

WORKFORCE PRODUCTIVITY TOOLS

Increasing productivity is one of the main levers executives can pull to impact near-term results and long-term profitability. While employee motivation, efficiency, and utility drive productivity; benchmarking against time and goals is a good starting point.

Whether the organization is in a period of fast-growth or in a mature industry will dictate whether the benchmark should be revenue-per-full-time employee (fast-growth) or profits divided by total labor costs if in a mature industry.

There are many factors that influence workforce productivity and therefore the potential output of equipment, distribution channels or your manufacturing plant. Before labor utilization can be improved it must be measured. Understanding where downtime losses are coming from and the impact they have on production can reveal root causes — which can include machine downtime, material delays, or absenteeism — that delay production.

When employees cannot perform their work against established standards, performance can suffer. Effective training can increase performance by improving the skills that directly impact the quality of output. A skilled operator knows how to measure work, understands the impacts of variability, and knows to stop production for corrective actions when quality falls below specified limits. Accurately measuring can pinpoint performance improvement opportunities down to the individual level.

There are several kinds of Web-based productivity tools, and many are free. Evaluate which tools will give your organization an edge:

Tool	Company Name and Description
Workflow	Webandflow: Browser based. Zapproved: Frictionless approval process.
Virtual Office	HyperOffice: Web collaboration. Microsoft: Office Online 24x7. ThinkFree: The best online office on earth. Zoho: Online office suite.
Time and Attendance	Harvest: Simple online tracking. Motismo: Simple time tracking for professionals. TimeTracker: Free to-do-list with a clock. Togl: Online time tracker.
Storage	Carbonite: \$40 a year service.

Tool	Company Name and Description
Social Networking	Geni.com: Families, genealogy. Eons.com: For baby boomers. Facebook: Largest working class social network in the US. MySpace: One of the largest for young adults. Twitter: Micro-blogging, RSS, updates. Xanga: Blogs and "metro" areas. Yelp: Local Business Review and Talk.
Promotion	ContestMachine: Promotions Made Easy. PRWeb: Internet Releases. HRmarketer: Internet Releases. Fo.re.cast: Web 2.0 surveys for everyone! FeatureList: Let your users vote on their favorite features! SEONIK: SEO friendly link generator. Socialspark: Social media marketing. SurveyMonkey: Polls and surveys. Trackur: Online reputation monitoring tool Yodle: Local Internet Marketing.
Project Management	Historically Microsoft Project or a limited document tool like Excel has been used. Collaboration on projects was very limited. As an entrepreneur, you can now use web-based software service project management tools such as eProject or Basecamp . What makes these tools efficient is that as long as you already have a browser installed you don't have to install any additional software. Just sign up and start managing your projects. Pay on a monthly basis so the initial investment is small. You can also use the tools to track time and manage and approve timesheets.
Payroll	Perquest: Easy online payroll. PayCycle: Do your payroll online.

Tool	Company Name and Description
Market Research & Intelligence	Online RSS Readers: Google, Bloglines. Google Alerts: Track anything online.
Knowledge Management	Kindling: an idea management and collaboration tools. Zoho: Online knowledge management.
Help Desk	TagTicket: Hosted help desk software. ZenDesk: Web 2.0 online help desk.
e-Procurement	Coupa: Purchasing made simple.
Document Management	OpenKM Document management system. Solodex: Create and sharedocs and projects. Zoho: Online document management.
CRM software services (Sales force automation and marketing automation)	ACT!: Small business contact management. Microsoft Dynamics: Microsoft's CRM for SMBs. RightNow: Vertical CRM platform. Sage: SalesLogix: SMB CRM. Salesforce.com: Largest SaaS provider. Eloqua: Marketing Automation. Constant Contact: Email marketing
Copywriting	Gramlee: Online grammar checking and proofreading.
Collaborative Workspaces	ClientSpot: Easy web-based client collaboration. Exvo: Teamwork made easy. HyperOffice: Web collaboration. Near-prise: Enterprise 2.0 On-Demand. Thinkature: Real-time collaboration for the web. Twiddla: Painless team collaboration online. Worketc: Easy Intranets. Yugma – Interact, share, get things done online.

<p>Blogs</p>	<p>Besides using a blog as a marketing and sales tool, it also can be used as a productivity tool for recording and sharing information. Here are a few examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift changes--Employees can record what happened on the previous shift and what to look out for. • Product knowledge--Product experts can benefit the rest of the company and external partners by sharing product information via a blog. • Customer service--Blogs can be simple mechanisms for customer service personnel to share ideas or advice. • Research--Companies with subject matter experts benefit when these experts share their knowledge via blogs both internally and externally.
<p>Billing</p>	<p>CurdBee: Simple billing. Blinksale: The easiest way to send invoices. Budket: Cash flow analysis and financial planning. Clarity Accounting: Simple online accounting software. Endeve: Electronic invoicing program. Freshbooks: Painless billing. Quicken Online: Manage your money online! Rudder: finances in your inbox. Ronin: Simple invoicing. Simply Invoices: Invoicing in minutes. SidejobTrack: Web-based job tracking, invoicing, reporting & project management software for the part-time independent contractor.</p>
<p>Analytics & Intelligence</p>	<p>AnalysisOne- Visualize your business performance Google: Online advertising and web analytics. Perquest: Workforce Analytics.</p>

Tool	Example Tools
<p>Other Tools:</p>	<p>EmployeeSuggestionBox.com: On-demand collaborative suite. Nozbe: Getting things done. PlanZone: Where Teamwork begins. Proplr: David Allen’s “Getting Things Done” tool for stress free productivity. RivalMap: Portect your company’s competitive advantage. TrackerSuite.net: Web-based projects, billing, reporting, HR and more. UserVoice: What do users really want?</p>

THE FUTURE OF WORKFORCE PRODUCTIVITY: MEASURING THE RETURN ON YOUR MOST PRECIOUS INVESTMENT

Revenue-per-employee does not take into account the composition of the workforce, especially the significant use of contingent workers, but is a good starting point. For a firm to achieve competitive agility, it must be organized in a way that supports continuous learning and change. Competitive agility is achieved through organizational agility which, in turn, is facilitated by workforce effectiveness (i.e. scalability).

About Serenity Systems

Serenity Systems improves business performance of enterprises with ERP systems. Through Serenity’s Certification (developed from Microsoft’s Infrastructure Optimization model) business goals are supported by the IT infrastructure and ERP system while management is provided with peace-of-mind via our user, network, and systems support with performance visualizations.

Founded in 2002, Serenity Systems has provided nearly a hundred enterprises with high-impact business-centric technology solutions in support of their business goals. For more information, contact Mark Leary at 713-647-7272 or reach us at: <http://www.serenitysystems.com/contact.htm>