

TABLET BUSINESS APPLICATIONS

How Tablets Improve Productivity, Capabilities and Efficiency

Last year, tablet sales increased more than 250% over 2010. According to Gartner, 2012 sales are expected to double, reaching almost 120 million units, with Apple accounting for two thirds of the tablets sold. What is the reason for this massive increase in demand? To be concise, the answer is value. Businesses are discovering that tablets offer a powerful and economical way to improve their mobile capabilities, efficiency and bottom line. The key to getting the most out of tablets is to choose the right devices, wireless plans and applications for the business's specific needs. This can be a real challenge in an industry where all three are changing on a daily basis, but with diligent research and expert assistance, the benefits can provide an excellent ROI.

TABLETS vs. LAPTOPS

A common question is, "why do I need a tablet if I already have a laptop computer?" Actually, it is really not an either/or issue. Both tablets and laptops have their own advantages and shortcomings. The specific uses for the device determine which is better. Today, a large number of businesses benefit greatly from having both. To summarize the differences:

Tablet Advantages

- Instant booting
- Extensive battery life

- Compact size
- Lower price
- Numerous apps

Laptop Advantages

- Larger keyboard
- Bigger screen
- Easier multitasking
- Productivity software
- More communication ports

To determine the best choice of devices, businesses should consider the discussion of capabilities below.

THE VALUE OF TABLETS FOR BUSINESS

The greatest value of tablets for businesses comes from the devices' mobility, compact size and special capabilities. Appropriately applying this technology can benefit a company in a wide variety of ways.

Virtual Desktop – When combined with [Virtual Desktop](#) (VDI) cloud-based service, tablets have all the power of a computer on the business's network, with the portability and convenience of a smartphone. It can utilize all of the enterprise's accessible software, files and other resources to do business anywhere. For example, with a tablet on VDI, someone in the field could conference with colleagues, update documents, utilize the CRM systems, interact with financial software and even print out a document on any printer on the company network, just as if they were in the office.



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Early Issues Resolved – When tablets first hit the market, there were some key limitations that have now been addressed, making them more appealing for business applications. Two of the most significant limitations were lack of communication ports and cumbersome printing.

Ports – Now, many tablets come with USB ports, which offer an ultra-high speed option for the input and output of data and information. Today's tablets can also be Bluetooth-enabled for wireless communication with other devices.

Printing – Tablets cannot be connected directly to printers, which required emailing documents to a computer that could print. Now, a variety of printing apps have been developed that make printing directly possible. In addition, cloud-based printing (such as Google Cloud Print and VDI) is available.

Summary of Advantages – The following list demonstrates the broad range of advantages tablets offer businesses:

Capabilities

- Near immediate booting for quick startup.
- On-board cameras – most have one on each side for taking photos/video and Web conferencing.
- Touchscreen functionality.
- GPS enabled for tracking and navigation.
- Easy to use with barcode scanners in the field.
- Function as a mobile pay station.
- Convenient, eBook/ePublication reader.

Versatility

- Lighter and more agile than laptops.
- Usable virtually anywhere, anytime.
- Highly portable for information entry and access even in awkward places.
- Less cumbersome and obtrusive than laptops in meetings and events.
- Make personal sharing of information easy and convenient.

Customer Service

- Acts as a self-service device for customers.
- Delivers faster customer service.
- Easier form completion and order entry for customers.
- Enables customers to directly enter information and requests.
- Facilitates direct customer signatures and authorizations.
- Provides helpful information and promotional messages to customers.

Productivity

- Expand access to company records, knowledge bases and other information.
- Extensive range of economical Apps for near limitless functionality.
- Excellent for presentations to individuals and small groups.
- Ideal for mobile conferencing.



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GET THE RIGHT WIRELESS PLAN

Speed – Tablets are advanced voice and data devices that require a robust Internet connection to effectively perform data-intensive functions. While 3G is adequate for most business applications a 4G LTE connection is far superior for video conferencing, HD downloads, multimedia presentations, seamless media streaming and other functions that rely on high-speed, uninterrupted data flow.

Amount of Data – It is also important to know that many applications likely to be used on tablets will consume much larger amounts of data than PDA and cell phone users may expect. Since all the major carriers except Sprint (so far) have eliminated unlimited data plans, it is very important to select a plan that includes sufficient data for the business applications that will be utilized. The cost of data increases when data plans are exceeded, so it is also prudent to track usage, especially at the end of billing periods. There are several tablet apps that will provide such tracking to alert the user when the plan limit is near. Whenever possible, the tablet's WiFi capability should be used instead of its onboard modem (if it has one) to reduce data usage.

Coverage – During the planning, selection and provisioning process, businesses should make sure the carrier they select has high enough speeds in the coverage areas where the tablets will be used. Insufficient speed or sporadic coverage will compromise performance and produce disappointing results.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to selecting the right wireless plan, businesses should consider:

Tablet Size – The smallest or largest is not necessarily the best. The best size is one that has a large enough screen for the desired applications, yet is still as compact and lightweight as possible.

Modem – All tablets do not have onboard modems. Some only operate on WiFi. If direct Internet connection is needed, make sure it has a modem.

Cell Phone – Very few tablets have integrated cell phones. Look for this capability in the future.

Security/Compliance – Some tablets, like the Samsung S.A.F.E. program-enabled, have higher levels of security than others for compliance with company and agency standards.

Other Special Features – A variety of OEM features and after-market add-ons are available to meet individual business needs.

Cost – Like smartphones and laptops, tablets with different capabilities, features and manufacturers can vary a great deal in price.

INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC TABLET APPLICATIONS

Following are examples of how different industries are using tablets to increase productivity and enhance their bottom lines:



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Construction

- Mobile workforce management
- GPS location/navigation
- Mobile Office
- Fleet management
- View blueprints and virtual plans
- Upload images

Distribution

- Asset tracking
- Inventory management
- Timesheets and driver logs
- Track vehicle location and idle time
- GPS location/navigation
- Monitor cargo conditions

Healthcare

- Track patient data
- Remote viewing of medical images
- Communication and email access
- Reduce paperwork
- Mobile medical/treatment reference
- Access to real-time patient information

Finance

- Mobile banking
- Meetings/presentations
- Remotely print, fax, email, access and store documents
- Communication and email access
- Schedule management

Manufacturing

- Logistics automation
- Fleet productivity and management

- Detect and report hardware malfunctions
- Inventory management
- Approve purchase orders
- Monitor energy use

Transportation

- GPS location/navigation
- Monitor cargo conditions
- Track vehicle location
- Timesheets & driver logs
- Locate lower gas prices
- Keep fleets on track and on time

Marketing/Media

- Manage and update social media presence
- Communicate with clients
- Presentations and meetings
- Access and update files remotely
- Schedule management
- Record voice memos

Retail

- Inventory management
- Process credit card transactions
- Schedule management & time card tracking
- Income management
- Asset tracking
- Digital signage/marketing

Sales

- Cloud-based CRM and other applications
- Virtual Desktop (VDI) access to agreements and other information
- Client presentations
- Customer information scanning and access
- Travel efficiency & airport convenience



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SUMMARY

If you have not yet considered tablets for your business, now is the time. Combined with the proliferation of 4G LTE, tablet technology is making it practical and cost effective to mobilize virtually every aspect of how companies do business. There are many options beyond the iPad that have

excellent capabilities and economy, and more are being released on almost a daily basis. Do some exploring or ask an industry pro to help. The benefits are well worth it.

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