

American Small Business Travelers Alliance

ASBTA NEWS...

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ASBTA: Six Technology Trends That Are Having a Major Impact on Smaller Businesses.

ASBTA Identifies New Trends Small Businesses Should Embrace to Stay Competitive

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Flower Mound, TX – Six technology trends will play a major role in how small businesses (SBs) stay competitive with larger corporations, reduce costs, and better meet customer needs, according to the American Small Business Travelers Alliance (ASBTA), a national information alliance dedicated to educating small businesses (SBs) regarding travel and technology.

ASBTA's research identifies the following trends that will have the biggest effect on SBs in the next two years:

Top Six Technology Trends Facing Small Businesses (SB):

- **Mobility and wireless networking** – Rapid growth, diversity in technology, and the widespread deployment of Wi-Fi hotspots have greatly increased SB worker productivity. SBs utilize Wi-Fi connections at Hotspots, airline clubs (AA Admirals Club, Delta Crown Room, etc), and restaurants as well as utilizing Google or yahoo to find Wi-Fi enabled locations. The need to stay connected has led to an increased demand for laptops, PDAs and 3G cell phones.

“Small Businesses have readily embraced the concept of the Extended Office,” said Chuck Sharp, President of ASBTA. “The ability to conduct business wherever you are, whenever you choose, with the same capabilities you have in your office puts small business on the same playing field as large corporations.”

- **IP Telephony (VoIP)** – VoIP, or the transmission of telephone calls over the Internet, can save SBs money over time. Though not as straight forward as connecting a standard phone, the initial investment of time to implement VoIP technology will significantly reduce costs on long distance

and conference calls often allowing the complete elimination of traditional land line service.

Use of this technology will continue to increase as companies discover the significant financial savings and impressive array of additional services and features previously only available to expensive PBX systems. -

- **Security** – Security continues to be a significant issue for small businesses. Wireless connectivity increases that concern for every day activities. Companies must defend against viruses, spy ware, and system intrusions, while complying with government regulations concerning privacy of customer data.

According to Sharp, “Internet security often is a vulnerability many small businesses haven’t adequately addressed. Businesses must be proactive and diligent. Don't wait for a security breach to implement an anti-virus, firewall, and spy ware strategy. Begin immediately and be proactive by continuously updating the virus and spy definitions”

- **Technology adoption and life cycle**– The adoption of new technologies has been a vital component to the increased productivity of small businesses. As the cost of technology drops and implementation becomes easier, SBs are installing their own networks. According to a recent ASBTA survey, 60% of SB employees travel with a laptop. “Technology continues to evolve, so it is important to set realistic goals and schedules to purchase new technology,” Sharp said. “Determining which services and technology currently in use are the most central to operations is a good indicator of what upgrades must be scheduled first.”
- **Paper office to digital office**– While it’s been true for over two decades for large businesses, small businesses will save time and money by continuing to transform all documents from paper to digital. Filling out forms on paper in the field and later entering them into the computer is wasted time. The new mobile SBs can directly enter data into their PDA or laptop and immediately have that data ready for use anywhere in their network. “With laptops, PDAs and even current models of cell phones, work can be finished the first time the data is entered, not when you get back to the office.” Sharp said.
- **Collaboration** – Collaboration previously meant employees sitting around a conference table a considerable amount of time. “This is one of the most exciting trends in technology for SBs,” Sharp said. “This trend brings all of the other technology changes into play. With mobility and wireless connectivity, VoIP, security, and the adoption of these new technologies throughout the business world, workers can collaborate in real time.” SBs can have workers positioned on all points of their production line and

collaborate on changes “live” through the convergence of their implemented modern technologies.

CONCLUSION

These are exciting times for small businesses. Sharp suggests “Recognizing and embracing the right technology trends for everyday activities will not only keep SBs relevant, but afford them incredible impact and growth in their industries.” ASBTA is conducting a wireless and mobility survey if you are a small business and would like to participate, please send your email to survey@asbta.com. We would appreciate your participation.

Resources

http://www.intel.com/business/smallbusiness/index.htm?iid=ibe_home+smbiz&

<http://www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness/bc/default.mspx>

<http://www.businesstraveltechnology.com/>

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/extendedoffice>

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