

Start My Consulting Business
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Essential Tools To Run Your Consulting Business

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When you're starting your business, you'll been an incredible amount of time and energy on it.

But you want to spend your time and energy on the things that matter most--those high-value tasks that propel your business forward.

You can't afford to waste time on busywork or low-value tasks. The tools below are ones that I use to run my business. Depending on the type of consulting you do, you may not need to use them all, but most consultants will find them helpful in automating tasks, simplifying tasks, and letting you access your critical business info anywhere.

So, let's get to it!

Communication Tools

Skype

I use [Skype](#) every single day. It's reliable, high-quality, let's me communicate with clients wherever I am, and let's me have my own phone number that follows me wherever I go.

And all that for about \$60 per year. That's WAY cheaper than a landline that locks you into an office.

Another alternative--which is free--is Google Voice. I've used Google Voice on occasion, and it's OK, but [Skype](#) gives me more functionality, including screen sharing, video calls, etc.

Gmail

For years, I used Microsoft Outlook, but I switched to GMail in the past couple years, and have no reason to go back.

The biggest reason I switched to GMail was to have easy, seamless access to e-mail no matter where I go.

Outlook and other systems allow integration with mobile phones, but it's clunky, and sometimes difficult to set up and troubleshoot. I'd rather spend my time billing clients instead of figuring out why my e-mail didn't sync to my phone or looking for a contact that I KNOW I added. GMail fixes all that--and it's free.

And, yes, Google Contacts is my main contact management system, though I also have my

contacts in my time & billing system (more on that later).

GoToMeeting

Since all my clients are out-of-state, I regularly need to dial into their desktops and/or servers to do my technical work or to have them show me something.

[GoToMeeting](#) also lets me do group trainings and demos for up to 25 people.

There are free tools like LogMeIn, as well as other paid tools, but [GoToMeeting](#) seems to set the standard (as does its sister products like GoToWebinar and GoToTraining). It's not cheap, but you can try it free for 30 days; after that, you can typically get 20% off when they send you their opt-in offer.

Website Tools

I won't talk much about website tools here, since I've already covered them extensively in my other free ebook, but WordPress is a full-featured, user-friendly way to create and maintain your website, add and manage your web content, etc. It runs roughly 15% of the world's top websites. Yep, it'll handle yours too.

The web hosting company I recommend is [BlueHost](#). They're affordable, reliable, and have great service.

Documents

Depending on what you need, a full-on document management system might be the way to go, but 99% of us don't need that.

So, it's typically easier and just as good to use a few tools to get the job done.

CamScanner

I no longer use my giant desktop scanner if I need to physically scan or sign a document. With CamScanner--a free app--I can scan any document (receipts too) with my mobile phone. Simple, easy, & quick.

EchoSign

When I need to sign or get a document signed, I use [EchoSign](#). It lets me manage documents that need signatures, send them out to be signed, and does it all electronically. Plus, it's free (up to a certain amount of signatures per month; after that, you have to pay).

Client Info

There's a lot that goes into this category, but essentially, it's all about storing, managing, searching, and accessing your client-related info.

Evernote

I LOVE [Evernote](#). I use it all the time, for virtually everything-- business and non-business related. Recipes, ideas, marketing leads, whatever. It's free, and I can access it anywhere.

Dropbox

There are a lot of cloud backup services, but [Dropbox](#) is free, easy, and reliable. Google Drive is another option.

Mozy

Yes, I know, most of your most precious data sits on your laptop. Me too. [Mozy](#) is an automated backup that stores all your valuable data in the cloud, and is always accessible.

Accounting & Billing

Yes, the whole reason we're doing all this is to get paid.

FreshBooks

[FreshBooks](#) is a cloud accounting system that lets you track your time (it even has a timer feature, which I HIGHLY recommend), and create and manage invoices. Easy to use, and very reasonably priced.

Calendar

So, now that you've ditched Outlook, you need a new calendar. Well, Google Calendar does the trick. It's in the cloud, so it's available anywhere, you don't have to worry about syncing anything, and yep, it's free.