Resources

There's a lot of technology needed to run a small business. The good news is that today, most of it is remarkably cheap and (relatively) easy to use.

The problem, in fact, is that there are *too* many options; you'll often find dozens of vendors, products and choices in just a single category. So I decided to put together this list of the things *I* use for my business.

This isn't intended to be an exhaustive list – but every service on here is one I've used and recommend based on first-hand experience.

(Full disclosure: If you click one of these links and sign-up for the service mentioned, in some happy instances I get compensated by the company in question.)

E-mail Marketing

- **Constant Contact.** I've been working closely with Constant Contact for over 10 years now. All the newsletters that I manage for clients are done on the Constant Contact platform. Great product, smart (and nice) people and it just keeps getting better. If you want a high quality, easy-to-use tool for your e-mail marketing, this is it.

- **AWeber.** AWeber does a lot of things, but I've been using it for years now as an autoresponder. So, for example, if someone buys one of your digital products, you can use AWeber to deliver it. And to then automatically send a follow-up message a few days later to see how they liked it. And then another message a few weeks after that offering something else. AWeber lets you set up an unlimited number of follow-up messages at predetermined intervals. You set it up once and forget about it.

Audio on your web site / in your newsletter

- **Audio Acrobat.** For about $20 a month, this service takes care of all types of audio needs. Want to record your monthly newsletter and give readers an option to click and listen (and post it automatically on iTunes)? Want to record a message that visitors to your web site will hear? Want to set up a dedicated phone line that your customers can use to record a testimonial for you? You can do all this and a lot more with Audio Acrobat, and it's easy as can be. (More on how I use audio here.)

Data Backup / Retrieval

- **Dropbox.** Dropbox synchs any files you designate, instantly, to "the cloud," so you can get to them from any other computer or device. I keep all my files in my dropbox folder so it doesn't even matter what machine I'm using or where I'm located. You can also set up folders to share with other people you designate (great for exchanging large files with other folks). Free.

- **Carbonite**. For about $5 a month, Carbonite has your data back-up covered. I've used them to restore an entire computer's worth of data and it worked like a charm. (And the iPhone app, which lets you retrieve any file you've backed up, directly onto your phone, is pretty cool too).

Online Events / Webinars / Screen-sharing

- **Eventbrite.** A great tool for managing and promoting your events. It's easy to personalize the registration page to match your brand, the support staff is helpful, and you've got all the bells and whistles you'd expect for setting up events however you'd like. Eventbrite has saved me hours of development time.

- **ReadyTalk.** We've all lived through the webinar nightmare: You show up, ready to participate, and the software doesn't work. You can't log in, your computer crashes, blah, blah, blah. Until I discovered ReadyTalk, I figured this was just the way it had to be. But with ReadyTalk, there's no software download required (it's Flash-based). Participants can chat, "raise their hands," and see anything on your desktop you want them to see. I use it for all my online events.

- **Glance.** A great service that lets you see my computer screen on your Mac, PC or *any* mobile device. There's no download required on your end (all you do is go to my custom URL) and instantly (Ok, it takes one second), we can be reviewing designs together, walking through a web site or doing anything else that requires two (or more) people to look at the same thing at the same time.

- **Screencast-o-matic.** I know, it sounds like a toaster. But this easy-to-use tool allows you to record whatever is on your computer screen. Great for creating tutorials/demonstrations (you can easily include a video/audio of you talking at the same time) and then uploading and saving to YouTube.

Selling Stuff

- **E-Junkie.** I looked at a number of options when I relaunched my site recently and e-junkie was the clear winner. It was easy to set up, has plenty of options, and offers (very important) really attentive customer service. There's also an incredible treasure-trove of detailed, online documentation.

- **Clickbank.** I used Clickbank for 8 or 9 years before I needed to move up to a more sophisticated system. But it works great and if you want to quickly and easily get up and going selling digital products (e-books, etc.), this is the place to start. They also have a built-in affiliate program, making it easy for other people to sell your stuff.

- **PayPal.** You can use PayPal to quickly get up and running selling things on your web site (the ones above have more features, but PayPal is very simple). You need a PayPal account anyway to get paid easily by other people and to make payments. Definitely worth having an account.

Web Site Building / Hosting

- **WordPress.** I can't imagine ever building another HTML-based web site. Every site I'm involved in now is created on a WordPress platform. So much easier, totally integrated with social media, updates made in one place can be automatically populated across the entire site. Much more search engine friendly too.

- **Thesis.** This site is built on WordPress, using the Thesis "theme." Thesis gives you an incredible amount of customization capability and control, in addition to optimizing your site for the search engines (SEO) and helping your site load as fast as possible.

- **HostGator.** I've been through four of five hosting companies in the last 12 years and HostGator is the best. 24/7 tech support; unlimited disk storage; unlimited domains; and all for less than $10 a month.

- **BetterWhols.** A simple, free, reliable tool for quickly checking the availability of a URL you may be considering.

Images

- **iStockPhoto.** For a few dollars each, you can buy the rights to download from among hundreds of thousands of photos/illustrations. Great for newsletters, web sites and powerpoint presentations!

- **Flickr.** Millions of photos, free to use (with certain restrictions and requirements).

Miscellaneous Tools

- **Elance.** A marketplace for finding freelancers for just about anything you might need. I've used Elance to find help with logo design, editing and virtual assistant services.

- **Lastpass.** An easy way to get all your user names and passwords organized, secure and in one place. And it's free.

- **Send Out Cards.** This service allows you to send cards and gifts from your computer *through regular snail mail!* Amazingly convenient and these days, "old fashioned" mail really gets noticed. A great way to stay in touch with clients, prospects, colleagues (and mom).

- **SurveyMonkey.** Easy and inexpensive. A convenient, electronic way to survey people in your newsletter or otherwise.

- **VistaPrint.** Self-serve printing of business cards, notepads, letterhead and just about anything you might want to put your name and logo on. Customer service is so-so, but the end product and interface for set up is top rate.

- **PhotoStamps**. Create real, U.S. postage stamps with your photo, logo or whatever else you want on them. A cool – and relatively cheap – way to brand your outgoing mail.