



Transforming Your Small Business

Through New,
Affordable
Technology



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Foreword by Ramon Ray

Thank you for taking the time to download and read your ModernBiz guide on using technology to grow your business. Technology is NOT what's most important in your business. What's most important is YOU. It's your ideas and best practices, it's the products and services you create, it's your customers and of course your employees (even if your employee base is just you).

However, technology is important to helping you manage and run your business more efficiently. Technology can help you save money, increase profits and revenue and improve your marketing. It also helps you communicate and collaborate better with your customers, partners, vendors, employees and contractors.

Being a modern business is about so much more than the latest technology and gear. It's about seeing new possibilities and knowing how to make them real for your team, your partners and your customers.

As a small-business owner myself, I know that technology enables my business to do so much more than it ever could on its own.

I'm excited to help you imagine the possibilities that technology can create for your business!

Ramon Ray

Publisher, Smart Hustle Magazine &
Technology Evangelist, SmallBizTechnology.com



Why Investing in Current Technology is Important for Your Business

Whatever size your business may be, today's affordable technology can help it grow.

By using any number of subscription-based software services available online, your business can enjoy greater productivity without exceeding your budget.

The Value of the Cloud to Your Business

No longer do you need to spend a fortune to acquire the best technology to automate your processes. For common tasks that every business manages, such as accounts receivable, to industry-specific needs, you can find affordable options online (that is, in the cloud), even if you operate the smallest of businesses. The cloud has given small startups access to the same software available to much larger enterprises, with the ability to work with files from anywhere using mobile devices or personal computers.

Best of all, you don't have to take an all-or-nothing approach to your technology. Cloud solutions can be progressively combined to create a customized collection of interconnected technologies. Today's businesses are using file-sharing and collaboration software, Web-based email, online suites of office software, and a wide variety of cloud-based tools to power daily operations and communicate with customers and colleagues.

In efforts to save money, businesses often seek out free online services. However, for just a small monthly fee, you can achieve a level of stability and security you don't get with free solutions. This small, up-front investment in technology actually will help save you money in the long run, setting up your business for continued growth .

The cloud has given small startups access to the same software solutions available to much larger enterprises



Work on your documents offline, and they'll sync once you're back online with [OneDrive for Business](#)



Get to all your docs, from anywhere, from any device, with [Office 365](#)





Studies have shown that small businesses that use the latest technology regularly outperform their peers in the marketplace



Gaining a Competitive Advantage

Your small business needs every edge in the marketplace it can achieve. Businesses that choose to continuously invest in current technology stay a step ahead of the competition. Studies have shown that small businesses that use the latest technology regularly outperform their peers, create jobs twice as fast and see an increase in their revenues 15 percent faster than their competitors.

Employing the latest technology for day-to-day operations makes good business sense – increasing efficiency, improving productivity and allowing employees to accomplish more and appear more professional to colleagues and customers. The newest technology is faster and more responsive than ever, allowing your business to offer a better level of customer service to the buying public. Websites run more smoothly, cash register transactions are completed without delay and invoices are paid more quickly. Current technology also reduces errors, preventing mistakes that could slow processes down and make your business appear less professional.

An Affordable Way to Use the Applications You Need

Businesses that rely on outdated technology are forced to regularly update software, servers and devices to handle new workloads. This process can be cost prohibitive, leading small businesses to operate at a status quo during periods of economic uncertainty. Software licenses for major applications usually cost hundreds of dollars per user. Consequently, many businesses allow employees to work with the same software for several years before updating, forcing them to hire skilled professionals to install and maintain this software by either hiring a full-time IT staff or outsourcing the work to a local contractor that charges an hourly rate for services.

Cloud-based services are supported offsite by professionals with software-specific knowledge, eliminating the need for you to pay someone to install and update software on each computer in your company. Using an assigned username and password, you and your employees can access the latest version of applications and files on any approved device, whether you are at home, on the road or in the office.

In addition to cost savings and increased productivity, cloud-based software offers a level of security that most small businesses would be unable to afford on their own. Whether it's offering file storage space or developing new customer relationship management (CRM) software, a cloud services provider employs the latest security standards to keep its subscribers' information safe. In many instances, cloud customers have a higher level of security than many larger businesses because IT staff are often stretched across many different areas in big organizations.

Run Your Business from Anywhere

Today's modern businesses invest in the cloud as a basic business expense. But this expense saves money. Instead of traveling across the country to land a new client, a modern business will host a videoconference using cameras built into laptops, tablets or smartphones along with one of the many cloud-based presentation tools available today. The ability to always be connected to files and applications means you can answer client requests immediately, even if you're on vacation or a business trip. This consistent access can give you an advantage in landing a client over a competitor who is less accessible during the decision process.

The small monthly investment in cloud software and connectivity replaces a previous need to purchase server space that may not even be used. For many cloud services today your business pays only for the technology it needs each month. When changes are needed (such as adding access for new employees), they often can be made immediately, again, saving you money. Cloud providers add and remove features as the needs of your business change, giving you even more flexibility.

Even for businesses that already have on-site IT staff, the cloud isn't replacing jobs. The shift to the cloud is simply redefining the description of the work. Technology professionals are taking on more of a business analyst role, freeing them up for more challenging and often rewarding tasks.



Modern businesses invest in the cloud as a basic business expense



How the Cloud Can Improve Your Office Productivity

Cloud technology can increase productivity by making your business more agile. The cloud offers a wide range of benefits to help your company become more responsive – from encouraging collaboration to allowing you to access files and applications from anywhere, from any device.

Join the Growing Reliance on the Cloud

The concept of the workplace is gradually changing as business owners realize employees can work from anywhere, thanks to the anywhere-access of cloud applications. This section offers a look at how the cloud can help improve productivity for your small business, allowing collaboration between team members and access to files from anywhere.

Adoption has spread across many industries and businesses of all sizes, with 75 percent of organizations stating they now use some form of cloud technology. This number continues to grow each year as the cloud becomes a more viable alternative to purchasing and maintaining on-site software, hardware and IT personnel.

Make Your Office More Mobile

At one time, employees were required to drive to an office every day, often going out of their way to check in before beginning a day of scheduled meetings. Mobile devices, such as tablets, smartphones and laptops, have changed that. Instead of sitting in an office, professionals can now work from conference rooms, convention centers or their own home offices.

This growing desire for office mobility has changed the way employees consume information. Files and applications now can be accessed from outside of the office when they need them most, wherever they may be. This agility is in high demand – with more than 74 percent of businesses naming it as a top reason for their move to the cloud.



This growing desire for office mobility has changed the way employees consume information



Create a More Productive Way to Manage Office Work

Cloud access has opened up new possibilities for workers who may find it difficult to be productive in an office setting. This is especially true of today's open-office work spaces, where distractions are unavoidable. In a traditional office environment, time to concentrate in order to complete an important project or conduct an important phone call may require working from home that day. But that option may remove access to the files and services they need.

On the other hand, cloud technology allows you to work from anywhere and can keep you connected from any device. And instead of having to purchase separate software for each, a modern business will invest in a single, cloud-based application that works on all of these platforms.

This combination of mobile devices and cloud technology empowers your workforce to communicate with people all over the world. As a result, your business will save money and time on travel without sacrificing the personal connection you and your staff need to conduct business effectively.

Find an open time on your team member's calendar.

Set up an online meeting to get quick input on your work.

Add team members from multiple locations to expand the conversation as needed.

All from [Office 365](#) on any device.



Work Better with Others

Once employees begin working remotely, collaboration becomes more challenging, as employees can no longer stop by someone's cubicle to get an update on a project. But, cloud providers have stepped forward to offer a solution, combining instant messaging and videoconferencing technology to create a way for teams to easily collaborate on projects.

When your employees have the ability to securely and reliably communicate from anywhere, they enjoy a level of productivity not previously experienced. Instead of waiting for the latest version of a document to be updated or a Monday-morning meeting for a status update, teams can work simultaneously on documents shared on line, updating automatically across screens of every logged-in user. Status updates are shared to ensure all team members know immediately when action needs to be taken on an item.



Cloud technology allows you to work from anywhere and can keep you connected from any device



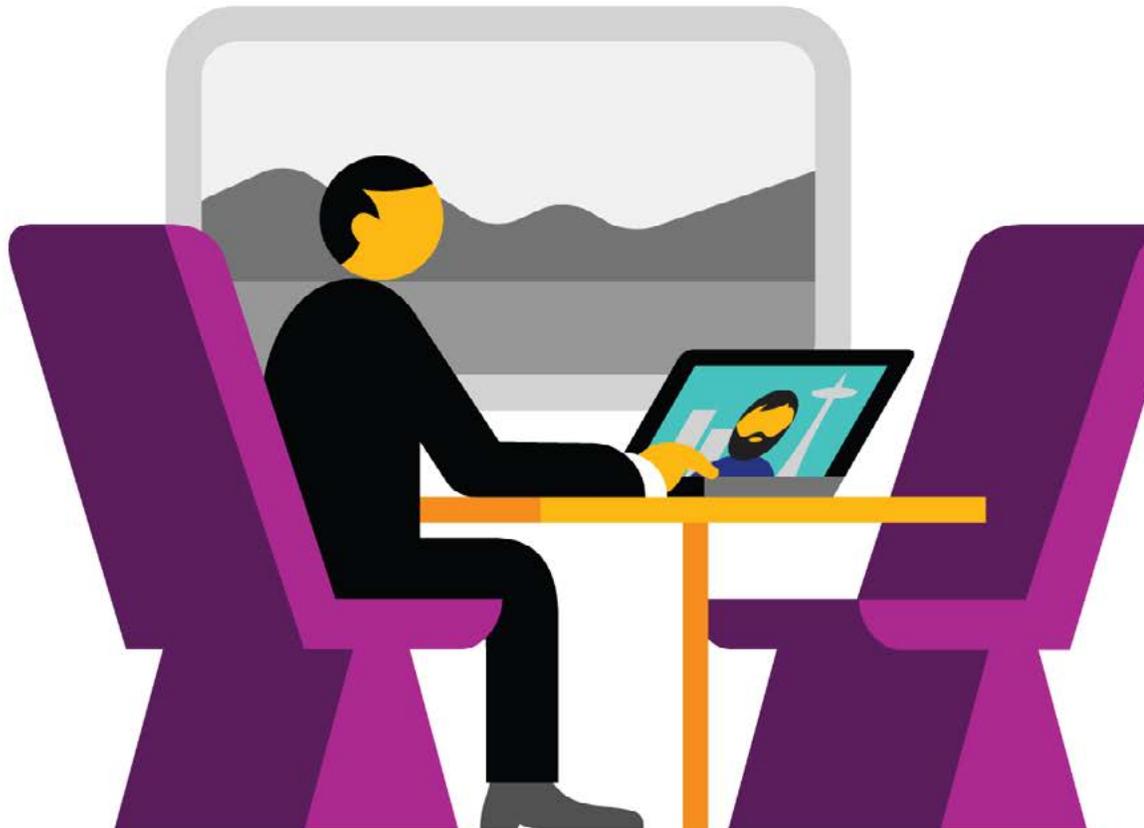
Allow Your Staff to Work from Any Location

With such a large portion of the business world turning to cloud services, businesses that fail to make the change may find themselves left behind. Fifty-five percent of small businesses have a mobile workforce today, so businesses that don't support these technologies will struggle to attract and retain workers and to compete for customers and clients.

Nearly half of all small business employees today work in more than one location, and that number grows year over year. By using the latest technology, you can manage employees, applications and projects more effectively, whether they are in the same office or on the other side of the world.



Get the rich, full-featured Office experience you know, always up to date in the cloud, with [Office 365](#)



//
55%

**of small businesses
have a mobile
workforce today**



Keeping Your Business Secure in Today's Technology Environment

Businesses of all sizes must take steps to protect themselves against today's threats. None of us can afford to assume that our servers and devices are inherently safe. Threats can come from anywhere.

Knowledge is Power

Today's workforces are always connected, whether on the road or in the office. With all of that connectivity comes a price. The cloud has granted access for employees in every business, using all of their mobile devices. Over time, they have grown increasingly more comfortable sharing documents, sharing databases with business partners and logging into work servers in public places. These actions create risk.

As comfort levels increase, people all too often take security for granted. Though high-level security is built into cloud services employees must still responsibly manage their devices and passwords to protect the company. Through user education and signed acceptable use policies, your business can reduce risk by showing employees they have a responsibility in keeping business and customer data safe.

Ironclad security is a business priority. Doing everything within your power to prevent any type of intrusion, even when sharing documents and networks is business critical.

Threats Are Everywhere

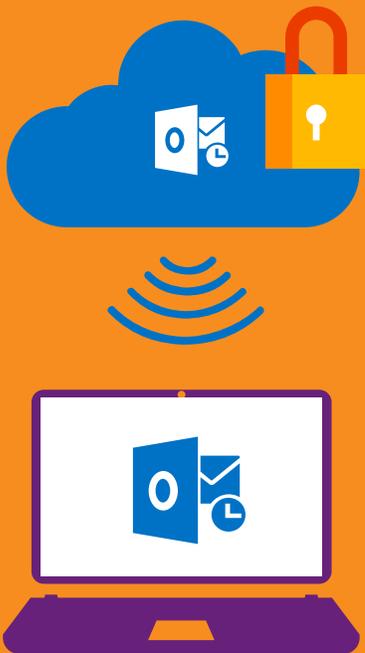
Cyber-attacks are a growing threat to businesses worldwide, with companies attacked a reported 16,856 times a year on average. The majority of those attacks result in a notable data breach. It's easy to assume your business is too small to gain the attention of cybercriminals, but businesses of all sizes can be targets. In a survey conducted by the National Small Business Association, 44 percent of respondents admitted to having been the victim of a data breach, with the average incident costing nearly \$8,700.

If your business systems fall prey to malware, viruses or a hacking attempt, more is at risk than your company's reputation. If customer payment information or sensitive business information is stored on your site, those customers may be forced to deal with stolen financial information or identity theft. Affected customers are unlikely to come back to that business, and local data breach notification laws could require you to spend thousands of dollars on notifications to let customers know they might be impacted – or, more damaging, thousands or millions more to protect them moving forward.

A data breach can be extremely costly. Even with that in mind, many businesses fail to remain current with the protections they need. With so many tools available to help provide data encryption and firewall-level security, your business can potentially prevent a costly data breach in just a few minutes at significantly less cost .



As comfort levels increase, people all too often take security for granted



Get built-in, up-to-date spam and virus protection for your email in [Outlook](#).

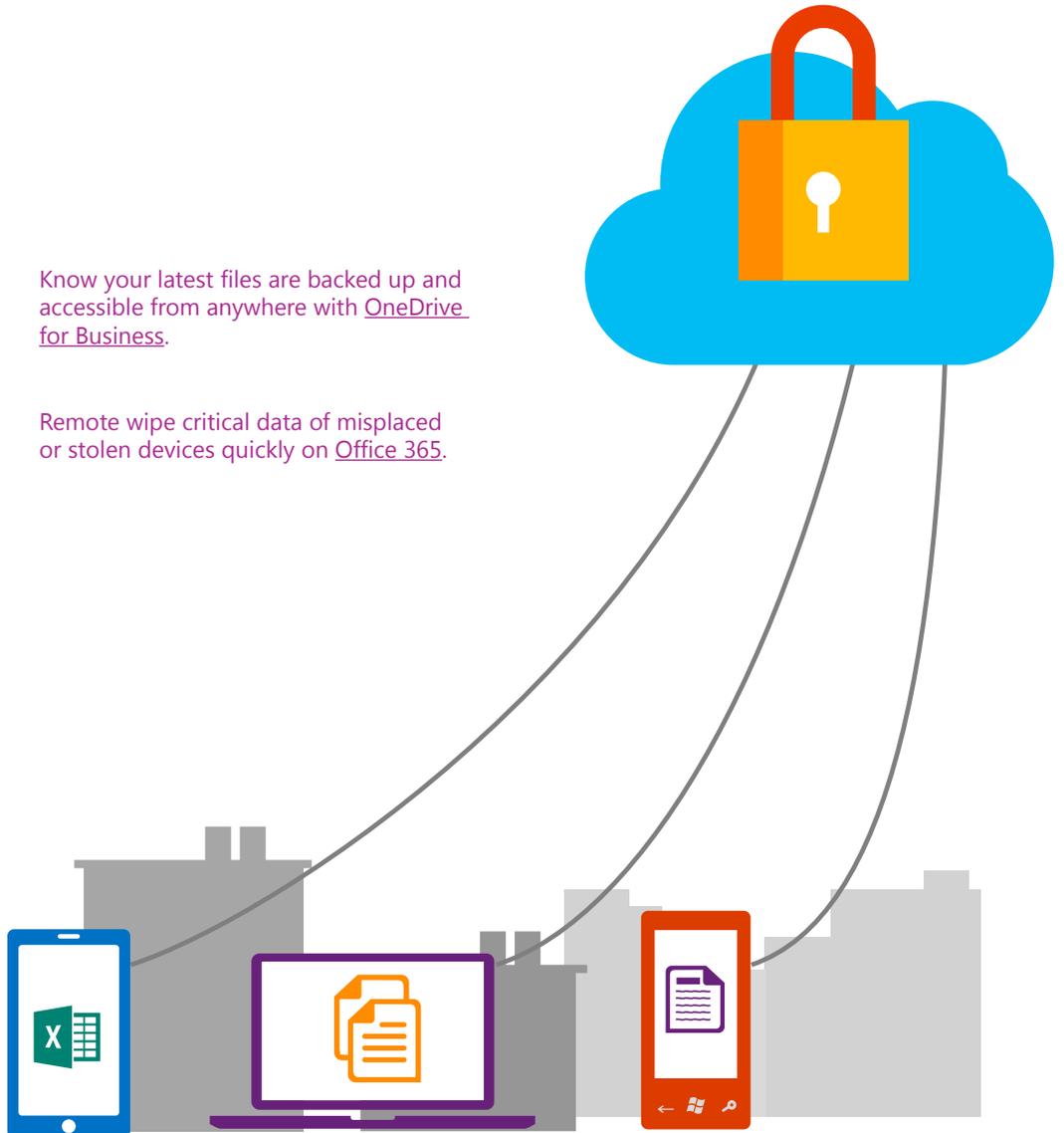
Level the Playing Field

In times past it was a business necessity to hire a full information technology team to set up servers and make sure every computer was current and protected. Cloud technology has all but eliminated that need, giving organizations of every size greater choice as to how they access large-scale applications that employ state-of-the-art security.

While a cloud services provider can afford to hire the best security professionals to manage hundreds or thousands of accounts, a small startup with only a few employees typically can't. As a result, through cloud-based software and hosting services it's quite possible that small businesses have a greater level of security than much larger companies trying to manage the work in house. The cloud also allows businesses greater flexibility to add new services or expand use of existing solutions on a moment's notice, with no equipment to purchase or setup required.

Know your latest files are backed up and accessible from anywhere with [OneDrive for Business](#).

Remote wipe critical data of misplaced or stolen devices quickly on [Office 365](#).



Through cloud-based software and hosting services it's quite possible that small businesses have a greater level of security than much larger companies trying to manage the work in house



Protecting Your Information from a Disaster

A cloud-based environment protects a business against larger-scale disaster. Even if a fire, earthquake, tornado, or other destructive force impacts a business complex, files are still protected if stored in the cloud. Should a disaster strike the cloud provider's data center, an offsite server is usually available to provide access to all of that provider's customers. Best of all, even when a building is uninhabitable, a business can provide uninterrupted service to its clients and customers, since employees can conduct their work from any Internet-connected device.

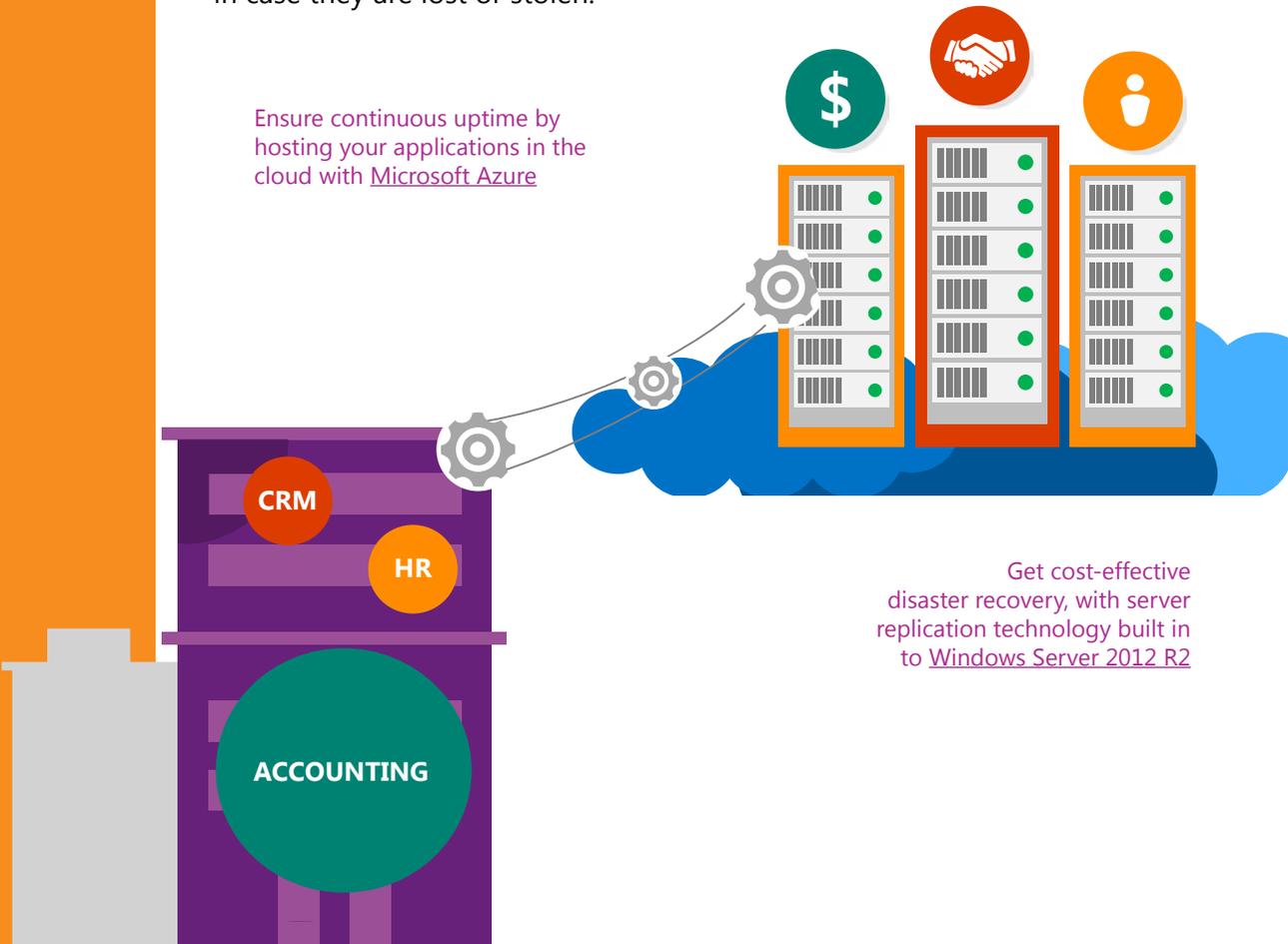
Cloud services include routine backups, which means information remains secure even if something should happen to the offsite server. Nothing is stored on a business's premises, and no personnel in your office are required to manage the backup process. Therefore, your files are safe from a problem that impacts your local community or damages your personal devices.

Still, even when you outsource your applications or digital infrastructure to cloud providers, you remain responsible for ultimately ensuring data is protected. The challenge you face is to ensure the applications your business uses for CRM, inventory, accounting and other business operations are secure while still granting access to your employees. When using mobile devices or equipment located offsite, your employees should be able to access information without sensitive data being stored on their own phones or computers in case they are lost or stolen.

Ensure continuous uptime by hosting your applications in the cloud with [Microsoft Azure](#)

Get cost-effective disaster recovery, with server replication technology built in to [Windows Server 2012 R2](#)

A cloud-based environment also protects a business against larger-scale disasters



Additional Resources:

To modernize your small business consider the benefits of the cloud. The small investment often outweighs the risks of not modernizing.

The wide range of very affordable technology can transform your small business into a more profitable and productive organization, one which supports you and your employees to work from anywhere, dramatically reduce costs, improve efficiencies, simplify operations and stay safe. You don't need an IT department to get started, just inspiration to find what your business truly needs. Review the following resources to learn more about what new technology can do for your business.

Dig deeper with insights from our [Small Business Hub](#):

[Grow efficiently](#)

[Three Steps to Streamline Your Next Project](#)
[How to Get the Most from Your Technology](#)

[Business anywhere](#)

[Five tips for building connected work teams with online collaboration tools](#)
[How Small Businesses Can Thrive with Flexible Work Options](#)

[Connect with customers](#)

[2 Quick Ways to Improve Social Interactions with Your Customers](#)
[Seven ways to get customer email addresses](#)

[Safeguard your business](#)

[Hurricanes, water, earthquakes, and flares: How the cloud protects your data](#)
[Guard your business against viruses, spyware, and malware](#)

Find a partner to get started: <https://pinpoint.microsoft.com/>

Learn more about modern tech for your small business:

[Windows 8.1](#)
[Office 365](#)
[OneDrive](#)
[SharePoint](#)
[Lync](#)
[Yammer](#)
[Microsoft Azure](#)
[Surface Pro 3](#)
[Windows Phone](#)
[Windows Server 2012](#)

