

Timesaving technology

How to improve processes through business technologies

INTERVIEWED BY JAYNE GEST

Technologies such as smartphone apps offer quick access to information, which leads to better decision-making.

But technological improvements are only part of a solution to any given problem.

“You don’t start by simply adopting technology. You start by seeking a solution to a problem,” says Keith Stump, vice president of sales at Blue Technologies.

For example, the cost of labor is a business’s most significant expense. The more a company can influence what its employees do, how they do it and the time it takes, the more productive and cost-effective the business becomes, he says. And often technology can help achieve that goal.

Smart Business spoke with Stump about coupling technology and processes to create efficiency.

How do process improvements and technological upgrades intertwine?

Consider the problem you’re trying to fix, and then examine all aspects of the surrounding process to understand it. You should start to see how everything fits together, and if there’s a better solution. For instance, you may have excellent hardware for copying, printing and faxing, but the software managing the information and devices is in need of an upgrade.

Attack the problem piece by piece. Determine your outcome and develop a strategy to work toward that goal. There must be milestones along the way, as well as consistent, structured reviews.

How might technology boost productivity?

It’s common for some technology to be well structured within the business. For example, a company has specific IT help desk procedures, remote monitoring and data backup. However, the print management

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could be unstructured. Employees may be buying printer supplies from several stores. There’s no typical process for toner delivery. Support comes in a variety of fashions.

Nationally, on average, 19 percent of service calls to internal help desks are related to printers. If your IT department is supporting printers, it means high-paid people are doing a low-paid activity, which isn’t cost-effective. With the right service provider, software can automate your print management with supply alerts and service triggers. Now, toner is automatically shipped. If there’s a problem, the machine notifies the provider to send a repairperson.

How can companies better integrate mobile devices?

Today, there’s a greater proliferation of tablets and other mobile devices in the workplace, especially for employees operating in the field or at multiple locations. However, it’s still necessary to print and scan documents. There are free, downloadable apps that enable mobile devices to automatically sync with the multi-functional scanner/printer as soon as the device is brought into the facility.

What can be done to improve document management?

There are software applications that allow users to search for business documents,

similar to how information from the Web can be pulled up through a search engine.

The information is housed within an infrastructure, and a software application allows you to easily access business documents, such as contracts, packing lists, invoices, copies of checks, etc. It’s a huge advantage in terms of speed and efficiency.

Also, when scanning, it’s important that everything ends up in the right place, accessible to the right people. With auto-capture software on multi-functional devices, an employee hits a speed dial button and the machine routes the scan to the appropriate storage place. Documents are more accessible and secure with fewer errors.

What is key to successful change?

Business technology — and the processes it improves — touches many areas. All employees must embrace changes that are implemented to enhance productivity, whether in the IT infrastructure and support, hardware or software applications. Designate champions within your staff to help employees understand why change is necessary. Having C-level support and a well-designed rollout is critical.

Buying hardware, software or managed services is a part of doing business. But the best companies ensure each purchase decision starts with an effort to improve processes and create cost efficiencies. ●