

THE TOP 25

PRODUCTIVITY TOOLS & APPS

TO KEEP YOUR BUSINESS ON TRACK FOR 2017



What does increasing productivity mean to you? Does it mean wrapping up work by 5pm to have dinner with your kids? Having time to write your book or take a morning yoga class to keep your health up? Or simply sitting down to a clutter-free, organized work space every morning?

Finding out what you need from your work life is the first question in determining what is going to increase your productivity. What habits, tools and supports would help you get more accomplished and increase your revenue without the threat of burnout?

Remember, you don't need to be everything to all people, including yourself. If you don't think accounting is the bomb, figure out a way to get invoicing and payroll off your plate. If you just can't handle the constant barrage of email communication leaving your desk, use a scheduler.

Managing your business doesn't have to take over your life. There are cheap solutions that can help you stay organized and systemize your processes. Sometimes the more you spend, the better the functionality. But not always.

Here is the list of the 25 best apps and tools I've used and recommended to keep my business on track.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

ONLINE CALENDAR & SCHEDULING SYSTEM

1 GOOGLE CALENDAR

PROS: It's free, intuitive, and shareable. Colour-coding the types of responsibilities is one way I can make sure I have enough 'pink' in my week. Pink is for play on my calendar.

CONS: Limited features.

2 17HATS

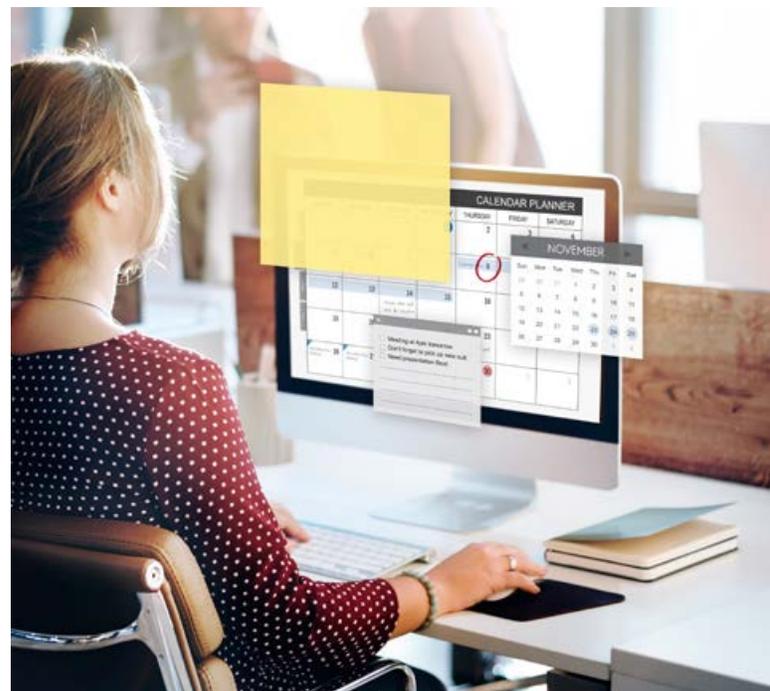
PROS: It has my back for workflows, accounting, emails, and everything in between. It builds with you, so your initial commitment is minimal. Love the price point for a solopreneur.

CONS: Only a 2 week free trial is available.

3 CALENDLY

PROS: You'll never double book again because Calendly syncs with your other scheduling apps, like Google Calendar. Plus, the user interface is downright pretty.

PROS: If you're using the free option, you can only have one event type and can't customize the email notifications to your attendees. But if you get the paid version of Calendly, it's also like a personal assistant, reminding clients and colleagues when you have an upcoming appointment!



CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

4 Zoho

PROS: It's free to try, inexpensive, and allows you to work email and social together to talk to your clients where they are.

CONS: It's not super intuitive for basic contact and task management. Sometimes small businesses don't need the advanced features.

5 INSIGHTLY

PROS: More robust features include calendaring, sales, project management, and social. Their reports are clean and easy to interpret.

CONS: Not great for small businesses who want to streamline their workflow with automation, such as email automation or auto-task assignment.

6 SALESFORCE

PROS: More customizable and it has fabulous mobile interfaces. It's free to try.

CONS: More expensive for small businesses.



ACCOUNTING/ BOOKKEEPING

7 EXCEL OR NUMBERS

PROS: I prefer to delegate my numbers to someone who knows better. But if you're just starting out and it's not realistic for you to outsource this, Excel or Numbers are free options that'll help you organize your profits and expenses in spreadsheets.

CONS: Limited functionality and time consuming.

8 FRESHBOOKS

PROS: A beautiful user interface and you can start with a small package for free. Freshbooks covers invoicing, expenses, time tracking, and financial reporting. As your company grows, so does the bill, but it is always reasonable. You can customize your invoicing and send everything out by email.

CONS: This is not a true "accounting" software, like Quickbooks.



9 QUICKBOOKS PRO

PROS: Robust features for invoicing, payroll, managing expenses, and bank reconciliation. It's the industry standard and easy to use. If you have a Mac or PC, you can also use their online program. They have three plans to choose from depending on what your business needs.

CONS: The learning curve is a bit steeper with QuickBooks and the interface isn't as user-friendly as Freshbooks.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Investing in a project management system keeps your company project information contained in one place. Eliminating status meetings or calls, and organizing email, and conversation streams in one spot mean that when a member of the team needs the information, it is easy to find.

10 GOOGLE DOCS

PROS: As a free option, Google Docs lets you keep project plans in one place with shareable files that can be easily accessed anywhere.

CONS: No advanced team features.

11 DROPBOX

PROS: Easy to use cloud storage and file-syncing services. Easy to access your files from nearly anywhere - computer, mobile device or loads of apps support integration. It supports real-time collaboration for Office Online users, so you and your colleagues can access and edit the same Dropbox file at the same time while seeing one another's changes appear on the screen as they happen. Easy to use for file sharing too.

CONS: Offers less free storage space than GoogleDocs or OneDrive. Real time collaboration only available for Office Online users (Office 365).

12 EVERNOTE

PROS: Evernote is an easy way to remember everything, from websites to articles, handwritten notes and to-do list. Everything is automatically synced across all of your devices, making it easy to capture, browse, search and edit your notes on every device you own. Collaborate with your team with file sharing and project task assignments.

CONS: Free edition only allows 2 devices to connect, no real time collaborative tools for teams.

13 ASANA

PROS: Allows you to track projects from start to finish and there is a free personal account option available if you don't have a team. Any size team can work on the same file and add accountability tracking. This app is great for people who may not be working in the same office. Organize by things to do today, upcoming, and later.

CONS: You can only assign a task to one person - which can be limiting. The interface can be overwhelming and there is a definite learning curve to leveraging this tool to its maximum.

14 TRELLO

PROS: Trello is similar to Asana, but it has the power to create larger lists of to do's and assign responsibilities to more than one team member. Its user interface is more like sticky notes if you're more of a visual person.

CONS: If you have lots of projects and lots of tasks it the interface can get a bit messy.

15 BASECAMP

PROS: With the ability to include auto check-ins for daily status updates, chat rooms for easy one-stop brainstorming or immediate questions answered, if you have many people working together, Basecamp will give you an easy user interface and all the growing room your company needs.

CONS: This one has a higher price point.



COMMUNICATIONS

16 SKYPE

PROS: Free, straightforward, and mostly reliable.

CONS: Sometimes the quality of video is not ideal, but you can record conversations for playback later, which can be beneficial.

17 ZOOM

PROS: A great product for webinars and large group multimedia presentations. You can have multiple presenters and switch the interface to have people attending visible. It offers a comprehensive Q&A feature, polling, and reporting. Even the smallest package has cloud-based recording.

CONS: This one will actually cost you, so if you aren't planning on holding many webinars or doing presentation calls with your team, it might not be the best investment.



18 GOTO MEETING

PROS: Advantages include the interfaces with Microsoft Office, email, and IM that allow instant meeting bookings. You can also, one-click, the recordings from the sessions for those who could not attend. No codes, PIN numbers, or other details to remember. Click the link and join.

CONS: The price point makes it unattainable for those on a limited budget.

MARKETING

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

19 HOOTSUITE

PROS: If you're looking to manage your social media all from one dashboard, Hootsuite is a program that allows you to plan updates and follows on multiple platforms from one interface. It expands to more than three platforms before you have to pay.

CONS: The learning curve can be a bit steep when you're first starting out.

20 BUFFER

PROS: Easier to learn than Hootsuite and quick to get started on. There's also a free option.

CONS: Fewer bells and whistles and the reporting feature is not as powerful.

21 COSCHEDULE

PROS: More than a social media scheduler, CoSchedule lets you create, manage and automate editorial, marketing, and social media calendars. It also works to tasks, notes, deadlines, custom workflows and editorial calendars.

CONS: There is a free trial, but after that, you'll have to invest in this tool.



EMAIL MARKETING

22 MAILCHIMP

PROS: Easy online email marketing system to manage subscribers, send emails, and track the success of your campaign. It's easy to use and customize without any coding required using a GUI interface. It works with many other programs and is super user-friendly.

CONS: Especially on the free plan, segmenting functions are limited.

23 AWEBER

PROS: Unlike Mailchimp, Aweber offers multiple subscriber lists. You can track each email campaign separately. It also provides a real URL, not a shortened nondescript one. This increases a potential customer's feeling of security.

CONS: Subscribers have to opt into each of your lists separately. It's also a bigger investment and not as user-friendly as Mailchimp.



24 INFUSIONSOFT

PROS: More than an email system, Infusionsoft is a CRM, online shopping cart and affiliate program all in one.

CONS: If all you need is email, this may be too big a system for you. The investment and learning curve are steep.

25 PRODUCTIVE

With hundreds of ***Productive! Planners*** in the hands of entrepreneurs, just like you, staying on top of your goals by breaking the tasks down by quarter, month, and week, has never been easier.

Make yourself accountable for getting your *Power Moves* done with a weekly breakdown that makes even the most daunting of tasks manageable today.

I've had prototypes in the hands of business managers for over a year, honing the messaging and usefulness of this more-than-a-planner, planner.

Don't you ever feel like good old-fashioned paper and pen is the best way to make your goals feel real?

There's nothing like chronicling your goals, celebrating what you've accomplished, and mapping out a game plan for keeping the momentum in your business.



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