

✖ We had an opportunity to speak with Jake Villareal, Chief Marketing Officer of Apptivo. We interviewed him to find out about the advantages of web based business management tools for small businesses. We also spoke with Robert Ardell, CEO of Unclevic.com to find out what his experience was like using such tools.

Sean: Jake and Robert, thanks for taking some time out to speak with us today. We are eager to pick your brains and find out about your ideas to help small businesses.

Jake: Thanks Sean. It's my pleasure to share my views with your readers.

Robert: You are welcome Sean. I am sure we can share some really useful and interesting experiences with your readers today.

Sean: Great to hear that. Jake, let's just jump into the main area of discussion today "Web Based Business Management Tools for Small Businesses". Can you tell us a bit about some of the areas small businesses struggle with and how web-based business management tools can help them?

Jake: Sure. The challenges faced by businesses of different sizes are usually very similar, irrespective of whether the business is large or medium sized or a small business. The problem for small businesses specifically is that they do not have the resources and the time to tackle these problems effectively. For example, every business needs to track its inventory, take orders, deliver the orders on time, receive payments and ship the products. The big and medium sized businesses can easily handle all of this by using the expensive Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software and hiring an IT team to manage this software. When it comes to a small business, the first problem they face is that, they cannot afford these expensive ERP packages, second, they don't have the IT infrastructure to run these packages and finally they don't have the expertise to use these packages. This is where web-based business management tools come to the rescue. Most web-based, Software as a Service (SaaS) business management tools are available at a very low cost. They don't require anything more than a single desktop with internet connection and are extremely easy to use and implement for the business.

Sean: So how do these web based business management tools compare to the traditional ERP software in terms of functionality?

Jake: Most web-based business management tools have comparable, if not the same functionality as traditional ERP software. Also, these tools are specifically designed for small businesses so some of the latest advances in managing eCommerce stores, and integrating their product listing with Google, are all available in most of these web based business management platforms. So basically, these platforms are not some watered down versions of the big ERP packages. Instead, they are packed with functionality and have been specifically designed keeping in mind the small business owners.

Sean: What about pricing? Are these web-based tools affordable?

Jake: Sean, you will be pleasantly surprised how inexpensive these tools are. In fact a lot of companies, including ours, offer the business management platform absolutely free to users and just charge for the optional value added services. A lot of other tools have similar pricing structure. Also, most of these companies help the small businesses owners setup the platform for their business at no additional cost.

Sean: Thanks Jake. Robert, first of all congrats for making it to the Inc. 500 list, if I am not wrong you adopted one such web based business management tool recently. How has your experience been using that?

Robert: Thanks Sean. Yeah, that's right. We recently implemented Apptivo and we have already noticed a significant improvement in the way we manage our business. A lot of really small things, which we used to spend a lot of time on earlier, have been completely automated. Time is one of the most important of resources for somebody who is running a small business or a start-up, and these tools help you make the right use of your time.

Sean: Robert, which main aspects of your business areas do you manage using web-based tools?

Robert: At Unclevic.com, we do everything, right from managing our inventory, taking orders, shipping products, customer service, to managing our website from within Apptivo. Apptivo is very nicely integrated with all our external partners as well. This allows us to very efficiently monitor our whole business from a single place.

Sean: That's really interesting. Jake, could you tell us a bit more about the kind of businesses

which Apptivo is suited for?

Jake: Apptivo is designed to support and manage two main kinds of businesses. The first being E-Commerce businesses like Unclevic.com, where all the sales activities are done through a website, as well as, the second, more traditional businesses where the customers purchase the products through phone, mail or in person. In fact, I would say Apptivo is best suited for a business owner who has a traditional business and wants to expand or move her business online and sell through a website.

Sean: I am sure a lot of our readers are eager to try out Apptivo. How would you advise them to proceed?

Jake: The best way to proceed would be to go online and sign up on www.Apptivo.com. All the things we talked about today are completely free and as an added bonus to your readers, we will be providing free business integration and set up service to all new sign-ups. To avail this offer, your readers can drop us an email at sbdc@apptivo.com, and one of our associates will get in touch with them.

Sean: Thanks Robert and Jake. We appreciate your time.

Robert: It was my pleasure speaking with you.

Jake: You are welcome Sean.

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