

The Savvy Business Owner's Guide to

Maximizing Technology Return-on-Investment

by
The SanityWorx Team

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EDITION

SanityWORX
Bringing Sanity to Your IT World™

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Thank you for entrusting us with your time. We understand you're busy, so we have worked diligently to streamline this paper to include what you need to know to **increase top-line revenues and bottom-line profits** through the proper use of technology in your business without any of the fluff. Give us a few minutes of your undivided attention, and we'll give you some meat to chew on that can turn into financial benefit to your company in short order.

This paper is for you if...

- Creating a culture of productivity is key to your success plan.
- Having fulfilled, happy employees is an active goal for your company.
- Innovation and growth are top priorities in the vision you have for your business.
- Reducing (and even eliminating) technology-related headaches is among your key objectives.
- You are interested in setting the stage to become—or maintain your status as—an industry leader.

As you know, technology isn't just for technology companies anymore. Regardless of your industry, products, or services, proper use of technology is what sets highly profitable companies apart from the rest of the pack. Following are a number of facets of the technology picture that can either serve as differentiating competitive advantages for your company, or as stumbling blocks that hinder progress, reduce employee satisfaction and loyalty, and distract your entire team from focusing on providing your customers or clients with an experience that will keep them coming back again and again.

For just a moment, let's step away from focusing on or talking about technology and take a look at your business in the big picture. Here are a few questions to get the ball rolling...

- Why did you start your company?
- What is your over-arching purpose for being in business?
- Where are you at this point in your journey compared to where you thought you'd be?
- What is your vision for the future of your company?
- What challenges stand between your current reality and that vision?

We're asking these questions here because those are the questions we'll ask when we ultimately visit in person. Your initial response to these questions might be, ***"Why is an IT services company asking those questions? Those things have nothing to do with technology."***

Here's our response...

First of all, we're asking those questions because we're not like any technology services provider you've encountered before. While we are world-class IT professionals, we are also successful business people. We use technology to **drive higher performance, deliver superior products and services**, and significantly **increase revenues and profits**. If technology is costing you money—as opposed to bringing a positive return-on-investment—it is simply being used incorrectly.

So, in the end, these questions have everything to do with technology because implemented properly, technology is going to play a significant role in the accomplishment of your goals and set your business apart as a leader.

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We invite you to read the remainder of this paper from a 30,000-foot view of the landscape in which your business operates. Consider how each of the elements discussed can positively—or negatively—impact your business, and you’ll quickly see a path to maximizing your technology return-on-investment.

Data—the Lifeblood of Modern Business

Your data is quite literally the lifeblood of your business. A whopping 43% of businesses that experience server-level data loss are out of business immediately. Another 51% close their doors within two years of this catastrophic loss. In total, 94% of all businesses that lose their data end up going out of business. A mere 6% survive this tragedy. ¹

You’re covered though, right? You have your data backup method, so this won’t happen to you.

Maybe.

Backups—7 Criteria an Effective Backup Must Meet

Backups are an important part of data protection, but all backup methods are not created equal. To be effective, backups must be:

- Comprehensive
- Automatic
- Off-site
- Redundant
- Secure
- Verifiable
- Easily Restorable

Comprehensive—Backing up key files is a good thing, but backing up all necessary files is much more beneficial when the time comes when those files are needed. Limited or intermittent backups may be only slightly better than no backups at all when the time comes they are called upon to reconstruct the data foundation of your business. For example, email archives or databases must be

backed up very carefully or the backups may be corrupt and cannot be recovered.

Automatic—Despite our best intentions to remember to back up our files onto an external drive of some type, we get busy and forget. That’s a simple fact. Backups need to be an automatic function of an effective technology strategy. People do many things very well. Remembering to make backups is most often not one of those things. Reporting from this automatic system is a critical component of a system and easily readable reports that are sent to the right people for review helps ensure that the system is functioning correctly.

Off-site—Backups made and kept on-site can be a lifesaver when it comes to recovering from a failed hard drive, but what about theft, fire, or other events that affect everything on-site? A backup that is not off-site is a partial backup at best.

Redundant—As good as an off-site backup is, the same things that can happen at your place of business (theft, fire, earthquake, flood, etc.) can happen at a remote backup location as well.

Proper data backups are automatically mirrored in multiple off-site locations to prevent against disasters at any given data storage location.

Secure—Where is your highly valuable data being stored? Do you know? What is the encryption level? Who has access to it? What level of security can you expect? These are important questions to which you’ll want to know the answers before trusting your data to an outside storage provider.

Verifiable—Perhaps you’ve heard the horror stories... Mr. Business Owner was a 100%-er when it comes to making data backups. It happened every day, without fail. Then the day came when his vigilance paid off. The company lost its data (through equipment failure, fire, theft...it doesn’t matter how it happened). Mr. Business Owner was so pleased he had his backups. They purchased new equipment and proceeded to restore the data.

“Sometimes the cure can cause more pain than the illness.”

That's when they realized they had never verified their backups, and some of the data were corrupt and could not be restored. If a backup cannot be verified as restorable, it isn't a viable backup.

Easily Restorable—Even properly backed up data isn't as valuable as it could otherwise be if the restoration process following a catastrophic event is too time-consuming or confusing. Data restoration doesn't have to be difficult, but many backup technologies today still use outdated methods that make restoration an additional headache as a follow-up act to the pain of the initial data loss.

Gremlins in Our Computers—a Look at Viruses & Malware

You're familiar with computer viruses, worms, Trojan horses, and other malware. They can slow down computers, making employees less efficient. They can cause data to become corrupted and unusable. And they can open doors into your system that allow outsiders with bad intentions free and easy access into every facet of your business. Malware is not anything to be trifled with. It is constantly evolving and improving and even IT pros have been caught on occasion. Everyone needs a rock-solid anti-virus/anti-malware protection designed to adapt quickly to the latest threats and even proactively detect and isolate potentially unwanted behavior by programs and software components.

There are many solution providers in the marketplace that promise protection from viruses and malware. Here are a few points to consider when selecting a solution:

- 1. Will the software itself bog down the performance of computers as it tries to protect them?**

Sometimes the cure can cause more pain than the illness. The malware protection must be light and not hinder your workers. Not all solutions are created equal.

- 2. Are updates included, and are they automatic?**

Going back to our earlier discussion on human frailty when it comes to remembering to make backups, this same reality applies here. If it's up to a person to remember to keep anti-virus/anti-malware solutions up-to-date. You are guaranteed that someone will forget...possibly for a long time. Remember that you are only as strong as your weakest link.

- 3. Who is ultimately behind my anti-virus/anti-malware? Do I trust them?**

Some "solutions" in this area are actually malicious fronts for data thieves. As they purportedly "protect" your computer, they are stealing your data for their own purposes. Know your solution provider. Make sure it's someone you trust.

"Just because a job candidate indicates in her interview she is proficient at a given software package does not mean she knows the best way to use it to meet your company's needs."

Performance Optimization—Finding Hidden Gold in Technology

Studies have concluded that a significant portion of employees' potential is swallowed up in the use of inefficient technology. Outdated equipment and software, improperly configured systems, viruses and malware, and other such issues can greatly

reduce employee output, costing your company in real dollars—not to mention lost opportunity. A Ponemon Institute report concluded that hospitals in the US alone waste over **\$11 billion each year** through the use of inefficient communication systems and technology.² This reality exists in all industries.

Properly functioning technology should not be an expense to your company, but rather an investment with a measurable return. Our advice here isn't just to simply buy the fastest, best, or most expensive equipment. **That would be irresponsible.** There is a point of maximized ROI—a sweet spot, if you will—for each technological need or opportunity your company has. When these “sweet spots” are identified and acted upon throughout your organization, productivity increases, employee satisfaction becomes apparent, and more dollars find their way to your bottom line profits.

Training—an Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure

Something many of us as business owners struggle with is carving out the time to **properly and consistently train our people.** We feel anxious about getting employees up and running as quickly as possible so we can meet deadlines and maximize revenues. We may have this all wrong, however. Rushing to get employees up to speed and “producing” instead of properly training them so they operate at the highest possible efficiency level usually results in wasted time, lost opportunity, and lower quality output.

Just because a job candidate indicates in her interview she is proficient at a given software package does not mean she knows the best way to use it to meet your company's needs. Create a unified plan in which everyone in a given position is using software and hardware solutions the same way—the proven best way—to meet the needs of the company. Training should take place not only when an employee joins the team, but as an ongoing part of your company's culture. Empowered, informed employees **enjoy their work more, get along** with each other better, **provide better service** to your business's customers, and **stay with your company** longer. All these positive tweaks mean more money to your bottom line, not to mention a meaningful reduction in headaches for you.

The Right Tool for the Job

You wouldn't use a screwdriver to pound a nail into a board (we hope), but this is the direct equivalent to many companies' use of technology. Whether due to a lack of knowledge of a better way, or tight budgets that dictate “making do” with what you have available for a given task, ill-fitting technology solutions are altogether too common in the workplace.

The right technology tools can **enhance** job satisfaction, **increase** output, **reduce** errors, **produce** better finished products and services, **thrill** customers and clients, and **keep** business owners sane. These are some pretty good reasons to make sure everyone in your organization is using the right tool for his or her respective job.

Compliance—We're Not in Kansas Anymore, Toto

As if the possibilities of data loss or corruption, viruses and malware slowing down your computers and stealing data, and keeping up with the best software and hardware solutions for your needs isn't already enough, along come government regulators who want to make sure there isn't a dull moment in our business lives. Compliance has become an unwieldy, unavoidable monster for many industries.

From PCI compliance in the credit card processing world, to the HIPPA laws our medical friends manage, to myriad other privacy and procedural compliance issues in the financial, legal, and other industries, this is a black hole into which a company may get sucked and never again see the light of day. While compliance requirements can accurately be categorized as an expense and not an investment, lack of compliance can most definitely be categorized as ultimate **business suicide.**

This isn't a fun topic. We'll be the first to agree with that. But it's a necessary part of any successful company's technology picture. If you aren't compliant, everything else we've shared is moot because there won't be a business to optimize. Know the compliance requirements imposed on your business and make compliance a priority.

Innovation—the Dividing Line Between “Me Too” Companies and Industry Leaders

Do you consider your company to be an innovator? **Here's a simple fact:** *Every company is either improving, growing, and innovating, or it is slowing (or quickly) becoming irrelevant.* In the past, the term “innovation company” meant a company that developed something the rest of us could use in running our lower-tech businesses. Now, however, we are all innovators. Sure, our primary product or service may not be selling our innovations to others, but using technology to consistently innovate within our companies—if not beyond—is a hallmark of those who will enjoy ongoing success. It's a must-have if we are to remain viable in the marketplace.

Putting It All Together—Technology as an Asset and Competitive Advantage

Providing our people with the right tools for their jobs, making sure those tools are optimized, protecting them from outside attacks, preserving the integrity of the data that allows our teams to operate at peak capacity, and going beyond just producing the same product or service as the guys down the road are all necessary pieces of the puzzle as we see technology in the proper light—as an asset and competitive advantage in growing our businesses.

The Checklist—What You'll Need to Leverage Technology into a Competitive Advantage

“Just because a job candidate indicates in her interview she is proficient at a given software package does not mean she knows the best way to use it to meet your company's needs.”

Vision and Direction

Just as planning a family vacation in advance allows you to meet your family's needs and, at the same time, save you money on ticket purchases and fares, business planning can produce similar benefits and savings. Step back and look at your industry and the trends in software and hardware. Creating a big picture business plan and defining your goals, directions, and needs will help you focus your technology

decisions and purchases to enhance your ability to meet business goals and avoid waste and inefficiency.

Tools / Platform

As we've mentioned, there is nothing worse than not having the right tool...unless it's having the wrong tool and trying to force it to work. There are many options for platforms, software, and integrated systems. Making informed choices as to the best solutions for a given need can be daunting. Is purchasing, maintaining, and supporting servers or adopting a cloud-based software system the right answer? Either may be the right choice depending on your company's needs, industry, and size.

People / Skill Sets

People are the heart of any organization and their effectiveness directly impacts the bottom line. Many times, it seems, the expectation is that everyone should have basic computer skills and that *all* younger team members are computer whizzes who can handle any computer-related task. This is not true. Basic training, at minimum, is necessary for everyone if maximum effectiveness is to be attained. Where training really pays off, though, is in specialty software and systems where product complexity can often overwhelm users. Unfortunately, in too many such situations, training is handed down by the exiting employee in a quick meeting on her last day, resulting in low knowledge

retention by the new employee and virtually guaranteeing reduced effectiveness.

Training can be as easy and flexible as an occasional "tips and tricks" email or 5-minute demo in a department meeting, to online or offsite classes.

The important thing is to identify a need and begin working on it. Creating momentum with a culture of learning can produce immediate benefits, especially when we convey our vision and engage our employees in stretching to meet goals.

Execution Plan

Execution—a hard-cutting and definitive word. Steven Covey talks about leaning your ladder against a wall and upon reaching the top, discovering that your ladder is leaning against the wrong wall. The steps above—Vision and Direction, Tools and Platform, etc.—help us determine the correct wall to climb, but a proper plan of execution helps us streamline the implementation process and minimize costs.

In the same way preparing a packing list and itinerary for the family vacation helps you purchase your sunscreen at the local big box instead of spending four times more at the beachfront boutique, an implementation plan for your business allows for proper budgeting, allocation of people and resources, and an orderly transition to a new system or way of doing business. A little bit of effort to effectively plan on the front end of a project will always pay dividends on the back end as the plan is followed and effectively executed.

Continuity / Systems

We've already talked about backups, but we're going to hit this topic one more time. **Backups matter!** Your backup solution should provide quick and reliable access to your company data in the event your place of business is damaged or destroyed, or is otherwise unavailable. Your system

must automatically back up and *verify* your backups and report the results. It should provide for a disaster recovery option where entire servers or data sets or even just a single file are easily and reliably available for restore or running from an alternate location.

Feedback Loop

"Feedback? We don't need no stinkin' feedback" ...said no effective business owner ever! Feedback is the mechanism that helps us correct our course and maintain our direction toward making our vision a reality. Part of any effective program from marketing, to employee training, to implementing a new system or process is collecting direct and immediate feedback *and* analyzing

and taking action based on it. The old "suggestion box on the wall" with the lock for which no one can find the key is no longer an adequate tool. Businesses today need a simple and immediate system and more importantly, an open-minded person who has the responsibility and authority to take action.

Partnering for Success—Synergy: Producing a United Effect Greater Than Our Separate Effects

You are the best at what you do. (And if, for some reason, you don't believe you can make that statement, we would like to show you how to change that reality with some tools we have that go well beyond the technology realm.)

We are the best at what we do.

Together, we can optimize the technological needs of your company in a way that:

- Increases sales
- Enhances output
- Boosts employee morale
- Reduces waste
- Improves quality

"Steven Covey talks about leaning your ladder against a wall and upon reaching the top, discovering that your ladder is leaning against the wrong wall. "

- Streamlines processes
- Diminishes headaches
- Creates competitive advantage, and
- Increases your bottom-line profits

It may seem hard to comprehend at the moment, but we can do all this together in a manner that improves your situation in all these ways, while making you more money than you are now. Really.

Sound hard to believe? We'd like the opportunity to show you how. We're so sure our approach to leveraging technology can bring the benefits we've outlined in this paper—**all at an ultimate net income increase to you**—that we'll invest our time

at no cost to meet with you and show you the path to your desired outcome.

Just click the link below and take the first step by requesting a visit with us to help paint the picture of how your visions can become reality by leveraging technology to grow your business. We stand alone in the technology world as a business-savvy team of technology professionals who understand that, at the end of the day, it's not about technology...**it's about how technology can make more money for you.** The answers already exist. We look forward to having the opportunity to lead you to them.

Talk to you soon.

The SanityWorx Team

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Works Cited

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