

Leverage The Web

— Ready for a business revolution? —

An Introduction to the Advantages of Business Software Online

Leverage the Web

**Why all successful small businesses
and startups in the future will be
run using software online**

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This is NOT About Software!

If there are two things of which all small business need more, it's time and money.

As a small business person, these are the first two things you think about when you wake up and the last two things you think about before you fall asleep.

The key to getting more of both is to find solutions to run your business that don't cost much or take much of your time, but yet have big payoffs in both time and money. The term for that is "leverage" and it's used by every successful business, small or large, around the world.

Over the past few years, the World Wide Web has begun evolving a lever that gives small business people a huge return for a small investment. That lever is the growth in the availability of online software.

Put simply, using online software to run your business, instead of software installed on your computer or on company servers, can save you a lot of time and money.

More importantly, using online software yields one of the **BIGGEST ADVANTAGES that a small business can leverage today; the one that is a total **GAME CHANGER** and the reason why all successful small businesses in the future will be run using software online.**

"All successful small businesses in the future will be run using software online."

eBook Sections

1. In "**The Online Software Lever**" section, I'm going to show you how leveraging online software allows you to:
 - a. Pay next to nothing for software and hardware while still having the ability to use the powerful features available in expensive solutions.
 - b. Spend more of your time on high-value tasks such as making sales and delighting your customers rather than running your business in the back room.
 - c. Run your business from anywhere and at anytime, allowing you to get more done during your workday than you ever imagined.
 - d. Take advantage of the **GAME CHANGING LEVER** that online software provides.
2. In the "**Online Software Types**" section, I'm going to list the many, many types of software available online and briefly discuss what capabilities you will find within each.
3. In the "**Finding Software Online**" section, you'll find links to a number of resources where you can discover what's available within each type of online software (there are THOUSANDS of listings within these links!).
4. In the "**What Should You Do Next**" section, I'll give you a step-by-step quick start game plan that allows you to start leveraging online software. I'll also tell you about the complementary site for this ebook and how I can help you navigate the online software world.
5. In the "**About the Author**" section, I'll tell you all about me: why I wrote this ebook and who the heck I am that I think I know so much.

A Few Things about This eBook

This is NOT about software!

Though I talk about software throughout this ebook, at its core the subject is really about a better way to run your business; a way that save you money and time while also giving you a **HUGE ADVANTAGE**.

"Though I talk about software throughout this eBook, at its core the subject is really about a better way to run your business..."

No technical expertise needed!

The biggest fear I have encountered in the course of introducing online software at small business after small business is the amount of technical knowledge needed to use and take advantages of the leverage it provides (what good would time-saving software be if it took lots of time to learn?).

"What good would time-saving software be if it took lots of time to learn?"

Using that experience, I've written this ebook for small business people, not their IT team (though I believe that many an IT team could learn a thing or two in here).

In addition, many of the online applications, at least the ones that I have included in the "Online Software Guide" section, have been designed to get you up and running quickly and easily.

What won't this ebook teach you?

I believe in setting proper expectations up front. Therefore, for the record, this ebook will NOT cover any of the following:

1. **Any deep technical details.** As discussed above, chances are you are not in information technology and, if you are, there are much better resources than I to get trained on the new Web technologies and methodologies.
2. **The importance of having a Web site online.** If you haven't caught on to this by now, you're behind on the online learning curve. Get a site today!
3. **How to set up a Website online.** There are plenty of great online resources on how to set up and maintain a Web site. Some of them will be listed in section 2.
4. **Web marketing.** As far as I can tell, Web marketing is the number one written-about topic in existence. I am not dipping my toe in those waters except to tell you that some online software offers better methods to target your online advertising in a very cost-effective way.
5. **Search engine optimization (SEO).** As far as I can tell, search engine optimization is the number two written-about topic in existence. Not dipping my toes in here either.
6. **How to get rich quick.** However, if you figure out a way, send the details to my e-mail: matt@leverage-the-web.com. Thanks in advance!

The Online Software Lever

The Online Software Advantage

As I mentioned in the "It's All about Leverage" section, online software will help you save both time and money by leveraging both for big results.

I also mentioned a **HUGE ADVANTAGE** that online software provides and here it is:

Software online provides a huge advantage because it lives on the Web, the world's largest network, which allows users from any company, in any place and at any time to work together in ways that were not previously possible

What does this REALLY mean? It means that not only does online software save you time and money, but it takes your business to the next level by allowing you to **CHANGE THE WAY YOU GET THINGS DONE**, saving you even more time and more money and making you productive in ways that you've never imagined.

"...not only does online software save you time and money, but it takes your business to the next level by allowing you to **CHANGE THE WAY YOU GET THINGS DONE...**"

This leads us to:

The Online Software Advantage (TOSA)

Software online not only saves you time and money, but it exponentially increases those savings by enabling you to change your business processes in ways that were not previously possible

That's a lot to swallow in one bite, so let's use the rest of this section to examine exactly what TOSA can do for you and your company.

TOSA and Small Business

One very important aspect of TOSA is that the companies which can benefit the most from it are small businesses.

That's because medium and large companies have had this kind of software for years. They've been able to put in processes that have leveraged the capabilities of online software, but their online software was developed in-house or bought, configured and maintained for a lot of money.

With TOSA, small businesses can finally get the advantages of much more powerful software for a fraction of the price – both in terms of time and money.

Case Study Introduction: Sally's PR Firm

To make TOSA feel more concrete, we'll take a look at it in a "real-world" situation. This case study is not a real-life story, but is a true-to-life scenario intended to demonstrate TOSA.

Sally owns a small public relations firm. She often writes press releases for her clients, but is finding that the approval process, the back-and-forth with her clients, has become very time-consuming.

Currently, the approval process Sally uses looks like this:

1. Sally writes a release and sends it to Client A via e-mail for review.
2. Client A reviews the document and then e-mails Sally with a time that they can meet, either in person or on the phone, to review the document.
3. Sally e-mails Client A back with a different time because she is meeting with Client B at the time Client A wanted to meet.
4. Client A e-mails Sally back with yet another time to meet because Client A is busy at the new time Sally had suggested.
5. Sally e-mails Client A back saying that the new meeting time will work. She is relieved that it only took four e-mails to set up the meeting; often it takes many more.
6. Sally and Client A meet and review the document together.
7. Sally revises the press release and sends it to her Client A via e-mail for review.

8. Back to step 2 and through the process again for as many revisions as it takes.

Just finding a time to meet with a client for a review is a time-consuming process. Then Sally had to take time out of her schedule to meet with the client to hold the review. Keep in mind, meeting with clients is important to Sally, but she would rather spend the time talking strategy, new campaigns and other important details. Reviewing press releases does not fall into the “must have a meeting” category.

Multiply Sally’s current press release approval process by her 15 clients and by the multiple projects each client has going at one time. Then multiply that with the number of revisions a release can go through before final approval and you can start to see why the press release approval process is eating into Sally’s time!

Sally needs new processes that will let her take her time back and use it on high-value tasks.

"Sally needs new processes that will let her take her time back and use it on high-value tasks."

Time and Process

Time is our most valuable resource. With enough time, you can get almost anything done. Without enough time, you will most likely fail.

For small business owners, time is always in short supply. You have a lot to get done and only a set number of hours in a day in which to do it all.

Given that, you must guard your time as closely as possible. You must become efficient by spending your time on your most important tasks; those that serve your customers and move your business forward. You must discover ways to eliminate less important tasks which includes anything that can be automated or delegated.

How can you become more efficient and spend your time in the best manner by getting it done online?

TOSA: Advantage #1

Online Software allows you to work more efficiently by helping you focus on your most important tasks when they need to be done and allowing you to automate or delegate less important tasks.

Case Study 1: Sally's PR Firm

Let's take a look at how this works for Sally:

Remember Sally's press release approval process? It was very complex and took up way too much of her valuable time.

She decided to look at online software because when you use online software you can move a process along by assuring that you are focused and working only when you need to be. Each party does their part of a task on their own schedule and then hands it off to the next person to do their part in turn.

In addition, you can automate or eliminate altogether less important tasks such as setting up and holding meetings for tasks that do not require you to meet.

Liking what she say, Sally decided to take her time back by implementing a new process that made use of online software.

She chose to use an online software application that handles document approval workflow. Here's what her new press release approval process looks like:

1. Sally writes a press release and uploads the first version to the online software application. At that time, she selects the people who should get

an e-mail notifying them that a document is awaiting their review. She selects Client A.

2. The online application sends an e-mail to the approver, Client A. Note that this can also be a text message that goes to the approver's cellular phone or PDA. Neat, eh?
3. Client A logs into the online software application and reviews the press release. The software offers tools so Client A can add comments directly to the document online. Once Client A completes the review, he saves his comments and marks the document as "reviewed".
4. The online software application automatically sends an e-mail to Sally to let her know that Client A has completed his review.
5. Sally logs into the online software application and downloads the latest version of the press release. She makes changes based on the Client A's comments and then goes back to step 1 above.
6. Sally and Client A continue to work through this process until the document is marked "Approved" by Client A.

Can you see how this online application makes Sally's use of time more efficient? It allows her to:

1. *Focus on only the important tasks such as getting the press release finalized.* Sally knew that she did not need to meet with a client, except in rare circumstances, to review a version of a press release. So she eliminated not only the meetings, but the time-consuming processes surrounding the meetings such as setting up each meeting and traveling to and from each meeting.
2. *Focus on the process only when she needs to be involved.* In the example above, Sally is involved in steps 1, 4 and 5. The task handoff is mostly automated with the online software application sending the e-mails and

handling the back-and-forth communications. While steps 2 and 3 are going on, Sally is free to focus on other tasks such as working with other clients or managing her business.

“But...but....”

I can hear you all reaching for your keyboards, ready to fire off an e-mail to me that goes something like this:

“Why doesn’t Sally just use e-mail to send the press release versions back-and-forth with her clients?! She would get the two results you mention above without having to learn an extra application or spend any time or money!”

Process Improvements

I’m glad you asked! This is the perfect time to demonstrate how online software is a **GAME CHANGER** when it comes to running your business:

TOSA: Advantage #2

Online applications offer you tools and features to manage your processes.

Now we really start to see the advantage of running your business using software online.

As I mentioned, online software helps you change how you get things done in ways you never imagined.

“Now we really start to see the advantage of running your business using software online.”

Sally has many clients and the software she is using allows her to set up separate client accounts (and separate accounts for users within each client) so that no client can see the other client within the online system.

However, Sally gets to see it all and this is where she gets management and reporting advantages that using e-mail would not provide

For example, the tool that Sally uses not only streamlines the process of approving press releases for Sally. It also offers tools to help her manage the work. Here are a few examples of what it offers:

1. A dashboard that allows Sally to see the status of all her open approvals. She can see who has reviewed and commented and who has not. This is especially helpful when she has multiple approvers for one press release. It is an at-a-glance way for her to manage the approval process across all her clients.
2. A versioning system that stores every version of the press release as it goes through the approval process. This allows Sally and her clients to track changes or even revert back to an earlier version.
3. Online storage of each press release version. The software keeps each press release version online and only e-mails a notification to approvers to come and review. This comes in handy when Sally includes some very large images in a press release as sometimes the release is too large for the approver to receive using their e-mail system.

Yes, Sally could have used e-mail to streamline the press release approval process, but then she would not have realized many of the benefits that online

"Yes, Sally could have used e-mail to streamline the press release approval process, but then she would not have realized many of the benefits that online software offers..."

software offers:

1. **Centralized management** – imagine each review going back and forth and cluttering up Sally’s mailbox. As we did in the previous section, multiply that by multiple clients with multiple projects. That’s a lot of e-mail to sort through (i.e. a lot of time spent) if Sally wants a clear picture of where every current approval stands!
2. **Versioning** – each version resides in a central spot. There is no confusion around who is working with which version of the release because it is all automatically captured and tracked for Sally by the online application as opposed to existing in multiple e-mails on multiple people’s computers.
3. **Delivery** – Sally doesn’t need to worry about e-mail box limits or firewalls. All she does is upload the press releases to the online software. The e-mail that goes to her client is small and quick and is not bounced or returned.

E-mail was not the right tool for Sally’s press release approval process because it did not meet her need which was to save time and effort so she could focus on other tasks like delighting her customers and making more sales.

Time and Place

People are creatures of habit.

For thousands of years, getting your work done meant going to a certain place; whether it was a farm, factory or office.

Today, we are more mobile than ever before. We travel to meet our customers, whether it’s across town or across the world. We work from home offices and we struggle to balance our time between our work and personal lives.

Where we get our work done has become less important than actually getting our work done. Here's where online software comes into play and how it lets you make the most of your time.

TOSA: Advantage #3

When you use online software, you can literally run your business from anywhere as long as you have a computer that can connect to the Web.

Being able to access your software and data from anywhere is an invaluable capability. You can make much more efficient use of your time and fit in all the things you need to for your work life and want to for your personal life.

This is not a rant against offices or working with other people physically. Some people love to work at home or alone, but the majority of people like to get out and have co-workers to talk with. Having a separate space to work also helps with the work/life balance.

However, the need for more efficient ways to work continues to grow. People have more and more to do in their day, both business and personal, and anything that allows you to get more done is worth its weight in gold.

"People have more and more to do in their day, both business and personal, and anything that allows you to get more done is worth its weight in gold."

This certainly helps our friend Sally with the PR business:

Sally leaves her office early to go watch her daughter's softball game. She leaves extra early, even though she has work left to do for tomorrow, because she needs to beat traffic to be on time.

Because she beat the traffic, Sally gets to the ball park with plenty of time to spare. Sitting in her car, she works on her laptop, connected to the Web with a broadband cellular card. She send out four invoices, re-edits two press releases which she then submits for review and answers a client question in their shared work space. Sally works until she hears a knock on the driver's side window. Her daughter is standing there smiling. Work complete, she closes up her laptop, comes out of the car, gives her daughter a hug and goes to watch the game.

Using online software makes you mobile and frees you in ways you never thought possible.

Imagine paying your company's bills while sitting in an airport waiting for a plane. Or, if you need a change of scenery, you can head to the local coffee shop for a cuppa' joe and STILL get work done while you enjoy the hustle and bustle of the crowds passing by.

Inside my laptop is a communications card that is essentially a cellular phone. For under \$60 a month, I can access the Web at high speed from any spot in the world where I can get a cellular phone signal. I can work at home, at a client's office or in the middle of a field under a tree! Recently, I purchased a new device, a "mobile hotspot". It does the same thing as my communications card except it allows up to five computers to connect to the Web. I expect this to be very handy during meetings!

Because my software and data are online, all I have to do is connect to the Web and all my work is waiting for me. I don't need paperwork because all my paperwork is there: e-mails, files (documents, spreadsheets and presentations), favorites and bookmarks, project plans, accounting (bills and invoices) and so much more.

"Because my software and data are online, all I have to do is connect to the Web and all my work is waiting for me."

If I leave my laptop behind, I can use any computer to connect to the Web and get my work done. I have done this at client's offices, Internet cafes and even at the homes of my friends and family.

I can also take advantage of the capability to work from my mobile device. Many of the online software applications offer add-ons for your iPhone or Blackberry. Now that I can view e-mails, instant messages and documents on my phone, I leave my laptop behind much more often.

The Web is where I get my work done.

Place and time also work together in a very interesting way to provide another advantage:

"The Web is where I get my work done."

TOSA: Advantage #4

You can still work collaboratively even though no one is in the same room or even working at the same time.

These days, project teams are spread around the world. Your clients may be in a different place. Your advisors (e.g. accountant, lawyer) may be in a different place.

The need to get everyone together and in the same room was solved via teleconferencing, but the ability to work asynchronously (not at the same time) was a direct result of online software.

Case Study 2: Sally's PR Firm

Client E needs to come up with a new campaign. Some creative brainstorming is called for, but each member of the client's marketing team is on a different continent.

Sally suggests using some online software she found that allows for asynchronous brainstorming. It combines the features of a whiteboard with the abilities of a mindmap and has all sorts of tools that can help knock an idea loose.

She sets up the brainstorming space online which involves naming the room, securing it with a password, seeding it with some preliminary ideas and thoughts, and using the tool to invite in the team via e-mail. That done, Sally heads off to bed.

The next morning, Sally notes in her e-mail that many of the team members visited the online brainstorming room and made changes. She logs in and is pleased to see that many new ideas and thoughts were recorded. She loved one of them and thought about some ways to expand upon the idea. She entered those in and then head off to her first meeting of the day.

By the time she got back, the brainstorming room was really popping. Her idea had been validated-debunked-revalidated and expanded on by three people. Now the juices were really flowing! This process continued for the allotted three days at the end of which, Sally summarized the ideas the team liked most and presented them to her main client contact who was very pleased.

During this process:

- There were no meetings
- There were no phone calls
- Everyone was able to work on their own schedule, right when the ideas hit (even if it was the middle of the night!)
- The data was all in the same place and easily viewable as one piece
- The goal was met and the client was pleased.

Money and Online Software

Since you are running a small business, keeping your costs down is always a high priority. The less money you spend, the more profit you make.

That's why it makes so much sense use online software.

TOSA: Advantage #5

Online software offers you the lowest cost of ownership, both in time and money, for software, data storage and more.

When you work online, you do not need to have:

1. Physical software servers to host the complex applications you need to run your business;
2. Physical file servers to store and share the large amount of data your business produces;
3. Extra electrical bills to run those servers;
4. A method to connect to your company network through a firewall (or to even have either a company network or firewall) with a virtual private network (VPN) connection;
5. Software installed on your computer besides a browser, a light e-mail client for sending and receiving e-mail and a virus protection/personal firewall solution such as McAfee or Norton; and

6. Time set aside to upgrade or patch your software as the operator of the online application will do that for you as part of their regular product improvement process.

Not having to spend in any of these areas can save your business a tremendous amount of money and time!

"Not having to spend in any of these areas can save your business a tremendous amount of money and time!"

Granted, the online software vendor will charge a fee, but that is typically much lower than the cost of hardware (not to mention the physical space, electricity and other utilities necessary to maintain that hardware) and software.

And you cannot discount the cost of not having to hire any consulting folks to help you install and configure any complex pieces of hardware or software; a cost that can be much higher than the entire software and hardware together!

In addition, you do not need to upgrade your hardware as your needs grow or existing hardware become obsolete. The online software vendor will take care of this as part of their business expense.

You may be charged more if you take up more disk space on their servers, but it will still likely be less than the cost of owning and maintaining your own server and typically, the reason you need more space is because your business is growing which means you should have the money to pay for the space.

Case Study 3: Sally's PR Firm

The software that Sally used for press releases was a content management system with workflow functionality. I have installed these types of systems at Fortune 100 companies and let me tell you: they cost at least \$25,000 and usually cost over \$100,000 *just for the software*.

Often, my clients just wanted one feature of the software, but had to buy the whole package to get that feature.

My clients also had to pay for hardware and my consulting company's time to set everything up and maintain it over the long term, adding considerable cost to the software purchase.

The solution Sally is using costs her \$19.95/month and it does exactly what she needs it to do.

Enough said.

Try and Buy – Or Free!

Another great price advantage that online software affords is that most vendors offer a 30-day trial so you can try before you buy.

In fact, most online software is offered with at least one free version which is great for small businesses that are just starting out!

Try finding an offer like that that with offline software!

"In fact, most online software is offered with at least one free version which is great for small businesses that are just starting out!"

TOSA: Advantage #6

Online software vendors typically offer one free version or, at the very least, a 30-day trial offer.

Learning Online Software

Once you buy software, there is always a cost associated with the time and effort required to get that software up and running to a point where your business can benefit from its use.

TOSA: Advantage #7

Online software provides time savings by offering both faster setup and learning times than offline software.

Let's start by looking at what it takes to setup and learn an offline software application. You will need to:

1. Purchase the software;
2. Purchase the hardware on which to install the software;
3. Setup and configure the hardware;
4. Install the software;
5. Setup and configure the software and;
6. Learn to use the software.

And, we are taking for granted here that you already have a way to securely access your software from remote locations. If not, you will need to purchase and install a firewall and a virtual private network (VPN) (or hire someone to do it for you). If you decide not to access your software remotely at all, you will be stuck managing your business from your office. Not a very practical solution in our very mobile society.

Now, let's see what it takes to setup and learn an online software application:

1. Register on the site and (sometimes) pay a fee to use the software;
2. Configure the software (if necessary);
3. Learn the software.

Online software applications have only half as many steps, and step one is significantly shorter than steps 1-4 of the offline software application process. Plus, the only thing you need to access the application remotely is connect to the Web. Nice, eh?

In addition, online applications are typically a bit easier to use because they usually follow online standards (links, page layouts, etc.) with which you are already familiar. Offline applications have no such constraints and thus the learning curve can be steeper, and take more time.

Web Connections

Thanks to the fact that you are working on the Web, you gain another advantage from online software:

TOSA: Advantage #8

Connectivity and integration is part of the mix because the Web is the where you are getting it done.

Many of the online software applications are built to be open to working with other online software applications and sites (and even with offline applications). This would not be possible if not for the "Web Network". For example:

1. Your online bookkeeping application allows you to set up connections with your bank online to transfer funds, pay bills and receive payments.
2. Your online to-do list application connects with your online (and even offline) calendar to help you develop a quick-glance view of your schedule and to-dos.
3. Your online content approval system connects with your online content management system to automatically update your Web site after a piece of content has been reviewed.

The Final Advantage

There's one more advantage I wanted to discuss before moving on to the next section. It focuses directly on why you are where you are, doing what you are doing.

TOSA: Advantage #9

Getting it done online allows you to focus on what your business does rather than what it needs in order to do what it does

Why did you really start your business in the first place?

Unless you are in the computer industry, you most likely did not go into business to spend your time setting up and maintaining software and hardware.

"Why did you really start your business in the first place?"

Even if you are in the computer industry, chances are you'd rather be out helping your clients set up their software and hardware than back in your own office doing it for yourself.

It does not matter if you started your business to pursue a passion, gain independence, make money or for another reason altogether. To reach your goals and realize your dreams, you need to focus on servicing the customers you already have and adding customers to grow your business.

"To reach your goals and realize your dreams, you need to focus on servicing the customers you already have and adding customers to grow your business."

Setting up how your business runs (the processes, the software you use) should be the first thing you do. However, you don't want to spend a lot of time doing that because it's not the reason you opened your doors. Once the setting up process is done, you should focus on higher-value tasks.

I am not saying that you should never take a look at how your business runs again. I strongly believe in constant improvement and, if something isn't working as well as it should or if you hear of a better way, changes need to happen!

However, when that change does happen, and it will, you will find that using online applications make it happen faster, and cost less in terms of time and money, because of the advantages I laid out for you in this section.

In the short and long-term, online software allows you to achieve the sort of success you got into business for in the first place, whether personal, financial or both.

One Last Thought

Before you move on to the listings section, here's a word to the cautious or technically challenged: using online software does not have to be an "all-or-nothing" leap of faith. Take one thing you do, one business function, and dip your

toe into the online software world. The ease of use is high, the cost is low, the payoff is huge and I bet you'll never look back.

Online Software Types

In the previous section, we talked about a content management and workflow solution at Sally's PR firm.

Well, that is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to online software. There is an online piece of software to handle just about every need a small business owner has.

"There is an online piece of software to handle just about every need a small business owner has."

In the pages that follow, I will list for you the many, many types of software available online. I will also briefly discuss what capabilities you will find within each type.

An Important Note Regarding Types of Online Software

Before you dive into the lists, there is one important point to understand: online software does not always fit neatly to type.

Some types are more robust with a broad feature set and some focus on one specific capability.

For example, there are many vendors that offer online accounting software. Some of those have a billing and invoicing capability, some do not. Then, there are many vendors that offer online software that JUST have a billing and invoicing capability.

So, which type of online software to leverage? Well, it all depends on your needs.

"So, which type of online software to leverage? Well, it all depends on your needs."

I point this out because of the approach I've taken when dividing the online software into types. I have

grouped software into types based on capabilities; what they bring to the table for you to leverage.

For each type listed, I will point out the capabilities of the software listed under that type so you know exactly what I believe each type offers.

Online Software Types

Accounting

There is a great selection of Web based accounting software available, including free small business accounting software. From basic accounting to finance to tax reporting, it's all out there.

That's a good thing because at the heart of any business is the flow of money. Even if you run a non-profit company, you need money to keep operating and that means you need to keep track of that money.

One of the best advantages offered by online accounting software is the ability for your accountant to login and manage your books – no more e-mails, meetings and faxes to exchange information – everything is centralized for appropriate users to access.

"One of the best advantages offered by online accounting software is the ability for your accountant to login and manage your books..."

Advertising

Online advertising is still a thriving industry, especially with the advent and tremendous growth of social media sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter.

Online advertising software plays the matchmaking role, allowing you to advertise to targeted audiences in multiple ways – newsletters, banners, widgets and more.

One the flip side, if you own a site or newsletter which can run ads, this software brings the appropriate advertisers for your reader and pays you for each click.

Appointment Scheduler

I find this type of software to be very intriguing. More than just posting your calendar online, this type of software actually takes one of the most frustrating of all business tasks, scheduling a meeting with multiple people, and automates it online!

Now THAT'S leverage!

Approval Workflow

As we saw with Sally, the ability to automate and manage an approval process is available via online software.

Approval processes are not just for text. You can also post images and other graphic materials such as ads and brochures. Reviewers can mark up the images and leave comments right online. You can even comment on comments and carry on conversations.

"Approval processes are not just for text. You can also post images and other graphic materials such as ads and brochures."

Of course, it's all tracked and managed by the software.

Backup

If you've ever lost the data on your computer's hard drive, you know how important it is to have a backup and if you've ever had a fire or flood or other incident, you know how important it is to store that backup in a different place than your computer.

"If you've ever lost the data on your computer's hard drive, you know how important it is to have a backup..."

Online software is ideal for this task since your data is securely stored in a remote location. For example, I currently have a piece of software that runs on my laptop and backs it up to the Web anytime I take a break. It does not back up the whole thing, just any changes that I've made. The best part? I set it once and it runs on its own.

Now that's peace of mind.

Billing & Invoicing

This software allows you to send online invoices with e-mail notifications and then to receive payments online.

Typically, your customers can login and view invoice and payment history as well.

Blogs

If you frequently have news, announcements, insights or other types of writing for your site visitors, blogs (or **Web Logs**) are a great way to centralize your messaging. In addition, most blogs come standard with a content feed so that your readers can sign up to get your updates as soon as you post them!

I emphasize the frequency though since readership tends to fall if you are not updating often.

Bookmarks/Favorites

There are many, many bookmark/favorites tools online. Their capabilities range from making your bookmarks/favorites available anywhere you have access to the Web to the ability to share your bookmarks/favorites with others (and in turn have their shared with you) to tools that suggest sites based on you're the ones you already have saved.

In addition, you can typically "tag" your bookmarks/favorites which organize them into categories making it easier to find what you are looking for, both within your lists and other's.

Brainstorming

As we saw with Sally at her PR firm, there is software online that provides great brainstorming tools.

Some of the software is visual and contain great drawing tools. Some of the software is organizational and helps you take your ideas and start fleshing them out.

All of them target creativity and the capture of new thoughts and directions.

Business Cards

I highly suggest that you purchase your business cards online because it is the most straightforward way to save money for your business.

For example, my local printer quoted over \$1000 for 500 business cards while an online printer quoted me \$120 for the same quantity AND quality! Which do you think I chose?

Many of the sites allow you to upload your own design, but if you don't want to mess with that, you can take one of their many, many templates and customize your text and text placement.

Business Networking

Right behind having a Web site, I consider online business networking to be one of the most important tools for small businesses. That's because "who you know" is even more important for small businesses trying to get their foot in a door.

"Right behind having a Web site, I consider online business networking to be one of the most important tools for small businesses."

The larger players in this areas offer many capabilities such as connections, introductions, forums, the ability to ask and answer questions and groups.

There are also a lot of smaller vendors. These sites tend to focus on different areas such as:

1. Niches such as a specific industry or skill;
2. "Matchmaking" services, bringing together businesses to work on projects or to partner up in other endeavors.
3. Information sharing such as the right people to call for sales within a company.

Business Funding

A segment of the business networking software vendors offer specific services to help match startups and small businesses with angels, venture and institutional investors.

Some of the other capabilities include methodologies to fine-tune your business' elevator pitch and lots of good advice in the form of articles and anecdotes.

Business Plan

If you like track your business plan and know at any moment where you are against where you should be, then this is the online software for you.

Using different templates, this software helps you develop you business plan online and then uses a number of tools to track you progress against business plan predictions.

Business Process Management (BPM)

There are a number of online software vendors that offer a "build your application" approach. These are great tools for those who want manage processes from start to finish (e.g. hiring a new employee, fulfilling an order, etc.), especially if you are tracking it all on a spreadsheet today.

Typically, these online applications offer both a back-end database and a business-rules engine that allows users to dictate what happens at every step of the process.

Best of all – you do NOT need to be technical to use this type of online software. These offerings were developed for business users

so the tools are straightforward and the language used is "business-speak", not "tech-talk".

Calendar

This is a very broad type within the online software world. There are tons of stand-alone calendars as well as many calendars that are part of another application (e.g. a project management software application).

The key advantage to having your calendar online is the ability to share it and, as mentioned previously, to schedule appointments. It's also very helpful for teams and clients to have the ability to see internal and external deadlines.

Call Center

Customers really appreciate having the capability to contact you from your Web site and one of the neatest ways is to have a "Click to Call" button prominently displayed.

Once they click, an agent is selected out of your queue and contacted to make the call to you via Skype.

There is no phone involved, no PBX and very little hassle.

Chat

Chat is another great channel for customer communication. There are a number of powerful online software chat offerings that can be embedded

"Chat is another great channel for customer communication."

directly into your Web site making both set up and management of chats a snap.

Chat is also very handy for internal and external teams and can be used for collaboration and brainstorming in very powerful ways.

Classifieds

Though they may look similar, these are not your local paper's classifieds. Typically, posting to these services is free and their reach is much broader.

Online classifieds services offer more than just a listing as well. Some examples of capabilities include private messaging, online chat rooms and other communication tools that facilitate selling, buying hiring or whatever classifieds goals you have.

Collaboration

By far, this is the largest type of online software because most, if not all, online software is collaborative in one way or another.

As I mentioned in "The Online Software Advantage" section, the most powerful feature of online software stems from the fact that it is online and thus allows for people and companies to work together in new ways.

Well, another word for "working together" is "collaboration" and there you have it – collaboration is at the core of online software.

I would be hard pressed to name a piece of online software that is "just" for collaboration because they typically have another purpose

(e.g. brainstorming, project management, accounting, etc.) however, that's OK because:

Online software is collaboration.

"Online software is collaboration."

Community

As the explosion and continued growth of social media has shown us, online communities are powerful forces. As a small company, you can tap into that force to extend your reach.

Communities can be used to elicit, capture and test ideas. Communities can be used to capture comments and gather feedback from your current customers.

You can use communities to service existing customers. I love this approach because customers who have gotten smart with your products and/or services help answer other customer's questions and solve their problems; all at no cost to you. Talk about leverage!

"...customers who have gotten smart with your products and/or services help answer other customer's questions and solve their problems; all at no cost to you. Talk about leverage!"

Community is your customer's channel back to you. Some companies are afraid of that – which should tell them something.

Contacts

Though typically tied in with the "Customer Relationship Management" online software type, there are stand-alone options that allow you to enter, store, search and share your contacts online.

Content Syndication

Content syndication is the best way to put your message in front of as many readers (i.e. potential customers) as possible. There are many ways to syndicate your content, but the two major methods are:

1. **Feeds** – whether RSS or ATOM, readers can subscribe to feeds and get your information as soon as you update your content.
2. **Widgets** – widgets are little pieces of code that any person or company can put on their Web site. Widgets can show have tools (e.g. a mortgage calculator), news or display any information that you would like to distribute. Best of all, a widget contains a link to your site. So, other people put your widget on their sites and viola, instant viral marketing!

“...viola, instant viral marketing!”

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Online CRM software is designed to track your interactions with your customers from your first meeting through the entire life-cycle of your relationship with each one.

The more powerful vendors offer not just a "customer journal", but tools that allow you to set up next steps and reminders and reporting that gives you a view across your entire sales and customer service organizations.

Because the software is online, interactions can be collaborative in many ways and you can provide multiple channels for the system to be updated.

Customer Service

Beyond giving your customers a way to reach you and your staff access to powerful ticket and issue tracking system, online customer service software includes collaborative features such as user communities, online chat and more.

Database

Databases are where data lives and data is what feeds business decisions. Having your database online adds the ability to have multiple sources of updates and enables multiple users to run reports off of that data.

As I noted way back in the beginning of this ebook, capabilities like this are not new for middle to large companies but to provide this much power to small companies is a clear result of the online software lever.

Document Management

This is very similar to Business Process Management except that it revolves around the filling out (via a workflow) and storage of forms.

There are many online software applications to handle this and some even include legal capabilities (e.g. online signing of contracts).

eCommerce

eCommerce is one of the main reasons that businesses jumped onto the Web in the first place and it remains a huge driver of Internet usage today.

Online solutions range from a simple button that leads to an online payment processor to full storefronts with product, inventory and fulfillment management.

Electronic Signature

As mentioned in Document Management, electronic signature software allows you to finalize contracts online – no meeting, no faxing, all legal.

eMail

There are a ton of email software solutions online ranging from free single email accounts to entire email servers that you and your company can use to host email and online calendars.

One of the more intriguing types of email software online are the email aggregators which collect your email from multiple email accounts and allow you to manage them all in one spot.

Employment

Hopefully, you are having success at your small business, but one day you may find yourself back in the job market. When that day comes, there are many online resources available to job seekers which can help you find your next gig.

Examples include:

1. Online job boards
2. Online networking
3. Online classifieds
4. Online freelance sites

Recruiting

On the flip side of looking for a job is hiring for one. Online software offers many solutions for finding, vetting, tracking and hiring employees.

Estimates and Quotes

At the end of the sales cycle is the estimate or quote – the point where you say, "Here's what I heard you say you want and here's what it would cost if I did it for you."

Online estimates and quotes software allows you to send your quote electronically, by email or online or both, and then to receive confirmation to proceed (or even haggle) online.

Event Planning

Planning an event is a time-consuming and very detailed oriented task. Where better to do it than online where all your information around the event can exist in one place for everyone to access.

Online event planning software gives you the capabilities to:

1. Create Online Registration
2. Create Custom Event Websites
3. Send Email Invitations
4. Automate Confirmations
5. Receive Online Payments
6. Get Detailed Reports
7. And much more!

Registration/Reservation Software

This type of software is simply a subsection of the "Event Planning" type. It's very useful when you don't need all the capability of a full event planning tool, but just want to allow people to register or reserve a space.

Expenses

Managing expenses is never fun and for a small business, it takes time and energy away from more critical tasks.

By using online software, you can let each employee enter their own expenses online and then manage approvals and payment all in one convenient spot.

"Managing expenses is never fun and for a small business, it takes time and energy away from more critical tasks."

This is a great use of the online software lever.

Flowchart

Flowcharts are great tools for detailing processes, showing history and future direction and for brainstorming.

There is a great selection of online flowchart software, most of which allow you to share and collaborate with others.

Forum

As I've pointed out when discussing previous types of online software, opening up the channel for online conversation between

you and your customers and even between customers can be a very powerful lever for customer and tech support and much more.

Forums are different than chat in that they work asynchronously (not at the same time) so that a conversation can happen over time as parties come on and off the Web.

Online communities are typically built around forums because forums are where conversations happen online.

"...forums are where conversations happen online."

Forums can be stand-alone or added directly to your Web site.

Freelancers

Freelancers are a great resource for small businesses because they allow you to get targeted project work done without having to hire employees.

There are a lot of sites that offer freelancer marketplaces and they all have great tools for posting, assigning, managing and paying for your project.

On the flip side, if your small business IS a freelanced business, then these site provide excellent tools to show off your work and bid for jobs.

Full Business Software Application Suites

These are holy grail of online software. Imagine being able to find a one-stop-shop for all the software you need to run your business - one price, one login, all integrated together.

Currently there are not many of these offerings, but if I'm reading the tea leaves right, I believe that consolidation of online software into full suites is in our future.

"...if I'm reading the tea leaves right, I believe that consolidation of online software into full suites is in our future."

The only real downside of this approach is that you like part of the suite, but don't like it all. For example, perhaps you like the estimating, quoting, invoicing and accounting modules, but you don't like the project management module. That could be enough to make you look elsewhere since you'll be paying for that module, but not using it to run your business (which is NOT leverage).

Fundraising

Heads-up to non-profits – there are some powerful online software tools for fundraising.

Not only do these tools allow you to list a cause, collect money online and track the entire endeavor, but they also provide Web sites and some very interesting approaches to fundraising (such as challenges, micro-fundraising and more).

"... fundraising online is incredibly cost-effective – no door-to-door workers, no printing and mailing, no tables set up with workers manning them. This is online software leverage at its best."

Best of all, fundraising online is incredibly cost-effective – no door-to-door workers, no printing and mailing, no tables set up with workers manning them. This is online software leverage at its best.

Getting Things Done

If you love David Allen's "Getting Things Done", then you'll love online software.

Many online vendors offer his program already built in to their products making it easier to implement than ever.

Don't like David Allen? Well, there's also online software for smart goals, Franklin Covey and many, many more.

Knowledge Base: How To/Q&A

Self-service is the name of the game these days and giving your customers the ability to search for solutions without having to wait on the phone or for operating hours to come around is a huge plus.

Online knowledge bases are a specific application of the database type that I listed earlier and can be integrated with forums to their use even more powerful.

"Self-service is the name of the game these days and giving your customers the ability to search for solutions without having to wait on the phone or for operating hours to come around is a huge plus."

Human Resources

Human resource software is the perfect candidate for online use since many people need to be involved at many points in many processes. Having this all online centralizes the processes and data and helps to assure that everything flows along more smoothly.

In this type, you'll find everything from the recruiting capabilities I mentioned earlier to the ability to manage performance reviews, take disciplinary actions, post the employee handbook and much more.

Instant Messaging

IM software is similar to chat software in that it allows you to carry on quick and easy conversations. In fact, since it usually runs on your computer, I would hesitate to label this online software except that it has everything to do with the Web.

IM software uses the Web to route all your messages. Services on the Web watch for your local software to say, "Here I am" and then notifies the appropriate contacts that you are now online and available (or are online and not available when you need privacy).

IM is most handy when you need to ask a quick question or give a quick update.

Intranet

Intranets are probably the purest form of online software as they were originally designed to allow users to collaborate, shares data and files and have conversations via forums and chats.

Before the advent of the online software explosion, Intranets lived "in-house" on a company's servers. Today, they are similar to the "Full Business Software Application Suites" type of online software in that they offer multiple features, mostly targeted at the traditional Intranet purposes mentioned above.

Inventory

Managing inventory and inventory processes such as orders online makes a lot of sense especially if you sell online or have multiple locations offline.

It's also handy to be online if you have, or are part of, an integrated supply chain system where your suppliers and buyers can see when you need materials and you can see when they will need their materials.

With online inventory software, you can combine all of your inventory information into one spot and thus manage your processes from end-to-end more easily and so effectively. Leverage at work!

Issues/Tickets tracking

Perfect for support and customer complaint groups, online issues/tickets tracking systems offer a number of great features such as:

1. Workflow processes to route issues/tickets through the resolution process;
2. A centralized database so information can be shared and searched;
3. A customer-facing interface so customers can see the status of their issue/ticket.

Since support personnel are often mobile, easy online access to the issues/tickets tracking system is a huge plus as well, bringing the information to them where and when they need.

Large File Transfer/Sharing

One of the most frustrating things about email is that large files often cannot be sent or received because the email provider has set a limit on the size file that can be sent or received.

"One of the most frustrating things about email is that large files often cannot be sent or received because the email provider has set a limit on the size file that can be sent or received."

Large file transfer/sharing software online helps resolve this issue by giving you an online spot where you can upload a large file or files and then send a unique and private link to the recipient to use for downloading the file.

Many of the vendors also offer login protection and encrypted connections so privacy concerns can be alleviated.

Lists

I don't know about you, but I would be lost without lists. Heck, this whole online software types section is a list!

There are many, many online lists software offerings. Some are simply that, a place you can go and make list after list, even checklists that can be checked off as you complete the items listed.

Some allow you to share your lists or to build lists collaboratively.

Many of the online lists software vendors offer the ability to synch with your regular to-do tools such as Outlook or your mobile device enabling you to manage your lists in multiple ways all depending on the resources you have at hand.

Marketing

The online world is a marketer's play land with millions of potential customers and so many ways to reach them.

Online marketing software helps marketers make sense of everything going on with tools that range from online reputation monitors to campaign effectiveness.

"Online marketing software helps marketers make sense of everything going on..."

Meeting Online

Meeting online is a lot more than just about audio and video conferencing these days.

Online meeting software allows you to make presentations, collaborate online and share your desktop or applications.

Many of the online meeting vendors allow you to record online meetings, a handy tool for trainers who can then reuse meetings as presentations and for archives that help those who missed the meeting stay in the loop.

Metrics

This is not the dreaded Metrics system, but tools that monitor your Web site and tell you:

1. Where you visitors came from – such as a search engine or another site
2. How many people visited – once or more than once
3. How many of the people that visited bought items on your site.

4. And so much more!

Running a Web site without having access to metrics is like flying blind – you just keep trying things with no idea what works.

Online metrics software is easy to set up and easy to use and you will love the flashy reporting!

"Online metrics software is easy to set up and easy to use and you will love the flashy reporting!"

Mind Mapping

Are you a visual thinker? Do you like to draw everything out on whiteboards because it helps you get the big picture? Then mind mapping is for you. In fact, mind mapping for me - this book was planned and outlined using a mind mapping tool.

As opposed to using a text outline or structure, mind maps allow you to drag-and-drop items around (similar to an electronic whiteboard) so you can see everything laid out in front of you. You can create relationships between items and even attach notes, links and documents.

Want the big picture? Collapse all the branches and just see the main concepts. What to focus in? Expand the branches to whatever level of detail required.

Newsletters

Newsletters are a great way to stay in touch with your customers. You can send product and service updates, disseminate news and advertise.

Online newsletter software is very robust offering automated list management, sophisticated reporting on sends, bounces, reads and of course who clicked on what link in the newsletter and how many times.

Notes

As with all informational and organizational tools, notes have moved online as well.

Notes software online can be as simple as having a spot to jot down thoughts to the power of being able to embed links, text, audio and videos in your notes, creating "virtual notebooks" online where all your information on one subject is gathered and organized.

Of course, since this is all happening online, you can both share your information with others and allow them to contribute as well.

Online Payments

If your company wanted to accept credit cards, it used to be a pretty detailed process consisting of meetings, forms, calls and letters to get set up.

These days, you can be accepting credit cards online relatively quickly thanks to online payment software. You can collect the credit card online or have your customer give you the number to input yourself. Plus, it all can tie back to whatever bank with which you do business.

This is one online software type that just makes life easier.

Organizational Charts

A subset of flowcharts and mind mapping, organizational chart software online does pretty much what you would expect it to do except it also centralizes the data in one place and allows for easy updating and distribution.

Payroll

Online payroll software can help you manage payments whether you have 1 employee or thousands.

Online payroll software can be integrated with both online and offline accounting systems to allow for end-to-end processing of paychecks.

Photo Editing

Need to touch up that photo for your next brochure or ad? There are some great online photo editing software tools that you can use to do just that.

Say good-bye to red-eye without paying for expensive photo editing software!

Polls and Surveys

Two additional channels for gathering information from customers, potential customers or whomever else you wish are polls and surveys.

Polls typically ask quick multiple-choice questions and are short and sweet.

Surveys are typically longer and can contain many types of questions from multiple choice to matrices to full-text.

The online polls and survey software offerings can be integrated into your Web sites or widgets, sent as part of your newsletter or can even stand alone at the vendor's site.

Portfolio

If you are an artist, photographer, graphic designer, actor, musician, writer or any other creative type, then online portfolio software is for you.

Easy to sign up, add materials and configure, your online portfolio becomes your calling card for showing off your fabulous work.

Public Relations

All the traditional PR capabilities can be found in online software offerings. You can:

1. Build media lists
2. Write, send and track releases
3. Monitor online clips and mentions
4. Create online press rooms with press packages and more

Presentation

Presentation software online enables you to create "PowerPoint-like" presentations which can be shown online, printed or saved as a PDF.

You can also share and collaborate on online presentations much more easily.

Programmers

Programmers can find code versioning systems and online development environments within online software offerings.

These tools allow for collaboration and sharing as well, especially helpful for distributed software development teams.

Project Management

Hands-down, one of the best uses of online software is project management.

That's because project management depends on collaboration, communication and a centralized repository of data and reports. These are all core leveraging points for online software.

"Hands-down, one of the best uses of online software is project management."

You can find online project management software that ranges from simple collaborative spaces to powerful systems that would meet the most sophisticated project manager's needs.

One of the best features of online project management software is the ability to configure user accounts so that one client cannot see the other client, but you can get a view of all your projects clear across your business.

Purchasing and Supply Chain Management

As a subset of many of the online accounting software offerings, you can create purchase orders, set up automatic reoccurring purchases and even pay suppliers online.

Some vendors also offer warnings, limits, convertors and other handy tools.

Reminder

Online reminder software is typically part of an online calendar or to-do list.

The best part about online reminders is that they can come in many forms including text messages, e-mails and even phone calls.

Remote Access

Sometimes, not matter how good you get with online storage software, you leave something on your office PC that you need when you're somewhere else.

That's where remote access software online. Using an encrypted Web connection, you can access your office PC from anywhere as long as you have a Web connection.

Handy, eh?

Research

The Web is a fine place to do research, and there are online software tools to help you along the way.

From online software applications such as the "Notes" type I discussed earlier to online "sticky notes" and annotations that you can collect and share, you should be able to find a tool that helps you pull it all together.

Shipping

One of the best advantages to being an online business is the lack of any need for a physical location or warehouse.

However, if you do sell physical products online, there are plenty of fulfillment companies who provide online software to make the entire order through shipment process smooth for both you and your customers.

Shopping Cart

Most associated with eCommerce, many vendors offer stand alone shopping cart software online which can be customized and integrated into your Web site.

Some of the handy features include:

1. The flexibility to use many different payment processors instead of being locked into one;
2. Reporting on sales and shopping cart abandonment (when someone puts something in their cart but does not buy it)
3. Autoresponders that send emails to your customers after the sale to thank them and to pass on sales-related information.

Spreadsheet

Spreadsheet software online enables you to create "Excel-like" spreadsheets which can be shown online, printed or saved as a PDF.

You can also share and collaborate on online spreadsheets much more easily.

Start Pages and Feed Readers

As I mentioned in the "Content Syndication" online software type, RSS and ATOM are one major way that companies update interested readers. All blogs and news services offer at least one feed and many offer several.

Where this comes in handy for small business people is that you can use start pages and feed readers to collect a number of feeds into one place so you can get updated news and information quickly and easily. You do not need to go to each site to get updated – the updates just happen. This is leverage at its finest!

"You do not need to go to each site to get updated – the updates just happen. This is leverage at its finest!"

Many of these services allow you to set up tabs to make your information even more accessible by category or type.

Storage

Storage online allows you to access your files wherever you go. This is a key leverage point for online software and provides tons of flexibility and process changes that can help your business make most of the workday.

Many of the services have automated synch capabilities to assure that your latest files are online.

Tasks and To-Dos

Another huge online type, task and to-do software is offered in many shapes and sizes. The best part about having this software online is

the ability to access it anywhere – for additions, updates and check-offs!

Many of the to-do and task systems offer different methodologies (as mentioned in the "Getting It Done" type) as well as synch with offline software and mobile devices.

Technical Support

Whether your company provides technical support to customers or you just need a good internal solution for technical support, online software has got you covered.

One of the best features of this type of online software is the ability to take over a remote computer through the Web. This allows technical support personnel to troubleshoot and fix issues on systems that can be hundreds of miles away (unless of course the problem is connecting to the Web!).

Text messaging

A handy communication tool, the ability to use online software to type and send text messages is good for those of us who do not have texting plans or dislike using phone keypads to type.

Time Card/Time Sheet

Allowing employees and contractors to record and submit their hours online just makes sense. This way, there is no double entry (cutting and pasting their hours into your accounting system) which leads to less work and less errors.

Typically, these systems can be integrated with online and offline accounting systems to make the process work end-to-end.

Time Tracking

The child of the Time Card/Time Sheet type, these online tools allow you to hit a start-and-stop stopwatch to track how much time you are spending on a task.

Once you hit "stop", you typically can tell the system which project and client to which to charge the time.

This works especially well when the tracker is part of the Time Card/Time Sheet software which is often, but not always, the case.

Training

Online training software is truly a real leverage for small business. This online software can help you:

1. Create the training;
2. Give the training;
3. Track who took the training; and
4. Track training results (quizzes, etc.)

Video Editing

Similar to the "Photo Editing" online software type, having the ability to edit videos online saves you the cost of learning and buying expensive video editing software, especially if your needs are modest.

Web Sites

These days, building a Web site using online tools is fairly straightforward. That's a good thing since, as I believe I've mentioned a few time throughout this ebook, Web sites are a must for any sized business.

Online Web site software offers great tools for the non-technical business person:

1. Professional and modern-looking site design templates;
2. content Management that allows you to add, change and delete content (text, images, videos and more) by using Web forms; and
3. Web Site Add Ons such as slide shows, image galleries, forums, chat rooms and more.

"Online Web site software offers great tools for the non-technical business person..."

White Boards

As I mentioned before, I love to draw on white boards and having the ability to do so online makes me very happy.

But besides my happiness, I can think of no more creative and engaging way to collaborate and brainstorm online.

Online white board software offerings typically allow you to share and collaborate and print or save your drawings.

Wikis

Like Wikipedia (the first Wiki) Wikis are collaborative online work environments that allow users to contribute content to the same project.

This is very handy when you have a large project and you need to break it up into chunks for different teams to capture. Each team can own a piece of the wiki and, as all the teams contribute their findings and updates, the wiki becomes a compilation of the entire project's work.

Word Processing

Word processing software online enables you to create "Word-like" spreadsheets which can be shown online, printed or saved as a PDF.

You can also share and collaborate on online documents much more easily.

Work Scheduling

A handy subset of the "Appointment Scheduler" and "Calendar" types of online software, this type allows workers with a time schedule to sign up for slots, trade slots and view the whole schedule, all online.

Great use of the online software lever!

Finding Online Software

There are many online software resources on the Web. Below I've listed some of the best including sites that dedicate themselves to keeping you up to date, articles that focus on specific types of software and other sites that provide news and information as well as tips and tricks for using online software.

There are literally thousands of online software listings in the links included below, so take it one step at a time (see the "What Should You Do Next" section for more pointers on that).

"There are literally thousands of online software listings in the links included below..."

Have fun exploring!

Sites

Go2Web20 (<http://www.go2web20.net>) – "The complete Web 2.0 directory"

Search by keyword (a big plus!) or use the tag in the purple box on the right (to see all the tags available, hit the "Show all Tags" button at the bottom of the purple tags box)

Feedmyapp (<http://www.feedmyapp.com>) – "Your daily Web 2.0 dose"

Lots of very well categorized listings. Use the tag list on the left to find online software by type.

It|Redux (<http://itredux.com/office-20/database>) - "Office 2.0 Database"

Lots of listings, many with multiple reviews!

Listio (<http://www.listio.com/web20/search.php>)

Lots of listings and ratings, too! One nice feature, within each listing, you can see a list of related software applications.

Make Use Of (<http://www.makeuseof.com/dir>) – "Cool Web Sites, Web Applications and Mobile Tools"

Well organized listing of online software.

I want to Web 2.0 (<http://www.philb.com/iwantto.htm>)

Slow but very complete (categorized) list of online software.

./emilychang eHub (<http://www.emilychang.com/go/ehub/category>)

Great list, but not as easy to navigate as others.

All Things Web 2.0 (<http://www.allthingsweb2.com/mtree>)

A full directory of online applications; some are rated and reviewed.

The Webware 100:

2009 Finalists:

(<http://www.cnet.com/html/ww/100/2009/categories.html>)

2009 Winners: (<http://www.webware.com/100>)

2008 Entrants:

(<http://www.webware.com/html/ww/100/2008/winners.html>)

Articles

<http://www.mashable.com> has some of the best articles listing online software applications. Be warned that the older the article, the more broken links it usually contains. With that in mind, I have listed the articles in chronological order with the most recent listed first (except for the first article which I feel is the best starting point).

270+ Tools for Running a Business Online

<http://mashable.com/2008/09/21/270-online-business-tools>

Top 10 Social Networks for Entrepreneurs

<http://mashable.com/2009/03/12/entrepreneur-networks>

85+ Tools & Resources for Freelancers and Web Workers

<http://mashable.com/2009/03/03/freelance>

5 Ways to Collaborate on Documents Online in Real Time

<http://mashable.com/2009/02/21/online-document-collaboration>

GTD Toolbox: 100+ Resources for Getting Things Done

<http://mashable.com/2009/01/29/getting-things-done>

Analytics Toolbox: 50+ More Ways to Track Website Traffic

<http://mashable.com/2009/01/12/track-online-traffic>

WRITER'S TOOLBOX: 35 Best Tools for Writing Online

<http://mashable.com/2008/12/13/writers-toolbox>

100+ More Ways to Organize Your Life

<http://mashable.com/2008/12/02/organization-applications>

40 Great Resources for Making Lists

<http://mashable.com/2008/11/20/list-management>

35+ Online Shopping Cart Solutions for Your Business

<http://mashable.com/2008/10/08/shopping-cart-solutions>

Top 10 Online Note Taking Applications

<http://mashable.com/2008/08/19/online-note-taking-applications>

25+ Tools For Accounting and Budgeting

<http://mashable.com/2008/08/14/accounting-and-budgeting-tools>

30+ Solutions to Start Your Own Wiki

<http://mashable.com/2008/07/29/wiki-solutions>

30+ Tools for Synching Files and Folders

<http://mashable.com/2008/07/24/synching-files-and-folders>

12 Tools For Kickass Web Meetings

<http://mashable.com/2008/06/19/web-meeting-tools>

10 Services To Send Text Messages From The Web

<http://mashable.com/2008/04/19/send-text-messages>

7 Last Minute Tax Tools

<http://mashable.com/2008/04/15/taxes-online>

Forget Access: 8 Online Database Tools

<http://mashable.com/2008/02/28/online-database-tools>

Forget PowerPoint: 13 Online Presentation Apps

<http://mashable.com/2008/02/16/forget-powerpoint-online-presentations>

13 Great Tools For Organizing The Web

<http://mashable.com/2008/02/15/13-great-tools-for-organizing-the-web>

Forget Word: 13 Online Word Processors

<http://mashable.com/2008/02/11/13-word-processors>

10 Great Tools For Online Business Communication

<http://mashable.com/2008/02/08/online-business-communication>

Forget Excel: 14 Online Spreadsheet Applications

<http://mashable.com/2008/02/06/forget-excel-14-online-spreadsheet-applications>

5 Free Online Pie Chart Utilities

<http://mashable.com/2008/01/17/5-free-online-pie-chart-utilities>

10 Online Virus & Malware Scanners

<http://mashable.com/2008/01/05/10-online-virus-malware-scanners>

20+ Customer Management Tools

<http://mashable.com/2007/11/07/20-customer-management-tools>

20+ Charity & Fund Raising Tools

<http://mashable.com/2007/11/05/30-charity-fund-raising-tools>

30+ Reminder Services

<http://mashable.com/2007/11/04/30-reminder-services>

30+ Mind Mapping Tools

<http://mashable.com/2007/11/03/mindmapping>

60+ Free Password Managers and Form Fillers

<http://mashable.com/2007/09/17/password-managers>

WEB HOSTING TOOLBOX: 130+ Resources for Your Web Hosting Needs

<http://mashable.com/2007/09/13/web-hosting-toolbox>

ONLINE PRESENTATIONS: 30+ Presentation & Slideshow Services

<http://mashable.com/2007/08/12/online-presentations>

EMAIL NEWSLETTERS: 30+ Mailing List Services

<http://mashable.com/2007/08/10/email-newsletters>

ONLINE POLLING TOOLBOX: 40+ Online Polling Sites

<http://mashable.com/2007/08/06/online-polling>

Freelancers' Toolbox – 30+ Online Freelance Resources

<http://mashable.com/2007/08/03/freelancers-toolbox>

ONLINE STORAGE: 80+ File Hosting and Sharing Sites

<http://mashable.com/2007/07/28/online-storage>

Work Together: 60+ Collaborative Tools for Groups

<http://mashable.com/2007/07/22/online-collaboration>

E-Commerce Toolbox: 30+ Leading E-Commerce Sites

<http://mashable.com/2007/07/17/e-commerce-toolbox>

14 Personalized Homepages Compared, Feature by Feature

<http://mashable.com/2007/06/29/personalized-homepages>

Video Toolbox: 150+ Online Video Tools and Resources

<http://mashable.com/2007/06/27/video-toolbox>

90+ Online Photography Tools and Resources

<http://mashable.com/2007/06/23/photography-toolbox>

Other Sites

Web Worker Daily (<http://webworkerdaily.com>) – "Rebooting the Workforce"

Tips and tricks blog.

AppScout (<http://www.appscout.com>) – "The Best and Worst New Software, Sites and Web Applications - Reviews, News and Opinions"

News and Information.

Make Use Of (<http://www.makeuseof.com>)

Combination of news and info, tips and tricks and online software lists.

Webware (<http://news.cnet.com/webware>) – "Cool Web apps for everyone"

News and Information.

ReadWriteWeb (<http://www.readwriteweb.com>)

News and Information.

What Should You Do Next?

Up to now, we've been talking about The Online Software Advantage. Now, it's time to take action!

Here's my suggested step-by-step game plan for implementing online software to run your business:

1. Sit and make a list of your pain points – where are you spending the most time and money now and how can you leverage online software to lessen that pain?
 - a. Perhaps you spend too much of your time in meetings exchanging information.
 - b. Perhaps you spend too much money and time maintaining your current offline systems.
 - c. Perhaps you would like to provide a centralized workspace for each of your clients where you can post important project details, materials and communications.
 - d. Etc.
2. Once you have your list, select the most painful and review the online software types in the "Online Software Types" section to see which type of software will most likely ease that pain.
3. Using the resources in the "Finding Software Online" section, explore the software available within the type you selected and see if you can find one or two that seem to fit your needs, both on the basis of capabilities and cost.
4. Try one or two of the online software applications you've identified
 - a. Make use of the free level offered or the 30-day trial.
5. Use the software. Ask yourself:
 - a. Is this easy to learn?
 - b. Does it fit my needs?

- c. Does it fit the way I like to work?
 - i. This is an important one because sometimes you like your software just so. One example: I like to enter due dates on my to-dos and some of the online software offerings do not allow you to do that because they follow the "Get It Done" methodology. Those pieces of software were removed from my list right away!
- 6. Make your final selection and you're on your way!

I also encourage you to visit the complementary site for this ebook: www.leverage-the-web.com , where you will find an ever-growing number of resources to help you leverage online software.

About the Author

Hi there! My name is Matt Mansfield, and I'd like to welcome you to the "About the Author" section!

I've been a technology veteran for over 20 years. I love playing with software, figuring out how it works and finding the best software for different purposes. This pursuit includes finding and exploring online software and now, by reading this ebook, you can reap the benefits of what I discover.

Writing this ebook has long been a dream of mine. Everyone has been discussing online software and Web 2.0 in magazines, on TV and of course, all over the Web. But I've found that the message is not reaching the small business owners who can benefit from software online the most.

Why not? Because most people are not techies and they don't spend their time reading about technical stuff until they need to at which point, if they are starting or running a business, they are too busy to do something that does not relate to the core of their business (like making sales and delighting customers!).

Over and over I have had the same conversation with friends, family and colleagues. It goes something like this:

Other Person: I wish I could start a business/expand my business/lower the time my business takes to run /lower the cost my business takes to run, but it just seems to cost so much.

Me: You really think so? What makes you think that?

Other: Well, I took this course in college/spoke to a friend/once sat down and thought it over and the numbers seemed really big. I just don't have that kind of money!

Me: How much have you explored using online software to run your business?

Other: Online software?

Me: Yeah. Using online software can save you tons of money, time and help you get your business up and running pretty quickly. Usually, you can find lots of shortcuts, not in just running your business but in setting up sites, communities and software that will help you grow and expand your business once it's started/starts to expand.

Other: Wow...tell me more.

Me: I've been planning to write an ebook about online software, so I have lots of information already gathered. Why don't you come by my office and I'll show you what I've got?

For many years, that's how it went. They would come over and get a full list of different types of applications and learn how and when to use them. We were both happy, but I wanted to do more.

This ebook is that "more". Now I can reach all the existing and potential business owners who find me on the Web. Now I can give you my lists and suggestions and you don't have to make a trip to my office! I am helping a much larger group of people by leveraging the Web and, I am having a BLAST!

The "Official" About Me Section

About Leverage the Web

Leverage the Web is the result of my passion for introducing and coaching small businesses and startups in how to use the tools and opportunities available online to take their business farther while spending less time and money.

While I mostly feed that passion in the day-to-day running of my business, [Biggest Possible Future](#), I wanted a platform that would allow me to bring the Leverage the Web message to a broader audience. This site is that platform.

About Me - Matt Mansfield

My eclectic career experience spans over 20 years of technology support and administration, software design and development, product and project management, marketing and PR and training for both groups and individuals. For more details, check out my LinkedIn profile at www.linkedin.com/in/mansfieldmatt.

Since 2000, I have been immersed in the World Wide Web - planning, designing, building and managing Web sites. For me, the Web satisfies both the creative and gear-head sides of my brain and I am a strong advocate of the Web's ability to communicate, connect, sell and provide an platform on which starting and running a business can be done both more quickly and with much less complexity.

I have also served as a member of the [School Town](#) team. In that role, I designed the functionality and look-and-feel for a unique and powerful student learning environment.

I live in the suburbs North of Chicago with my wife, four kids, three fish and many, many books.

The Final Word

Thanks for taking the time to read this ebook! I appreciate feedback, positive or negative, so please send a note to me at matt@leverage-the-web.com with your comments or questions.

See you online!

Matt Mansfield

Appendix A: TOSA Pullout

The Online Software Advantage (TOSA)

Software online not only saves you time and money, but it exponentially increases those savings by enabling you to change your business processes in ways that were not previously possible

TOSA: Advantage #1

Online Software allows you to work more efficiently by helping you focus on your most important tasks when they need to be done and allowing you to automate or delegate less important tasks.

TOSA: Advantage #2

Online applications offer you tools and features to manage your processes.

TOSA: Advantage #3

When you use online software, you can literally run your business from anywhere as long as you have a computer that can connect to the Web.

TOSA: Advantage #4

You can still work collaboratively even though no one is in the same room or even working at the same time.

TOSA: Advantage #5

Online software offers you the lowest cost of ownership, both in time and money, for software, data storage and more.

TOSA: Advantage #6

Online software vendors typically offer one free version or, at the very least, a 30-day trial offer.

TOSA: Advantage #7

Online software provides time savings by offering both faster setup and learning times than offline software.

TOSA: Advantage #8

Connectivity and integration is part of the mix because the Web is the where you are getting it done.

TOSA: Advantage #9

Getting it done online allows you to focus on what your business does rather than what it needs in order to do what it does