PLAN CONSULTANT

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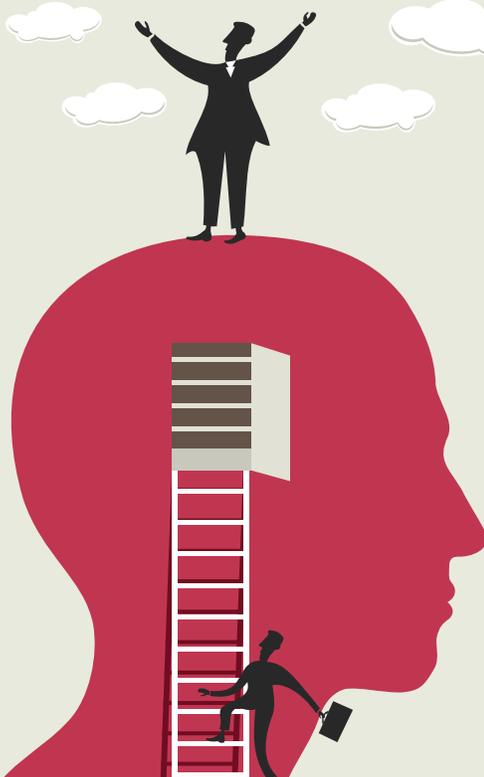# GET READY
FOR WHAT LIES AHEAD

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HEADS IN THE CLOUD

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Microsoft may be ubiquitous but here are a few applications you may not be aware of.

While we've spent our fair share of this column writing about some of Apple's innovations, there's another technology giant that continues to push us ever onward. This quarter, we're highlighting a small, Pacific Northwest company you may have heard about…Microsoft.

SharePoint
http://sharepoint.microsoft.com

Raise your hand if your company is 100 percent flawless at internal communication. It's both funny and ironic how often you hear or say "where is that saved again?" in a given workweek. By the time this article prints, our firm will have been on Microsoft Office 365 (cloud-based Microsoft Office 2010) for just over six months. In addition to all the cool Office applications we're all used to, MS Office 365 brings SharePoint to small and medium-sized businesses at a killer price, in a leased monthly package.

What is SharePoint? Basically, it's an application that makes it easier for people to work together. Using SharePoint, your people can set up websites to share information with others, manage documents from start to finish, and publish collaborative reports for quicker, faster, cheaper, and better decision making. From a software architecture perspective, SharePoint is broken into 6 sections:

1) Sites
2) Communities
3) Content
4) Search
5) Insights
6) Composites

Prior versions of SharePoint required a software department, but Microsoft has finally hit a home run with this newest version. All of us can now afford this powerful tool at prices starting at $6 per month per user. I recommend licensing the entire Office 365 Suite and seeing your firm productivity soar in just months!

QuickOffice Pro HD
www.QuickOffice.com

Microsoft Office is about as ubiquitous in business as software can be, so it's unexpected that finding a functional mobile MS Office application has been such a challenge. QuickOffice Pro HD rises to that challenge. This app, which is available for iOS and Android devices, allows you to create and edit Word, Excel, and PowerPoint documents and is compatible with Office versions from 2007 to 2010. It integrates with many cloud storage services including Dropbox and Box.net, as well as SharePoint, to give you access to your files no matter where you save them.

Need to convert that Word file to a PDF and email to a client? QuickOffice has you covered. How about making a last-minute change to that PowerPoint presentation just before you take the stage? Yep, QuickOffice lets you do that, too.

QuickOffice adeptly tackles most of the tasks you'd normally handle sitting at your desk, but it does have some limitations over the full versions of the MS Office applications. These include lack of a Track Changes feature for Word documents or use of macros in Excel spreadsheets. But, apart from some functionality often reserved for power users, QuickOffice has you covered. It's not the least expensive app you'll download, but the added productivity while on the go is well worth the $19.99 price tag.

OneNote
http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/onenote

I hate paper, but I realize that business needs to go from paper-based, to less paper, before we can truly go paperless. Tablets have become the gateway technology that's slowly transforming skeptics into believers. OneNote by Microsoft takes the place of a digital notebook that combines everything: Post-it notes, pieces of information, Internet searches, fact sheets, etc.

Unlike other productivity tools, OneNote 2010 is integrated into Office 2010 to combine and share notes. Use this application to gather and organize text, pictures, digital handwriting, audio/video recordings, and more—all in one digital notebook on your computer.

Finally, a program has solved the information overload issue. No more searching your emails to find all those confirmation codes for that upcoming conference. With OneNote, you can combine digital agendas and speaker biographies; download speeches, attendee lists, hotel/air/car rental confirmations, emails, and even handwritten notes from prior events. Also, the search capabilities are awesome and immediate for future reference.

Oh, and did I mention that you can even find and apply an online template created for and by the current users? My favorite Seattle software company finally listened to their customers and created valuable, easy-to-use, integrated productivity software. Bravo!

CloudOn
http://site.CloudOn.com

This nifty app actually gives you access to fully functional versions of the actual MS Office applications—actual versions of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint right there on your iPad. CloudOn connects you to a remote server that has the MS Office applications installed. Simply add your login credentials for your Dropbox or Box.net account, and you're on your way to macro bliss with those Excel spreadsheets.

So why would you bother with QuickOffice when you can have CloudOn? A reasonable question. One of CloudOn's drawbacks is that you must be connected to the Internet in order for it to work. Either a WiFi or mobile data connection will do, but without some sort of access, you're out of luck even when it's safe to turn on approved, portable, electronic devices. No Internet, no connecting to the remote server that's the heart and soul of the app and no connecting to your cloud storage to access your files. That might sound like a deal breaker, but at the amazing low price of free, it's worth having CloudOn at the ready when you do have a connection, saving QuickOffice for when you're working offline.

Moprise
www.moprise.com

If an iDevice is your weapon of choice, no need to worry about Apple and Microsoft not playing nicely together in the sandbox. Enter Moprise. With this quick download from the iTunes app store, you can connect directly and securely to SharePoint and all of its content. The personal version, which allows you to connect to two SharePoint sites, will cost you zip, zilch, and nada. Need to connect to more than two sites? No problem. The business version permits unlimited connections and carries a sticker price of $14.99.

LOOKOUT

Adam and Yannis are always on the lookout for new and creative mobile applications and other technologies. If you have any tips or suggestions, please email them at adam.pozek@dwcconsultants.com and yannis@spectrumpension.com.

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