



Simple Steps Infrastructure Tips

If you are starting a business, you will probably be using some combination of computer and mobile device. This is an overview of considerations.

Business Continuity – Machines break. If the computer you use to run your business stops working, you cannot close your doors. What will be your alternative plan to place orders, schedule appointments, invoice and track inventory?

Hardware – To determine the right device(s) for you, think about how to do your work most efficiently. If you are at the same desk every day, invest in dual monitors. One can be for your email (or graphics), and the other for the attachments (or pallets). If you are a traveling financial person, consider a laptop with a built-in numeric keypad. If work is internet and email, a tablet or phone might be all you need; but get a bluetooth keyboard to help avoid typos. You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Software – There are operating systems (what runs the electronic device) and there are apps (how letters are written, emails sent and images edited). For computers, the operating system choices are **Windows** (the current version is 10, and Microsoft will stop supporting Windows 7 on 1/14/20), Apple OS (current version **Mojave**), Linux (a “flavor” called **Ubuntu** is free and can run on many “older / retired” Windows computers) and **Chrome** (Google’s software that runs Chromebooks - which have limited “local” storage and are “best suited” for online apps and services). For mobile devices the popular operating systems are **iOS** for iPhones and iPads - whose “software sandbox” is usually “cleaner” than **Android** (whose devices are “usually” less expensive).

There are many types of niche software(s) (ie: home inspection, construction estimating and project management, HR) to help run many types of businesses. There are also several choices of “base business” Office Suites; the software used to create letters, spreadsheets and presentations. The most familiar (and most popular) is **Microsoft Office** which is available as either a desktop version (where you own **Word**, **Excel**, **PowerPoint** and depending on the version you buy, **Outlook**) or a “rented” version, **Office 365**, which costs about \$100 per year, includes 5 device licenses, online storage / file access for multiple computers and mobile devices and is regularly updated with improvements, bug fixes and security patches. If you buy an Apple computer, **Pages**, **Numbers** and **Keynote** (MS Office “equivalents”) are pre-installed. **Google Docs** can be free however without purchasing **GSuite**, your tech support has no helpdesk, just what is written online. **Open Office** and **Libre Office** are free, downloadable office suites that work on Windows, Apple and Linux – and comes pre-installed with Ubuntu – **but** save letters and spreadsheets in their “native” file formats and must be “tweaked” to be read in MS Office.



While it is possible to manage your finances from a spreadsheet, accounting software makes the job easier. The “market monster” is **Quickbooks** which (like MS Office) has desktop and online versions.

The internet allows for centralized storage and centralized notetaking. Services like **Dropbox**, **OneDrive** and **Google Drive** allow you to access files from any “online” device. But note that if a “connected” computer is hit with ransomware, unless a device is offline (disconnected from your network), all of your machines using that central storage will be affected. Programs like **OneNote** from Microsoft and **Evernote** allow for idea creation and retrieval from any platform or device.

Adobe’s **PDF** format allows for “formatted / graphically designed” documents to look the same on any platform or device. **Bullzip** is a free Windows-based app that will allow you to create PDF documents. Apple’s print command window contains a PDF creator.

Browsers – Web pages are viewed inside browsers; and there are many choices. **Safari** is exclusive to Apple products. **Edge** is exclusive to Windows. **Firefox**, **Chrome** and **Brave** are multi-platform. These three are free, and there are pluses and minuses to each; the major issue being that each browser “reads” web pages differently.

Safety – Enough cannot be said about exercising caution when online or with the data you store. Have a password on your device. Use two-step (multi-factor) authentication for online services and accounts whenever possible. Avoid “clicks” on unfamiliar emails. Use an anti-virus program like **AVG** or **BitDefender** and malware protection like **Malwarebytes**. Have a **firewall** on your router, and most importantly, **update** your software and operating systems when you become available.

Small Business Resource – gcatoolkit.org provides free software and assessment services.

In accordance with SCORE’s Code of Ethics and Conduct, below are 3 local, experienced technology support vendors

- Bud Freund | 203-253-1077 | simplestepstech@gmail.com
- Fredd Fishman | 203-858-3984 | ff@eitct.com
- Chris Tiefenthaler | 203-858-3972 | office@lasermanct.com