

Boosting Your Business

Powering up: Companies thinking new technology for the new year

Premium content from South Florida Business Journal - by Jeff Zbar

Date: Friday, December 10, 2010, 6:00am EST

In the reception area at Berger Singerman, visitors can use Wi-Fi-connected iPads for their surfing pleasure or business needs. At the website of CableOrganizer.com, visitors will find faster-loading pages and a simplified shopping cart. In the back office at Ink & Toner USA in West Palm Beach, executives are using the latest version of QuickBooks loaded on to newly purchased PCs.

From the leading edge to the seemingly mundane, South Florida companies are tapping new technology and tools to steer them to greater profitability or improved customer service in the new year. Companies are discovering that new hardware, upgraded software, security to protect the network and portable devices that keep customers engaged or employees productive provide a fresh take on the tools that run business.

Berger Singerman's iPads are just one of the recent tech advancements at the Fort Lauderdale law firm. Attorneys who previously used only BlackBerrys can now choose to use iPhones, said Rey Leon, the firm's IT director. The Apple phone's speed and accessibility provide added value and increased performance that enable "many of our attorneys to benefit from and be able to respond to client needs," he said.

The firm also upgraded to Microsoft Office 2010 and Exchange 2010, and installed the Interwoven document management system. In conjunction with the new system, the firm will enhance its scanning tools to reduce paper usage, and will deploy a new mobility application. This will enable staff and attorneys to access documents from any Internet-connected desktop, laptop or smart phone, Leon said.

"They can access any client documents and be able to file any e-mails received right from the smart phone," he said. "This will help reduce costs and will assist in keeping all client records in a single location."

The firm also installed the Computrace application on all laptops, enabling Leon's team to track and find misplaced or stolen laptops, lock down the hardware or remotely erase sensitive documents.

"This, along with encryption, gives us another added layer of security, so that any documents on the laptop will not be accessible to anyone not authorized on the computer," he said.

Oftentimes, upgrades are meant just to boost computing speed. Some companies are tapping into new Internet services, like Verizon's 4G LTE, which recently launched in Florida. The service is up to 10 times faster than the company's existing 3G network, which can boost efficiency and productivity.

Coconut Grove ad man **Bruce Turkel** replaced the traditional hard drives on his agency's laptops with solid state drives. They're faster, use less power, are more durable and boot up faster than "spinning disc" drives, he said.

Miami PR firm [Max Borges Agency](http://MaxBorgesAgency.com) is investing upward of \$20,000 to upgrade its website and create an application to enable media to access client product data and images.

Ink & Toner USA owner **Bob Bloom** admitted he's no fan of upgrading software "for the sake of upgrading." But, stepping up from a four-year-old version of QuickBooks and computers that are even older will boost how quickly executives can access and work with data, he said. Moreover, newer software brings more functionality, he said.

"This isn't that sexy," Bloom admitted. "Our QuickBooks data file has grown so large that we see performance issues when we access data, especially when we have multiple people doing so simultaneously."

With prices falling and functionality rising, the new year is an ideal time to invest in new tools and applications designed to improve business efficiency. After all, computing isn't necessary sexy. But, to most business owners, profitability is.