



**LOTUS**  
MANAGEMENT  
SERVICES, INC.

# **Small Business Start Up Technology**

*How your small business can leverage  
technology to increase productivity  
and growth.*

# THE ACCIDENTAL ENTREPRENEUR

Since the great recession of 2008 and maybe a bit earlier we have experienced the explosion of the accidental entrepreneur. Experts reason that it could be due to fewer employment options to an increase in lower-cost technology. Many were left with fewer options across the board in just about every industry. People were left with the options of starting a new career or pushing their expertise into a small business. Some picked up part-time employment while they used their entrepreneurial spirit to make ends meet.



Technology has also allowed more people to operate small businesses with less assistance. The birth of the one-man-shop. A smart phone becomes an office in your pocket allowing a person to be out working their craft while they continue to receive phone calls, voicemails, texts, and email. Social media allows us to virtually hang out our shingle and tell hundreds in the time it would take to call just one friend. It is truly the renaissance of individuality.

Like many businesses, Lotus Management Services started out as an accident. Our Senior Systems Engineer hung out in the evening with a former co-worker to assist the new employer utilize technology. The co-worker's employer asked for an invoice and a business was born. That grew and transformed for a decade until another accidental meeting to become Lotus Management Services in January 2012.

Accidental entrepreneurs come from all walks of life and all sorts of industries. Their constants across each small business. They need a product to sell and customers. Those customers have to trust the business and it has to be easy to contact them.

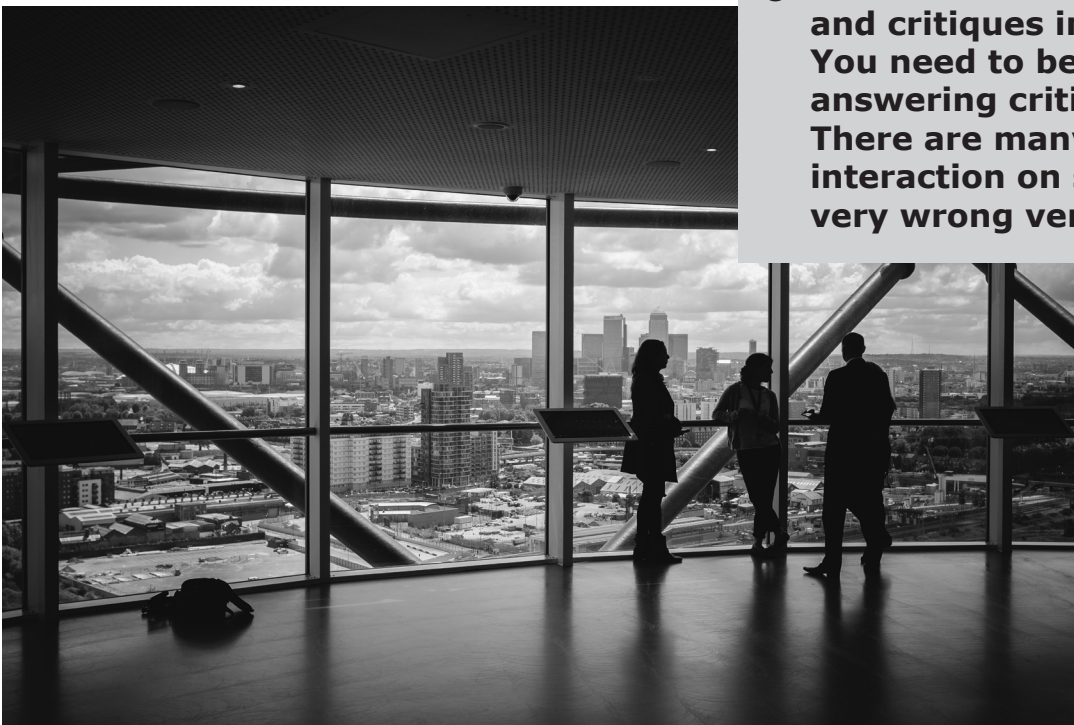
- Lower technology costs
- Work anywhere technology
- Social media advertising

***Accidental entrepreneurs come from all walks of life and all sorts of industries***

# Small Business

You may hear the terms micro business or small business. There is no longer shame in being a small business – we even have a Small Business Saturday every November. People now search out small businesses versus dealing with large chains or conglomerates. It is all in how you make your customers feel. They have to feel comfortable in how established your business is in their community. There are many steps you can take to put your potential customers mind at ease.

- **Communication** - Make it easy to communicate with a real person. Many people do not leave voice mails anymore because they have the feeling that no one is going to listen any ways. How many times have you called someone and left a detailed message just to have them call you back immediately and ask what you need.
- **Personal Response** - Read and personally respond to emails and web site feedback. Just a response to their emails besides an automated response will cause people to fall in love with your business. It shows you care.
- **Social Media** - Answer questions and critiques in social media. You need to be careful when answering critics in social media. There are many stories of business interaction on social media going very wrong very quickly.





# COMMUNICATION IS CRITICAL BUT IMAGE IS EVERYTHING

Design a professional logo. This scares a lot of small business startups but it doesn't have to be the case anymore. You can have a professional logo created on sites such as Fiverr for a very small investment.

The same goes for business cards. Have your business cards designed and printed by a professional. Again sites such as Fiverr will allow you to create a stunning business card for a minimum cash outlay. You can have your cards printed through your local office supply store or one of many online specialty shops.

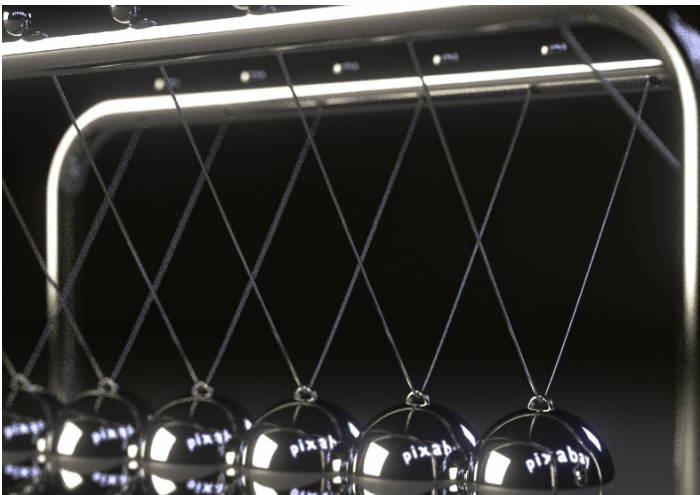
Nothing says new startup like a Gmail or Yahoo email address. A domain can be purchased for your business for just under \$15.00 per year. Though it is getting

- **Professional logo and business cards**
- **Avoid free email accounts such as Google and Yahoo**
- **Avoid amateur phone messages**

tougher to find a good domain with a little ingenuity you can find something that works. Be sure to pay close attention to your domain. Companies have discovered this the hard way such a Pen Island, Experts Exchange, and others. (Take a moment to squish those words to together in your mind with dot com at the end) A professional email account that includes email, calendar, and contact manager along with smartphone sync costs just a few dollars a month.

***penisland.com***  
***expertsexchange.com***

Funny outgoing voice mail messages can be just that, but usually not for a business. People expect someone to answer the phone professionally or to be presented with an automated menu with connection options. It wasn't long ago that only big businesses could afford full-featured telephone systems. Now a one-person shop can have all of those features for not much more than the cost of a local telephone line. Look for plans that include unlimited local and long distance calling. Be sure to use a system that will allow caller ID to show your main business telephone number when you call.



# EMAIL SOLUTIONS

Microsoft Exchange has been the gold-standard for business email for nearly two decades. Exchange is server software that receives, stores, and delivers email to programs such as Outlook as well as smartphones. It also manages calendar appointments and contacts.

***Not many years ago it would cost a business about \$25,000 to get started***

Not many years ago it would cost a business about \$25,000 to get started with a minimal Exchange installation. A business would need to purchase a server, fixed IP address Internet service, and a handful of software licenses. Then an engineer had to be hired to set it all up.

Today Exchange can be purchased per user per month in the cloud for just a few dollars. There some setup, but it is a one-time event. Adding new users, resetting passwords, and routing email can all be done via a web portal.

- **Professional email starts at just \$5.00 per month**
- **Nothing says startup like a Gmail or Yahoo email address**
- **Mobile sync of contacts and calendars**
- **Share contacts and calendars with your team**



# TELEPHONE SOLUTIONS

At one time the PBX was the dominion of the large business. Small businesses might have a 4-line phone if they were lucky. Many just had a home phone or cell phone. Some might remember being trained as a kid to say "Hello, Acme Incorporated."

Today any size business can have a professional sounding PBX. Even a single-person business can have an automated attendant, multiple extensions, and call queues with unlimited local and long distance calling for less than the cost of one cell phone line.

We will tell you a little secret. A one-person sole proprietorship can have multiple extensions. It is even encouraged. It allows you to mentally prepare for the type of call you will answer. It will make company look more organized. Just don't try to pull of any accents when you answer the various lines.

Many online cloud-based PBX systems have extensive integration with mobile apps that allow you to have many of your office phone functions available on your smartphone. Some also perform web chats, collaboration, and screen sharing as well. These are great for reaching a group of potential clients in a webinar or for online meetings that cut down on travel expenses.

- **Automated attendant**
- **Unlimited local and long distance calling**
- **Less than cost of a single cell phone line**
- **Mobile app integration**

***A one-person sole proprietorship can have multiple extensions***



# DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT

Most new businesses do not put much thought into document management. Think of your computer as a really large filing cabinet that is also now connected to filing cabinets in other places. This is a depiction of modern document management.

Businesses do start thinking about

document management once they realize

they are spending a lot of time looking for particular documents or they have multiple versions. That usually happens about the time you add the second employee.

It is important to pick a document filing system that will grow with your company. Fortunately the cost of online, cloud-based solutions are very affordable for even the smallest company and they quickly grow with your company. Many start with a nominal amount of storage at now cost such as Microsoft One Drive. Most Office 365 plans include up to 1 gigabyte of storage. That is equivalent to 250 each 4 gigabyte thumb drives for free in the cloud available anywhere.

Find a cloud storage provider that will allow you to access documents from anywhere on your notebook computer to mobile devices. It is really convenient to have synchronized copies of documents on your notebook computer in case you are away from Internet access. Also be sure your documents can be accessed from common software applications such as Word, Excel, etc. Check if you can share files easily with your co-workers and team.

- **Access documents anywhere**
- **Document sharing across multiple devices**
- **Costs continuing to diminish**
- **File sharing across team**

***Find a cloud storage provider that will allow you to access documents from anywhere***





# IT MANAGEMENT

Business management of the computers and infrastructure has involved over the past two decades. Businesses had two choices – a traveling IT person that would visit your business on a rotating schedule or on-demand for an hourly rate. The other option for businesses large enough to support was an on-site dedicated IT person or team. Some businesses still use both these models but smarter choices have emerged.

One of the largest changes has been the traveling IT person. There are far fewer IT service people roaming the streets. Most are now leveraging remote technology for instant problem resolution at a much lower cost. There are also extensive tools that allow for remote monitoring of computer and network systems so they can be repaired to reduce or eliminate downtime. Most provide the option of remote support and management for a fixed monthly fee.

At one time most companies that had

***There are far fewer IT service people roaming the streets. Most are now leveraging remote technology for near instant problem resolution and much lower costs.***

- **IT management is quickly evolving**
- **Remote support a fixed monthly fee**
- **Death of the IT “jack of all trades”**
- **Outsourcing to specialized consultants**

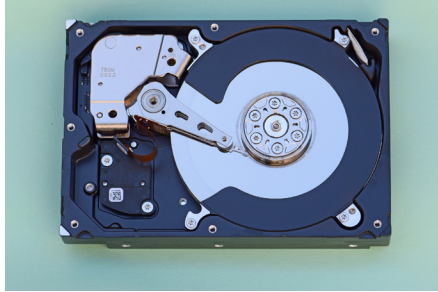


more than 40 to 50 employees employed a full-time, on site IT “jack of all trades”. The roles are becoming more difficult to fill due to ever expanding breadth of knowledge required. Many companies are now utilizing an employee on site that oversees teams of outside consultants. Consultants can be specialists in certain areas such as Enterprise Resource Planning software or virtual computing. They may also use services to outsource day-to-day maintenance or help desk. We know of one company that has 700 employees and just one full-time on staff IT Manager. He directs outsourced companies to manage day-to-day IT operations and support desk across multiples sites in a handful of states.



# DATA BACKUP

This is by far one of the most critical and often overlooked components of your IT infrastructure. Usually data backup is considered right after a data loss event. As you can imagine that is just a bit too late in the game. That is like a batter popping a fly ball into right field and then the coach saying, "Boy, I should have had a right fielder out there".



If you're storing your documents in the cloud for easy access anymore you already have a backup by default. You should consider how many versions are kept in the cloud. Sometimes data loss is not as simple as deleting or losing a file. Sometimes the wrong file is over written

***Backup is not a one-size-fits all prospect. It really takes a professional looking at your data and business needs to evaluate and choose the right solution.***

- **Backup is typically considered after a data loss incident**
- **Most data loss is human caused such as deleting a file or folder**
- **Business continuity thinks beyond data backup**
- **Automation is the only right choice**

with the wrong data. You need to have the ability to go back in time and retrieve an earlier version of the file.

If you have an on site server for file storage or application execution then you need to think beyond data backup. What happens if that server goes down? Does business just stop and for how long? We then start considering a business continuity solution. This is not just a backup of your data but a backup of data infrastructure, management, and delivery.

Backup is not a one-size-fits all prospect. It really takes a professional looking at your data and business needs to evaluate and choose the right solution. This is an area where you can be unprepared by lack of attention or over prepared by spending too much for too much protection.

It is important to remember that automated backup is the only true choice. You don't want to rely on human intervention for a successful backup. A human should monitor the backup but should not be relied upon to perform it.

# OFFICE SPACE

The last decade has brought about a large change in dealing with office space. In the past you would just rent a space in a local office park or building and hang out a shingle. Today your office can be virtual, shared, or a spare bedroom, or even your pickup truck. The great thing is that can change day-to-day.

Virtual office space from companies such as Regus can be found in cities of



- **Today your office can be anywhere for most businesses**
- **Virtual offices offer a fixed business address for a low monthly cost**

all sizes. How these work is that you pay a low monthly fee for a mailing address. You don't have access to a dedicated physical workspace at the lower price levels, but you are able to rent office space or even conference rooms by the hour for client or team meetings. Some plans even include the ability to use a shared workspace lounge in thousands of location across the country in airports.

These virtual office spaces also offer copy services as well as the ability to outsource small tasks such as stuffing mailers. For a fee they can also act as a receptionist handling telephone calls on behalf of your company. The options are almost endless.

By utilizing some of the technology in this white paper your office pretty much becomes wherever you are located. It could be your back patio on a nice day to a far flung resort while you take a break.

***your office pretty much becomes wherever you are located***

# BUSINESS PERFECTION

Many of us strive for perfection. Understand that developing a small business is an evolution. This will help you and your business from suffering from paralysis by analysis. Obviously you have taken the steps to get your business started. Keep that momentum moving forward.

*developing a small  
business is an evolution*

Outsourcing can help you get past the paralysis by providing the analysis through experience. Don't be afraid to reach out for assistance. It might be closer and less expensive than you think. Be sure to value your time. It is a rare commodity. Outsourcing equals leverage.

**LOTUS**  
MANAGEMENT  
SERVICES, INC.

## ABOUT US

Since 2012 Florida businesses have relied on Lotus Management Services to fix computer problems. We focus on small businesses with a full line of computer services including cloud-based telephone and corporate email solutions.

6900 Tavistock Lakes Blvd.  
Suite 400  
Orlando, FL 32827  
407-982-5342  
lotusmserv.com