



Technology For Small Business

HELPFUL HINTS FROM EXPERTS

Business Technology Health Checklist

Important Technology Tips For Small And Midsize Businesses During Tough Economic Times

(NAPSA)—Businesses today have fewer resources but face more challenges than ever. Small and midsize businesses in particular can attain competitive advantages in these tough economic times by adopting technology that securely and effectively builds strong customer relationships.

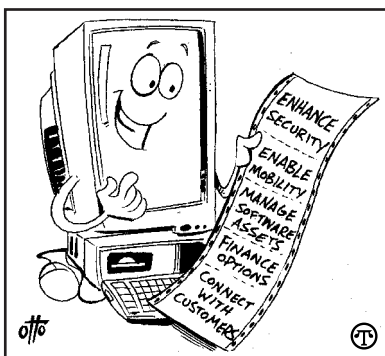
"Statistics show that one in three businesses fails to survive, so having a strong strategy is vital," said Bob Clough, vice president of U.S. Small and Medium Business Sales and Marketing at Microsoft Corp. "Smart businesses that follow a checklist of critical tactics stand a better chance of beating the odds."

The Business Technology Health Checklist, available online at <http://www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness/checklist/>, offers several vital tips, including these:

- **Connect with customers.** Accurately and efficiently managing customer relationships is critical to retaining current customers and attracting new ones. Look for customer relationship management (CRM) software that tracks detailed customer history with tools that are easy to use, simple to set up and maintain, and easy to integrate with current applications.

- **Enhance security.** Companies can reduce lost productivity and downtime by protecting their networks and data from hackers, viruses and other threats. Use password protection, install current anti-virus software, invest in firewall technology, and use encryption software to help protect sensitive files.

- **Hire technology experts.** Invest in an information technology consultant that can assist with long-term technology planning, deployment and support. Look for local, personal support with a broad range of experience. Check backgrounds and references.



Following a useful checklist may help many small businesses bring in big checks.

- **Enable mobility.** The agility of smaller businesses often is their biggest asset. Embracing wireless technologies such as laptops, Pocket PCs and cell phones can lead to increased productivity and profits. Look for mobile technology that is secure, easy to use, integrates with existing systems, and offers access to important workplace tools such as the Web, calendar and contacts.

- **Manage software assets.** Software is a critical tool for smaller businesses that need to compete with larger rivals. A solid software asset management plan offers a clear understanding of your organization's software usage and needs. This helps prioritize future software license acquisitions, streamline licensing costs, and maximize software investments.

- **Choose the right licensing and financing option.** The right software licensing agreement can help businesses maximize technology budgets, while offering longer warranty protection and upgrade options. Available this spring, Microsoft's Open Value plan will give small-business customers as few as five licenses and enable them to spread out payments. For Microsoft Business Solutions applications, Microsoft Capital can provide easy-term loans to businesses that qualify.