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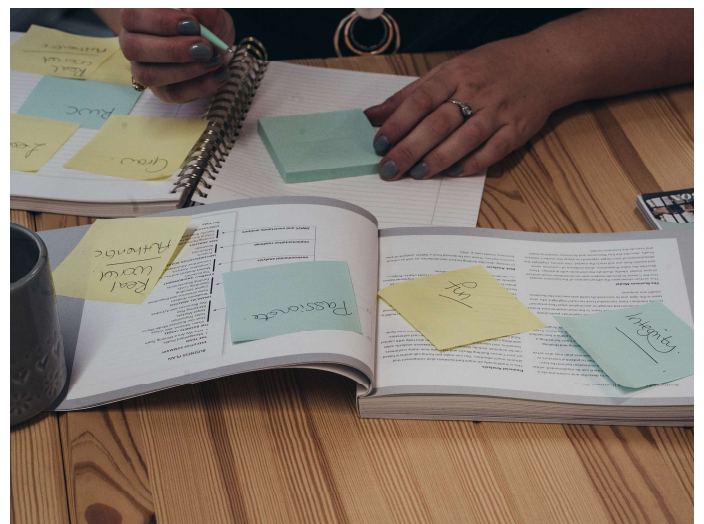
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Get your business up to Scale



Written by

Chris Mann

Open User Systems

If you're starting up in business, there are so many hats to wear and things to consider, that you will usually do what is easiest and gets you up-and-running the quickest, in order to start earning money! That goes from choosing a website domain, picking a company name, establishing branding and procuring IT systems.

There are many elements of a business that can evolve and be changed easily at a later stage as you develop your customer base.

Unfortunately, those mentioned above are VERY difficult to change once you have been established for a significant period of time, particularly once you reach capacity whilst dealing with the challenges of growing pains. As a company grows, it is common for people to implement a "sticky plaster" fix, which solves the immediate issue but in turn introduces more complexity.

The last thing that anyone wants is to be forced into a situation where their earlier choices come back to haunt them. -

In the IT industry we refer to the term 'technical debt', which is the result of opting for the easier solution now, whilst delaying the inevitable consequences and work until a future date. AKA, sweeping it under the carpet.

Here are some easy steps to take to make sure your business is set to scale:

➔ Plan ahead



My first piece of advice for anyone starting up or considering starting a business is to do your research.

Don't leave it too late - you are in the ideal position to make some simple but crucial decisions for your business right now.

Have a 5 year plan - where do you see your business going? How many clients, staff and products do you want ?

Avoid the temptation to create a "pick and mix" solution of software - whilst it is entirely possible to bolt together any number of different systems, this quickly becomes complex, costly and plain dangerous to your business. Just because others' do it, doesn't mean it is the right way.

➔ Assess the value of your data



Your data probably feels small and simple compared to the sheer scale of information that is available in our modern world.

Although you may never reach the levels of data stored by companies like Google, Facebook and Amazon, your own data is extremely valuable to you, your clients and your business.

One of the biggest challenges is to have easy access to your data for all needs, whilst still keeping it simple, manageable and centralised.

All of us have used spreadsheets; here is a common scenario:

1. Start with a simple spreadsheet that has all of your clients' contact details.
2. Realise that this should be imported into another program (Outlook for email contacts).
3. Next you need to use this information in your accounting software so you now need to import that as well.
4. Finally, you need to produce invoices and sales orders so you find yourself manually copying contact data into documents.

Even in this case there are now four duplicate copies of contacts.

This will create issues, such as:

- Wasted Time
- Increased Human Error
- Potential lack of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) or PCI (Payment Card Industry) compliance

The drawbacks might seem small when you are dealing with a handful of clients. But imagine you needed to handle 50, 100 or even 1000 clients? These issues can quickly become unmanageable, and costly.

→ Think Big



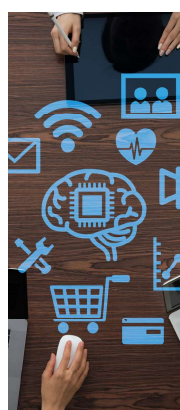
Most systems start as a document or spreadsheet.

However, if this spreadsheet contains your clients data, then you may want to consider whether this is the right option for you.

One of the first roadblocks you may experience, is when you have to share responsibilities with another member of staff.

The simplest way to know if your business is scalable is to ask a friend to try to carry out one of your daily tasks. Create a simple procedure and see if it can be followed. Then, both complete this task at the same time to test whether there is an issue created when you both want to access, or amend the same data.

→ Choices



The most important piece of advice when choosing software, is to ask yourself the question: should I use multiple tools, or is there something that can combine all my needs into one place?

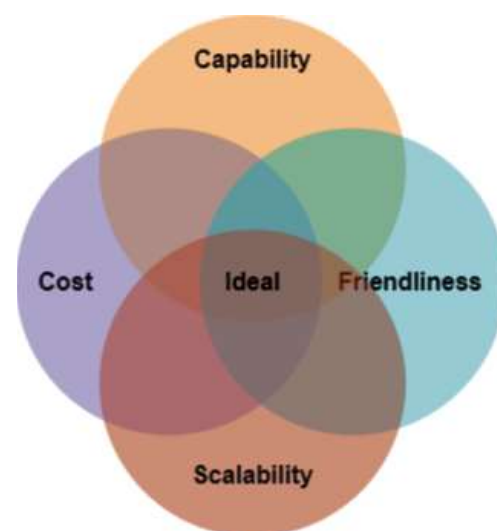
You may be concerned about the risks associated with putting all of your eggs in one basket. This is a legitimate concern, and to ensure you feel confident and in control of your data, you should always ensure that any software that you select is mature, well regarded, and has backup/redundancy considered.

When you are selecting software, you have a huge array of choices available to you, which can often be overwhelming. There are established major commercial products, open-source products, and free or low-cost options.

Open User Systems specialises in the open-source and lower cost solutions as we believe that you should always consider one of these before opting for the higher-priced commercial options.

However, it is important to have realistic expectations from your software choices. The following diagram gives an idea of the sweet spot between the four characteristics of great software.

If you can find something that ticks these boxes, you are on to a winner!



Even as a startup business, you have enormous potential to delight your customers with the impressive level of organisation in your business.

If you can get your software choices right, it will enable you to focus on what you are best at; delivering your own unique value to clients, rather than feeling like a data-entry monkey!



Client Spotlight



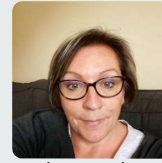
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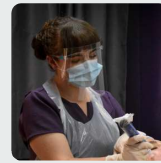
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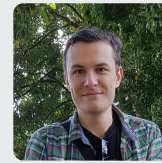
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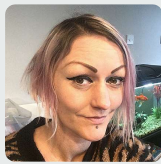
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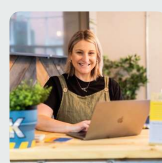
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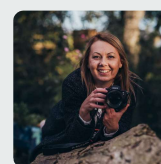
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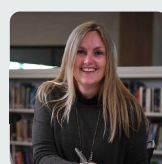
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The Coaches Corner



Join us bi-monthly in the coaching corner webinar, to get the latest business growth insights from the team at Real World Consultancy.

Free *social* Business Networking



Speed Networking

Create connections and get to know people QUICKLY without the awkwardness of 'finding someone to talk to'

- 19th January 2022 6-7pm
- 23rd May 2022 6-7pm
- 6th September 2022 6-7pm



Business Escape Room

A twist on an escape room - have fun with other business owners whilst building connections.

- 3rd March 2022 6-7:30pm
- 6th July 2022 6-7:30pm
- 17th October 2022 6-7:30pm



Business Bingo

Create connections and get to know people QUICKLY without having to think of any conversation starters!

- 12th April 2022 6-7pm
- 18th August 2022 6-7pm
- 30th November 2022 6-7pm



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