



Using Technology to drive growth in the small business

“In today’s cost-conscious environment, technology may be the best partner of all for smaller firms. Whether it is a website, a piece of business management software or a powerful new computer, technology can support a host of core activities. But just as with staffing questions, technology needs to be carefully considered and managed to generate a maximum return on investment.” Comments Martin Smith of C2 Networks in Guildford. Martin also gives a few simple guidelines when the business owner is considering spending on technology –

- **Use technology to ease your load** – technology can’t ignite growth or solve all your growth problems. Yet as part of an integrated expansion strategy, it can provide the extra edge a growing business needs. What you need is software designed to automate, simplify and expedite things.
- **Choose carefully** – beware you don’t get carried away. It’s a fallacy that all processes need to be automated. Comparison shopping is important, look for vendors that offer expandable and scalable products that can grow with you.
- **Practice smart computing** - Technology is only as reliable as the people using it. Put in place procedures for securing your data from outside eyes and equipment failure. If you are going to rely on technology and you don’t have the discipline for multiple back ups – your ability to survive is limited. One hard disk crash can put you out of business.
- **Look at outsourcing** – Many businesses tend to err on the side of doing too much in-house. Even if you think it makes sense for an essential piece of software to be written in-house, you may not have factored in the cost of maintaining and updating the software as time goes by. Ask yourself two questions, will it take you less time, effort and cost to manage the outsourcing relationship than it would to complete the task in-house? Is the product or activity you are thinking of outsourcing so far outside of your business that mastering it won’t advance your core competence and strategy? If you answer ‘yes’ then outsourcing is likely to be the right answer for you.
- **Drive a hard bargain** – Much technology doesn’t come at a set price, particularly when you need customisation or installation services. Don’t be afraid to shop around. Be a good consumer and get multiple quotes.
- **Use what you buy** – Once you’ve paid good money for a new software application or printer, use your investment to it’s maximum potential. Get to know it’s capabilities – e.g. accounting software – it keeps the books but it can also discover trends in customer payments, allowing you to predict cashflow in the near future.

C2 Networks specialises in IT and financial software solutions for businesses, including Customer Relationship Management Software. Contact them on 01483 688145 or email Martin Smith on martin@C2networks.com