

Why Upgrading Your Tech Tools Matters Most



At ECHOtape, we sell adhesive tape. So when I say that ECHOtape is a tech company, you may very well scoff. I know, I did. My early career was in the computer field, and when I first put these two words together, tape = tech, my first reaction was, “You’ve got to be kidding me.” Silicon Valley start-up, we are not. But considering that Uber is considered a “tech” company because it uses a hand-held GPS (a.k.a. smartphone) to order and track the nearest car; and Rolls Royce is a “tech” company because it improves its engines through constant data collection and analysis via computer technology; then we aren’t so far off either. We are a traditional company that leverages technology to expand its business to new customers

in new areas in ways that only modern technology can facilitate. So yes, in a way, we are a technology company.

But let me tell you, getting here has been a hard-fought battle! While embracing new technology is second nature to me (and many of you, I'm sure!), getting our company to make these kinds of changes has been *far* more challenging (more posts on this topic to follow). My advice for other small businesses struggling to adapt? Focus on the technologies that improve speed and efficiency first. For example:

1. Improving Collaboration with Cloud Computing

Cloud Computing conjures up different images for everyone, but for our purposes, the [National Institute of Standards and Technology \("NIST"\)](#) defines the cloud as a model for, "Enabling ubiquitous, convenient, on-demand network access to a shared pool of configurable computing resources that can be rapidly provisioned and released with minimal management effort."

The active terms that we like are "convenient" and "on-demand." After all, any type of cloud computing is useless if it isn't easy to use and available whenever we want it. There are a host of IT solutions available to small businesses, and ECHOtape started three years ago by migrating our entire sales and service teams to [salesforce.com](#) (an entire blog on this soon to come). We are currently exploring more cloud applications like [Dropbox](#) and Office 365 as we ponder our next move. Cloud computing is helping small businesses like ours improve collaboration especially in light of multiple offices

and a remote workforce.

2. **Productivity Tools**

Leveraging technology to promote company productivity is a fine balance between something being clever and useful. Everyone loves playing around with new technology and its bells and whistles, but we're a business! We need those bells and whistles to work for us, not to simply hear the "Big Bang Theory" theme song whenever we receive a text message.

ECHOtape started to use [GoToMeeting](#) three years ago when we introduced [salesforce.com](#) and needed a way to help our remote staff. GoToMeeting is affordable and easy to use so we can display presentations, exchange ideas, and dialogue for important meetings and with remote staff and all that is needed is a computer, smartphone, or tablet and internet access.

Along with GoToMeeting, which is great for group collaboration, [Skype](#) has proven to be a wonderful tool as well. I know that many of you love Skype because it gives you a chance to talk to your friends who live far away or your kids who are in college, but it also has powerful business application which we love too. A face-to-face conversation, even if it is only virtual, is important because it is a great reminder of who we are as people and the privilege of working together.

I am currently trying [Evernote](#), a powerful note-keeping application, that works great wherever you are. You can create

individual notebooks and take notes that automatically save to the Evernote cloud server. Your notes are accessible wherever you have Evernote installed. Your notes can include text, photos, and PDF's, which all are easily searchable. Lastly and most important, you can create a shared workspace in order to encourage collaboration and group synergy.

There are many other interesting (and free!) productivity applications available, including [Doodle](#) (cross-platform scheduling), [Expensify](#) (expense tracking), and [Remember the Milk](#) (cross-platform task management).

These applications and others are all great for experimentation, but don't forget – if it's not helping with your bottom line and making the job easier for you and your employees, your #2 pencil and a pad of paper still has a 500+ year track record of success!

3. **Social Media – Increasing Customer Engagement**

When we think about social media, cool things like FaceBook, Instagram, and blogging come to mind. Social media is fun because it is about sharing experiences. But did you know that social media is one of our most powerful tools for increasing the ECHOtape brand by helping us engage directly with customers?

Blogging. What is blogging? Hey, you're reading a blog right now! To be sure, blogging is a great way for personal expression, but as you can see here, it is also a primary means for US to share with YOU what is going on at ECHOtape.



We blog about everything from our 2015 Goals to what happened during Customer Service Week, to how to use our repair tapes on the job. If you want to know what great things are going on with ECHOtape, then our blog is the best place to start.

Instagram. Instagram is a mobile app designed to take great pictures on the go which you can then upload immediately to the Web. Now, you might ask, how does that help a company like ours? We sell tape! Instagram lets us share pictures of our tape and company and blog posts in a way unlike anything else on the web and it is easy to use and simple to get started.

Canva. Doing business in an online world requires visual stimulation. Nobody is going to pay attention to a website or blog that looks like it was designed in 1995! That is where [Canva](#) comes in. You don't need to be a programmer to make amazing visuals for your website, presentations, or social media anymore; you simply need a little bit of creativity and the use of Canva's millions of layouts, images, and illustrations. Beauty can be so simple.

That said, maybe you still aren't buying the notion that we are a technology company. Or maybe you still don't think your business qualifies. Here's the truth: Maybe innovating through technology does not make a business a "tech" company, but you know what it does make us? Trying to get ahead of the curve. And we're ok with that, too.