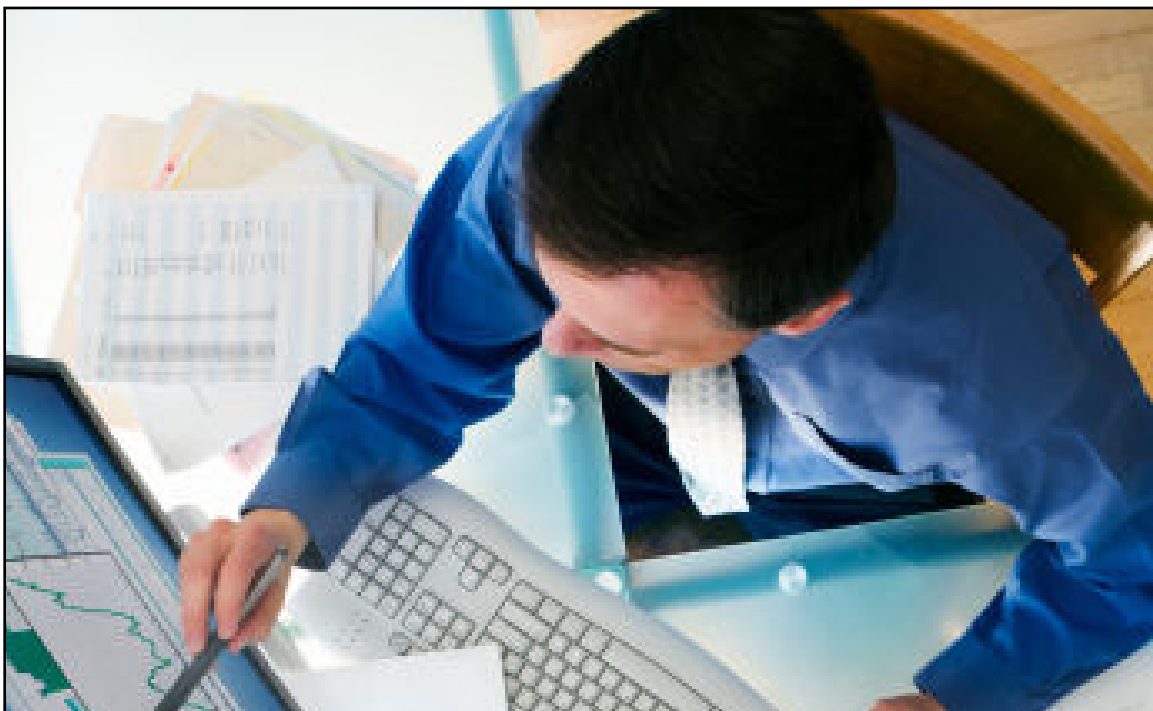


# INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY Lower Costs

**Reduce Staff and Technology Costs with Improved Systems**

*By Jennifer Goldman, CFP®*



*Taking your advisory practice to the next level isn't as complicated as you might think. In many cases, improving your use of technology can significantly upgrade your businesses' efficiency and productivity while lowering your staffing costs.*

**COVER STORY**

**T**oo many advisors lose too much time, money, and great staff by using out-dated or low-grade technology like Outlook to handle vital tasks such as tracking e-mails, to-do lists, and appointments. And even worse, that data is in jeopardy when it's stored on company hard drives and onsite servers. This is not a great way to run a sustainable, efficient and compliant business.

### You Need Robust Systems

The case for moving your business to more robust systems such as a Client Relationship Management System (CRM), a Document Management system, and an E-mail Management system is extremely strong. If you're interested but not sure you're up for the work involved in making the transition, there are companies that will handle the set-up and data import so that all you have to do is sit back and be taught on how to use your new systems. The fact is that a nimble small business are providing great service and growing fast and affordably when they invest in time saving technologies. Happy, satisfied customers translate into more referrals and more business. Staff are also happier and tend to stick around when they are spending their time on challenging work and not the mundane day-to-day operations that can be done by technology.

If you're still not convinced, ask yourself if this sounds attractive:

- \$65/month for the staff to know what to do, for whom, how AND you being able to run a status report on all work with 2 clicks.
- A 5-person firm with 100m AUM 500 accounts can spend \$1,700/month to be fully compliant, have no server costs, and have all portfolio reporting and management be done by another, expert firm.
- Less than 20 emails in your inbox at any given time.

### Email Burdens

First, let's talk turkey about email. In 2005, professionals reported spending two hours per day processing email with 30 minutes of this time occurring after normal business hours. That was 2005 — what do you think 2010 looks like? A lot worse.

Professionals admit that 25 percent of email processing time is wasted so that means the \$40k salaried person is wasting at least \$2,500 a year of your hard earned income. It's also highly likely that you could find something better for the staff person to do such as proactive planning for clients, marketing or other client-value or revenue-generating activities. According to Forrester Research 38 percent of respondents in the U.S. and U.K. said they employed staff to read or otherwise analyze outbound e-mail.

Client Relationship Management systems such as Redtail, Salesforce, Grendel and email management software such as Net Docs EMS, QuickFile and Clearcontext let you read an email and automatically move it to the to-do list and assign it to a staff person or to a document management area that retains emails for future reference. This solution eliminates five problems: a full inbox, complying with FINRA and SEC requirements for retaining email correspondence, tracking what was discussed with a client via email and paying the cost for email storage.

Email software like Google Apps (\$50/yr/user), GoDaddy (free), Microsoft BPOS Exchange (\$600/yr/5 users), Redtail Email (\$96/yr) allow you to set up your email and a support@ email so you can direct all client communications to support@ and your staff instead of you. That eliminates you having to be in the office all day and filtering e-mails. For one-man companies, put this in place if you plan on growing your business and adding staff. Clients love knowing there is only one email to use, that your entire service team will see the email and that it isn't trapped in only one person's email box.

## You Need Two Monitors



Second, let's talk about increasing your screen space to upgrade your efficiency. When you spend a good part of your day in front of a screen, it makes sense to use at least two monitors. "Our (Microsoft's David Williams) research shows that productivity gains for standard tasks, window management, office, switching between documents, you can get productivity gains with multi-monitor anywhere from 20 to 50 percent," says Bill Gates. It's unbelievable how much time wasted on opening and minimizing e-mail, web browsers and other software. Spending \$160 for a monitor and dual monitor card is much cheaper than a \$40,000 a year salaried person wasting at least an hour a day, which costs the business \$5,000 a year.

## Document Management

Third, let's talk about document management. The SEC and other national regulatory bodies are demanding formal document management systems—no more hard drives, zip disks and unmaintained servers. Systems like Net Documents or Knowledge Tree (~\$30/month) or less complex systems like Redtail or Grendel Imaging eliminate time and money wasted on printing, archiving emails, walking files from one desk to another as well as dragging

heavy bags full of documents to read. It also saves you time backing up everything on a hard drive that you have to carry home to protect it OR saves you money you were paying to maintain your server.

## The To-Do List

Finally, it's time to discuss the endless to-do list and who does what. There are a number of inexpensive systems and they keep track of to-do's, contacts, emails, and a lot more. Check out systems such as Redtail CRM (\$65/mo/15 users), Grendel CRM (\$50/mo/15 users) and Salesforce (\$125/mo/user). You can access all the information from anywhere there is an internet connection and they all sync with Outlook, some integrate with Document Managements systems, and some have mobile apps so you can skip over Outlook or logging into the Document Management system.

## Stop Wasting Time

Harvard Business school's experts Kaplan and Norton suggests that less than 30 percent of the tasks that executives and staff members spend time on actually contribute to achieving the business' strategic plan. Many business owners constantly complain they don't have enough time, enough money, and enough clients. The solutions are simple, inexpensive and they permanently solve the problem. If you need help, there are plenty of "doers" who will help you figure out the best software and that will do the work of moving all your data into the software, setting it up to meet your needs, and integrate the technology with other software and hardware devices.

The bottom line is there is no excuse for not taking the next step to upgrade your productivity and efficiency by adopting a few win-win, low-cost business solutions.



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