



Five Low-Cost Technology Initiatives to Improve the Workplace

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Doing more with less isn't just a catchphrase these days — it's the new norm. We are all being asked to find ways to deliver greater value to customers and to our own organizations, while consuming fewer resources to do so. Sometimes it can seem like a daunting task, like we are already giving everything we can. So, how can we make the office more productive and more efficient, while simultaneously keeping morale high and budgets in check?

The answer is technology. Exploiting technology — especially low-cost technology — in intelligent ways can often have a multiplicative effect, helping amplify productivity while stretching the budget farther than you might previously have thought possible.

The purpose of this paper is to outline five very concrete low-cost technology initiatives that can help make your office happier, healthier and more productive — all without breaking the bank!

Save Money and the Planet By Printing Smarter

Gartner estimates that businesses spend between 1% and 3% of their annual revenue on printing costs. *The Wall Street Journal* says the cost for the typical large company is \$750 per employee per year. Either way, it's clear, controlling printing costs can have a big impact on the bottom line. And, as an added bonus, many of the things that will help your organization save money will also help save the planet. Here are a few things you can do to make sure you're printing smart:

- **Print on both sides of the paper** — If you're currently printing single-sided, you can instantly slash your paper budget by 50% by getting everyone in your office to print on both sides of the paper (known as "duplex" mode). Most printers designed for business use support duplex mode, but if yours don't, the amount you save on paper by printing double-sided, may quickly offset the cost of upgrading your printers to newer models that do.
- **Print in draft mode** — A quick and easy way to save on toner and ink is to print routine and noncritical documents in "draft" mode. Not only will your toner and ink cartridges last longer, but your documents will print faster too!
- **Print multiple pages on a single sheet of paper** — Some applications, like Microsoft® Word and PowerPoint®, will let you print multiple pages on a single physical sheet of paper. This is especially useful in PowerPoint where, by choosing to print "handouts" instead of "slides" from the print dialog box, you can actually print between two and nine slides on each side a single sheet of paper.
- **Print only the pages you need** — This may sound obvious, but how many times have you tried printing a page from within your Web browser only to discover that, even though the content you wanted easily fit on a single page, multiple pages came out of the printer due to ads or navigational elements scrolling down the side of the page? It's easy to get around this and to save paper by explicitly specifying a range of pages to print.

- **Make sure you're using the right printer for the job** — Different kinds of printers are optimized for different kinds of print jobs. Choosing the right one for your office, or for the task at hand, can save you money and improve the quality of the materials you print. For example, if you work in a small office and mostly print black and white text, a dedicated monochrome laser printer may be your best bet. If you print a mix of text and graphics, some of which are in color, a color laser printer might be most appropriate. If photographs and graphics are critical to your work, consider an inkjet printer with four or six separate color cartridges to maximize the quality of the images you print. And, if you also need scanning, copying and faxing capabilities, you may want to look at an “all-in-one” multifunction printer. Your Staples Advantage® representative can help you pick the right printer based on the kind of work you do.
- **Buy ink and toner in high-yield sizes** — Toner cartridges for laser printers, as well as ink cartridges for inkjet printers, often come in regular sizes or high-yield sizes. Not only will buying the high-yield cartridges mean having to change them less frequently, but you'll also save money by buying in bulk.
- **Reduce margins and font sizes** — Another “trick” for saving paper is to reduce the margin and font sizes for the documents you're printing. Smaller margins and reduced fonts sizes let you fit more text on each page, which results in shorter documents, fewer pages to print, less money spent on paper, and a happier and healthier planet.
- **Enlist an expert to manage your printers, copiers, and multifunction devices** — For medium- and larger-sized businesses, the most significant cost savings related to printing may come from moving to a managed print service, such as [Staples Advantage's Managed Print Service](#). With a managed print service, a third party that's expert in optimizing your print environment to best suit your business needs will assume full responsibility for your printer fleet, saving you as much as 30% annually through optimization of your current print environment and the elimination of inefficiencies.

Adopt Low-Cost Communication and Collaboration Tools

One of the great things about the Internet is that it has brought with it a broad selection of high-quality, low-cost tools to help organizations communicate, collaborate and stay in sync. Some examples that will get your office talking without busting the budget include:

- **Skype** — [Skype](#) is like a free phone system that runs on your computer, tablet or smart phone. Download the app, plug in a headset, such as the Jabra® PRO 930 UC or the Logitech® H555, and you can place high-quality calls to other Skype users for free! Add a Webcam, such as the Microsoft® LifeCam or Logitech HD Webcam, and you can even do video calls. And, for a small monthly fee, you can use Skype to call regular phone users, too.

- **Use join.me to hold online meetings** — Join.me is a free service that allows you to instantly hold online meetings with up to 250 attendees, complete with audio conferencing and screen sharing. Beyond the cost saving when compared to competing services, join.me is nice in that it doesn't require meeting attendees to download any client software — they just point their Web browser at join.me and enter a unique code you give them.
- **Move to a VoIP phone system** — If you need a phone system for your office, or it's getting to be time to replace an aging phone system, consider a voice over IP (VoIP) phone system. VoIP systems are all-digital phone systems that use your office's data network and the Internet to make and receive calls. This offers all sorts of advantages over traditional analog phone systems, including lower cost of ownership, higher quality audio, and better integration with email and electronic address books. Your Staples Advantage® representative can help assess your needs and select a system that's just right for your business.

Keep the Office Sunny By Moving to the Cloud

You can't read a magazine or listen to the radio these days without hearing ads telling you you've got to *move to the cloud*. But what does that really mean? Quite simply, moving to the cloud means storing data and using applications that would normally reside on PCs or servers in your office to servers that reside in a data center that's accessible via the Internet from anywhere.

The advantages to moving to the cloud are many:

- **Your data is backed up automatically** — All reputable cloud service providers have rigorous data backup and recovery plans in place, meaning data you store in the cloud is automatically protected without you having to worry about complex or cumbersome data backup processes.
- **Your data and/or applications are accessible from anywhere on any device** — Because data and apps that reside in the cloud can be reached via the Internet, accessing them from home, the road, or a remote office is just as easy as accessing them from your primary office — in fact, the process is identical! Also, many cloud-based applications and storage solutions make it easy to access your data from disparate devices, so you can use your computer when you're at your desk, your tablet when you're in a meeting, and your smartphone when you're on the go. No more lost productivity, and no more complex issues around transferring or translating files, or trying to get into the corporate network via VPN!
- **Greater uptime** — Because most cloud service providers are run from Class A data centers that feature redundant network connections, backup power generators, and trained personnel who monitor the center 24 hours a day, seven days a week, chances are good that you'll enjoy greater uptime than if you stored the data or hosted the applications on your own server in your own facility.

There are a number of easy, cost-effective ways to begin taking advantage of what the cloud has to offer. Here are some of the more popular ways in which businesses are using the cloud:

- **Dropbox** — [Dropbox](#) is a nifty utility that creates a special folder on your PC (or tablet or smartphone) that syncs any content you put in it to any of your other devices that also have Dropbox installed on them. You can also give others access to your Dropbox by granting them permission and giving them their own login credentials. It's a perfect way to quickly and easily share files with others, and to make sure you have access to important documents on all your devices, even when you don't have connectivity. Dropbox supports Windows-based PCs, Macs, Linux, as well as Kindles, BlackBerries and Android- and iOS-powered phones and tablets. The service provides a baseline of 2GB of storage for free, with paid plans for 100GB or more starting at \$9.99 per month.
- **Box.net** — [Box.net](#) essentially does the same thing as Dropbox, but it is designed with larger organizations in mind, so it offers more granular security permissions, central user administration, file locking, email notification of changes and other features that larger companies with IT departments would find valuable. Box.net is free for personal use, with business plans that start at \$15 per user per month.
- **Google Drive** — [Google Drive](#) is cloud-based suite of apps, including a word processor, a spreadsheet, a drawing package, a simple database and presentation software, that you access over the Internet via a Web browser. The service is free, and it makes sharing documents, spreadsheets and other files with far-flung colleagues much easier than trying to email copies around and then worry about syncing up different versions.
- **Cloud-attached storage** — Another approach to capitalizing on many of the cloud's advantages is to add storage to your own network that is "cloud-aware," meaning it makes it easy to access files that are stored on it via the Internet, and, in some cases, to back up those files to a remote location. Examples of cloud-aware network-attached storage (NAS) devices that are available from Staples Advantage® include Buffalo Technology's CloudStor series, Western Digital's My Book™ Live Duo Personal Cloud Storage and Iomega's StorCenter line of drives, among others.

Keep Your Employees Happy and Healthy Through Better Ergonomics

Paying attention to the physical health and comfort of your employees shows you care about them and value their well-being. It also helps bolster productivity, and these days, when we're all spending countless hours sitting at desks, typing and staring at computer screens, we need to take extra precautions to prevent repetitive strain injuries (RSIs). There are lots of ways to do this, including:

- **Educating your employees about ergonomics** — Many people don't know it, but the proper sitting position to reduce stress and strain on your body is with your feet flat on the floor, and your back slightly reclined at between 100 degrees and 110 degrees — not

straight up and down at 90 degrees. Your neck and shoulders should be relaxed, and you should avoid craning your neck forward or raising or lowering your shoulders. Your lower arms should be at right angles or slightly more open, preferably resting on your chair's armrests so that your wrists are straight when using your keyboard. Staples Advantage® offers a free guide to [The Ergonomic Office and Beyond](#), which offers numerous tips for optimizing the comfort and health of your office, and your Staples Advantage representative would be happy to answer any questions you may have about good office ergonomics.

- **Making sure chairs and desks are properly adjusted** — When properly adjusted, the seat depth should be such that you can place your clenched fist between the edge of the chair's seat pad and the back of your knee. The height of the chair's arms should be adjusted so your lower arms are level with your desktop and it's comfortable to use a mouse and keyboard — you should not have to strain or stretch to reach them. The seat height should be adjusted so that your feet are firmly on the floor with your upper legs angled slightly downward. If you are not very tall, you may need a footrest to help you achieve the correct seating position with your chair. Make sure your thighs have sufficient clearance to fit comfortably under your desk or keyboard tray. You should also make sure that the tilt tension on your chair can be adjusted to suit your weight.
- **Providing ergonomically designed keyboards and pointing devices** — There are a number of keyboards and pointing devices designed to reduce the stress on wrists, forearms and hands. Examples include the Microsoft® Natural Ergonomic Keyboard, the Razer Ergonomic Mouse and the Logitech® Wireless Trackball.
- **Properly setting up computer monitors** — Making sure that employees' monitors are approximately at eye height, an arm's distance away (18" to 30" inches from their eyes), and placed so their eyes are looking forward and slightly downward most of the time, is essential to reducing eye strain, as well as neck and shoulder fatigue. Additionally, it's important to make sure monitor screens aren't backlit by bright sun and don't have bright glare on them, as this too can increase eye strain. If you can't control the natural light or screen placement, consider purchasing antiglare filters for users that are affected. Finally, if you still have old CRT-based monitors, think about upgrading to LCD or LED monitors — they use less energy, and the sharper screen image is much easier on the eyes.
- **Providing laptop stands** — For users who rely on a laptop's built-in monitor as their primary screen, consider getting a laptop stand or riser to elevate and angle the screen to a comfortable viewing position. Keeping the laptop screen at desk level causes users to angle their neck and eyes downward, inviting fatigue and potential long-term neuro-muscular damage.

Protect Yourself, Your Company and Your Customers

Computer security company Sophos estimates that a Web server is successfully compromised once every five seconds. In 2011 the Internet Crime Complain Center logged a total of 314,246 reported cybercrimes, totaling \$485.3 million in damages — up 3.4% from the previous year. FBI Director Robert Mueller has said publicly that he fully expects cybercrime to soon eclipse terrorism as the biggest threat to the U.S. It's clear — if you're going to use technology in your business, you need to take precautions.

So, what can you do? Here are a few ways you can affordably protect yourself and your organization from cybercriminals, malware and the costs associated with being hacked:

- **Make sure your data is backed up regularly** — Whether or not you believe your data is vulnerable to a cybercriminal, there's no question it's vulnerable to a hard drive failure, a power surge or simple user error. That's why you need to make sure you're properly backing up all your data, and then testing those backups to make sure they can be restored properly. There are several ways to do this. You can either buy an on-site solution, such as a Seagate® Backup Plus external hard drive, or you can subscribe to a backup service, such as [Staples' ThriveSafe Data Protection service](#).
- **Encrypt sensitive data** — If one of your concerns is unauthorized people gaining access to sensitive information, you should think about encrypting your data. Both Windows® and Mac® OS X come with disk encryption utilities, though for more flexible encryption options, you may want to consider third-party products from companies, such as Symantec™ or WatchDox.
- **Make sure every computer is protected by up-to-date antimalware software** — By some estimates, the average survival time for an unprotected computer to remain uncompromised on the Internet is just nine minutes. That fact alone should highlight the need to install antimalware software on every computer, and to make sure updates and new virus definitions are routinely and automatically being installed.
- **Make sure you have a strong, properly configured firewall on individual systems as well as at the edge of your network** — It used to be that firewalls — the technology that prevents unauthorized users from accessing your network and the computers that attach to your network — used to just live at the “edge” of your computer network, where it connects to the Internet at large. Now, the best practice is to also have a firewall running on each individual computer that's attached to your network. Both Windows and the Mac OS X operating system come with basic software firewalls, but you should make sure they're turned on and properly configured.

- **Consider bringing in outside help** — Security can be complex, especially if you're not an IT professional. Staples Advantage can help. We have certified security professionals who can come in, perform a security audit, and then implement a plan to ensure the security of your network and the systems attached to it. Contact your Staples Advantage representative for additional information about a [Network Health Assessment](#) and our [managed IT services](#).

In Conclusion

Hopefully the ideas presented here will spark some ideas for ways you can use technology to save money, while increasing productivity and morale, and continuing to move your business forward. At Staples Advantage, we believe in doing everything we can to make your job easier. For additional cost-saving ideas and more information about how Staples can help your business grow and thrive, please visit us on the Web at StaplesAdvantage.com.