up too much of your day? Do you need to gain back time to focus on your business?

In this section, we will discuss tips you can incorporate to save time and make your use of technology more efficient.
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The Need to Find Information Easily

Searching for information is one of the biggest time wasters that businesses face today. Consider how much it will cost your business if an employee spends just one hour of her day having to search and gather the information that she needs to do her job. Now, think of the yearly cost? Now imagine how quickly that cost can balloon for every other employee who may face the same issue.

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Using Shortcuts to Find Your Files

A benefit to using an updated desktop operating system is the improved built-in features it will typically offer for finding, managing, and accessing files. Here are some shortcuts that a modern operating system could provide to help you find and access the files you need more quickly:

Built-in desktop search. This feature allows you to search for items on your computer, within your e-mail, and even across your network (depending on the configuration), all from a single search box.
List of recently used files. By maintaining a list of recently used files, your operating system can give you quick access to files that you're currently working on, without needing to navigate through multiple folders and subfolders to find them each time.
File preview options. When you're sifting through multiple files with similar names, this feature helps by giving you a quick glance at what is in each file—without having to open it. This way, you can just scroll through the files until you find the right one.
Assigning files to multiple collections. This feature solves the problem of having one file that is related to more than one folder on your computer. For example, you could create a collection for each supplier you deal with and a collection for your financial records. You could then assign files that have billing information from your suppliers to both the appropriate supplier collection and the financial records collection. This lets you access the billing information through either collection, without having to make multiple copies.

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Using an Integrated Office Productivity Suite with a Consistent Interface

The chief concern most of us have for introducing new software tools into our daily work is the steep learning curve. What's more, it can be very frustrating to spend precious time and money to learn one program and then encounter needs that go beyond that program's features.

Using an **integrated office productivity suite that offers a similar interface across programs** can significantly decrease the training cost. When you begin working with a new program included within the suite, you will be able to pick it up quickly thanks to familiar menus, toolbars, keyboard shortcuts, and more.

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Moving Content Between Programs in an Integrated Suite

A truly integrated office productivity suite will give you the added benefit of **easily moving information and content between programs**. For example, say you've used your spreadsheet software to build a chart that shows your sales performance over the last quarter. Rather than using the spreadsheet when you share this chart with your investors, you might want to insert it into your quarterly update on the business. Being able to quickly insert the chart into the document without losing your formatting will save you a lot of effort. But what happens if you find a mistake in the numbers and you need to change the chart? Sure, you could copy the chart over again once you've made the change in the spreadsheet. Even better, though, would be if the chart in your document would automatically update. True integration among productivity tools makes this kind of shortcut possible.

For more information on what current operating systems and office productivity suites can do to save you time, contact your local SBA office for a copy of the printed version of *Business Technology Simplified*. Or, to download the free eBook, click on the link at the bottom of your screen.

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Upgrading Your Accounting Practices

Are you spending too much time preparing invoices and managing your bookkeeping?

When business is going well, the downside is you will spend more and more of your time preparing invoices and managing your books. It won't be long before you outgrow manual accounting procedures.

In this section, we will describe the benefits of using a business accounting program.

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Simplifying Bookkeeping with a Business Accounting Program

A basic small business accounting program enables you to **track your sales**, **expenses**, and **customers** and even **generate invoices** and **pay bills** with very little effort. Depending on the program, you may also get additional capabilities that let you set up **automatic billing** and **track vendor and employee information**.

Whichever program you choose, you should save time both day-to-day and at tax time, because the program will organize all of your business's financial information in a single place.

Keep in mind that you don't need to be an expert in accounting to work with a good business accounting program. These programs simply take the bookkeeping essentials that you already know from running your business—such as checks, invoices, and sales receipts—and convert them into digital format.

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Features of Business Accounting Programs

Some of the best features that business accounting programs provide are:

Ability to import data. Programs that let you import your data can save you a lot of time by letting you enter the information once but use it across different programs.
Templates for professional-looking invoices and forms. Built-in templates can help you present a professional image with your invoices, statements, and other forms without spending time designing them yourself.
Ability to re-use information. Once you've entered a customer's details or created an estimate, you shouldn't have to re-enter that information the next time you want to use it. Programs that let you retrieve information you've already used will save you from time-consuming double entry.
Ability to track project expenses. By letting you record your time, mileage, and other related project expenses, accounting programs can make it much easier to produce accurate invoices without a lot of hassle and without the risk that you'll overlook any details.
Instant business reports. Accounting programs with built-in reporting capabilities give you business insights without manual calculations. Typical reports include profit and loss, sales, and expense statements for periods that you specify, as well as summaries of unpaid invoices.

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Features of Business Accounting Programs

Support for business planning. Accounting programs that include options for quickly building a business plan and forecasting your sales and expenses for the coming year can be a valuable tool for business planning.

Inventory management. With programs that help you track your inventory and set trigger points for reordering new merchandise and/or supplies, you can reduce the risk of delays in meeting customer requests.

Payroll management. With features that automatically manage payroll and associated taxes, your accounting program can help you keep your payroll on track without taking up a lot of your time.

Simplified tax reporting. Most business accounting programs let you simply generate a tax summary for your accountant, saving you valuable time and often—by generating highly detailed tax reports—saving you money on year-end accountant fees.

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Conclusion

While a computer with some basic desktop software will go a long way toward making your business more efficient, your options don't end there. Today's technology offers a number of simple solutions that can help you take your business further.

In this module, we discussed basic desktop tools, the benefits of time-saving technology, and business accounting programs, all of which help you run your business more smoothly, more efficiently, and more accurately. Furthermore, these technologies will free up valuable time, helping you focus on growing your business.

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Congratulations!

Congratulations on completing "Using Technology to Simplify the Day-to-Day"!

Remember, this was one of the three modules within the *Business Technology Simplified* series. The other, upcoming modules within this series are:

"Running Your Business on Your Own Terms"
"Finding and Managing Customers"

Thank you for taking the time to view this module. We hope you find great satisfaction and added success in implementing technology to help your business reach its goals.

Click the appropriate link to advance to the next module or exit the course.