Breaking the Addiction

In the past fifty years, NASA has gone from putting a man on the moon, to roving around Mars with a remote-controlled dune buggy, to sending a space telescope on a data-collection mission in distant galaxies. Meanwhile, back here on Earth, businesses have moved from paper ledgers and adding machines to desktop-based accounting and project management systems and on to cloud-based technologies. At EDSymposium19, Steven Burns of BQE Software showed us how these advances in technology can improve a firm’s growth by bringing actionable information to real-time to help us make business decisions.

Today’s cloud-based technology allows you to store and access data and programs over the Internet instead of on your computer’s hard drive. You have access while in the office or on the move, allowing you to readily conduct business 24/7. Many desktop-bound business-management applications like client billing, payroll processing, and staff scheduling were once desktop-bound, but can now run in the Cloud and with many benefits too.

12 Reasons to be in the Cloud

1. **Zero Installation and Maintenance** – Being in the Cloud means you no longer need to maintain the applications and operating system on your own computers or server.

2. **Enhanced Security** – Malware and ransomware can disable desktop computer systems and servers and hold your information hostage.

3. **Better Performance** – Load-balancing helps by distributing the workload across multiple computer resources running in the Cloud. By spreading the work out evenly, performance, efficiency and reliability improve.

4. **Guaranteed Disaster Recovery** – A firm can get back up and running in as little as five (5) minutes.

5. **Outsourcing / Remote Work** – A firm can outsource administrative tasks like accounting and bill paying and even enable staff to work from home or any worksite location.

6. **Device Agnostic** – Cloud-based applications can function on a wide variety of devices regardless of your firm’s computer hardware or software applications.

7. **Ease of Use**

8. **Grow at whatever speed you want**

9. **Accessible Anywhere / Anytime** – Whether you’re in the office, on a job site or working from home, you can access your applications in the Cloud.

10. **Always backed up** – Backups are real-time. No need to worry if someone remembered to schedule the backup, or if there is enough space on the backup drive.
11. **Online Collaboration** – Working in the Cloud enables two or more people or organizations to work together to complete a task or goal.

12. **No Capital Expenditures** – Cloud applications are accessed using a browser, so no need to buy special computer hardware or software applications.

It’s clear the Cloud is great, but when its applications are used in a disconnected way to accomplish their work and the applications don’t connect, there are double entry efforts and no real-time information shared across applications. This is called Chunkification. You might have an app for time tracking, a different app for billing, a different app for accounting, a different app for scheduling, and a different app for to-dos. If you experienced the frustration of investing hours and hours of time to learn how to use five or more different applications, then struggling to share your information between those applications, you’ve probably clenched your keyboard above your head and yelled “There’s got to be a better way!” But wait, before you launch that keyboard into cyberspace, of course, there’s an app for that.

Like a space telescope, Business Intelligence (BI) application software is designed to retrieve, analyze, transform and report data for business intelligence purposes. BI is not a new term and is something you may have been using for years. Microsoft Excel is just one example of a Business Intelligence application. You can load it up with statistical data, apply some algorithms, use pivot tables and analyze the data for patterns. Business Intelligence is now being used to increase productivity and efficiency, reduce costs, win more clients and boost profits. This kind of insight comes from bringing the data together and presenting it in a format that helps you make informed decisions.

Core, a BQE product, provides a single solution for all these tasks and more. This means even when not a part of the accounting or billing processes in your firm - all your data is integrated with what they have access to, so they have real-time information at all times. Core combines project management and accounting software together, enabling you to see real-time financials, track time and expenses and handle billing from a single easy to use platform in the Cloud.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) are systems designed to mimic functions of the human brain and perform tasks that would normally require human intelligence, such as learning, problem solving, and decision making. AI is essentially intelligence demonstrated by machines. It is possible to analyze current and historical facts to make predictions and get actionable insight for business management purposes using Artificial Intelligence and Business Intelligence together. We now have the ability to take a photo of a receipt and have all the information analyzed and uploaded into an expense report and linked to client projects.

The dashboards in our cars keep us informed on how much fuel we have, how fast we are going, how far we have come and other useful information. Beyond vehicles, the dashboards are now the interface for our project management and accounting software tools delivering insights into our business. Core provides a customizable Dashboard that delivers real-time insights into your business’ financial health, resource allocation and forecasting. It provides real-time, graphical information for executives and managers to make important and quick decisions. Figures 1 and 2 show examples of how dashboards can be customized to fit your information needs.
Figure 1: A dashboard can be customized to provide a quick view of a firm’s financial health, including Profit and Loss, Cash Flow, Aged Receivables and more.

Figure 2: A customized dashboard can display information specific to your role, including a status on projects and staff workload.

This information is now available to you in the office and beyond. You check your smartphone for email or directions, but are you asking it how your business is doing? Core’s mobile application
provides information for your business on the go. You can have a conversation with Core on your smartphone on your way to a client meeting or anywhere (Fig. 3).

**Figure 3**: A sample of a smartphone conversation.

You can ask questions about performance metrics of an employee, profitability of a project, money owed by a client or tasks on your to-do list. For example, you might ask “How is my business doing?” and get a written and an audio response like “You are doing well. Your income is up 17% as compared to last year and profits are up 26%. The Balance sheet looks stronger with a 22% increase in assets.”

Products like BQE CORE, which provide real-time Cloud-based services, free you up to focus on your clients. A Cloud-based approach can provide you with insight to increase your productivity, reduce costs and increase efficiency, it will also help you break the addiction to that old-fashioned desk-based system and free you up to plan and build your firm’s future. This is the technology solution that is right for you. Break free from the gravity of the old desk model, look for solutions that are cloud driven and embrace this mobility to launch your business into the future.

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