



FIVE TO THRIVE

Five critical tech tools to test initiatives, swiftly schedule meetings and have vital client info at the ready

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How do you eat an elephant? Getting a handle on something big – a new project, new client, understanding a complex piece of information – is a lot like eating an elephant and best done one bite at a time.

And staying on top of tech trends ... well, it's like there are never-ending elephants waiting to be chunked up into bite-sized, understandable pieces. (And no, we're not advocating the actual eating of actual elephants.)

Yes, driving processes and operational efficiency, data collection, analytics and improving communication are key to your business' growth. It's easy to start chasing new technologies to solve these challenges.

Problem is, there are so many technology solutions out there it's tough to know where to start.

To that end, here's a peek at some of the tools to love (and one to love to hate) to help you take a bite out of the ever-growing technology elephant.



Stanten



ASSISTANT.TO

If you're in a lot of meetings, this is for you.

According to Assistant.To, it takes 12 minutes to schedule one meeting. If you have five meetings in a day, that's a wasted hour.

Assistant.To integrates with email and Google calendar. Send your availability to a recipient, he selects the time that works for him, and the appointment magically appears on your calendar. Plus, you receive an email.

The cost: Nothing, if you use the base level.

The potential rub: You need to use Chrome as your browser, and it only works when scheduling with one person.



GOTOMEETING

Often, meetings are not just one-on-one discussions in a single location. They're with

multiple people in multiple locations on multiple screens.

Once a meeting is scheduled, GoTo makes it simple to spin up an audio, video and screen-share conference call from any device (the mobile version is quite slick) anywhere in the world.

Just select the day and time, and GoTo spits back a dial-in number (for those using a phone) and a weblink for screen share and audio.

During the session, you can share what's on your screen or easily give control to any of the other attendees.

And, it integrates nicely with Assistant.To.

The cost: About \$25 per month.

The potential rub: Depending on how many people use it in your organization, you'll need to get multiple logins. If you don't and a meeting runs over, the new meeting can bump – and disconnect – the first.



UNBOUNCE

This tool lets users build, publish and A/B-test mobile-responsive landing pages quickly – without needing to know any programming language.

There's no excuse to not test your marketing efforts. In simple terms, an A/B test compares two versions of something to see which generates the best results.

We've seen that a simple word choice in the headline, the semantics on the call-to-action button or whether you call content a "guide" or "e-book" can affect conversion rates by more than 30 percent.

Unbounce not only simplifies the testing, it makes parsing and analyzing the data a breeze.

With a wee bit of technical voodoo, Unbounce integrates nicely with most email marketing, marketing automation and customer relationship management tools.

The cost: There is a free version with limited functionality. Our company is into it for about \$99/month.

The potential rub: That "wee bit of technical voodoo" referenced above.



OPTIMIZELY

Optimizely can be used to test A/B test homepage imagery, calls to action and other

website elements.

During a recent client visit, there was a debate on the homepage feature image. The CEO hated it. But what matters is what gets website visitors to click for more information.

An Optimizely test was run on two variations of the image. Turns out, the image the CEO hated outperformed the alternative.

The cost: You can get started with the base model for free.

The potential rub: A bit more technical solution to deploy.



SALESFORCE

Oh, the 800-pound gorilla (elephant) you love to hate.

It's bloated. Reporting is unnecessarily cumbersome. The desktop version can be maddening from a user interface standpoint. Some of the most important features are locked up in the super expensive tiers.

But it does serve as that necessary central repository for all things prospect related, and it integrates nicely with website lead capture.

Perhaps the best thing about Salesforce is the mobile version. It's lightweight and gives you what you want when you need it most.

At a recent sales meeting, there were problems trying to hook into the company's guest Wi-Fi, so notes on the account were inaccessible. That is, until pulling up the company's record on a phone, using the Salesforce app.

Everything was there, and the meeting was navigated confidently and successfully.

Afterward, you can quickly key notes into the app – while thoughts were fresh – information that is synced back to your main install.

The cost: For our version, we pay \$25 per user per month, but the platform can get costly. Quick.

The potential rub: It's a beast that needs to be fed and has incredible bloat that many businesses don't necessarily need. ■

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