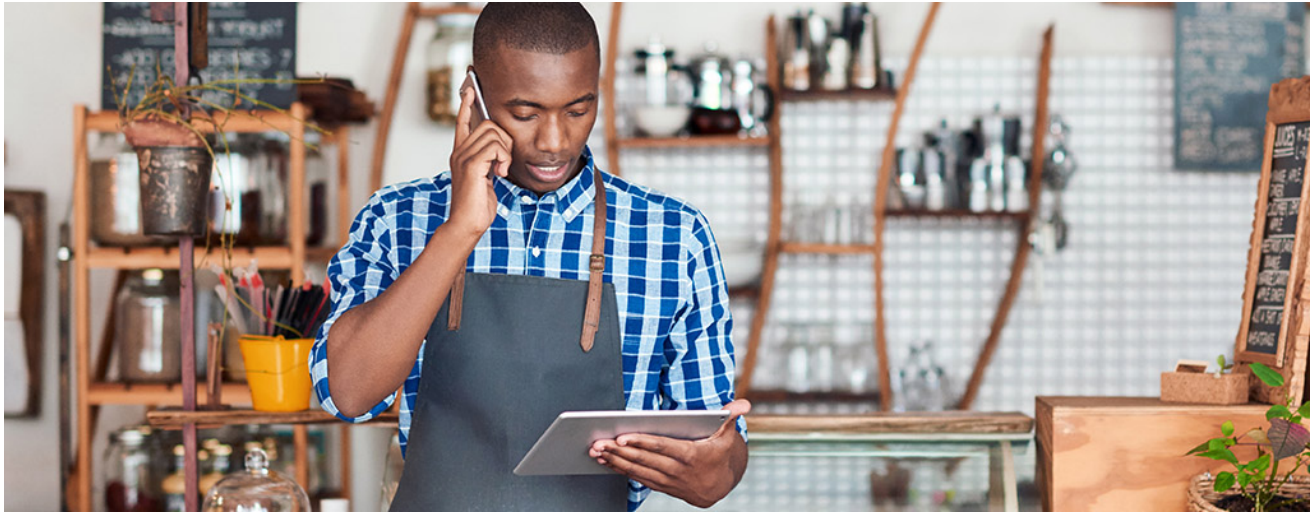**PERFICIENT**digital

Small Business Owner's Tech Guide:
How to Choose Services that Fit Your Unique Needs

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PREPARED BY:

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Small businesses account for 40 percent of all corporate technology spending, according to research firm Gartner. And it's no wonder why: The right mix of technology services is vital for any small business to succeed and grow, whether it's a mom-and-pop shop or a rapidly-growing online retailer.

Still, as a small business owner, you don't have the resources of a corporate IT department. So as daunting as it seems to select from a range of <mark>small business Internet and phone</mark> services and software packages, it's vital to make smart choices.

This <mark>small business resource guide</mark> can help. Whether you run a real estate office or a software firm, a restaurant or a manufacturing company, you can custom-fit your digital services to improve productivity, enhance your offerings, and even help grow your bottom line. Here's how to choose the right mix of tech based on your unique needs. Find your company type below and start selecting the services that will take your business to the next level.

Field-based Businesses

If you need connectivity in the field — for making deals, visiting customers, or because your office is actually a remote job site — you require a phone and Internet service that can serve you (and your clients) anywhere.

Consider these services:

- **Call forwarding.** A <mark>small business phone system</mark> with Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) can make the transition from office to remote locations simple, smooth, and professional.
- **WiFi hotspots.** Hotspots give you a secure connection anywhere. Don't get stuck without the Internet (or eat up valuable data) when you're out in the field.
- **Cloud-based data storage.** Gain access to the documents you need, when you need them.

See these services at work:

Real Estate Office

Realtors at this small agency are never off the clock. They need to stay in touch with clients beyond traditional business hours, often while they're out of the office showing properties or closing deals.

Internet

As Comcast Business customers, these agents have free access to WiFi hotspots across the United States, so they can connect mobile phones and laptops at no extra cost. When an agent is showing a home that isn't impressing clients, he or she can hop on the phone for quick and reliable access to the other listings in the area that meet their criteria. Agents can also stream live video of virtual house tours without using up their data.

Phone

Realtors need a seamless experience when using an <mark>office phone system</mark> and their mobile device. Instead of using wired, private branch exchange (PBX) equipment sitting at the office, realtors can benefit from a

cloud-based phone system with features that aren't available in traditional wired phone services. They're also less expensive than PBX systems, and you can manage their features using a web portal or an app.

An added benefit of this kind of system is that users can forward business line calls to their mobile phone. For example, the cloud-based Comcast Business Be Anywhere Mobility service allows on-the-move professionals like realtors to answer and make professional calls from their business line, no matter where they are.

Software

Realtors need a suite of software to create, edit, and sign documents. After all, online, secure document signing can help seal the deal in a flash. Clients can even sign contracts using an app on their mobile phones, and the digital signatures are secure and widely accepted.

To protect sensitive financial data, like the W-2s and bank statements that realtors need to access when finalizing a deal, a cloud-based security service can help keep PCs, laptops, and phones safe from intrusion. And agents can securely access their files using a mobile phone when they're on the go.

Engineering Firm

This firm consults on building projects big and small all over the community, and it provides services on many levels — literally. When your work site is six stories up, you can imagine the importance of communicating with clients in a way that's simple and hassle-free.

Internet

The engineers use a reliable Gig-speed Internet service, so they can walk clients through job sites using

video conferencing and virtual environments. The firm has some employees that meet via video chat — and much of the company's hiring is done with video screenings of potential employees, so bandwidth is important.

Phone

Comcast Business [Voice Mobility](#) keeps mobile pros in touch by providing a unified experience for clients whether they're in the office or on the road.

When calls come into this small firm, an automated agent can route them to the right person — or forward them to the right engineer on site, without delay. Visual voicemail lets the engineers see what a client needs at a glance.

A mobile app allows managers to check business voicemail and call logs and forward messages to individual workers at the firm, all from their smartphone.

Retail and Hospitality Businesses

The needs of small retail businesses can vary widely, so the key to a brick-and-mortar store's digital success is in the details.

Services to consider:

- **High-speed Internet**. Whether you're serving multiple locations or offering some of your services online, Internet speed likely plays a big factor in the success of your business.
- **Multiple phone lines**.

See these services at work:

Local Sandwich Shop

This small bistro is a local favorite. During afternoon hours, customers can be found sipping coffee while on their laptops. With its catering service in full swing, the shop is taking online orders all the time, and in response to the demand, the owner has decided to open another location.

Internet

Fast, reliable Internet is required to handle tasks for running the business, like point-of-sale transactions, online order taking, and customer access to WiFi. Making WiFi available to guests also means the shop needs to restrict access to certain sites, secure the network, and use a login screen to advertise specials and promotions. With Comcast Business WiFi Pro, they're well equipped to handle all of that.

Phone

As the catering business takes hold, the shop uses Comcast Business VoiceEdge Select for a high-quality VoIP phone number that's dedicated to taking orders, plus another line that's reserved for dealing with vendors. The business also has customer support that extends past regular store hours.

Software

When the other location opens, the restaurant owner will start setting up an office network using software-defined networking, or SD-WAN. This cloud-based technology lets you view your operation on one network, rather than several disconnected networks at each location. The SD-WAN provides granular control, like the ability to choose which Internet connection should get priority. For example, if guests on the WiFi network are streaming video, it won't affect the VoIP phone calls.

TV

The restaurant shows HD sports and other broadcasts to keep customers coming back, so it has business TV service that can also serve up commercial-free music.

Surveillance

The shop installed several Internet-based, WiFi-connected cameras. They help management keep an eye on the locations 24-7 and provide security for the customers and employees through Comcast Business SmartOffice™.

Bed and Breakfast

This small B&B looks quaint and old-fashioned from the outside, but behind the scenes, there are lots of high-tech digital needs to serve their modern-day customers. While guests want the creature comforts of a cozy inn, they can't go without WiFi access and cable TV during their stay.
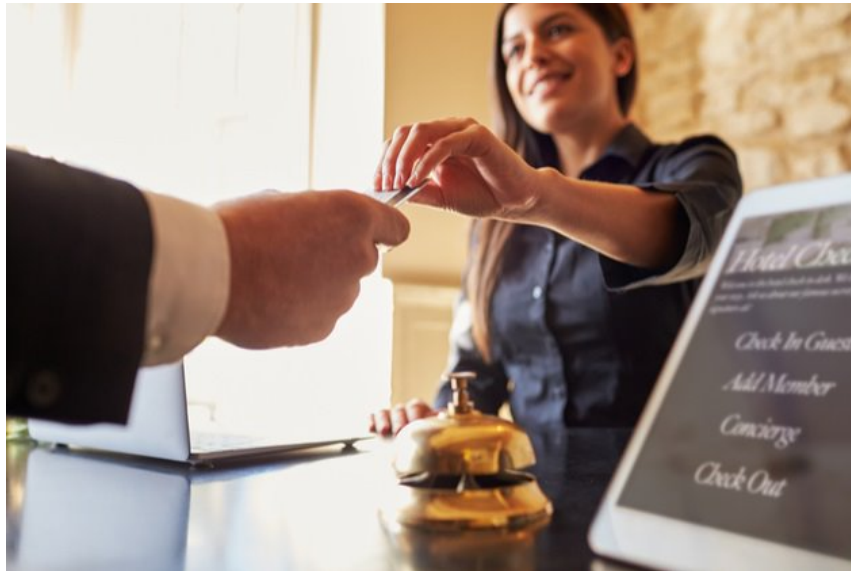
Internet

To start, the inn needs Gig-speed Internet to handle their own web-based tasks, like guest check-in, taking online reservations and doing their accounting, as well as providing WiFi throughout the property. With Comcast Business WiFi Pro, office and guest WiFi networks are separate.

Owners have a portal and an app to manage their wireless network and set options like content filtering. They can set up a login screen for guests, offer specials on a splash page, and block unsuitable sites from being browsed. They can also limit bandwidth, so streaming devices in guest rooms don't grind the office network to a halt.

The WiFi Pro portal also lets the owners see who's connecting to their networks and provides customer trend information using WiFi analytics.

TV

The inn also has specific TV needs, with customers viewing programming in the guest rooms. They provide local TV and sports and entertainment in each room and offer HD screens in their lobby and business center.

E-Commerce Store

This e-commerce business has no brick-and-mortar presence and makes all its sales online. A small team of employees must process the influx of orders and launch new products, while also handling sales and marketing. It has a range of tech service needs — with a solid Internet connection being the lifeblood of the business.

Internet

For updating their website and handling orders, the company uses fast Internet to keep their business running. Along with blazing speed and capacity, they need an e-commerce storefront that's easy to set up and update.

Phone

This small company needs a handful of enterprise-grade phones for running the business, hosting conference calls, dealing with vendors and reaching out to potential investors. They can easily set up new

users for phone and Internet with a web portal or app, such as Comcast Business, which provides business phone services on the go.

Customer service is top-of-mind with this crew — it's essential to the company's success. So the company uses a hunt group, which routes callers to the first available person on staff. They can choose to have the call go to each user on a list, and if no one is available, send the call to voicemail or another number.

Their Business VoiceEdge Select service offers simple call management through an app, with easy setup and cost benefits not found in a traditional wired phone system.

Software

For collaborating on internal documents and presentations, the online store uses a cloud-based productivity suite, Microsoft Office 365. The team can also work together using Skype and Outlook, and they keep files organized with OneNote and Teams.

Managing inventory is critical to their success, so they need to be able to back up their records online and offsite for security. Carbonite Pro can copy important files to the cloud, and in case of data disaster, make it simple to restore them. And files are encrypted for security.

As the business grows, so will their reliance on their customer relationship management (CRM) software. Their phone system needs to tie into the CRM, creating a smooth-running sales operation that, with a click, can initiate calls with customers and new sales leads.

Sole Proprietors and Professional Service Businesses

Many single-owner businesses and small professional offices need technology that will help compete with the big guys. They also need a mix of services that allow them to seamlessly transition from the office to off-site appointments, without skipping a beat.

Services to consider:

- **Cloud-based storage.** It's crucial to store sensitive information securely, while having easy access.
- **Collaboration software.** Do you need the ability to conduct meetings and collaborate remotely with coworkers or clients? You'll need reliable software so communication is not interrupted.

See these services at work:

Doctor's Office

Medical facilities like this one handle sensitive matters, so a secure Internet connection is essential. The practice is also expanding its telemedicine offerings, so it needs serious bandwidth capabilities to connect with patients wherever they are.

Internet

The office's Internet service includes a virtual private network (VPN) for encrypted communication over the Internet when staff are making home visits. It has a fixed (or "static") IP address for the office's VPN. (This also allows them to use the connection for video monitoring via web cameras. They can keep an eye on the office after hours with a service like Comcast Business SmartOffice.)

Phone

The practice relies on phone communication with patients, so excellent VoIP audio quality is important, and it has to be extremely reliable. The staff also needs the ability to route calls using an automated attendant, for setting up appointments and answering questions, like hours of operation and directions. They may also need a dedicated line for sending and receiving signed documents by fax. Business VoiceEdge helps them meet these demands.

Software

Because it's so critical to maintain the security of their files, this medical practice requires cloud-based backup. Another benefit to using cloud-based software is that adding and removing access is simple and easy, so when there's staff turnover, they don't need to worry about security risks.

TV

In the waiting room, the office offers live TV for patients and their families. Their private TV package, X1 for Business, means they also have TV services in the break room for their staff. And with their bundling option, they're improving the bottom line by reducing monthly costs.

Architecture Firm

Central to the needs of this business is the ability to create, store, and send large files. The employees must collaborate with clients and vendors with instant access to blueprints and plans, while they're in the office and in the field.

Internet

This firm needs reliable Internet for transferring large files to clients and coworkers, including photos and videos. For critical needs like reaching customers and contractors — and accessing servers — even when the power is out, the office uses an automatic 4G LTE backup system to make sure the firm can get work done.

Phone

Small professional offices like architectural firms should consider a bundled VoIP system like Comcast Business VoiceEdge Select, which can act as a virtual assistant and send business calls to any mobile device.

Architects (as with engineers or other professionals who get work done on site) need to project a professional image when they're away from the office. With a business line that transfers to their mobile devices, they can use a single phone number for contacting clients, whether they're in the office or on-site. Clients will see the business number on their caller ID and have a seamless experience.

Because this office has no dedicated receptionist, an auto attendant can route calls directly to the right person. And the practice can set specific rules for how calls are routed during special circumstances, like on weekends or holidays.

Rapidly Growing Businesses

Businesses that are expanding quickly have changing technology needs as well — and they need services that can grow as fast as the business does. Cloud-based technology is essential in helping these companies quickly scale up as their needs increase.

Consider these services:

- **Gig-speed Internet.** You need the ability to scale your Internet bandwidth as you grow.
- **Cloud-based collaboration tools.** With customers and employees remote and all over the country, seamless communication is essential.

See these services at work:

Software Firm

This growing high-tech company needs to support a remote team of software developers, sales staff, technical support crew, and customer support agents. They rely on employees located around the country, all working from home yet with the needs of a fully-staffed office. In short, they have technology built into every step of their day-to-day work.

Internet

The company's sales rely on website hosting that attractively displays their products and has an online storefront and e-commerce options for order-taking. They need fast, Gig-speed Internet for the programmers' daily video-based huddle each morning with coworkers in three time zones. The sales department needs reliable connections for taking credit card transactions, as well as managing sales data and doing virtual demos.

Software

The tech and sales staffs both use cloud-based productivity software for creating documents, presentations for meetings, and backing up their data.

Manufacturing Company

With orders on the rise, this small manufacturer needs the ability to stay in contact with clients and vendors online and on the phone without lags or interruption. They also need a toll-free number for taking orders.

Internet

High-speed business Internet is crucial for connecting many devices used during production and for collecting data insights about their manufacturing processes and sales. A service-level agreement (SLA) with the Internet provider can provide assurance of high-bandwidth and reliable network uptime.

Phone

Growing businesses like this one should consider a scalable VoIP solution such as Comcast Business VoiceEdge, which offers simple call management through an app, simple setup, and costs benefits you won't find in a traditional wired phone system. Employees can also set up conference calls with one click for both the host and users (using an app), with as many as 50 participants.

No matter which type of business you run, your technology services are a vital part of making it successful. For more on finding the right mix of Internet, phone, security, cloud, and TV services for your organization, visit Comcast Business.