

CONVERGING TECHNOLOGIES - THEY'RE COMING AT US!

But, don't be scared. I know that "converging technologies coming at us" might sound like an episode from some TV series, but it is actually a concept that has become reality. The acceptance of the internet has resulted in an explosion of new technologies and ways to use those technologies - think about the new term "apps". We have come to accept this term into our language, and use these little pieces of software on our phones for all kinds of things. All in just a couple of years! Yes, they're coming at us.

So, you can see that we are already enjoying converged technologies, but by different labels. We most certainly see it with the media we have at our fingertips. In communications and entertainment we have multiple technologies coming together to give us an end product from the combination that is far superior to the individual parts. For instance, we now take "smart phones" for granted even though they are quite miraculous. These phones have powerful little computer processors that allow us to communicate, to browse the internet, to play video games, to play music, to find and use productivity enhancers, and on, and on. Since all of these are available on one device and work together, this is an example of technological convergence.

So what does all this have to do with the readers of Business 380? It means that you need to know what is out there for you to use, so that you can get that competitive edge. Business right now requires you to be informed, to be nimble, to communicate quickly, and to use your scarce resources wisely. The intelligent use of technology is clearly a difference maker in the meeting these requirements.

So, are you ready? Have you attended seminars, read articles, or attended webinars (definitely a new technological convergence) about how to use new technologies in your business? You should, for there may be tools out there that you could use quickly and easily to make improvements. And, because technology applications for business keep changing and improving, you can look forward to continuous improvements in your business. You just have to get started (or keep exploring).

For instance, are you using technology to view your calendars on your phone while meeting with an important client? Do you and your staff enter billing information into your business systems using a smart phone? Are you tracking your vehicles using GPS? Others are doing it, and have been doing it.

The integration of smart phones into the stream of our lives has just begun. The Central United States is behind the two coasts in the use of smart phones to conduct business. Smart phone applications are in use, where the merchants are prepared, to purchase items using the scanning capability of the phone and an application that communicates the charge to your selected credit card. I know of a new merchant moving into this area who is planning on issuing Apple iPhones to salespeople. They will use their phones, equipped with a small card scanner, to make credit card sales. (Apple Store salespeople use this technology along with a small printer on their belts to make sales on the floor.)

Voice over IP phone systems (VoIP for short) are the future. One of the ways that VoIP phone systems converge technologies is in the integration of phone calls with smart phones. A good VoIP phone system will allow incoming calls to be redirected to a smart phone. The user of the smart phone can decide to take the call or send it back to his/her voice mailbox on the VoIP system. If the user accepts the call, then the VoIP phone system recognizes the smart phone as the user's extension and seamlessly connects the call. The user can then transfer calls within the system if necessary. All of this is done thru a few simple selections of options in the phone system and no other steps are required. No humans are needed in the process.

For the owner who wants to keep an eye on things, video cameras now come ready to use the internet. This means that the owner can jump on a computer, fire up a browser, and pull up any, or all, of the cameras to see what is going on. Of course, you can also use your smart phone to do this. (The images are stored on a hard drive for future viewing and the printing of pictures.)

So, converging technologies are something to be embraced, not feared or avoided. Converging technology is an example of what you don't know, can hurt you. So do yourself a favor, don't cop out with "I don't have time". You don't have time not to.