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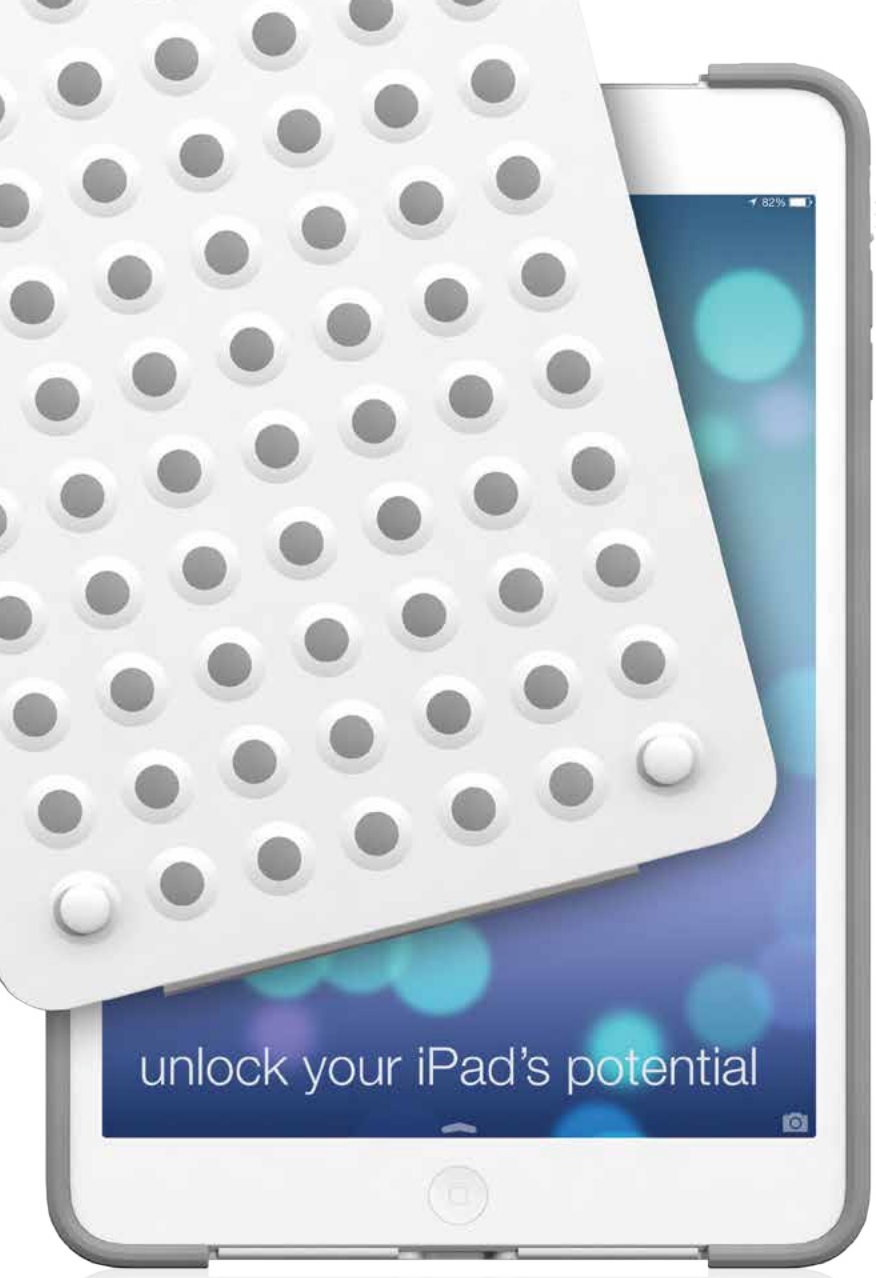

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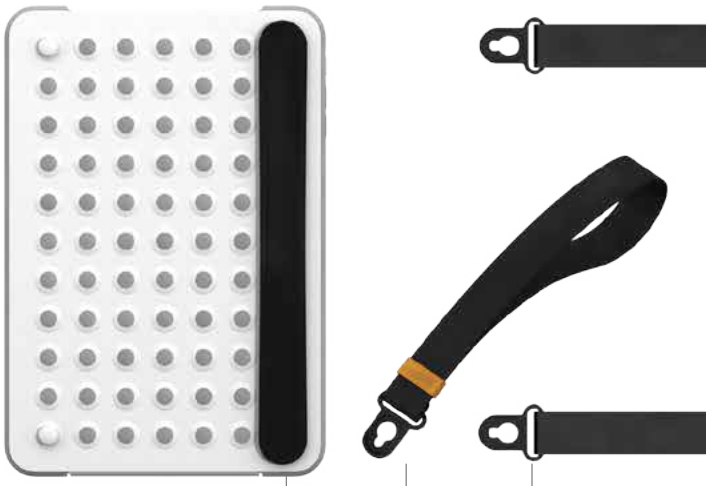

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Carmine De Santo
publisher@ibusinessmag.com
Publisher

Alex De Santo
Editor@ibusinessmag.com
Senior Editor

Ele Mansouri
assistant@ibusinessmag.com
Executive Assistant

JC Seymour
chiefeditor@ibusinessmag.com
Editor-In-Chief

Zoi Sotirakos
production@ibusinessmag.com
Production Manager

Giuliano Rosati
graphics@ibusinessmag.com
Creative Director

Jose Seymour
pr@ibusinessmag.com
Press Releases & Public Relations

Joe Galati
reviews@ibusinessmag.com
Product Review Specialist

Billy Trimble
info@inrich.me
Product Review Specialist

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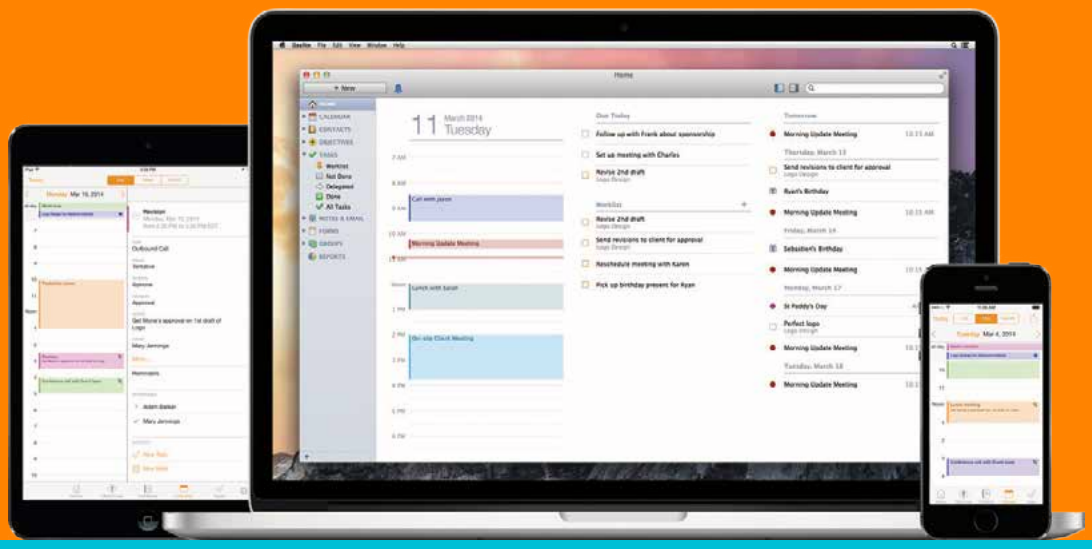

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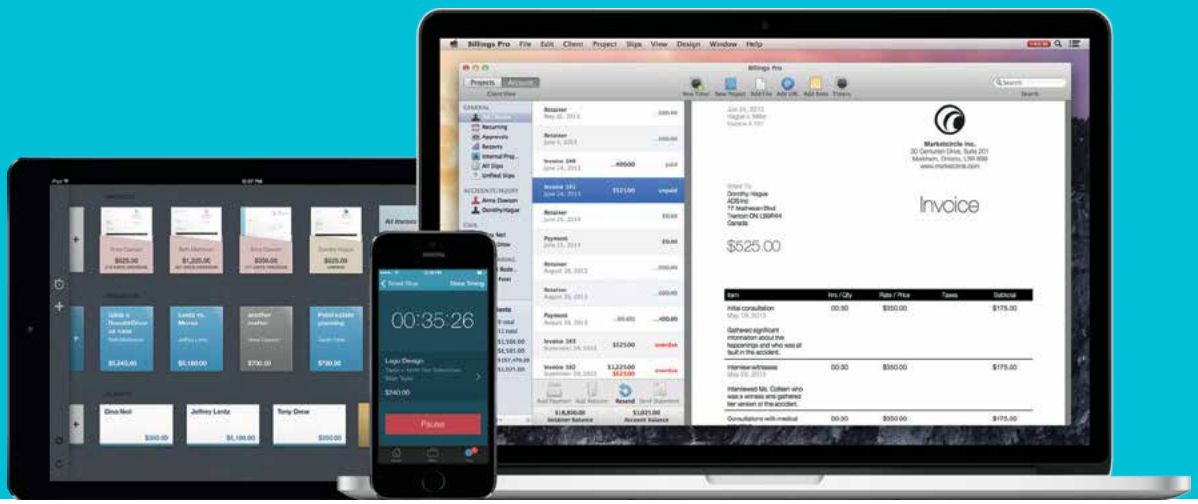

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The Boardroom Paper Chase

Alistair Esam

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Alister Esam qualified as an Actuary in 1997. He spent ten years with Towers Perrin, consulting around UK and international pension arrangements and working with schemes to manage risk and improve governance practices.

In 2001 he helped establish an administration firm specialising in outsourced administration for larger pension schemes, growing the business from four people to 60 over the course of three years.

Within both these environments Alister observed the need to improve professionalism of boards in both small and large schemes, so in 2004 he established eShare, to coincide with the establishment of a new UK pensions regulator, and to aid better governance of boards. eShare now provides Governance and Board Portal software to over 400 clients across the UK and overseas; predominantly in the Pensions industry but also across Healthcare, Housing, Corporate and Finance.

As the CEO, Alister has continued to grow the business year on year. He now spends most of his time travelling the globe working to improve governance in Australia, Africa, Central Europe and North America giving him a uniquely international angle on governance.

The quarterly board meeting may be one of the fundamental aspects of traditional corporate structure. But it is a structure that has remained completely unchanged, still relying, in the majority of cases, on hundreds of pages of paper presented and collated up to several weeks before the meeting. In an era of rapid global business with short lived opportunities and the need for immediate problem resolution, just how effective is this model today? How many critical decisions are shelved 'for the next meeting' due to lack of information? And how much time does any member spend considering these critical issues in between meetings?

This 'minute and forget' approach is simply no longer acceptable. Not only does the board need to improve its decision making during meetings, but members need to interact and engage with the business far more effectively throughout the year. And that requires a better way of information sharing than the traditional volumous paper board pack. In an era of smart devices, there is no excuse for such outdated paper based processes. Alister Esam, Managing Director, eShare outlines the value of online information and meeting management, with integrated decision making and risk assessment, in transforming the way the board interacts, both during and between quarterly meetings.

Board Bottleneck

Over the past decade, business intelligence and anytime, anywhere access to information has transformed the speed of decision making across every aspect of the business. Employees are expected to respond quickly to new opportunities, rapidly flag potential problems and, essentially, take every possible step to enable business agility. And yet with an estimated 75% of company boards still reliant upon paper based documentation, it is becoming clear that the decision making bottleneck is now at the top of the business.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that 95% of those organisations still adhering to the traditional 250 to 500 paper board pack have not yet made attempts to update this model. But why? Paper is inefficient and inconvenient. Managing paper based resources is time consuming. How much time is wasted in board meetings simply verifying the information to hand – rather than actually discussing and taking essential strategic decisions? Furthermore, how much time is wasted by the secretariat – including the highly responsible Company Secretary – undertaking mundane print, copy and collate tasks before each meeting?

This model is not only flawed, it is massively outdated. Whether a company operates a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) or Choose Your Own Device (CYOD) policy, the vast majority of senior workers now routinely use some form of mobile device to access corporate information when travelling, at home and, increasingly, in the office. There is simply no reason – and certainly no justification – for this inefficient approach.

PDF distraction

Of course a few organisations have attempted to remove the paper burden by opting for electronic documents transmission, emailing directors pdfs of the board papers. But this model is actually a retrograde step. Not only is there no version control, creating the risk of more confusion during the meeting, but board members are forced to download various third party annotative tools in order to make comments on the papers - comments which cannot be easily shared. The result is nothing more than a poor imitation of the traditional paper based process – and certainly no improvement in decision making activity.

The 'google' of board packs

Instead organisations need to exploit targeted meeting tools that provide a fast, consistent way of providing that essential board pack. A way that enables individual board members to access board papers, securely and efficiently from a tablet, at any time and delivers that information in a structured, ordered format. With multiple options that include both on-premise and cloud based models that enable the secretariat to store one version of the board pack – securely, in facilities that are compliant with local data regulations – that can be accessed by board members via any device, organisations can achieve significant benefits in line with their corporate IT data strategy.

In addition to providing board members with the chance to access information at any time, the key benefit comes from exploiting technology to enhance the way information is presented and shared. For example, documents and links can be easily assigned to particular agenda items, making it easier for members to go directly to specific items of interest. Documents can be annotated using simple tools – and these annotations shared with other board members before the meeting, if required. And, critically, board members can search current and historic documents easily at any time – including during the meeting, to create a far more interactive discussion and decision making process.

Improving Decision Making

With one click document distribution, not only can the organisation drastically reduce the essential paper, print and collate costs, it frees up the secretariat to undertake the far more valuable and important day to day activity that is typically interrupted by the quarterly board meeting. But that is just the start. This online information approach changes the way board members can make decisions – both within and outside meetings.

For example, during the meeting the board can exploit in-built interactive risk assessment and governance tools to provide a top level view of corporate risks. Rather than trawling though hundreds of pages of paper, members can understand immediately the current risks, the controls that are in place and identify gaps that need to be addressed. They can use the real time search to locate relevant information and gain the insight required to make a decision immediately – rather than re-tabling the issue for a subsequent meeting.

Furthermore, while real time access to information clearly provides a chance to improve the effectiveness of board members during the meeting, the most fundamental change is the way members can interact with the business between meetings. Combining alerts to information with updates on key topics raised during the meeting, plus decision-making functionality that incorporates discussion and voting tools, and reminds members of outstanding items, can enable boards to take votes and make decisions outside of the board meeting, which can lead to considered conclusions that are less likely to be swayed by more dominant members of the board. This ensures delays are avoided – and the board meeting can concentrate on the top strategic issues, rather than risked being derailed by minor yet pressing concerns.

Given the pressure on businesses to become ever more responsive and agile, it is clear attitudes within the board have got to change. The era of 'minute and forget' is over. With continuous real time access to information via a raft of devices, board members have the chance to be constantly engaged with the business, taking decisions throughout the quarter, not just at meetings. Those boards that take the step away from paper and look to actively and continuously exploit real time access to information will transform both the speed and effectiveness of decision making at every level.

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Evangelist File001

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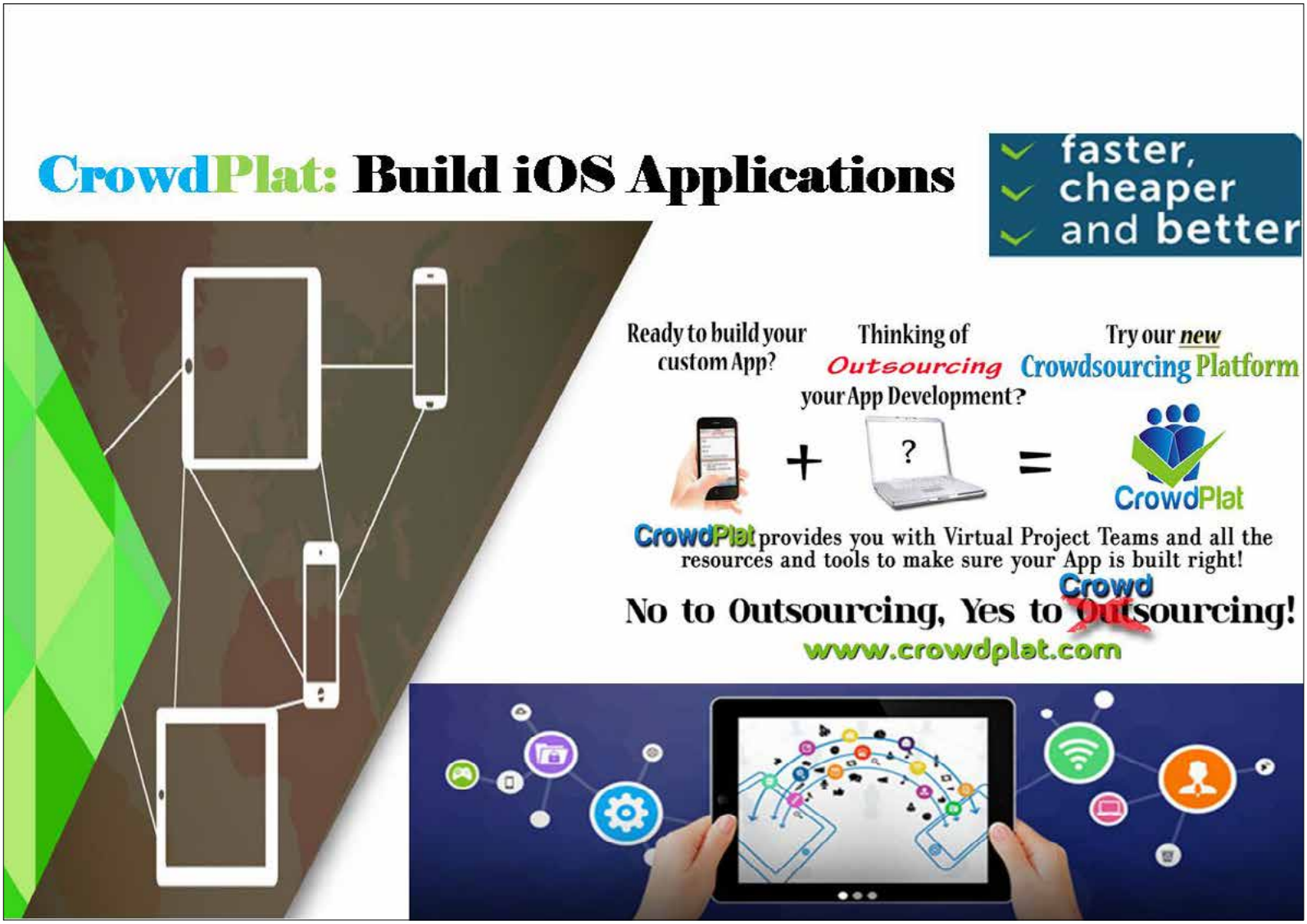
We are happy to have **Bill** on board as the contributing Editor to our new column " The Evangelist Files" highlighting the contributions of Mac Evangelists who had dedicated their careers to promoting and protecting the Apple Macintosh platform. The founder of the iBusiness Magazine was and still is such an Evangelist. We hope you enjoy and contribute to The Evangelist Files. Submit your favourite Evangelist experience too bill@grabil.ca

The Host Broadcast Division of a major Canadian Television Network was televising an international Summit Conference in Ottawa Canada. The Evangelist put in charge of setting this up was the assistant to the Executive Vice President of Host Broadcasting. Needless to say instead of using their standard Windows machines to register all the attendees, he had the entire lobby of the convention center set up with a network of Macs to handle the registration. This was in the early years when Macs had just been given the ability play audio files, so he installed a recent audio clip from Star Trek as the error message. Whenever someone made a mistake during registration, the error message "are you out of your Vulcan mind" would be heard all over the lobby. Most (including myself), found this hilarious, but senior management wasn't impressed and had the issue remedied ASAP.

Later on, the same gentleman was asked to handle the large responsibility of managing renovations the entire eighth floor of their building where the Host Broadcasting Division resided. The corporation at that time was an exclusively MS DOS environment. Our resident Evangelist bravely had the contractors wire the entire eighth floor for AppleTalk. Once this was done the Host Broadcaster Division only had two options. Re-renovate the eighth floor or switch to Macs. They wisely chose the latter. Our evangelist friend eventually retired with full pension and became a long-standing member of the National Capital Macintosh Club. But he wasn't done yet!!!

Stay tuned for our next episode where our passionate Evangelist, journeys overseas to educate universities behind the former Iron Curtain on Micro Computing developments in Canada.



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— Bernice Nesbit, Director of Marketing at Disguise

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— Scott Goudeseune President & CEO

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Consolidated Engineering Laboratories

Consolidated Engineering Laboratories uses custom FileMaker solutions for iOS running on the FileMaker Platform to automate workflows for materials testing vital for the construction industry

Materials testing company automates end-to-end business processes with suite of custom solutions for iOS
Lab personnel, drivers and field inspectors equipped with iPads save time and reduce errors

As a provider of engineering and materials testing services to the construction industry on diverse, high-profile projects such as the Golden Gate Bridge and the Huntsman Cancer Institute in Utah, Consolidated Engineering Laboratories (CEL) helps ensure that construction projects are built on time and in line with quality standards. Considering its demanding projects, the company must keep a constantly connected, mobile workforce as productive as possible. To accomplish this goal, CEL relies on custom FileMaker solutions for iPad based on the FileMaker Platform.

"We needed a platform that was robust enough for us to develop sophisticated mobile solutions for iPad while still being able to communicate on the back end with our enterprise resource planning system and other core business applications," explains Matthew Byrtus, CEL's director of information technology. "FileMaker software is ideal for meeting that need."

A pressing need to eliminate paper

Previously, CEL ran on mostly paper-based processes for testing and reporting. But these processes were costly, error-prone and slow, requiring approximately two weeks to cycle through from field input to an engineer-reviewed test report. "To achieve our goal of going paperless, we needed a solid, flexible platform designed for automation and mobility," says Byrtus.

Streamlining business processes end-to-end

Looking for a solution optimized for iOS devices, CEL evaluated FileMaker Platform, which consists of FileMaker Pro, FileMaker Pro Advanced, FileMaker Server and the FileMaker Go app for iPad. "Between FileMaker Pro for the desktop and the FileMaker Go mobile app, we found everything we needed to go paperless," notes Byrtus. "Even though we were totally new to FileMaker, it was easy to develop custom solutions. A key piece from Filemaker was the ability to program syncing when our field personnel do not have a connection."

CEL started by building a FileMaker solution to track pickups of concrete and other sample construction materials for testing back at the company lab. Now, as calls come into CEL's dispatch, drivers use their iPads to get real-time updates and can easily locate pickup sites to plan the most efficient routes. This has eliminated the errors and missed pickups that plagued CEL in the past.

A productivity boost through automation

Next, CEL developed an automated inventory system for checking its testing equipment in and out of the warehouse, as well as tracking equipment status and repair needs in the field using the FileMaker Go app for iPad. CEL also developed another FileMaker solution to manage its internal laboratory workflow.

"By automating our lab business processes with FileMaker, we're now able to capture every opportunity for revenue generation, instead of missing some as we did in the past," reports Byrtus. "We can also provide test results in real-time to the field, and when an engineer approves a test, the report is automatically generated and pushed out to our web portal. It's greatly improved productivity and efficiency."

CEL is now taking on its most ambitious project to date: building the company's core business workflow from field inspection and sample pick-ups to testing and reporting to clients using the FileMaker Platform. With this new solution, information will flow seamlessly from the dispatch office to nearly 200 field inspectors, providing them with all essential project details at their fingertips, including timesheets, reports, inspections and photos. Any updates made in the field are then automatically synced at the end of the day for internal processing. Eventually, CEL will use the FileMaker Go app to share data among 300 iPad users across the company.

"When it's all said and done, we expect to reduce our original two-week turn-around time for reports to just 72 hours," says Byrtus. "We're already realizing significant ROI and expect that to grow as we continue to build new solutions and expand our use of FileMaker."

"Even though we were totally new to FileMaker, it was easy to develop custom solutions. I can safely say that I can now run our entire organization from an iPad."

—Matthew Byrtus, director of information technology, Consolidated Engineering Laboratories

Overview

Using a custom FileMaker solution for iOS that was built in-house, Consolidated Engineering Laboratories automates scheduling, inventory management and business workflows to streamline testing and reporting needed to keep construction projects on schedule and in compliance.

Industry

Construction engineering and materials testing

Solution

Custom FileMaker solution for iOS enables dispatchers, lab workers, drivers and field inspectors to track pickup and delivery of test samples, and automate reporting of test results using the FileMaker Go app for 300 iPad users.

Benefits

Automated dispatch, inventory management and business workflows; saved time; reduced errors; maximized revenue opportunities; ensured compliance; achieved rapid ROI.

Introducing Marblue Cases

Dave Park
dave@xcel.on.ca

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Dave Park has been an avid computer hobbyist for over 30 years. For the past 10 years he has been selling all the greatest computer products to retailers all over the world with Xcel Source Corp. Contact him at 1-905-564-9235 ext.

Marblue, was formally known as Marware. Marblue makes a variety of iPad accessory covers that make add form and function to an iPad or iPad mini. Their cases are available in a variety of sizes and colors.

For iPad Air the Axis, comes in Black, and Emerald Blue, or Red. Once in the case you can rotate the iPad 90 degrees to either view it in either portrait or landscape mode. As well you can have it prop the iPad at a comfortable typing angle. The case also includes a strap to slide your hand in and hold the iPad in front of you. The lid or cover also automatically sleeps and wakes your iPad.

The same case is also available in smaller form to fit the iPad Mini or iPad Mini Retina.

The Air versions retails for $54.99 and the iPad Mini/Mini Retina version retails for $49.99.

Another case in the Marblue lineup for the iPad Air is the Inscribe. It is available in either Black or Eggplant (a rich brown color). The Inscribe includes a memo pad inside the case on the opposite side as the iPad. It also includes an elasticized penholder and pockets one could use to hold a business card. This case is an executive portfolio. The case acts as a stand for the iPad in landscape mode. An elasticated band holds the cover shut when not in use. The case allows full access to all buttons and does not interfere with the camera.

This case retails for $54.99

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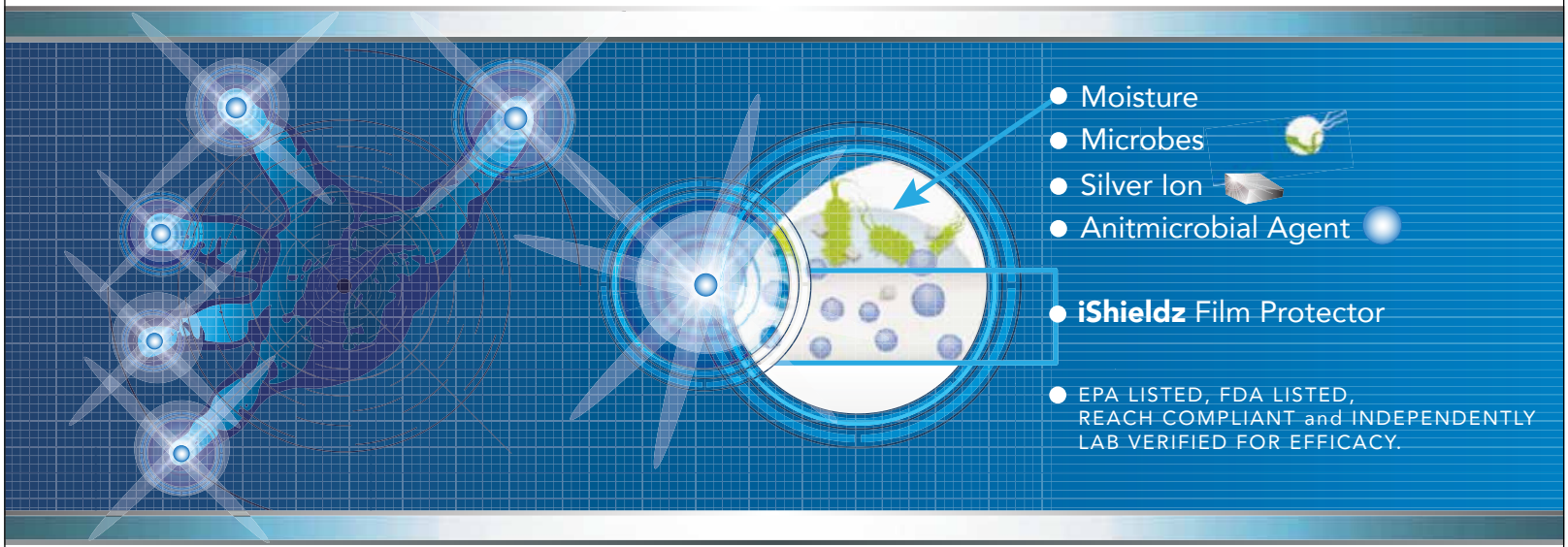

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Auto Wash Express automates business operations using FileMaker on iPad, desktops and the Web. Family-owned car wash business optimizes efficiencies bumper to bumper

Barcode-enabled mobile solution saves time and improves profitability

The Janezic family has been in the car wash business for three decades, keeping thousands of vehicles free of desert dirt at eight, soft-touch, self-serve car washes in Arizona. Spread out over several cities, Auto Wash Express has turned to FileMaker software to support three key areas of their operation: mobile management, inventory and process tools.

"Up until two years ago, we struggled with isolated spreadsheets to manage parts and supply inventory," says Brian Janezic, co-owner, Auto Wash Express. It made no sense to duplicate efforts manually in software silos or to drive around from car wash to car wash to check levels of soap and vending machine supplies."

The Janezics needed administrative and management solutions that everyone could use remotely from their home offices to check on eight locations. As a small, family owned business, a high-end, proprietary inventory management system, one that likely wouldn't be a perfect fit and would require outside programming resources, was cost prohibitive.

Working on his own in FileMaker software, and with no prior database development experience, it took Janezic only about two months to create his first productivity tool: a breakthrough inventory control solution. The iPad solution is connected to FileMaker back-end software that hosts users across the company.

"I'm a car wash owner first and a software guy second. But FileMaker software is so easy to use, I automated several business systems and processes. It just goes to show how even a small, family-owned business can automate their operations with FileMaker software," says Janezic. In creating his solution, he used the "Best Practices for Designing Custom Business Solutions" How-To Guide, available free from FileMaker, which made it really easy to make the solution work on mobile devices with just a few tweaks to the desktop version.

New ways for FileMaker to benefit the business

Janezic has since expanded the FileMaker solution to include ordering and expanded inventory control systems. If a bearing cylinder is going out in one car wash, a manager can grab an iPad to access the inventory management system and locate another one, either at a sister location or from the warehouse. The result is that time-to-repair has been reduced, as have phone calls, inquiries and driving among locations, positively impacting revenues and keeping customers driving through.

"Inventorying the warehouse used to take forever," Janezic explains. "Now it's all automated. We can keep track of parts for manufacturing and supplies for our car washes, eliminating a lot of downtime, which, of course, is very costly."

Optimizing business efficiency

Today, many aspects of the business run on FileMaker software, integrating iPads, desktops and servers, centralizing everything from order entry to inventory tracking and time sheet tracking. Instead of jotting down hand-written notes about which items are running low and notifying management, staff working at car washes simply click a box in the FileMaker solution on their iPads to initiate orders on the spot. Consolidated orders from all eight locations are processed on the back-end FileMaker server and shipped out to the right place.

Says Janezic, "With the mobile FileMaker solution for iPad, I do a lot of management remotely right from my house. It saves us a huge amount of time, as well as wear and tear on our vehicles."

The company also streamlined the employee time clock. Staff who tend the car washes use iPads with the FileMaker Go app to log their hours as well as tally orders for new supplies. This data is fed back to the FileMaker Server and used to automatically cut paychecks and keep supply chains intact.

Manufacturing and warehousing for the industry

The family business has another dimension, started a few years ago. To solve the challenges every car wash owner faces, the Janiceks built a small manufacturing company that builds product dispensing boards mounted inside car wash bays that come "prewired" and ready to manage washing, rinsing and drying cycles.

In the manufacturing operation, Auto Wash Express now uses its custom FileMaker solution and the FileMaker Go app for iPad with CNS barcode integration to expedite order flow and inventory. Parts are barcoded in the warehouse, enabling assemblers to use their FileMaker Go app for iPad to quickly locate the building blocks for dispensing boards and pull them off the shelves. Once a board is assembled, staff uses FileMaker to scan the item's barcode, which automatically calculates the shipping weight, produces a shipping label and generates a bill for the customer, all on the same screen.

Advancing the business with FileMaker

Janezic has also extended the FileMaker solution for forecasting point of sale and cost analysis. "Soon, we will be able to record car count per day and the revenue coming through each bay," he notes. "That way we can determine where to install additional or new equipment." The firm is gearing up to integrate sensors to provide real-time cost analysis of transactions in FileMaker.

Running on empty is not an option at Auto Wash Express, where customers have come to expect the same polished, reliable service at all locations. "The value back to our company has been tremendous. In fact, we recouped the cost of our FileMaker software within six months – a drop in the bucket over two generations of washing cars."

"It just goes to show how even a small, family-owned business can automate their entire operations with FileMaker software."

—Brian Janezic, co-owner, Auto Wash Express

Overview

Using a custom FileMaker solution for iOS, Auto Wash Express automates inventory management and cost analysis to save time and optimize the efficiency of its self-serve car washes and manufacturing operation.

Industry

Self-serve car washes

Solution

Custom FileMaker solution enables managers and employees to track inventory and parts, automatically order new supplies, record employee hours using the FileMaker Go app for iPad with CNS barcode integration.

Benefits

Automated inventory management; saved time; centralized and mobilized administration and management; reduced downtime; streamlined warehouse management; increased customer satisfaction; recouped investment within six months.

If we can order food from our smartphone, communicate with the world, order car service, book air travel and check our financial portfolios why shouldn't we be able to open the front door of our home with our smartphone? Well, now you can, and with other competition on the market, there are plenty to choose from. We cam across a very fresh, innovative product that we think you have to know about.

Smarterkey is just like it sounds. Smarter.

Have you ever come home with a load of groceries in your hand or maybe a child in tow and had to fumble for your keys dropping one or both of your precious pieces of cargo? I have. With Smarterkey you can now open your front door remotely, maybe when you leave the grocery store or as you are pulling in the neighborhood, all with your smartphone.

Do you have houseguests in for the weekend and you are going to be out of town? Give them a temporary access so they can enter your home without hiding a key. You control the time frame in which they get to use the Smarterkey solution.

Smarterkey requires some hardware. First you will need the Smarterkey hub with lock, which is a Bluetooth based device that communicates with the lock on your door (again the lock is supplied by Smarterkey as well). The hub connects directly to your home network and then controls the lock. There is a monthly optional fee that allows you to control users, allocate digital keys and monitor access. The smartphone app is free allowing you to open your door.

Although we haven't tested the Smarter Key solution, we can say that the product seems to cover all of the features that their competition has and then some. This is definitely worth a look for the users that are looking to step into or complete their home automation.

When it comes to accounting and the finances of your company staying connected means the world. Knowing when money is coming in and where money is going out, as a business owner is what keeps you awake at night. As we continue through the age of mobility the playing field is ever changing. Finding a solution that encompasses all of your needs becomes cost effective and provides a tremendous user experience for you and your client is difficult. Sage was founded in 1981 and based in the United Kingdom. They are third in the world for their efforts in enterprise resource planning or ERP. They know what they are doing, and they do it well. They also realized that we live in a mobile world and it was time to connect the dots.

Sage Mobile Sales offers a multitude of in-the-field opportunities for your sales and support staff. From editing customer information to reviewing a catalog with a customer – it can all be done on the iPad and most importantly, be tied back to your ERP. How about creating a quote in the field based off of real-time data? Check. Check product availability and commit to filling orders? Check. You can even accept immediate payment right in front of your customers. This, to us, is a full turnkey solution that not only impresses your customers but also most importantly allows you, as the field personnel to do what you do best more efficiently.

Sage Mobile Service acts much like Sage Mobile Sales when it comes to a familiar interface. Now your field technicians can optimize schedules and round and change job assignments on the fly. Talk about efficiency! Customers can interact with your Sage Mobile Service software right on your iPad for signatures and even add photos to an account. Once again, the technician will have full access to the regular Sage ERP system right at their fingertips. This all equates to doing the job quicker, more accurately and getting paid faster.

Sage Billing and Payment is also a piece of this software lineup that empowers the user to deliver invoicing in a way that best suits the client. From electronic invoices and receipts to customizable HTML invoice templates, Sage offers a wide variety of solutions that are sure to impress your customers. Of course credit cards and ACH are available at your fingertips to provide the utmost conveniences that were only dreamt of a few years ago. At any point you have full access to a feature rich dashboard that gives you up-to-date information about invoice delivery and usage plus quick access to re-send an invoice that may have got caught somewhere it shouldn't have. Again, all of this tied to the Sage ERP that you are familiar with.

Mobility and information at your fingertips is upon us. Thankfully companies like Sage get it and have embraced it, providing the users an experience that is both seamless and effective.

Sage doesn't not provide pricing or information regarding integration, however they can be contacted here for more information. If you haven't considered going mobile for your ERP system and giving your field personnel the best opportunity to succeed we encourage you to visit Sage and their mobile solutions.

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Mac or iPad?: Choosing the Right Device in the Post-PC Era

Jens Lodholm
@doctor_mac

Ever since the iPad was first released in April 2010, it has been making waves in our culture. Not only has it pushed the boundaries of technology everywhere, but it has caused many to forego buying a traditional computer altogether. It has seen wide adoption in environments where a computer isn't a good fit, but a small tablet is. And there is no better tablet than the iPad, which has defined the genre.

Sales statistics confirm the story. Year-over-year, the sales of most PCs have declined, with the obvious exception of Apple's Mac computer. So why have we seen this trend?

Computers don't beat a tablet for convenience. Cost is also an obvious factor, since a consumer can buy a new iPad for significantly less than all but the most flimsy of PCs. And with capabilities comparable to a full-fledged computer, the decision has been easy for many.

But if you're looking for a new device, is an iPad always the best fit?

As Steve Jobs famously pointed out, PCs are like trucks and tablets are like cars. Trucks are useful in certain situations, but not everyone needs one. So it is with computers. Often, a tablet will do.

So what should a potential buyer consider in making a decision? Three traits help answer this question.

Convenience

The iPad has several advantages over a traditional computer.

- Portability - Compared to a desktop Mac such as the iMac or Mac Pro, the iPad is extremely portable. Its advantage over a Mac laptop, however, is relatively small.
- Instant on - The fact that you can simply press the power button and swipe on an iPad to access its interface gives it a big advantage over most computers. Solid-state drives and reliable wake-from-sleep modes still keep Mac computers in the running, though.
- Size - For lightness and small dimensions, the only current Apple products that beat an iPad is an iPhone or iPod. Yet MacBook Airs compete favorably here.
- Access - The lack of lid gives the iPad an advantage over a laptop, because a user can hold it in one hand while standing very easily—no desk required. While it's possible to use a laptop on your feet, the iPad wins this contest.

Advantage: iPad

Cost

No new Mac can beat the cost for a new entry-level iPad, and even used Macs hold their value well enough that you'd have to find a great deal to do better. But if money is no object, then you must decide on convenience or capabilities.

Advantage: iPad

Capabilities

- Software - There are some functions an iPad simply cannot do, and applications it cannot run. For others, there are workarounds. But before locking in on an iPad purchase, consider what particular work you need to do on the device. iPads do not support Adobe Flash or Java without outside assistance, and no solution may be satisfactory for your needs. Do your homework before deciding.
- Interface - For many, the touch interface of an iPad is optimal. If you need a tactile keyboard, there are many viable options for an iPad as well. But if you require a specific interface, such as a mouse, trackball, or high-end drawing tablet, you may prefer to go the route of a Mac.
- Storage - Depending on how much data you need to carry around, an iPad may or may not be your best choice. Keep in mind that iPads do not sport a USB port. Still, consider if cloud storage could meet your needs in this area.
- Upgrade and Expansion - iPads do not have the same options for adding or upgrading hardware-based capabilities that many Macs have—RAM, internal disk space, graphics, etc.. However, many models of Mac are limited in these ways as well. Understand what you may need to add in the future, and if the device you're considering supports it.
- Power - For raw processing and graphics power, there is no substitute for the best hardware money can buy. But if you consider the costs versus benefits of candidate devices, you may be able to give yourself what you need for the foreseeable future without sacrificing too much money or convenience.
- Internet Connectivity - Although there are simple ways to get a Mac onto the internet via a cellular data/mobile broadband connection, the inclusion of this feature into some models of iPad gives it a leg up here. When you want to always be on the internet with your device (assuming your location has coverage), consider an iPad with this option built-in.

Advantage: Mac

Although the iPad has an advantage over traditional Mac computers, what you should buy depends on what you expect from a new computing device. Think through the elements of convenience, cost, and capabilities, and make a thoughtful decision.

If you need extreme portability with basic internet capabilities such as web and email, then an iPad may be just what you need at the right price. On the other hand, if you require much more power and versatility, a desktop Mac may be the right fit if you're willing to pay for it. And finally, if a blend between convenience and capability is ideal for you, then consider a Mac laptop.

PCs, like trucks will always have their place, but as society shifts, so does the industry. And in numerous famous cases driven by innovation, industry shapes society. You must decide for yourself how it shapes you.

SMB

Jens, the owner of a corporate Macintosh consulting business in Colorado Springs, CO, has carved out a niche corralling Apple products into playing nicely with others in enterprise environments. This has been his livelihood and area of expertise for years, whereas writing is his hobby and passion.

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Hotel software has come a long way. Many single hotel owners and large hotel conglomerations have come to realize the need of efficient software to keep their businesses up and running. Most importantly providing the guest the best experience possible but also the ability to manage the incredible amount of moving parts that go on during the normal course of business. From booking rooms to day-to-day operations the need for technology to intertwine your business is almost mandatory. protel has built a number of solutions to solve all of those problems.

Started in 1994, protel hotelsoftware has been developing and selling technology and service solutions specifically for the hotel industry. Because they are only focused in this area, the products never get diluted with other business concepts and the output is second to none. With over 11,000 hotels and hotel management schools in more than 80 countries, protel's expertise and reliability shine through.

protel offers a number of products which we will walk through. Their first product, bookatonce, combines user friendliness with powerful data collection allowing you to do your job more efficiently and in turn giving the customer the best experience. You don't need to be an IT expert to make reservations, administer guest data and create invoices. bookatonce is ideal for small hotels, B&B's and guest houses. bookatonce is also available for the iPhone and iPad.

protel Air is web-based hotel management software falling into the category of software-as-a-solution (SaaS). It offers a desktop and mobile version for Windows, Mac OS and iOS. Features include an active user desktop showing you a dynamic overview of the property so you know exactly who is coming and going at all times. With a room type plan at your fingertips you can enter reservations in a single work step. Keep guest profiles on file with specific wishes so you can clearly communicate to other employees the desires of a guest. Reporting is robust and powerful allowing you to keep track of your business with the greatest of ease. Do these questions every come up? How many guests are staying at your hotel? What countries are they from? How many checked in today? How many checked out today? What rooms still need to be cleaned? What are revenues looking like and what bills are outstanding? With protel Air Reporting, all of this information is quickly accessible. With the housekeeping module you can instantly tell which rooms still need to be cleaned, which are available and which are out of order. protel Air is a powerful solution that works across all platforms.

protel Smart is software designed for hotels with 30 to 60 rooms and 1 to 3 computer workstations. This is a low cost solution and ease of use functionality. Touting a similar room plan design as its big brother, you can easily reserve rooms for individuals or entire groups, with a powerful drag and drop interface. Guest profiles can be stored along with a powerful reporting section so you know exactly what is going on at any given point.

protel SPE is hotel management software designed for large and mid-market individual hotels. As with the other pieces of software we have discussed, this product, albeit geared to the larger hotels, offers a lot of the same feature rich robustness that you would expect.

A contact form is available for reaching out to protel's sales department. With their incredible lineup of software you will be hard pressed not to find a solution for your hotel. Stay on top of your business with protel.

In September 1994 Intuit purchased the right to use double-entry accounting software and a spin off of the ever-popular Quicken individual financial management software was born Quickbooks. It was time for there to be a bridge between small business owners with very little training and the big house accounting firms. In 2005 Quickbooks claimed nearly three quarters of the market for accounting software and hasn't stopped there. They have grown an incredible advisor program made up of CPA's and built a software package that is usable by just about anyone.

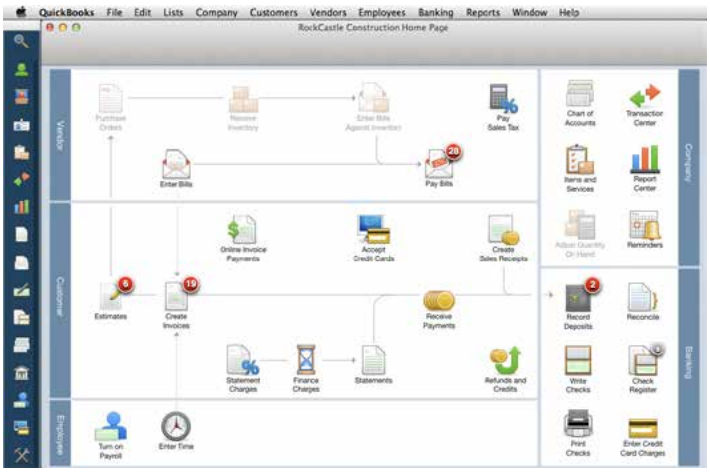
Mac users needed a stand-alone version of Quickbooks as well. Built on the same engine as its other operating system competitor, Mac users can enjoy the same incredible experience as everyone else. Personally I started my company using a product called ProfitTrain, which is an amazing piece of simple to use software in itself. I quickly realized that I was outgrowing the product and was forced to search in other places. I did a tremendous amount of research and everything pointed back to Quickbooks. I had multiple companies and needed one repository for all of them, but also keeping the "books" separate. Quickbooks allows you to manage multiple companies and switch between with a simple drop down menu. The straight forward, simple to use interface allows for quick entry and quick analysis. No one likes to sit down and enter receipts in or pay bills. Lets face it, invoicing is fun, but the other stuff can be a drain on time and productivity.

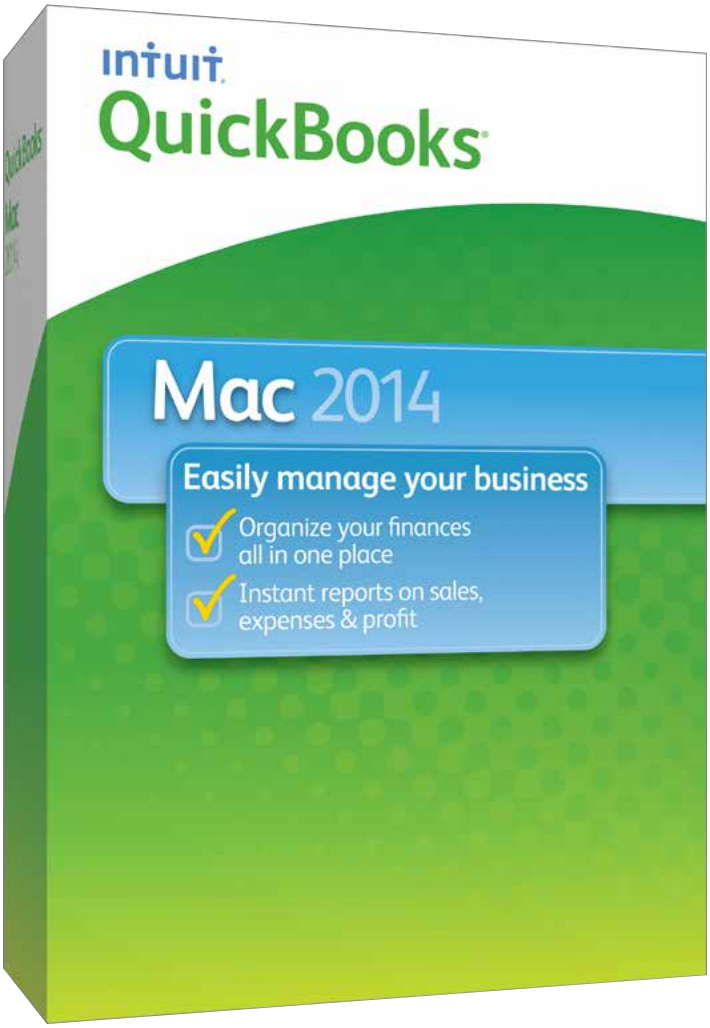
Needless to say, Intuit realized that their mobile versions needed to match the power and sexiness of their desktop version. It does just that. I can now see all of my companies in the palm of my hand and with the greatest ease bill customers, record expenses and look at reports, all on the go. There is an iOS version for both the iPhone or iPad which makes it very convenient.

Let's run through some of the biggest features. You can easily create invoices and track sales through an easy to read user interface. You can bill for time and expenses by logging hours and even add reimbursement expenses. New to Quickbooks for Mac 2014 is a toolbar on the left side that lets you create shortcuts to move around the software very easily. You now have enhanced customizable areas to keep important information at your fingertips. Income Tracker allows you to see all of your income-producing transactions in one spot including overdue invoices so you can track down YOUR money. Reports have been expanded to include other employees by tracking their sales and progress.

Pricing starts at $249.95 for a one-time purchase. You can get Enhanced Payroll for $28.00 per month (which has been reduced from the regular $35.00 per month). You can also accept credit and debit cards now for invoices sent out. There is an additional fee for this but think of the convenience this adds for your customers and most importantly you (less trips to the bank).

You can truly run your entire business with Quickbooks for Mac and they continue to be committed to the OSX platform adding feature rich solutions. As a daily user of their software I can't applaud them more for a job well done and now opening their software doesn't seem near as daunting. Dare I say I look forward to it?





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POS Software You Lavu!

Simplicity and affordability are the theme when it comes to POS (Point-Of-Sale) systems. There are many solutions that meet both criteria in some way or another depending on what your needs might be. Features are very competitive in this market. As you continue your research on the best solution for your business you will find some software developers that have given you everything under the sun and some that are more minimalist and a feature or two are missing. Either way, all are determined to solve the two most important problems – making things simpler and making them cost effective. POS's are a necessary evil and should not be taken lightly because they can truly enhance your business.

Restaurants and retailers have dreamed of moving to a wireless solution for their transactions. Allowing them to spend more time with the customer and less time in front of a screen. POS Lavu solves this problem with an easy to use iPad™ centric solution. Before the iPad™, wireless solutions were slow and far too expensive for a small business to bear. Once the iPad™ hit the market, multiple developers jumped at the opportunity to cut the cords for their future POS customers. Lavu did just that and born was a product that was powerful, simple to use and affordable. Focussed primarily on the restaurant industry Lavu offers a feature rich solution that includes specific multi-room layouts, easy-split checks, employee timecards, seat and course numbering, multi-printer routing, customer email tracking, remote backend office, standardized and exportable reports and inventory management. They pretty much offer everything you would need.

Backend is important when running your business. You want to know where you stand at all times and Lavu answers the bell. You can access Lavu from anywhere in the world via their web browser solution. There are also multiple reporting options giving you the opportunity to export data to your favorite accounting software.

Setup is easy and offered in two different ways. You can do it yourself (hardware not supported) or you can contact a distributor who will insure everything is up and running exactly the way it was designed to work. Lavu works with Zephyr hardware to provide you with the latest in hardware technology including iPad™ stands, networking, printers, cash drawers, scales and much more.

Signing up with Lavu is as simple as going to their website. They offer a 14-day trial period, contrary to most of their competition, which is 30 days. Once the trial has expired you will have 3 options to choose from: Lavu Silver, Lavu Gold and Lavu Pro. Lavu Silver has a flat license fee of $895 and $39/month which gets you a single terminal software seat. Lavu Gold has a flat license fee of $1,495 and $79/month, which gets you a dual terminal (2 seats). Lavu Pro is for the multiple device location. For the $2,495 license fee and $149/month you get 3+ terminals ($20 / month for each additional terminal, maxing out at 23 terminals). Software updates are always free.

Pricing may seem a little high but we think you get what you pay for and Lavu is one of the leaders in this industry. There are no contracts and no obligations so you can always cancel at anytime. Lavu offers 24/7 support and even provides on-site technicians where necessary and available. Being a leader in a saturated market like this is tough, but Lavu has earned that spot and should be a heavy contender when you make your POS software decision. Be sure to contact them or a local distributor to get "fit" for the right system.

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SpiderCloud® Wireless

How often do you walk into your office or any building for that matter, while on the phone or surfing the Internet, and lose service? Maybe the service simply diminishes or weakens. First you have to understand that your mobile device is accepting this data, and sending it for that matter, through multiple layers of attenuation. Whether it is concrete walls or steel roofs it all effects the quality of signal that you send and receive. The higher the frequency, the higher the data rate and the more difficult it is to penetrate. The lower the frequency the more it can penetrate. This all being said, wireless technology is not perfect, however we have found a company that can help solve those difficult environments indoors. Over 80 percent of all mobile voice and data traffic occurs indoors which means that network resources are disproportionate requiring the outdoor network to assign more resources. These challenges can be reduced, and likely solved with SpiderCloud Wireless. If you have LAN access you can take advantage of SpiderCloud Wireless.

How does SpiderCloud Wireless work? SpiderCloud Wireless has built the world's first scalable small cell system that actually works for enterprises of any size regardless of building size. Typically this technology in the past has worked well in confined areas, but SpiderCloud has taken it to the next level. Coverage and capacity is now offered in a 3G and LTE scalable, multi-access, small cell system that can cover from 50,000 to 1.5M square foot venues including office space and arenas. With the unique self-organizing and self-optimizing software, design configuration and deployment is simplified, RF management is made easier, and it can handle up to 100 Radio Nodes Powered over Ethernet (PoE). A system can be deployed in days.

The Radio Nodes support 16 to 32/64+ simultaneous voice or data channels with 3G, 4G or dual-band 3G and 4G (or dual-band4G). With the dramatic growth in smartphone and tablet use, customer satisfaction is a huge priority forcing mobile operators to improve coverage, capacity and support. Through a Signals Research Group study it was found that in many cases nearly 80 percent of an operators licensed spectrum was being underutilized in enterprise environments. Serving a large building with an outdoor macro network simply doesn't cut it anymore, and the expectations of the consumer prove it. Frustrations with slow data, dropped voice calls and limited service force the hand of these providers to come up with a better solution – one that SpiderCloud does very well.

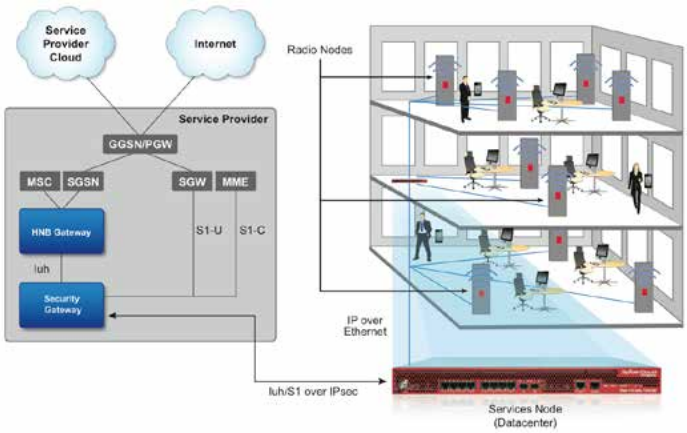
"Our team has created a unique and different product and our customers and partners have embraced us," said Michael Gallagher, CEO of SpiderCloud Wireless. "We continue to be humbled by the industry reception and accolades we are receiving and are thankful for the recognition among many worthy and truly innovative companies."

Current customers include Vodafone UK, Vodafone Netherlands and more. With the need for a better solution, customers can expect a quick installation and maximization of the licensed spectrum assets indoors.

When you invest in an in-building solution such as this, you expect your employees to have priority over the bandwidth, and SpiderCloud gives you just that. With a "white" list, Enterprise IT has the option to determine who has access to the system and who doesn't, giving a user multiple venue credentials allows employees to travel from site to site with instant priority.

With tremendous funding from the likes of Charles River Ventures, Matrix Partners, Opus Capital and Shasta Ventures they have raised over $106M as of April 2012 giving them the resources to create a product that serves you, the customer. With quality and service at the forefront of this organization, there is really no need to look further than SpiderCloud when trying to solve the real problems faced each day in your medium-large environment.

For more information be sure to contact your mobile operator about SpiderCloud today. Or, contact SpiderCloud here.



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Openways Review

Have you ever gotten to your hotel room only for your key card not to work? Now you have to either lug all of your personal belongings down the front desk or risk leaving everything in front of the door and run down to get a new card made. These challenges are real and real annoying. With the increase of smartphones in everyone's pockets, why not let the power in your pocket do away with the key cards that continue to give us so much trouble.

OpenWays has a solution. They claim they are not a company, NOT a technology but a global solution provider of mobile-based access-management and security solutions. For our purposes, lets call them the key card remover. Imagine getting to your hotel room and knowing that your smartphone has full control over the lock to your door. This is reality. OpenWays provides a better guest service experience, reduction in operating costs to the property and reduction in plastic card waste positively effecting the environment.

OpenWays uses a crypto acoustic key (a what?) to access a locked door. This sound is produced to open the door and once it is produced it becomes void so that the sound cannot be recorded and reused. The sound is no louder than someone speaking through the normal speaker of your phone. Guests don't have to use the Crypto Acoustic Credential (CAC), they can revert to the normal key card so you don't have to go exclusively to a smartphone solution, providing your guests with both options.

Pricing is based on guests checking in. Beyond some license and set up fees, a small fee is paid per check in. This is not a pay as often as a door is opened only on a per guest check in.

Although the website is lacking quite a bit of information beyond a video. I ended up spending time in the FAQ's to decipher information about this product. I like the direction of this technology and look forward to seeing this come online soon.

For more information contact OpenWays Pascal Metivier at pmetivier@openways.com.

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PATENT PENDING

Klapprodt Pools

Serving the Dallas/Fort Worth area, Klapprodt Pools has grown into a 25-person company with a reputation built on a unique approach to designing, constructing and maintaining pools: make it quick, efficient, and personalized for every buyer. No surprises: just gorgeous pools and great service. The company's 25 employees design and build up to 120 pools a year, maintain 200 pools weekly, and make an additional 150 to 200 service calls each month. Keeping the details straight can be daunting.

Now, Klapprodt is using Pool Pro Office (PPO), a custom-built solution from FileMaker developer Pool Pro Office that's based on FileMaker. It runs on Mac, Windows, and iPad using the FileMaker Go app—and was created with the FileMaker Platform. Klapprodt achieved return on investment within months, and its business is growing efficiently and profitably. Best of all, customer satisfaction is at an all-time high.

"Our vision," says Co-owner Jeremy Klapprodt, "is to make sure everyone is synchronized, extremely productive, and aware of even the most minute details of each customer's unique job – whether we are on-site designing a new pool, or on our way to a routine maintenance call."

When synchronization matters

Before the iPad app and Pool Pro Office, running the business was not always as easy and organized. Like many small to medium businesses, Klapprodt Pools has grown organically, and the single-purpose IT systems supporting the business were acquired one at a time. As a result, the information needed to serve customers wasn't always available from the road. Or, it was isolated in different software systems. For years, the company was using multiple in-house or outsourced solutions for lead management, construction, service, and billing, which meant duplicate data entry and extensive travel among multiple locations to obtain the right information. The company was also paying a substantial monthly fee for externally provided lead and service management solutions.

Details, dispersed everywhere

In the past, once a new customer lead came in, staff entered it into an online lead management system that would trigger the sales process. Once a job was sold, a supervisor set up design and construction scheduling manually. Plans and documents were kept in a file folder, accessible only on desks or in filing cabinets. Customer information was then manually entered into Intuit QuickBooks as well as a service management system for future service and warranty work.

Klapprodt explains, "It was a chore to find specific information for a customer, especially from a remote location. People would have to go to the service office to look up service details, the construction office for design or construction information, and the office manager for billing data. Zero information was obtainable from the field without a phone call."

Recognizing the inefficiencies, Klapprodt began looking for a single, integrated solution capable of handling all aspects of the company's business. He found Pool Pro Office, a desktop and iOS solution created using the FilleMaker Platform. Today, Klapprodt Pools uses Pool Pro Office in every aspect of the business, every moment of the day.

After selling the pool, a process that's usually done at the home office, designers get to work using the app for iPad. They visit the customer site to scope out the terrain and enter early ideas into the system. Construction supervisors on iPads pick up from there, sketching out more specific plans, subcontractor requirements, and more.

In the same lane

Three technicians and a service manager use the solution for maintenance and routine servicing – built-in maps show them how to get to the client site efficiently. The maps are universally viewable, so anyone can immediately see where the job is. Schedulers can devise the most efficient routes; and technicians can plan their days.

Even pool cleaners, office managers, owners, and directors tap into the Pool Pro Office solution. There might be technicians in the field servicing pools and needing to invoice clients on the spot, or construction management personnel looking for detailed information on approved pool designs. Which tile, which depth, diving board height? These details, now, are all in one place.

"Our customers see the results because we are more organized and accountable," says Klapprodt. "Overall, the FileMaker solution has created more efficient processes and information that is accessible just about anywhere, at any time."

The best, done better

The customized Pool Pro Office system based on FileMaker solutions has helped the pool company build a thriving business by doing things a little differently. The solution is helping the company do what it does best – even better. Management and owners, too, are seeing the benefits because they can run reports and glimpse what is happening company-wide, in-real time, which is extremely beneficial considering the number of jobs in progress daily.

Customer satisfaction is job one for Klapprodt, but there's also no substitute for return on investment. The FileMaker Platform based Pool Pro Office solution paid for itself in a few short months, based only on the savings from the recurring payments that are no longer being made on the outsourced lead and service management systems. This translates into tens of thousands in savings annually that can be funneled into a growing business now capable of building and maintaining more pools.

"We are genuinely excited about the benefits this new solution provides to our company," says Klapprodt. "We have been able to maintain better accountability, and we appreciate the overall cultural change. Because we have so many things happening all at once, we can stay on top of it all, remotely and in real-time."

"Overall, the FileMaker solution has created more efficient processes and information that is accessible just about anywhere, at any time."

—Jeremy Klapprodt, co-owner, Klapprodt Pools

Overview

Backyard pools and spas may seem like a simple business, until you factor in the complexities of design, construction, maintenance, and service. Klapprodt Pools puts it all together to achieve exceptional customer satisfaction, return on investment and business success using Pool Pro Office, a solution built based on the FileMaker Platform.

Industry

Pool design, construction, and maintenance

Solution

Used Pool Pro Office created with the FileMaker Platform to integrate business processes, from design through to maintenance

Benefits

Achieved ROI in months; improved productivity by putting all customer information (pool design, invoicing, location, and maintenance) in a single location; improved customer satisfaction by having everyone involved aware of every detail of a pool construction or maintenance project

TOP 25

BUSINESS APPLICATIONS FOR MAC OSX & IOS

1. *Daylight*

2 *VIPorbit*

3 *Billings Pro*

4 *Account Edge*

5 *QuickBooks*

6 *FileMaker Pro*

7 *Office for iPad*

8 *Pages*

9 *Numbers*

10 *Concept Draw Office*

11 *Keynote*

12 *Dropbox*

13 *Acrobat*

14 *LivePlan*

15 *Sage Mobile Sales*

16 *Mleads by MobileLeads*

17 *Accountek*

18 *DirectMail by E3 Software*

19 *PDF Expert*

20 *VizzyWig Video Editor*

21 *FScanX by Elevated*

22 *MoneyWorks*

23 *Elements CRM*

24 *Bento*

25 *eFax*

LivePlan

So you have an idea for a business. You are ready to work for yourself. The idea is kind of on a cocktail napkin but mostly in your head. You need a roadmap. You need a plan. The first thing a colleague or friend might tell you is to write a business plan. From a person who has had a lot of entrepreneurial ideas, a business plan is typically the last thing on my mind. It is so easy for us to evaluate our ideas in a longer-term format completely skipping over how you might actually get to the end result. Anytime I have started a business plan, I have always Googled the structure so I know what sections to write about or more importantly what not to forget.

Gone are the days of guessing what a business plan should include, what it should look like and in what order to write it. For almost 30 years, the creators of Business Plan Pro, the best-selling desktop business plan software in the world created LivePlan. LivePlan does all of the work for you. A product of Palo Alto Software, LivePlan is the ultimate tool when starting a new business. Imagine sitting down with someone in an empty room and they asked you a number of questions about your business-to-be. The person asking the questions also wrote all of your answers down on a piece of paper. At the end of the interview session you were handed a compiled report that shows you the map to starting your own business, or maybe expanding your current business.

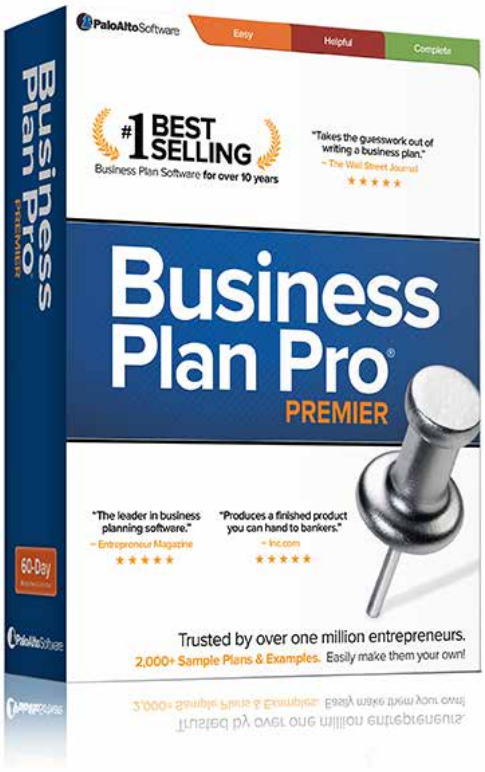
LivePlan helps you create your business plan with step-by-step instructions, asking you questions about each piece of the business including marketing, sales, financials, service and necessary investment. A web-based software, you can access your plan from any device on either Mac or PC. It's safe, secure and you can also collaborate with other users letting them edit or make comments about what you have created.

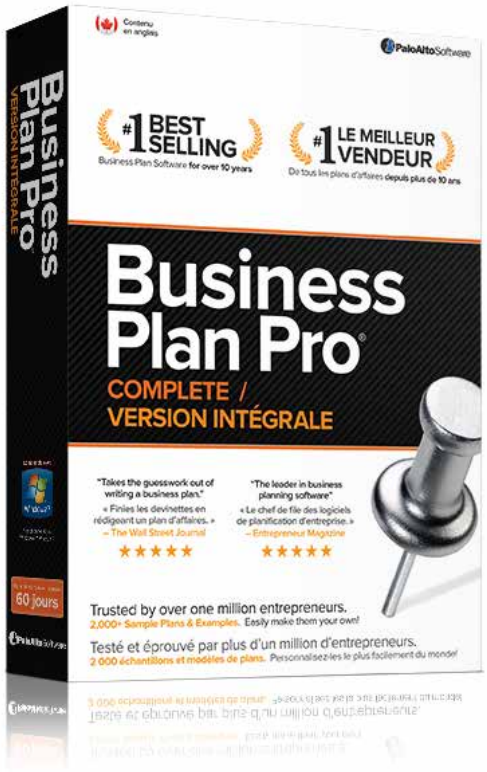
One of the most interesting features we found was the Progress Tracking. Within your created financials of your business plan you can import QuickBooks or Xero data directly in so you can see how your plan compares to your actuals, leaving the guess work out of it. Another feature that excites is the craze of infographics. LivePlan has a Pitch feature that lets you quickly build a one-page infographic that visually represents your business opportunity to a potential investor or partner.

LivePlan has a couple of different paid features. Of course they offer a free trial for 60 days, probably enough time to write your business plan. However if you would like to edit it down the road or pull in financials to make comparisons you will want to commit to the month-to-month plan or take a 40% savings and commit to a year. Month-to-month costs $19.95 (billed monthly) and if you commit to a year you will only pay $11.66 (billed annually).

LivePlan also offers hundreds of legal forms, employee handbook templates and much more. Tools like this can cost hundreds if not thousands in legal fees and cost you plenty of time waiting for responses. Support is provided via phone, online chat or email making it easy to get those questions answered immediately.

We are a huge fan of LivePlan, and they stand out as the best in the business. Easy to use, simple to get started and fun to maintain, the daunting task of starting your business is literally an interview away. What are you waiting for? Get started today by clicking here.





Going to a Conference

Michael Loewenberg
mike@meshbiz.com
blogmeshbiz.com

I build websites using WordPress. This past weekend, I went to WordCamp NYC, a two-day conference of workshops and face-to-face networking attended by WordPress rockstars, programmers, bloggers, designers, etc. It was held at the Brooklyn Marriott and I want to tell you how my Apple products helped me get the most out of my WordCamp experience so you can use some of my techniques to your benefit too.

I live about 35 miles north of NYC so I drove to the Brooklyn Marriott. During the workweek, that car trip can be 2+ hours; on the weekend, it took less than an hour to drive there. I mount my iPhone in my car using a Keno Airframe holder, plug the phone into a car charger and connect it using bluetooth for hands free control. The Keno Airframe attaches to the car's air conditioning vent, swivels for portrait or landscape viewing (useful when the phone's a GPS) and holds the phone great. It's compact and portable so you can take it with you to another car and it works with other phones too. I got mine on Amazon for about $25. Highly recommended!

At the conference, I used my iPad to take notes during the sessions, check my mail, visit websites suggested by the speakers, review issues I have with my website gigs with experts, and keep up with social media. For note taking, I use Noteshelf; I wrote about that in Issue 2 of iBusiness and you can see it on my blog (blog.meshbiz.com). Writing with a stylus on my iPad with the Noteshelf app is a pleasure and is way better for me than typing. I set up a notebook called 'WordCamp'; I went to WordCamp Connecticut in May and I added my NYC info in that notebook. So now I have all the newest WordPress topics in one place for easy review and information retrieval. Noteshelf backs up my notebooks to DropBox in pdf format so I always have access to them.

I had my iPhone with me too, of course, and I used both my iPhone and iPad to check mail, share pics on Instagram and Facebook and check out websites referenced by the speakers. There was free Wi-Fi for all conference attendees but, on occasion, I got a connection busy signal so I turned on cellular service on my iPad to access the net. I have an AT&T iPad 4 128MB and a 250MB per month plan for $14.99. It lets me stay connected wherever I am.

Whenever I travel away from my home or office and know I will be using my iDevices a lot , I carry a portable battery pack. I'm a big fan of New Trent; I have a 12000mAh External Battery charger that can charge both my iPad and iPhone simultaneously. I have seen other external batteries with two ports but they can only charge one device at a time. Highly recommended. I also bought some short cables for the charger so everything is compact and easy to use. Check Amazon for all the New Trent products and Amazon's inexpensive, basic charging cables.

Attending conferences with these tools and techniques ensures that I am location-independent for my business and personal connections.

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SMB

Michael Loewenberg is the president of MESH Business Solutions, Inc., located in New City, New York. MESH builds ecommerce websites and helps small businesses manage their technology infrastructure. Michael writes a Technical Blog that teaches people to be more effective with their technology tools – blogmeshbiz.com You can contact him at mike@meshbiz.com.

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HospitalityApps Review

Creating an inline experience in 2014 becomes more and more based around technology. As we move into a phase where the majority of users own smartphones, companies have become increasingly in tune with adjusting the clientele experience with convenience and information at their fingertips. Showing uniqueness is where some developers might fall short – giving your venue the branding and fingerprint identity that you pay a lot of money to uphold and build.

HospitalityApps is a UK based company that offers an incredible solution based specifically around hospitality which includes restaurant, take-away, nightclubs, bars, pubs, cafes and hotels. They understand the importance of the smartphone and the power it holds for you and your customers. This product is so feature rich that you will have to take a hard look for yourself. We will do our best to showcase some of our favorite features that we could see working in venues that our readers own and operate.

Let's start with the obvious. Customizable menu. Your menu can change as often as the wind creating costs to reprint and inconsistent experiences for your customers. HospitalityApps gives your menu to your customers in their pocket giving them updated information all the time. If your menu changes, they will see it. Mobile ordering allows the customers to place an order directly from their smartphone. Table reservations for as small as two people to as many as you can imagine can, yes, be handled right from the palm of their hand. HospitalityApps gives your customer important information about your venue like GPS directions, one-touch dialing and most importantly special offers to lure your clients to your location.

With all of this data at the fingertips of your users, you can market to them with newsletters; they can share experiences with their friends via social media and SMS. All of this can then be analyzed through feature rich reporting.

Some may suggest that they have invested resources into listing sites where you can easily gain new customers. We would tell you not to stop using those. A product like HospitalityApps is specifically designed for repeat business and encouraging customers to continue using your product with the ease of all they need at their fingertips.

Its exciting to have a product at that you can access and get the information you want. On top of that, which is expected nowadays, is the ability to place orders, make reservations and take advantage of special offers.

For pricing you will need to contact HospitalityApp directly at this link.

MoneyWorks®

Seriously Good Accounting Software

Accounting software has been asked to perform a lot more than just bookkeeping. Over time, and as technology has evolved, we have asked more and more of these powerful financial tools to give us at once information about and snapshots of the health of our organization. And oh, by the way, we want it in our pocket. We don't want accounting software anymore, we want business information software that is robust and user friendly. One thing we don't mention as often as we should is flexibility. What happens when your company grows? What happens when you quickly add 50 employees? Does your software grow with you? Do you have to go back to the drawing board and pay thousands of dollars to rework integration and upgrades?

Cognito Software, based out of New Zealand offers a product they claim solves all of these problems. With MoneyWorks, it was designed for maximum flexibility and interoperability. The key is to structure your business the way you want and let MoneyWorks adapt to you including all of the reporting you could ever want.

Lets take a look at some of the features that are offered.

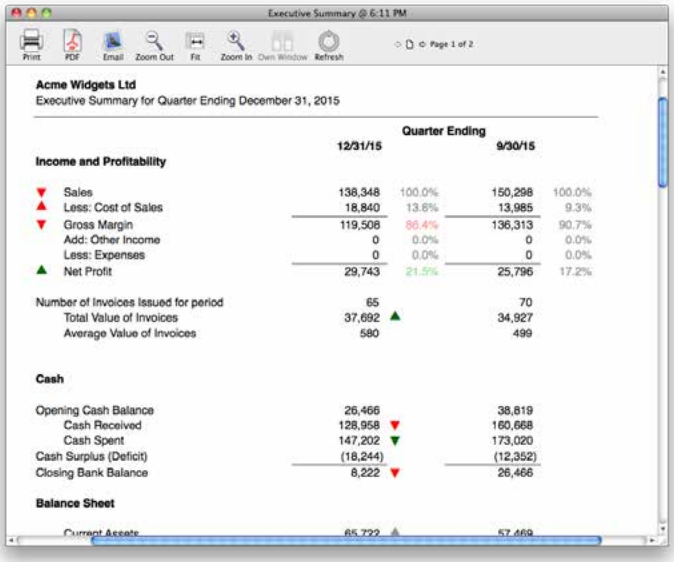
MoneyWorks offers a lot of the same features other competing software does. How much can you really adjust accounting, it is what it is. That being said, MoneyWorks truly excels in its scalability with unlimited bank accounts, point and click reconciliation and cash flow reporting. They also offer a MoneyWorks Gold package that provides powerful sub ledger capabilities allowing you to break down things into departments and see your company in a totally different light. This allows you to make decisions without guessing or extra work with custom reporting.

Within the MoneyWorks Gold package you can handle sales orders and quoting allowing you to provide information based around backorders or generate purchase orders from sales orders. GST/VAT tax tracking is made easy and MoneyWorks also supports North American tax structures.

MoneyWorks Gold also boasts a robust accounts receivable and accounts payable structure that give you full control over monitoring each side of the business. Built in is a contact management system that allows you to store details of customers and suppliers including names and addresses, phone numbers, email and web addresses. You can, from there, graph sales and purchases by customers. Inventory is even controlled from MoneyWorks Gold and gives you full control over every possible feature that surrounds products and services you sell.

Other features that MoneyWorks boasts is multicurrency, custom forms, advanced networking and even scripting which gives you the ability to automate repetitive tasks.

MoneyWorks comes with a 45 day trial and for 45 days it is well worth the try! To purchase you will need to determine if you want MoneyWorks Cashbook, MoneyWorks Express, MoneyWorks Gold or MoneyWorks Datacentre. You can reach out to MoneyWorks here for more detailed consultation.


Executive Summary @ 6:11 PM

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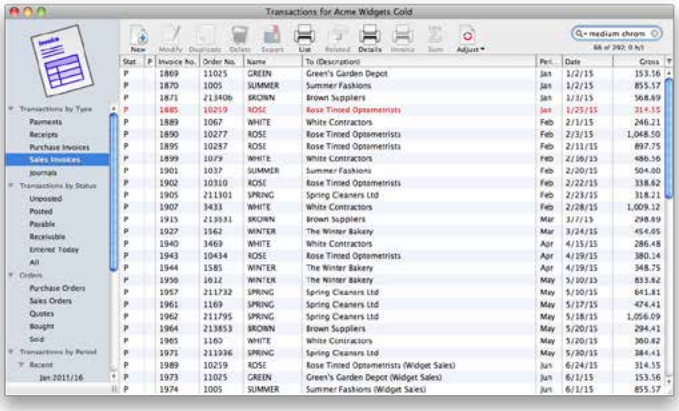
Acme Widgets Ltd
Executive Summary for Quarter Ending December 31, 2015

	Quarter Ending 12/31/15		9/30/15	
Income and Profitability				
▼ Sales	138,348	100.0%	150,298	100.0%
▲ Less: Cost of Sales	18,840	13.6%	13,985	9.3%
▼ Gross Margin	119,508	86.4%	136,313	90.7%
Add: Other Income	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Less: Expenses	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
▲ Net Profit	29,743	21.5%	25,796	17.2%
Number of Invoices Issued for period	65		70	
Total Value of Invoices	37,692 ▲		34,927	
Average Value of Invoices	580		499	
Cash				
Opening Cash Balance	26,466		38,819	
Cash Received	128,958 ▼		160,668	
Cash Spent	147,202 ▼		173,020	
Cash Surplus (Deficit)	(18,244)		(12,352)	
Closing Bank Balance	8,222 ▼		26,466	
Balance Sheet				
Current Assets	65,722 ▲		57,469	

Scripts

Activate Deactivate Log File

POS_Rounding
Auto_Make_Journal
Update_BOM_Costs
NoNegStock
Apply_Landing_Costs
Make_PO_Item
Pick_List
Utilities
Update_Currency_Rates


Transactions for Acme Widgets Gold

Stat.	P	Invoice No.	Order No.	Name	To (Description)	Peri.	Date	Gross
P		1869	11025	GREEN	Green's Garden Depot	Jan	1/2/15	153.56
P		1870	1005	SUMMER	Summer Fashions	Jan	1/2/15	855.57
P		1871	213406	BROWN	Brown Suppliers	Jan	1/3/15	568.69
P		1885	10259	ROSE	Rose Tinted Optometrists	Jan	1/25/15	314.55
P		1889	1067	WHITE	White Contractors	Feb	2/1/15	246.21
P		1890	10277	ROSE	Rose Tinted Optometrists	Feb	2/3/15	1,048.50
P		1895	10287	ROSE	Rose Tinted Optometrists	Feb	2/11/15	697.75
P		1899	1079	WHITE	White Contractors	Feb	2/18/15	486.56
P		1901	1037	SUMMER	Summer Fashions	Feb	2/20/15	504.00
P		1902	10310	ROSE	Rose Tinted Optometrists	Feb	2/22/15	338.62
P		1905	211301	SPRING	Spring Cleaners Ltd	Feb	2/23/15	318.21
P		1907	3431	WHITE	White Contractors	Feb	2/28/15	1,009.12
P		1915	213531	BROWN	Brown Suppliers	Mar	3/7/15	298.69
P		1927	1562	WINTER	The Winter Bakery	Mar	3/24/15	454.65
P		1940	1469	WHITE	White Contractors	Apr	4/15/15	286.48
P		1943	10434	ROSE	Rose Tinted Optometrists	Apr	4/19/15	380.14
P		1944	1585	WINTER	The Winter Bakery	Apr	4/19/15	348.75
P		1956	1612	WINTER	The Winter Bakery	May	5/10/15	833.62
P		1957	211732	SPRING	Spring Cleaners Ltd	May	5/10/15	641.81
P		1961	1169	SPRING	Spring Cleaners Ltd	May	5/17/15	474.41
P		1962	211795	SPRING	Spring Cleaners Ltd	May	5/18/15	1,056.09
P		1964	213853	BROWN	Brown Suppliers	May	5/20/15	294.41
P		1965	1160	WHITE	White Contractors	May	5/20/15	360.42
P		1971	211936	SPRING	Spring Cleaners Ltd	May	5/30/15	384.41
P		1989	10259	ROSE	Rose Tinted Optometrists (Widget Sales)	Jun	6/24/15	314.55
P		1973	11025	GREEN	Green's Garden Depot (Widget Sales)	Jun	6/1/15	153.56
P		1974	1005	SUMMER	Summer Fashions (Widget Sales)	Jun	6/1/15	855.57

Meet Kevin Porter

General Manager of Toronto Don Valley Hotel & Suites

Many people enjoy the Toronto Don Valley Hotel because it allows them to explore the heart of Toronto and return to the comfort of a hotel just outside of the hustle and bustle. Kevin Porter has been using Daylite for three years to help manage the hotel and increase efficiency. We asked Kevin more about how he and his team members have been using Daylite.

"Daylite helps to teach people better time management, utilizing the schedule, assigning tasks, and coordinating projects."

Why We Needed Daylite

We started using Daylite to incorporate all the different components and systems we use in the hotel. We needed a better way to manage our client database, but we also needed a better way to manage our scheduling and manage our meeting spaces. Daylite was the solution we found that could incorporate all three. Over the years, hotels pick up bits and pieces of various systems. Daylite is a way to combine all the bits and pieces into one app.

What We Use Daylite For

Assigning tasks to different employees is a big part of what we use Daylite for. For example, I use it a lot to assign tasks to managers. It's a central location to keep all of our clients from sales, our vendors, and anybody else that is of relevance to the hotel. There are a lot of interactions these days, so it's is a good way to keep your information in a central location that is safe and not all over the place on individual computers. Then of course, there's scheduling. It's good for everyone, from a time management perspective to be able to view schedules for each other. Before scheduling a meeting with someone, you can see if they already have something on the go or if the meeting room you want to use is available.

We help small businesses grow with great Mac, iPhone and iPad apps.

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Flexibility with Multiple Users

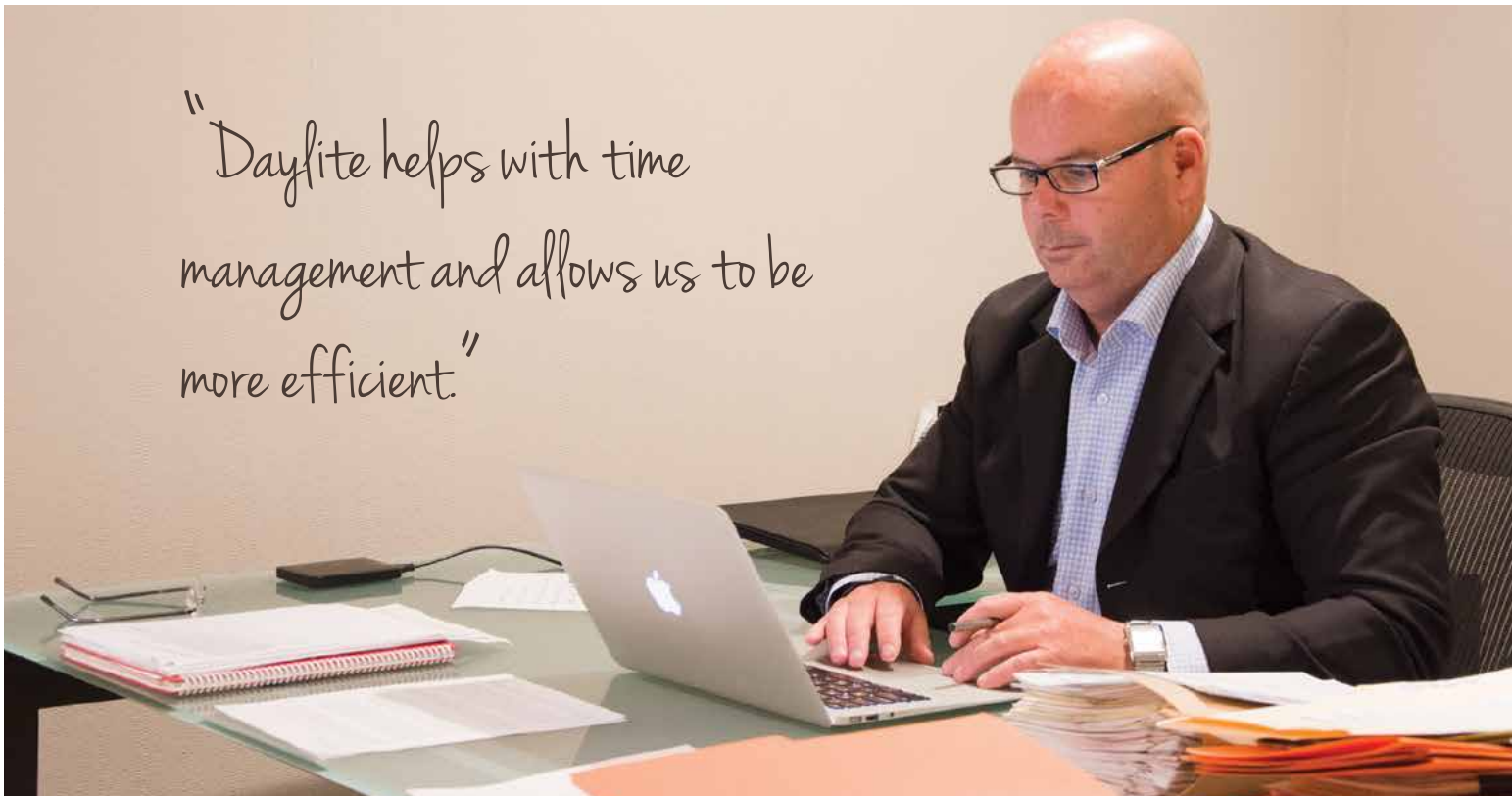
We have 13 people using Daylite on our team and everybody has their own level of use. For some, they only use about one tenth of its capacity and others use it in more detail. It all depends on the involvement of the person using it.

How Daylite Helps Our Business

Daylite has helped our business by being able to amalgamate everything into one location. We don't have to go searching for things or chasing people down for information. Daylite helps to teach people better time management, utilizing the schedule, assigning tasks, and coordinating projects. A few of us use Daylite for internal projects as well, such as website development. We can link all the related people, tasks and appointments to a project and organize ourselves through our project steps.

Exceeding Our Expectations

It certainly does more than I expected. We've been using Daylite for three years now. I would recommend it to others in the industry and I do. There's a lot of companies that aren't using anything for time management. Daylite helps with time management and allows us to be more efficient.



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The Shore of Opportunity…or Destruction

Michael Muhney
viporbit.com
@MikeMuhney

Every entrepreneur and business owner out there knows this truth: Customers are the lifeblood of success. It is probably fair to say that there is a mental awareness of this but all too often we become complacent to this truth. Finding and keeping customers can mean the difference between handicapping your business, growing it, or risking losing it altogether.

It's been said that to discover new lands one must first lose sight of the shore. You'll never know exactly what waits across the expanse until you dare let go of the known and familiar. Imagine your business as a ship, navigating seas of opportunity. Now imagine that sea is filled with a host of potential customers. And perhaps by crossing those vast, uncharted waters, you may discover new lands. These everyday opportunities are simply waiting to be discovered.

Imagine those prospects and customers (with a particular leaning toward the customers) as part of an ocean containing vast numbers of people. Sometimes, leaving the shoreline means departing from the known "status quo" attitude and performance, with regards to your customers. Staying at that shoreline can be comfortable, but it can also result in complacency. Just as the sands shift with each wave, customers shift as well. But there are ways to adapt and even anticipate these shifts.

One way to deal with those shifts is to address dissatisfied customers. Herein lies either the shore of opportunity or of destruction. If you look at it from a logical perspective, you may take one path. But if you engage from a heartfelt place, you may take a completely different tact, perhaps a better one. It is with this choice that the vastness of the ocean's possibilities and potential can be truly discovered but only if you are willing to leave the "safety" of the shore as you now know it.

By venturing out into the unknown with the right "heart" can your efforts and actions turn this type of customer interaction around and create an even stronger connection than those enjoy with your best customers. In other words, you have an opportunity to demonstrate your passion, sincerity, concern and authenticity by helping to transform their negative experience into a positive one. Sometimes all it requires is simply reaching out to them personally that makes all the difference.

As businesspeople, we've all dealt with an occasional angry customer. Look at it from the other side—each one of us has likely been a dissatisfied customer, at one time or another, too. As the owner or CEO, how often do you make it a point to purposefully contact those irate customers? In today's social media connected world, those people are more likely than not to post an ugly tweet, or status update on Facebook.

My team and I choose to go the extra mile by contacting every dissatisfied customer, whenever possible, in order to demonstrate our attitude of genuine concern for them and their experience. I myself seek to connect the old-fashioned way, by either phone or in person. The results of those kinds of efforts often produce a complete turnaround. I've even received apologies and revisions of customer reviews raving about this personal touch. In today's world so few people demonstrate that they truly care and are there to help each and every customer achieve success with and through the use of your product or service.

Logic may weigh the time and effort to reach out to those few complainers and determine it's not worth it. However, care and concern for individuals fosters a different approach—one that reaches out for the benefit of that customer, not just to save face. Dare to leave the comfortable shore of the known and venture into the deeper waters and help turn the tide from dissatisfied customers into champions for your business.

SMB

Mike Muhney, co-inventor of ACT!, is now the co-founder of vipOrbit, creators of mobile contact manager apps for iPhone, iPad & Mac. www.viporbit.com

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AccountEdge

Reading the bios of the founders of this company makes you want to be involved with whatever they are doing. I know companies are getting more creative and "loose" with their bio descriptions but these guys have it together and look like they are having fun making a product that quite frankly, isn't that fun to typically use. Acclivity is a software development company based out of Rockaway, NJ and they have 50 employees that service over 100,000 customers. Impressed? They offer 9 different products however we are going to focus on just one of them. As edgy as their website and bios are, so is their software – which we love. Accounting is loved by few but mandatory by all. We understand that but how do you make it palatable? How do you make it so everyone wants to be a part of it and also pull data that is usable on a day-to-day basis?

Meet AccountEdge Pro. A small business accounting software platform for desktop, mobile and cloud – Mac and Windows! The good news is that I don't think we missed any device there. Whether you need sales tracking, purchase tracking, run payroll, track and build inventory, bill for time or manage contacts AccountEdge Pro nails it in every capacity. Claimed to be the most powerful Mac accounting software on the planet lets take a look at some of the NEW features this year.

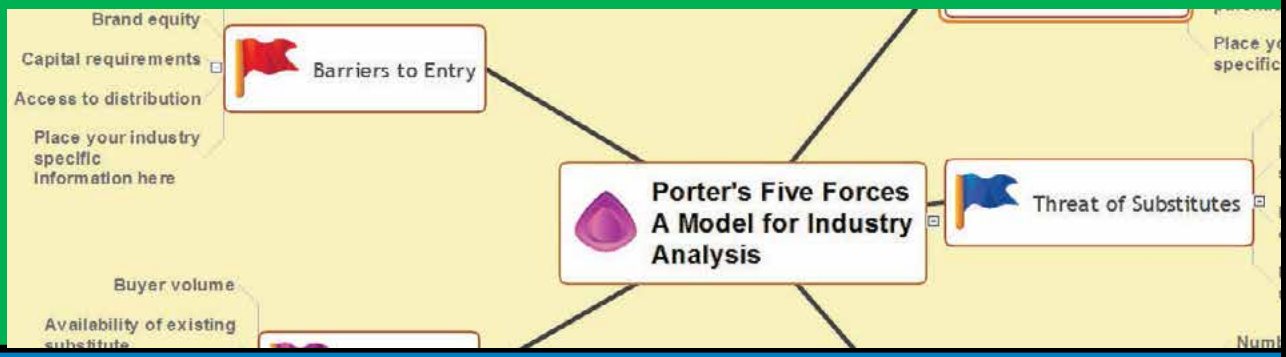
AccountEdge has built a platform that seamlessly works with Shopify. If you are an online business that uses Shopify, look no further for managing everything top to bottom financially. You can customize the look for your website with a totally flexible design and start selling in minutes. You can sync with AccountEdge by sending products and images to Shopify with AccountEdge Connector ($10. per month). Another exciting NEW feature is AccountEdge Cloud that lets you and your employees access your business from wherever you are. From entering invoices, orders and quotes to applying time to a payroll category, AccountEdge Cloud has you covered.

You may be familiar with QuickBooks and how customers can share their data with their accountants making it easier around tax season for everyone to have all of the information necessary for our favorite governmental department. AccountEdge has a similar feature. In fact, as a customer, AccountEdge will send a FREE copy of AccountEdge, Mac or Windows, to your accountant so they will be on the same page as you at all times.

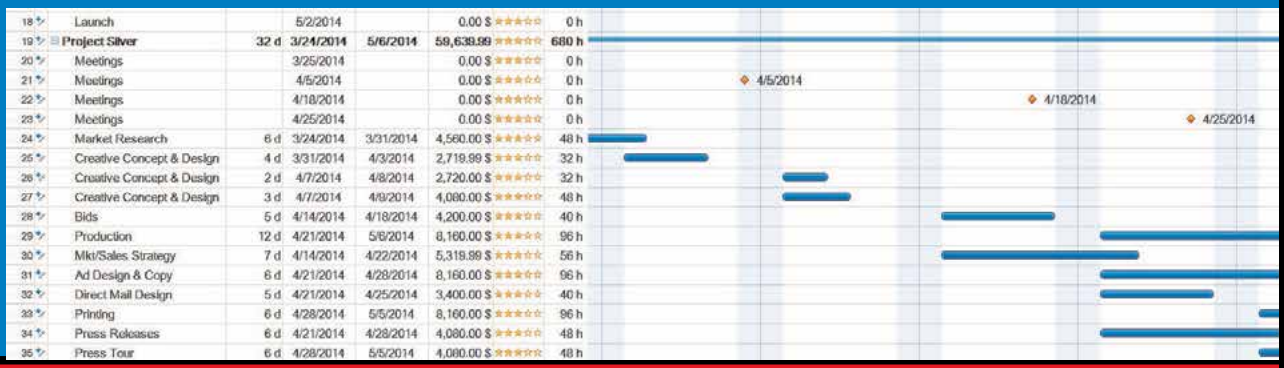
AccountEdge Basic is a stripped down version that is offered for really small accounting needs and costs $99 for a single user. The AccountEdge Pro software that we have been discussing costs $399 for a new user and both offer a free 30 day trial. There are a multitude of add-ons including the AccountEdge Cloud which starts at $10/month for a single user and payroll options that start at $21/month. If you need to accept credit cards, AccountEdge can help you there as well. Click here for information regarding costs. You can also order checks and forms from their website making AccountEdge a one-stop shop.

You may think that all accounting software is similar. I had that same line of thought as well. However, AccountEdge Pro challenges that thought process with a Mac-esque interface that is easy to use, easy to setup and extremely well supported. For 30 days of your life you can try it for free and if you have to account, you may as well try AccountEdge Pro.

ConceptDraw MINDMAP

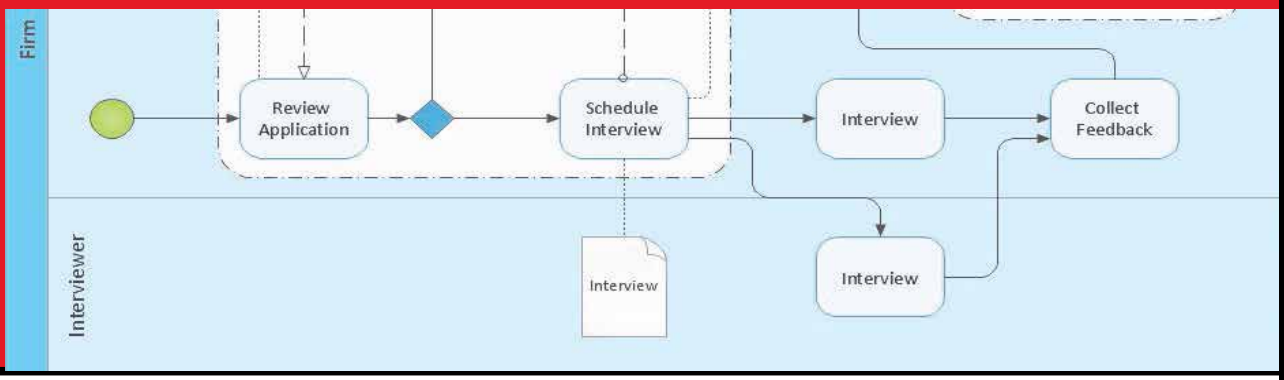


ConceptDraw PROJECT



18	Launch		5/2/2014		0.00 $	0 h
19	Project Silver	32 d	3/24/2014	5/6/2014	59,639.99	680 h
20	Meetings		3/25/2014		0.00 $	0 h
21	Meetings		4/5/2014		0.00 $	0 h
22	Meetings		4/18/2014		0.00 $	0 h
23	Meetings		4/25/2014		0.00 $	0 h
24	Market Research	6 d	3/24/2014	3/31/2014	4,560.00 $	48 h
25	Creative Concept & Design	4 d	3/31/2014	4/3/2014	2,719.99 $	32 h
26	Creative Concept & Design	2 d	4/7/2014	4/8/2014	2,720.00 $	32 h
27	Creative Concept & Design	3 d	4/7/2014	4/9/2014	4,080.00 $	48 h
28	Bids	5 d	4/14/2014	4/18/2014	4,200.00 $	40 h
29	Production	12 d	4/21/2014	5/6/2014	8,160.00 $	96 h
30	Mkt/Sales Strategy	7 d	4/14/2014	4/22/2014	5,319.99 $	56 h
31	Ad Design & Copy	6 d	4/21/2014	4/28/2014	8,160.00 $	96 h
32	Direct Mail Design	5 d	4/21/2014	4/25/2014	3,400.00 $	40 h
33	Printing	6 d	4/28/2014	5/5/2014	8,160.00 $	96 h
34	Press Releases	6 d	4/21/2014	4/28/2014	4,080.00 $	48 h
35	Press Tour	6 d	4/28/2014	5/5/2014	4,080.00 $	48 h

ConceptDraw PRO



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ConceptDraw Office

APG CASH DRAWER®

I have to admit; I never thought I would write a review on a physical cash drawer or for that matter a plethora of cash drawers. In fact, I figured they were probably all the same. They hold cash, right? And as they say, cash is king. For those of you that are decision makers when it comes to finding the right cash drawer, you have come to the right place. I got to thinking about this review further and realized that some, or hopefully all, businesses that require a cash drawer open and close it quite frequently. Due to the fact that it is a mechanical product, it is obviously important to secure the right cash drawer for your needs. Who wants to maintenance a cash drawer during the busiest time of your day? Reliability is the most important feature you could look for. We have to assume that integration into your POS is a given priority but opening and closing the drawer all day has to work, period.

Enter APG Cash Drawer. For more than 35 years, this Minneapolis, MN based company has been designing and delivering cash drawers with a variety of size, color, interface and integration options. With security and consistent functionality, APG Cash Drawer has provided the finest solution in the industry and perfected it. We won't go through every last option they offer but we will hit on some of the high points so you can dive deeper for your needs.

Let's start with the Series 4000 cash drawer. This is the ultimate heavy duty cash drawer built to perform and last, leaving you worry free throughout the day. Industrial strength ball bearing slides ensure effortless performance and a proven four-lock assembly puts security on "lock-down". As with a lot of their drawers, sizing, color and customization options can be achieved right on their site sending the specification over for a quote. See here for this specific model.

As move down the list, the Series 100 cash drawer offers a smaller size but will not compromise efficiency. Sometimes smaller is a good thing, giving you more workspace on your counter. Built with the same full till product in mind, this cash drawer has steel ball bearing slides and a robust latching mechanism. The Series 100 has been proven beyond 4 million cycles. That's circulating a lot of cash. Find a customized solution here.

Here is a solution you may not see as often in your everyday retail experience. The Flip-Top provides a small footprint cash repository solution. With a vertical bill storage solution, size isn't compromised and provides an ideal product for clerks seated or standing at the point of sale. Check out customization options here.

Vasario offers a cost effective choice without reducing features and quality. Each drawer is competitively priced and includes multifunction locks and drawer status reporting. A variety of models are available by visiting here.

APG Cash Drawers offers customizable solutions for just about any scenario. If you are looking for the best way to secure your cash and let it last a lifetime, be sure to check them out for more information and quoting.

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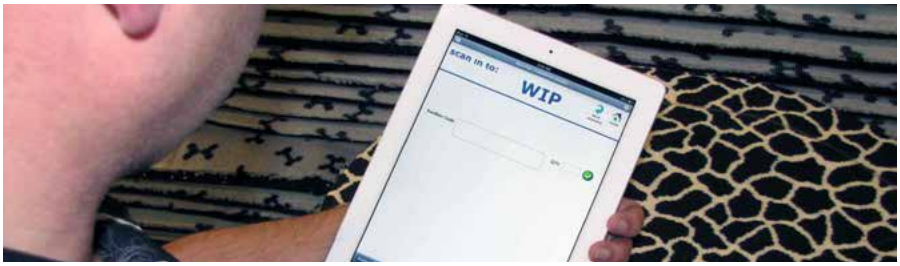

West Paw Design

West Paw Design in Bozeman, Montana, makers of eco-friendly toys, beds and apparel for four-legged friends, has discovered a dramatic new manufacturing productivity tool – FileMaker Go, the best-selling business database app for iPad and iPhone. FileMaker supports the company's mission of creating safe, fun and durable products for dogs and cats, while also contributing to the "big picture," environmentally and economically.

The entire business runs on FileMaker software integrating iPads, desktops and servers. With FileMaker, West Paw manages everything from order entry to purchasing, raw and finished inventory tracking, human resources, overseas tax calculations and shipping. At West Paw's 31,000-foot production facility, 48 employees provide a potent example of how local manufacturers can thrive in a competitive global economy, supporting President Obama's goal of doubling U.S. exports by 2015. The company exports to 28 countries and continues to grow at more than 10% per year. Montana also deemed West Paw as the state's Exporter of the Year.

Green is good

With sustainability in mind, West Paw uses organic, recycled and recyclable materials in its sewn and injection-molded products and streamlines its operations. It has reduced its environmental impact with a state-of-the-art, energy-efficient facility that uses Lean manufacturing, the "just in time" production system Toyota created to identify and eliminate waste. Lean manufacturing increases efficiency by optimizing the flow of materials and respecting individuals' input and talents – a factor evident in the effusive pride of employees and their pets, the company's official product testers.

Beyond Lean, West Paw realized that it could further increase manufacturing efficiency by going mobile with its FileMaker database solutions. On the production floor, raw materials advance from one station to the next in tote-bins or "kits" for sewing, injection molding or further assembly. For years, inventory managers carried clipboards, jotting down each kit's contents and the raw materials consumed, tracking everything on paper for subsequent database re-entry. Managers carried bins of work in progress from station to station. When products went into finished goods inventory, customer service representatives sometimes jogged back to the shipping dock to let specialists know that a rush order was ready to go.

But today, iPads equipped with FileMaker Go automate the manufacturing process. As bins go through production, employees scan barcodes at each step using tiny, keyfob-sized Bluetooth scanners attached to their iPads. The FileMaker database, accessed on iPads and hosted in the back office, automatically deducts raw materials from inventory, advances kits to the next stage of production, moves products into finished goods inventory and alerts specialists when products are ready for packing and shipping. Then the production process kicks off again as new orders arrive.

Recent Exporter of the Year

At a time when many American manufacturing jobs are migrating overseas, West Paw is as busy and productive as ever. All products are 100% "Made in the USA," including the super-durable Zogoflex material used in West Paw's virtually indestructible toys.

"Governors, senators and other dignitaries often tour our facility to see firsthand how West Paw exemplifies the green growth and aggressive exporting needed from small- and medium-sized businesses to reinvigorate the U.S. economy," says West Paw Design President Spencer Williams.

Staying fleet of foot

Although the new FileMaker manufacturing system is sophisticated, it did not take long to develop. IT Support Specialist Chad Oster created FileMaker Go solution in-house in a few weeks, starting from scratch. He rolled out the initial database in one week, and then created scripts required for automating details such as work-in-progress inventory calculation.

"Imagine mobilizing an enterprise resource planning/manufacturing resource planning (ERP/MRP) system on the iPad in weeks, including everything from inventory tracking to shipping," says Oster. "This type of ambitious business and IT feat is not only possible – it's simple and fast with FileMaker Go for iPad."

According to Williams, FileMaker Go is having a tremendous impact on productivity and efficiency. This includes saving the company hundreds of thousands of dollars per year in staff hours that can be reassigned to more meaningful tasks.

Management reporting and visibility have leapt to new levels. Williams and his team have an instant view into metrics that were almost impossible to track in the past. They can see if there are delays or issues at one manufacturing station, dissect and solve the problem based on employee input and revise the FileMaker database to automate the improved business process. That would take many months of software customization using an off-the-shelf ERP or MRP solution.

"From a high-level view, the USA needs to create jobs and be more economically viable in the world market," says Williams. "Using FileMaker Go for iPad, we can eliminate time wasted on non-value added activities, free up employees for more meaningful work and add manufacturing jobs – not jobs involving the drudgery of moving materials around, but jobs that allow individuals to genuinely add value based on their own unique expertise."

"Using FileMaker Go for iPad, we can take time that's wasted on non-value added activities, free up employees for more meaningful work and add manufacturing jobs…jobs that allow individuals to genuinely add value based on their own unique expertise."

—Spencer Williams, President, West Paw Design

CREATE A BUZZ WITH VIDEO

Businesses can no longer neglect video as a viable marketing channel if they want to stay competitive. Search engines love video and will usually rank a page higher if it includes a video. Video is a highly effective way to improve consumer interaction and click-throughs and allows you to tap into social media sharing more effectively.

Video empowers companies to tap into the all important human connection factor. Consumers want to see, relate to and ultimately buy from another person. Creating a face for a brand along with engaging content simply allows companies to compete on an entirely new scale.

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Microsoft Scores A Winner With Remote Desktop For iPad

Rene Siegal
siegelrj@mac.com

Late last year Microsoft rolled out its Remote Desktop app (MS RD Client) for iOS which creates a Remote Desktop connection to a PC or Mac allowing the use of native desktop apps on the iPad through a remote connection. Visio and Project are among my most frequently used apps and not included in MS Office for iPad. My only option to the access native desktop apps on my iPad is through a Remote Desktop (RD).

I tried many earlier RD clients for the iPad. Each had nice features, but over time proved too slow and/or too cumbersome; most had rendering issues, many limitations and high subscription fees. I downloaded MS RD Client, optimistic that this could be the RD to exceed my previous experiences. The Microsoft brand was also a powerful draw, conferring instant credibility on the app. I was not disappointed.

Configuring the app was challenging but well worth the time and effort. My issues included: 1) connectivity issues; 2) a PC Norton Internet Security conflict and 3) finding the right computer name to allow MS RD Client to connect to a PC with multiple user accounts. The online documentation for both MS RD Client and the PC Remote Desktop was clear and well organized; causes for the problems were easily identified. It was a matter of fixing what I could and finding help for what I could not handle alone.

The connectivity issue was quickly resolved by entering the IPv4 address in lieu of a computer name and creating a gateway using the IPv4 default gateway. Both were found in Network and Sharing by tapping the active network and accessing "Details" from the pop-up screen. This worked for both my work and personal networks.

The second problem was MS RD Client's inability to recognize the PC to establish a connection. The Help link in MS RD Client routed me to on-line FAQs for iOS. Norton users have to add MS RD Client as a "safe" app to Norton's Smart Firewall. Unlike older Norton versions, adding "safe" apps requires technical support for most users. Norton seems to be protecting its apps from setting changes by end users. An agent at Norton's 24/7 online chat accessed my PC remotely with my permission and quickly added Remote Desktop to the Norton firewall settings, resolving the firewall issue, allowing my PC to recognize MS RD Client.

The third problem was the inability to log into the PC through MS RD Client. The documentation for setting up a Remote Desktop under User Accounts indicated that I may not have the correct user name. The computer name has to be entered correctly or MS RD Client will not work. This took a bit of trial and error and tweaking settings.

My PC has multiple accounts—work and personal. "Manage computer" on my PC revealed both of the PC's "real" user names--work and personal--which I added to the PC Remote Desktop Group. I then set up two Remote Desktops in MS RD Client making sure the user names matched the ones on the PC for both user accounts exactly. I then logged into my work desktop from home, activated my VPN and tapped the "Home" Remote Desktop in MS RD client on the iPad. Success!

My PC's work desktop appeared on my iPad with all of my work resources accesible. My network shared drives were visible on my iPad through MS RD Client finally allowing me to edit documents on my iPad using native apps without downloading files. Our corporate policy allows limited local computer file storage, impacting what I could work on remotely on my iPad, and when. I could now work at home from my iPad in the peace and quiet I don't often enjoy in an energetic work environment and, following the same process at work, I could work remotely anywhere on campus.

Cisco VPN Users: Cisco restricts the use of its VPN client directly from an RD client; it even restricts RD access when the VPN is first activated on the PC. MS RD Client changes this dynamic. Providing the VPN is first activated on the PC, MS RD Client for iPad is able to access the PC through the VPN. Kudos Microsoft!

Most corporate users will experience "rolling" IP addresses, changed at random intervals. When using MS RD Client at work, I first check my PC IPv4 address and IPv4 gateway, make the necessary changes on the iPad and am up and running in no time.

PERFORMANCE: No Remote Desktop client will be lightning fast or without some lag or stutter; MS RD Client is the fastest and smoothest I've used; it does an excellent job of minimizing all of these issues. The time it takes to open and render files from my home network is much faster and using native Microsoft apps require much less effort than with prior RD apps. The high speed network at work improves the experience.

Productivity may be affected by having to locate and move the on-screen arrow to highlight, select or activate content or features making it necessary to become very familiar with MS RD Client's many capabilities to improve user efficiency. Using keyboard shortcuts, knowing which ones will work with Bluetooth keyboards, and using a stylus speeds things up considerably. MS RD Client's virtual keyboard faithfully replicates a PC keyboard and includes a pop-up "right-click" menu; the entire keyboard pops up from the top of the display; it minimizes easily and stays hidden when not in use. Many of the virtual keyboard's features make it easier to use native apps that rely heavily on drag and drop and resizing functions such as Visio and other drawing apps.

Overall, I am very satisfied with this app. I still travel with a laptop that connects to all of my work resources remotely through a VPN because both the PC and the iPad have to be connected to the same network to recognize each other. This is easier with thin and light UltraBooks or a MacBook Air. Availability of Web-based resources and cloud storage obviates the need to carry computer peripherals that used to weigh down laptop bags of most road warriors. Mobility gets easier by the year.

Killer app? In my opinion, MS RD Client comes very close. It really comes down to user preference and perceived experience. Mobile professionals will benefit from having MS RD Client on their iOS devices and it will be a game changer for many. MS RD Client is definitely a game changer for me. Those looking for perfection will be disappointed. A Remote Desktop that really works and is fast, smooth and reliable is important; perfection is not. MS RD Client simply works.

SMB

Rene Siegel is a research administrator at a major hospital where she is responsible for the day to day operations of two clinical imaging research programs. She has been using mobile technology since 1994, and has contributed to FoxPop.com (a UK-based user oriented website).

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