

4 ways small businesses can use Microsoft mobile technologies to get ahead

REDMOND, Wash. – March 31, 2014 – Mobile devices have changed the way we work in ways that would have been inconceivable just a few years ago. As the world changes, these new devices and services enable businesses to compete more effectively, make the most of their resources and keep customers happy. This is why small businesses — particularly those still on Windows XP and Office 2003 — should consider an [upgrade to Windows 8.1 and Office 365](#) today.

Ten years ago, social media didn't exist, work happened at your desk, smartphones were not all that "smart," and it was common for small businesses to use a fax machine for document sharing or rely heavily on paper to keep their businesses running. In addition, meetings were most likely done in-person with colleagues sitting in the same office.

Fast-forward to 2014. An office is no longer one single place — instead, it can be a coffee shop, a seat on the train or even the couch. Through tablets, smartphones and PCs, business can be done from anywhere, and colleagues are meeting virtually and working together across multiple time zones.

In this new world of work, there's a big gap in performance between small businesses that embrace new technology and those that don't. Small businesses using outdated technology are actually at risk of being left behind: Research by the Boston Consulting Group found that small businesses that are leaders in technology adoption perform significantly better than their peers. The study showed that tech-savvy small businesses increased annual revenues 15 percent faster and created jobs almost twice as fast, compared with those with lower levels of technology adoption.

The same research showed that 88 percent of small businesses believed that new technologies, such as mobile, would help their businesses. Forty-five percent of respondents are using smartphones for business today, compared with 20 percent in 2010.

"We live in a connected world, and today more than ever, speed and efficiency are top competitive differentiators. Advances in technology like mobility help small businesses compete with large companies without spending an arm and a leg," said Thomas Hansen, vice president of Worldwide Small and Medium Business, Microsoft Corp. "Small businesses now have access to technology that used to be only available to big enterprises. It's an exciting time to be a small-business owner."

By upgrading to more current software and services, such as Windows 8.1 and Microsoft Office 365, small businesses can tap into the power of mobile technology to connect and collaborate anywhere, gaining an advantage on the competition. Here are four key ways:

- **Your office is everywhere.** Connect face-to-face with colleagues and customers all over the world by using technologies such as Skype and Microsoft Lync.
- **Go paperless.** Sign and approve invoices on-the-go from a smartphone or tablet by opening links with Web-based solutions such as Microsoft Office 365 or SharePoint and using a stylus.
- **Stay connected.** Share calendars with colleagues through tools such as Office 365 to make it easy to connect.
- **Review documents faster.** Use Office 365 in the cloud to edit proposals and other documents remotely while avoiding version control issues.

Beyond the obvious benefits of mobile technologies, small businesses that continue to rely on outdated software, such as Windows XP and Office 2003, risk increased IT costs, unsecured technology environments and more. In fact, after more than a decade, Microsoft will end support for Windows XP and Office 2003 on April 8, 2014, so it's important that small businesses consider upgrading soon to avoid putting their companies at risk.

How to get started

To get up to speed in the new mobile world of work, small businesses should begin planning their switch to current technology now. Microsoft provides several free resources to help businesses get started — from assessing their technology needs and what solutions will best meet their business needs to finding a partner that can help them make the transition. For more information, visit the [XP end of support page](#).