BOOM or BUST?

The 7 Critical Areas Where Technology Fuels Fast Business Growth

By Ryan J Schave, MCP

eclipse consulting

Technology strategy, solutions & support for growing businesses

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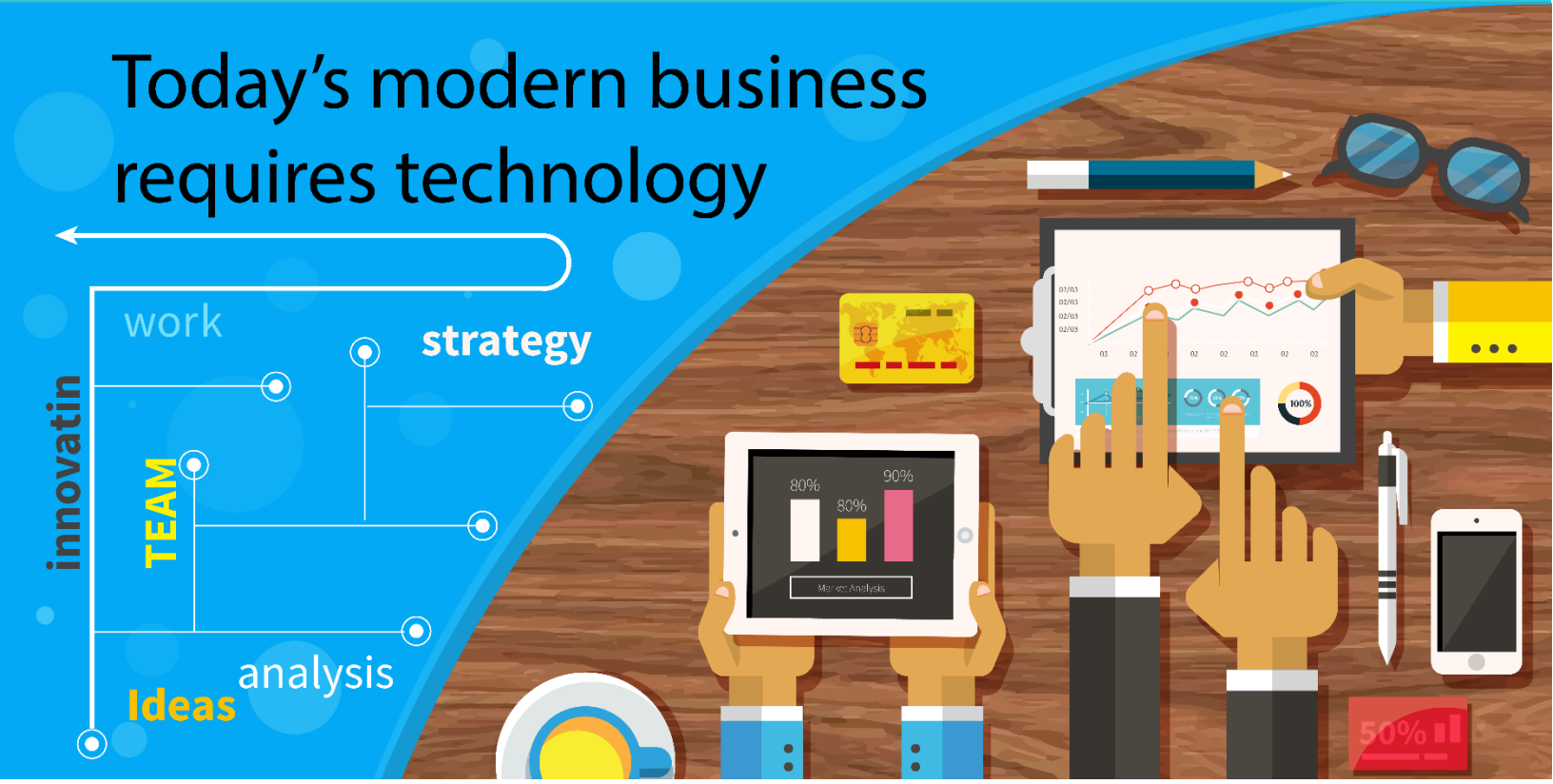

WELCOME!

I wrote this guide because **every** company today is dependent on technology. That can be frustrating when you don't "know" computers, and may not know what's possible. Worse, you don't know where you may be putting your business at risk! *(That always kills me. I hate to see good people dealing with easily preventable problems.)*

When I started Eclipse Consulting in 1996, the concept of using the internet and email for commercial purposes was in its infancy. Today, we can't imagine running a business without them. With literally thousands of technology choices available today, it's easy to get overwhelmed.

We keep it simple, and help you understand the options.

Ryan J Schave, MCP
President, Eclipse Consulting, Inc.

P.S. You'll notice throughout the book that we prompt you on optional next steps. I want to ASSURE YOU that these introductory meetings come with no strings attached. Sure, we'll recommend options, but you take it from there. We're techies. We like solving problems, not pushing sales.

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Area #1
Your IT Strategy

Few things cause more procrastination, frustration and delay than not having a strategy. Every single decision has to be weighed. **Every new software presents an opportunity** to consider. When you are constantly questioning what you should do, you end up wasting a lot of time. You could just be doing the work!

Your IT strategy will help frame future decisions:

- Will you be **Mac or PC** based?
- Will you use **Google or Microsoft** business applications?
- Should you use **cloud or on premise** servers?
- How will you **communicate** with customers?
- Are there ways to **make buying from you easier**?
- What **policies** do you need to have in place to **protect your business**?

Request a FREE "Explore the Possibilities" discovery session.

Ask about booking an IT Strategy session.

Area #2
Your Email Systems

Email is an essential tool for business communication. As your business matures, you need a professional email system like **Microsoft Office 365 or GSuite** (Google Business Apps).

Stop using your @gmail.com @yahoo.com @aol.com and @hotmail.com address for work.

While it may be untrue, using personal accounts make it seems like you are less serious about your business. If you use an email account that comes with your internet service provider (@cox, @comcast @att), you're then locked into using that service provider.

You may argue "…but my email works, it's easy and it's free."

Yes, BUT **free is never free**. You're paying for it in advertising. Without technical support, you may be spending too much time troubleshooting email issues. AND - you are missing a **golden opportunity to brand your business**. But beyond that, you are missing functionality that can help your business grow.

As a technology company, branding is not our biggest concern. **Professional email systems** come with **built-in security, employee management tools** and **collaboration tools**, such as:

- Employee authentication
- Ability to access or forward employee email and files
- Shared calendaring and folders
- Email policies for archiving email – corporate policies
- Technical support

We've seen clients "get tricked" because someone imitates an email address – changing just one letter, so it looks legitimate. With a professional email system and everyone using the corporate domain, spoofing becomes much more difficult.

Request a FREE "Explore the Possibilities" discovery session.

Ask about switching to GSuite or Microsoft Office 365.

Area #3
Your Website Functionality

Your company probably has a **business website**, but frequently, we see websites that don't do much except look pretty. Pretty is fine, but ask yourself, how does your website **help your business grow?** How can you leverage this asset more fully?

You can make your website work harder for you by:

- Adding self-service features for customers or distributors, like adding a **secure distributor portal** for your partners to be able to access wholesale pricing and private document.
- **Accepting orders online**
- Routing **sales inquiries** and **support requests** automatically
- **Integrating with third party systems** to avoid re-keying and mistakes
- **Programming functions that are unique to your business**

How can you make your website help your business grow?

Request a FREE "Explore the Possibilities" discovery session.

Ask about our Customization & Integration Services.

Area #4
Your Customer Management

Most businesses have **lots of customer data** – each trapped in its own data silo. One system for accounting. Another for marketing. A third for order management. Plus, lots of unmanaged emails and documents. The result is you have **information, but no insight** – and possibly a high degree of risk. Ask yourself:

- What happens if one of your employees suddenly becomes incapacitated in some way – or just takes a vacation? Can **another employee immediately step in** to fill the gap?
- Can your **sales team** see when a customer has an **open support issue** or a **large outstanding balance**, so they don't ask for an ill-timed sale or reference?
- Do you know your average **customer lifetime value**? How about your cost of goods sold?
- Is confidential **information stored securely**?

By **managing customer records** in a central location and/or **building integrations between systems**, not only do you have **less risk**, you gain **more opportunity**. With one **360-degree view** of your customers, so you can make more **informed decisions**. By entering information in one place and having it flow to the other business areas, you **cut administrative costs and reduce errors**. By analyzing the data, you can **identify your best clients** and look for patterns to help you **find more clients** like those ones.

With so many **small business software options** out there, it's easy to get overwhelmed. We can help you decide on the right solutions in each category (sales, marketing, accounting, etc.) and then build the integrations between them. Most **cloud-based solutions** are **more affordable and easier** to integrate than ever before, enabling your **employees to work efficiently** on any device, in any location.

Request a FREE "Explore the Possibilities" discovery session.
Ask about Software Selection and Integration Services.

Area #5
Your Data Security Plans

Keeping your **small business data protected** requires a combination of software, hardware, procedures, templates and employee training. In fact, the biggest risk comes from employees, who may use their devices in unsecured locations, lose their devices, or give someone their password. The **most secure lock** in the world won't keep out thieves if employees leave the door wide open.

That's why when it comes **to data security**, small businesses must be constantly vigilant:

- Invest in **firewall, anti-virus and anti-malware** software
- Keep up with **software updates** so hackers can't exploit vulnerabilities
- Create **onboard/offboard checklists** for employees and consultants
- Teach employees how to **be vigilant** for malware and phishing scams

As the saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Over **66% of small businesses** who experience a major data loss go out of business within a year. There are so many heartbreaking stories of companies who **"thought" their systems were backed up**, only to find the recovery disk failed or that when the entire office was flooded, the backup systems were also on site. Ask yourself these critical questions:

- **How much data** can you afford to lose?
- How **long can you afford** to be down?

Downtime and data loss can cost you money, and your reputation.

Imagine a wedding photographer losing a customer's wedding photos. When you consider the **negative publicity** received on social media and review sites, this **one "small' mistake** could cost the company their entire business.

Request a FREE "Explore the Possibilities" discovery session.

Ask about getting a FREE Data Security Assessment.

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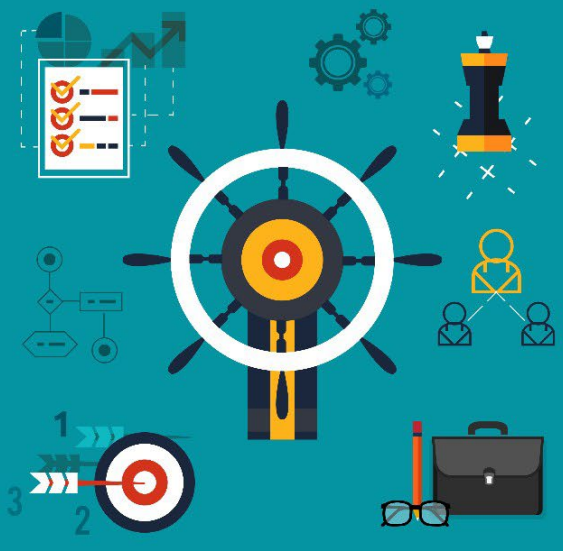

Area #6
Your Policy Management

IT Policies and procedures aren't the sexiest part of running a business, but they are important.

Think how much hassle you could avoid if:

- You had **written procedures** for all routine tasks.
- Employees knew the **most efficient way to** do their jobs.
- You were confident that people had **the appropriate level of access** to information.
- Rules were **enforced consistently**.

We help customers develop those policies and procedures around:

- Employee/consultant on-boarding/off-boarding
- Rules for virtual employees
- Back-up and recovery procedures
- Hardware and software purchases

Request a FREE "Explore the Possibilities" discovery session.

Ask about our Outsourced IT Services.

Area #7
Your Access to IT Resources

Having an **onsite internal IT resource** is great to have when you grow to that point. But what happens if that person quits? What if you can't quite afford a full-time person? How do you fill the gaps in the meantime? As much as possible, you want to build in some redundancies.

1. Use a dedicated **outsourced IT provider** (yes, like us) who can not only troubleshoot the day-to-day issues, but also provide guidance to prevent future problems.

2. Create **power users** for each of your main software applications. **Send your staff to training** so they know how to make the most of the tools you use.

3. **Document everything**. What are the logins? How do you reset the system? You may even want to record short videos to refresh your memory.

4. **Create procedural templates**. If you only setup new employees once or twice a year, you may forget all the steps involved. As you go through the process the first time, create the template that can be re-used for future hires.

Request a FREE "Explore the Possibilities" discovery session.
Ask about our IT Project and IT Support services.

Technology can be either a blessing or a curse. It's your call! You can choose to struggle, constantly resetting passwords and dealing with IT issues – or you can **view technology as a differentiator**.

We work with clients every day to help them find ways that technology can help them:

- **Increase revenue**
- **Improve customer satisfaction**
- **Cut support costs**
- **Reduce errors**
- …and so much more!

ABOUT ECLIPSE CONSULTING

Eclipse Consulting provides technology strategy, software and support for growing businesses in the Metro Detroit area of Michigan – and remotely across the country. Call us for tech support – or for a free quote on your next IT project.

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