Reading this could help you regain 2 hours in your working week

Office 365

An hour saved is an hour gained
how micro businesses can increase productivity through technolgy

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About this whitepaper

This paper demonstrates how micro and small business (defined as one to two person businesses) can regain at least two hours in their working week by introducing technology advancements into their businesses. The research is from a YouGov survey, commissioned on behalf of 123 Reg, which looked specifically at the ways in which small businesses can gain more time to look deeper inside their businesses, helping them to grow. This was supplemented by focus groups with small business owners across the UK to understand the stories behind the numbers.

So what could you do with an extra hour in your day?

Perhaps you would spend more time with your family, do more exercise or look to generate more sales leads for your business. But what is clear is that time is the precious commodity in today's digital economy. The aim of this report is to show small and micro businesses how easily new cloud-based tools can be set up nowadays, enabling them to take advantage of all the time-saving tips available to bigger businesses but at a fraction of the cost and without the need to hire in specialist IT skills.

In partnership with YouGov, 123 Reg conducted a new study revealing that 60% of SMBs currently spend up to ten hours a week on tasks relating to administration. In today's digital world, such a statistic is phenomenally high.
For all business owners, there are simple technologies that can be used to automate basic tasks; such as email sorting, document sharing or even video conferencing, all designed to help SMB's reduce admin time and use it more wisely on growing their business or spending more time with friends and family.

The real issue is that a great number of micro businesses lack the confidence to make the technological leap, in order to help them increase their productivity. In parallel to this, they also lack the time to choose and consider the right solutions for their businesses. The study shows that the small fraction of the time taken to buy and learn how to use these tools (alongside the low monthly costs) pay back huge dividends in helping SMB's become more productive.

The study of 1057 decision makers of businesses with 1 or 2 employees found that when it comes to online awareness, small business owners surveyed understand the importance of having a website and the benefits it can bring to business growth (64%), but many SMBs fall down when it comes to linking their day-to-day processes with their online presence, showing a failure to use technology to help save them time.

This paper will highlight the ways in which micro businesses can implement technology solutions and which tools and technologies lead to the greatest time-saving advantages.

123 Reg defined productivity as how much time business owners spent on activities that generated commercial revenues vs administrative tasks that needed to be done, but did not generate sales.

82% of SMBs use Microsoft Office tools

82%
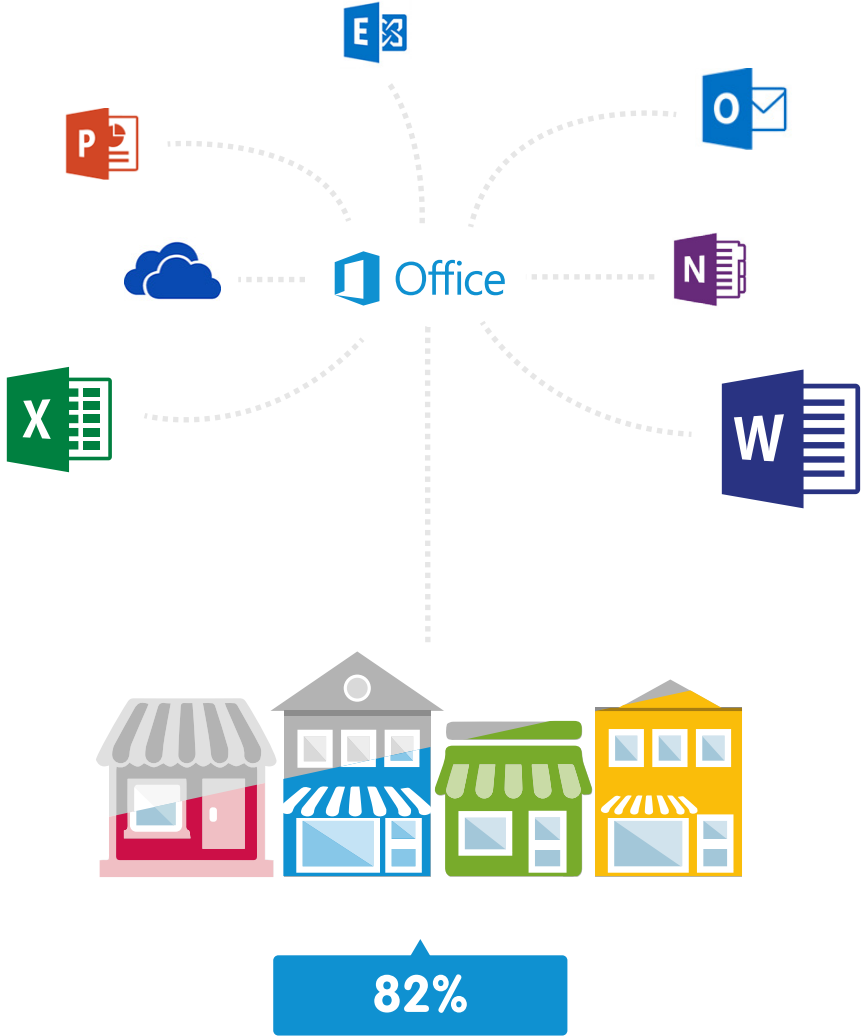
UK business growth

"Micro businesses are performing well within the digital economy and are positive about future growth"

Micro businesses vary widely in size and capacity for individual growth. There is a growing positivity amongst these businesses in the UK, and business owners are increasingly feeling good about the future of their business.

When assessing business growth in the past two years, 46% of respondents said they had experienced growth. Just 7% believed that their businesses had significantly declined in the same period.

The legal profession saw the greatest amount of growth with 67% of respondents in our survey saying their businesses had grown. Real Estate (61%), Hospitality (57%), Finance and Accounting (51%) and Construction (51%) were the industries which showed greatest growth rates.

However, some industries were less positive about growth, with just 36% of manufacturing businesses and 39% of IT and Telecoms owners believing that their business had grown in the past two years.

Whilst growth in London and the South East areas were strong both at 41%, microbusiness in the North West and Scotland saw greater growth at 54% each. Micro businesses in the North East were least positive with just 33% of respondents reporting growth.

As well as regions, age also highlighted an interesting trend. 60% of those under 35 said their businesses had experienced growth with just 14% experiencing a decline in the past two years. For those aged 55 and over, this dropped to 41%, with 26% reporting a decline in fortunes.

UK growth hot spots

microbusinesses

54%

33%

41%

46%

46% of respondents said they had experienced growth

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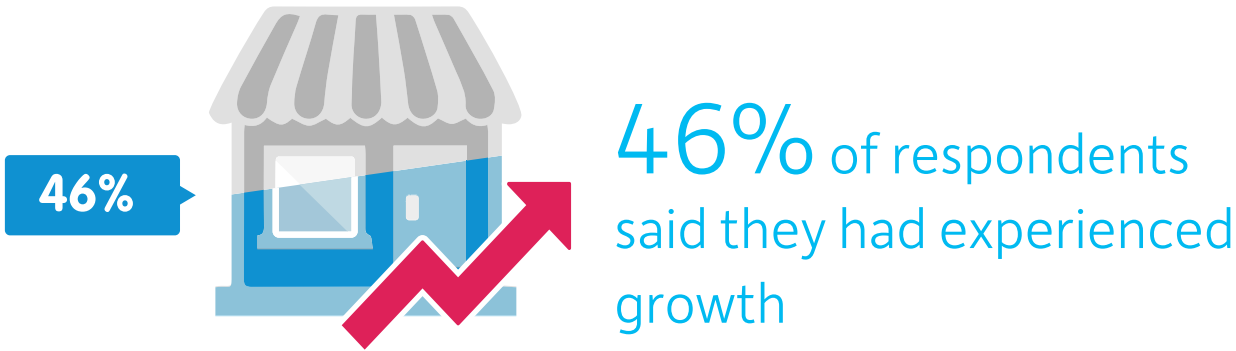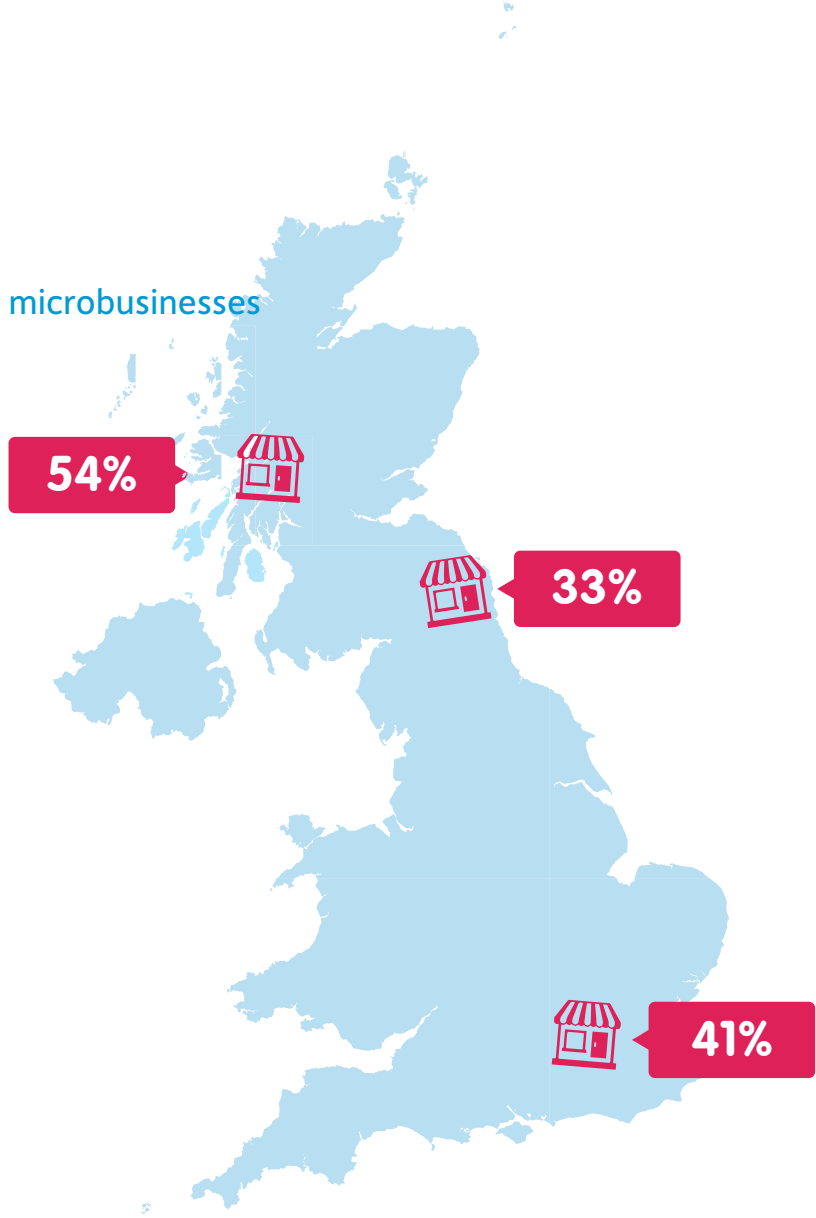
> "Small businesses can't stay small forever and must think like larger business to grow. To be able to add an extra pair of hands to my business, without paying for a full-time member of staff, would be invaluable."
>
> David Williams, First Enterprises

When it comes to online awareness, small business owners surveyed did understand the importance of a website and the benefits it can bring to business growth, with 64% of respondents setting up their website more than three years ago. However, and crucially, small businesses are falling down when it comes to linking their day-to-day processes and their online presence.

Success is clearly tied to having a website for micro businesses.

Of those micro businesses that have a website, 82% said they had experienced growth in the past two years compared to 18% who said their business had declined.

New technology has allowed businesses to better communicate with their customers through social media in order to gain a digital presence in the most cost effective way. Through state-of-the-art website builder tools to being able to market their business on major search engines, technology has helped small businesses to level the playing field with larger competitors. As the UK economy increasingly moves online, micro businesses must ensure that they have a strong grasp of technology advancements, so they are not left behind. The failure to do so will increase the time pressures faced by small businesses.

Time saving and productivity

"UK business owners are huge multi-taskers. Technology can help them to work smarter"

One of the single biggest headaches for micro business owners is the issue of productivity; there is just not enough time in the day to complete the multitude of tasks required of a micro business owner.

Whilst those businesses surveyed come from a wide range of sectors, each owner needs to have a variety of skills including the job they do for a living; be that accountancy or decorating, through to running a website and managing the new sales pipeline. This is a huge burden of responsibility to have and many business owners that 123 Reg met in a number of focus group sessions said that this was one of their main struggles.

More than half (59%) of micro business said they spend up to 10 hours per week on administration tasks.

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The good news is that today's easy to install cloud based technology solutions can improve the lives of small business owners immeasurably. They just don't know about them. What is clear from the survey is that micro business owners believe that if they had more time, they would be more productive and their business would be more successful as a result.

> "An overwhelming 63% of respondents would like to increase their company's productivity but only a third (33%) of these had a plan in place to do so."

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The study also found that 31% of micro business owners believed that their business could make more money if they were personally more productive. Added to this, over a quarter of respondents (26%) told us that if they had more time in their day, they could spend more time developing their business. The survey discovered that 17% of micro businesses growth had been negatively impacted by its owner's lack of time.

While productivity is, of course, something that every business owner should be looking to improve upon, it is important to look at the barriers to businesses finding more time to focus on growth activities, and why micro businesses, in particular, struggle in this area. The survey revealed that 28% were held back by admin tasks and 28% either by customer communications or on traveling to meetings.

The majority (82%) of micro businesses said they were using some form of Microsoft Office product for the business. Within this, 72% use Microsoft Word, 61% use Microsoft Excel and 41% said they already used use Microsoft Outlook as their email solution.

'By using Office 365, I have been able to control costs by having Skype for Business meetings rather than meet clients directly.'

John Westwood-Hill, owner of JWH Millinery

Despite this, so few were using major time-saving functions within Microsoft Office such as:

- Reducing the hours in a working week that micro businesses spend on travelling to meetings. Just moving one meeting a week to video conferencing could save on average 2 hours per week

- Collaborative working on documents such as presentations or contracts with other freelancers or suppliers in real time across different locations can save further valuable time. 123 Reg estimates this at 30 minutes per week through reducing constant revisions and emailing documents

- Fiddly annoyances that every business person suffers can also be eradicated. No more 'email not delivered situations' when documents exceed storage limits. Simply emailing the link to the cloud storage version eliminates this annoyance instantly and saves time to resend and transfer via cloud based services

The full suite of Microsoft Office 365 offerings include

Word	Excel	PowerPoint	OneNote	Outlook
Document, contract, and letter writing tool	Spreadsheet and calculator tool	Presentation tool	Digital note taking app	Email, task management, and calendar system

Exchange	Publisher	OneDrive	Skype for Business	Yammer
Keeps all your emails, contacts, calendars and other features synced on all your devices	Software that creates posters, pamphlets, and brochures	Cloud storage solutions for files and documents	High definition video conferencing	Business social networking tool

Embedding vital documents from your hard drive to your business website via cloud storage solutions keeps every customer contact form visible on the site, up to date and refreshed. No need to keep uploading files to your website.

Simply linking emails across all devices enables you to schedule 'email answering' to any downtime when out and about and away from your desk.

There are even free tools and apps that are easy to download from Docusign that work with Microsoft Office, to enable secure signatures to be uploaded removing the headache of print, sign and scan. For those professions with a lot of legally binding contracts such as accountancy, law or estate agents, this is a huge potential time saving.

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Getting business class email

"Email communication has become arguably the most valuable resource at a business's disposal and continues to be an extremely important link between business and its end customers"

No matter if a business is solely focused on its online presence or just exists as a shop or at the end of a telephone, it is absolutely vital that the business presents itself in a professional manner. This is arguably even more important when online, because the majority of businesses that consumers buy from are those that they have never met before. Therefore, trust is vital.

The study showed UK respondents the following two images:

We asked respondents a number of questions about their feelings towards each. What was apparent is that the domain led email address on the van was trusted more by consumers in every aspect. For example, 43% believed it was professional, compared with just 32% for the free non domain led email address. 26% of respondents would contact the business with the domain led email address (if they needed that particular service), compared with just 21% for the free email.

3 ways to be more professional and productive with email

1. Make sure your domain name is linked to your email

2. Distribute large files as links with Microsoft Office 365

3. Set up email groups through the Outlook Web App

'Having a domain led email address has allowed me to stay in contact with my clients in a more professional way.'

Stephen Shepherd, owner of Sorbrook.

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Develop good email habits

"SMBs need to find the time to step away from their business"

Business owners have an incredibly difficult job in balancing their work and their personal life. Many business owners have said they prioritised running their business over joining in special occasions including their own birthday celebrations. After all as the business owner, you are the only one responsible for bringing the money in every month.

As such, the ability to respond to customer emails at any hour of the day and in any location has led to business owners interrupting their holidays to answer quick queries or even keeping their mobile on all night waiting for the next email to ping.

This does have a hugely negative impact, not just on ones quality of life, but also on business productivity. A 2016 Chartered Management Institute (CMI) report highlighted a number of key issues with email. For example, 61% of UK business managers said mobile technology made it difficult to switch off from work, with more than half of respondents checking emails outside of work hours. Furthermore, 54% of managers said working has had a negative impact on their levels of stress.

Email features: Awareness and usage

	I didn't know about this	I knew about this, but don't do it	I already do this
Clutter feature	65%	18%	2%
Set email to deliver at a set time each day	64%	22%	2%
'To do' list to calendar reminders	55%	28%	3%
Sync your email to all devices	36%	40%	8%
Link to files to avoid going over email storage limits	60%	22%	3%
Embed secure signatures into emails	53%	30%	3%
Easily Sync your email on all devices	3 6%	40%	8%
Easily create different email groups for different customers, collaborators or businesses	44%	36%	5%

The only way to manage email is to develop good email habits

What cannot be changed is the amount of emails you recieve. Set specific times of the day to respond to emails only and enforce this. If you are open and upfront with customers through changing your 'out of office' message daily with the times when you will respond; then this habit should not generate negative feedback.

Also, set emails to deliver at one set time/s of the day that works for your schedule – once in the morning, once in the evening, for example. Whatever makes most sense for your workday but allows you to respond to all emails at once. Also, sync all of your email to all devices to enable you to use downtime effectively.

Organise your email so you are not clearing 'spam' constantly by enabling the Clutter feature in Microsoft Outlook to filter unimportant emails. This uses an algorithm to learn which emails you routinely ignore, putting them in a separate folder for you to clear at the end of the day.

Have a system for marking emails

1. 'Urgent but quick' - for emails that can be dealt with immediately (and then deal with them immediately),
2. 'Important but need time to respond' - for ones and that will take time to consider and then;
3. 'The no need to respond emails'

This is simple in Outlook using different flags and folders and will increase email productivity hugely.

Many business owners see all emails as equally important and feel overwhelmed with the need to respond in depth to everyone.

Sounds obvious? Our research showed that the majority SMBs do not know about any of these email features with less than 10% actually taking advantage of these easy ways of using technology and not letting it rule your life and business. 'By not having strong email practices, there is a risk that clients receive unsatisfactory service.

'A big issue I face is with diaries and calendars. I add some bits to my phone and some to my books. I need a solution where it can all be in one place and easy to manage.'

John Nancollis, Firm Start

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Technology & SMBs

"Technology can help businesses to grow and succeed online"

The growth of technology continues to shape new businesses. New technology has allowed business to better communicate with their customers through social media in order to gain a digital presence in the most cost effective way. Through state-of-the-art website builder tools to being able to market their business on major search engines, technology has helped small businesses to level the playing field with larger competitors. As the UK economy increasingly moves online, micro business must ensure that they have a strong grasp of technology advancements, so they are not left behind.

Whilst this is true, there is a real lack of awareness amongst SMBs about how they could be using technology to save themselves time in the working day. A further change that business owners can make to gain more time is related to the fact that many small business owners surveyed who use Microsoft Office said they were using older versions, and therefore not capitalising on some of the time-saving benefits available from using latest technology advancements. The survey demonstrates that small businesses are hungry for growth; but they don't always fully understand how technology can assist in their ambitions. Enabling technology can help businesses to think big and grow fast.

Cloud advancements: Awareness and usage

	I didn't know about this	I knew about this, but don't do it	I already do this
Edit a document simultaneously with another person	52%	31%	2%
Hold video conference instead of face to face meetings	48%	35%	3%
Access and send files anywhere on any device	37%	40%	8%
Back up and store files in the cloud	26%	50%	9%
Share PDFs whilst on the move	50%	30%	5%
On the move video conferences from your phone or tablet	55%	28%	2%
Share your calendar with trusted contacts	41%	41%	4%

How Office 365 can help you get to grips with technology

Link **OneDrive,** which offers 1TB of storage, and you can embed files on to your website. Just copy and paste the embed code and you can share your crucial documents

Embed electronic signature app from **DocuSign** which is available for **Outlook**

The app explains how to electronically sign and email documents, and can even help you gather signatures from others if needed

Video conferencing with **Skype for Business**

"I work with freelancers across the world. Being able to edit documents in collaboration, especially when deadlines are short, is really important to me."

Christian Jaroljmec, owners of The Web Lounge

Collaboration

"The flow of documentation is something that will probably never cease. It is also incredibly important for businesses to manage in both a cost and time effective way"

Increasingly, a business owner's daily interactions are with people in different locations, or even outside their organisation in the form of freelancers. In order to create invoices or proposals effectively documentation needs to be sent to key stakeholders within these processes. The key issue for small businesses is that this is often an arduous task and often very time consuming.

Our study has highlighted that micro businesses want to be more productive but it highlights that collaboration tools are not being taken advantage of. Importantly, not because businesses are not using them, but because many do not even know they exist. For example, 52% said they were unaware that you could edit a document simultaneously with another person. Collaboration is fast and allows people to work on lots of documents together and regularly share them with clients and customers. Cloud-based collaboration tools can be set up and implemented in minutes and easily self-managed. In a busy work environment, time saving and productivity is essential. By moving data to the Cloud, business owners can gain precious time back.

But what is clear is that small businesses are not aware of some of key collaboration tools, as the below highlights:

	I didn't know about this	I knew about this, but don't do it	I already do this
Edit a document simultaneously with another person	52%	31%	2%
Hold video conference instead of face to face meetings	48%	35%	3%
Access and send files anywhere on any device	37%	40%	8%
Share your calendar with trusted contacts	41%	41%	4%

Four ways your business could collaborate better using Office 365

- Store, sync, and share files simply
- Share documents internally and externally
- Work collaboratively with colleagues on the same file
- Avoid emailing documents around and losing track of the latest versions.

How are SMBs using Office 365 to increase productivity

"Since using Office 365, I've saved £140 and more than 5 hours per week by using Skype for Business instead of having to travel to visit customers in person. It means I can see more customers and still provide a personal service. My business is very visual, and by using video conferencing, I can show my products and get honest, instant feedback from customers. As a small business, these time and money saving opportunities will make a real impact on my ability to boost productivity and increase profits."

John Westwood-Hill, owner of JWH Millinery

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"Business owners need to service clients and customers throughout the day and into the evenings. If a client needs something, they need something! That is the challenge of working across time zones. Office 365 has allowed me to automate my day to day invoicing and operations so that I am able to better service my clients."

Christian Jaroljmec, owners of The Web Lounge

Top 3 Technology time saving tips

Every micro and small business is different; office based vs out on site, screen based or rare users of computers, long work hours or the business fits around their lives. However the majority do use Microsoft Office products (82%) and if micro businesses made 3 changes in a working week – here are the ones that our research and customers, say save you most time.

1. Cut down your travel time through using video conferencing and collaboration tools
2. Get on top of your email by adding key email features
3. Get rid of the small admin hassle tasks by using OneDrive and DocuSign

These time saving tips could save you and your business 2 hours per week. What would 8 hours saving every month mean to your business?

An hour saved is an hour gained - how micro businesses can increase productivity through technology

Conclusion

The need to save time is crucial, not just for small businesses but for the overall UK economy. Based on recent UK Government business estimates, every small business owner's time is worth £24* and that giving back 4.2m businesses only two hours back per week, SMBs with 0-1 employees could add an additional £9bn of revenue to the overall UK economy. Given the fact that over the past two years, almost half (46%) of UK businesses have grown, there is still much room for digital expansion. Our study has shown that technology can be seen as a challenge – but the new tools on the market are easy to use for those without a technical background. Micro businesses that embrace these additional tools will be able to reduce time spent on unproductive admin tasks and focus on the activities that really drive growth.

One change that SMBs can make to gain more time is related to the fact that many small business owners surveyed who use Microsoft Office, 65%, said they were using older versions of Microsoft Office and therefore not capitalising on some of the time-saving benefits available from using the latest technology.

Micro business owners like John Westwood-Hill, founder and owner of JWH Millinery, have shown that making productivity gains can really impact on bottom lines. In one week, John saved £140 and more than 5 hours per week by using Skype for Business instead of having to travel to visit customers in person. As a small business, such cost and time savings will make a significant difference.

How much time are you wasting?

Find out how you can implement these key productivity tools at www.123 Reg.co.uk/office-365/

*There are 4.233m businesses with no or 1 employee, turning over £264bn per year. These numbers equate to £24 per hour, resulting in a return of £9bn by giving micro businesses back 2 hours a week. Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2015

A little about 123 Reg

123 Reg is the UK's largest domain registrar, and has been every year for the last 15 years. 123 Reg has more than 800k customers, manages over 3.5 million domain names and is connected to over 1m websites in the UK representing 1 in 5 of the UK's active websites. 123 Reg provides easy to use and intuitive products for all website needs, with a particular focus on providing online services to Britain's small business community. The philosophy is simple: the internet should be for the many and not the few which, is why every single product is designed for the small business owner looking for an easy and hassle free way of getting online. 123 Reg enables SME's to maximise their potential online to significantly grow their business through expanding and improving their online presence, helping businesses every step of the way with excellent local and friendly customer support.

Office 365 provides you with the familiar tools that you use every day to get work done. Now you can get Office 2016 on your PC, Mac, tablets and smartphones for one single price per user. With unlimited online meetings, IM and HD video conferencing your business will become more productive, from virtually anywhere, anytime.

Microsoft® Office 365 enables you to work better and smarter with cloud technology. Automatic synchronisation across all your devices means you are always working on the latest version and multiple users can also work on the same documents at the same time.

- Get the full Office 2016 experience
- Cross-platform with just one subscription
- Backup and protect your files in the cloud
- 99.9% guaranteed uptime
- Expert support by phone, email and chat

Click here to work anywhere, anytime, on any device

Research

This survey has been conducted using an online interview administered to members of the YouGov Plc GB panel of 350,000+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. Emails are sent to panellists selected at random from the base sample. The e-mail invites them to take part in a survey and provides a generic survey link.

Once a panel member clicks on the link they are sent to the survey that they are most required for, according to the sample definition and quotas. (The sample definition could be "GB adult population" or a subset such as "GB adult females"). Invitations to surveys don't expire and respondents can be sent to any available survey. The responding sample is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. The profile is normally derived from census data or, if not available from the census, from industry accepted data.

All research: All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1057 Decision makers of businesses with 1 or 2 employees (including owner). Fieldwork was undertaken between 25th January - 3rd February 2016. The survey was carried out online.

Getting business class email: All figures unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2038 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 10th - 11th February 2016. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).