



# Business Tools for Entrepreneurs

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Whether you're thinking of becoming an entrepreneur or have an established small business, these resources can help you.

For more information contact the Heights Library at 216.932.3600.

To register for free classes at the Heights Library go to the website at [www.heightslibrary.org](http://www.heightslibrary.org)

## **Library Databases**

### **Heights Library Business Links**

**<http://www.heightslibrary.org>**

**Do Research: Business, Finance & Investing**

**Heights Library has its own collection of business-related links and databases; here are some of the most useful:**

### **Crain's Business Cleveland**

Crain's Cleveland Business is a weekly business newspaper published every Monday. Crain's covers businesses -- big and small -- in Cuyahoga and the contiguous counties.

### **Legal Forms**

Provides a wide selection of Ohio legal forms across the most popular legal areas. Includes real estate contracts, wills, pre-marital agreements, bankruptcy, divorce, landlord tenant and many others. Provided by CLEVNET. Must have a Clevnet library card to access from home.

### **Reference USA**

A yellow pages directory for United States businesses. Information such as company name, address, SIC, phone number, headquarter/subsidiary, numbers of employees, corporate structure and sales is available. Residential search also available. Provided by CLEVNET.

## Cleveland Public Library: Business & Consumer Information Databases

<http://www.cpl.org>

Click on Do Research / Scroll down to Explore these research categories: Business & Consumer Information

### Ohio Web Library: Business & Government Resources

<http://www.oplin.org/databases/>

(Scroll down to Business & Government)

- [Business Source Premier](#)  
**What is it?** Full text business articles, research, and news updated daily from EBSCOhost.  
**Why use it?** Read articles from popular and scholarly business periodicals. Research industries. Evaluate companies and their markets.
- [Explore Ohio | OPLIN](#)  
**What is it?** OPLIN's ever-expanding directory of Ohio-specific websites and links.  
**Why use it?** Find Ohio-focused websites by category or by county.
- [Ohio.gov: Government Information & Services](#)  
**What is it?** The official government website of the State of Ohio.  
**Why use it?** Find government services and information for residents, businesses, visitors, and state employees. Reach the website of any Ohio government agency.
- [Regional Business News | \(EBSCOhost\)](#)  
**What is it?** Full text for articles from over 75 business journals, newspapers, and newswires, covering all metropolitan and rural areas within the United States, from EBSCOhost.  
**Why use it?** Research regional business conditions around the country.
- [Job & Career Accelerator](#)  
**What is it?** The LearningExpress Job & Career Accelerator™ provides personalized, step-by-step job search assistance for all levels of job seekers. Job seekers can explore suitable occupations from over 1,000 detailed occupation profiles and find available jobs in their area from a database of over 5 million up-to-date job postings.  
**Why use it?** With Job & Career Accelerator, users can easily create professional targeted resumes, master interviewing techniques, improve work related skills and prepare for occupation-related exams. In addition, it helps job seekers plan, tailor, and track multiple job searches at the same time while providing expert advice and tips each step of the way.

## **Web Links**

### **Business Owner's Toolkit**

With an emphasis on problem-solving dating back to 1995, *Business Owner's Toolkit*™ ([www.toolkit.com](http://www.toolkit.com)) offers more than 5,000 pages of free cost-cutting tips, step-by-step checklists, real-life case studies, startup advice, and business templates to small business owners and entrepreneurs.

### **Entrepreneur.com: Grow Your Business**

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/grow/index.html>

One of the best-known magazines for small-business owners has a website with a section devoted to entrepreneurs who are just starting out or looking to develop their business.

### **IRS: Starting a Business (includes forms, checklist, what you need to know about federal taxes, etc.)**

<http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=99336,00.html>

**Microsoft BizSpark** (<http://www.microsoftstartupzone.com/BizSpark/>) is a startup program that gives you three-year access to the latest Microsoft development tools, as well as connecting you to a nationwide network of investors and incubators.

### **Microsoft Small Business Center**

<http://www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness/hub.mspix>

Support for small business owners in the form of security, IT help, video demos, free web links, document sharing, free e-mail hosting, and more.

### **Open Office** <http://www.openoffice.org/>

OpenOffice.org 3 is the leading open-source office software suite for word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, graphics, databases and more. It is available in many languages and works on all common computers. It stores all your data in an international open standard format and can also read and write files from other common office software packages. It can be downloaded and used completely free of charge for any purpose.

### **SCORE** [http://www.score.org/business\\_toolbox.html](http://www.score.org/business_toolbox.html)

We are America's premier source of free and confidential small business advice for entrepreneurs. We offer advice online and in-person at one of our 364 offices nationwide.

Also: **SCORE Business Plans:** <http://www.score.org/templategallery.html>

## **U.S. Small Business Administration Tools**

<http://www.sba.gov/tools/index.html>

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) was created in 1953 as an independent agency of the federal government to aid, counsel, assist and protect the interests of small business concerns, to preserve free competitive enterprise and to maintain and strengthen the overall economy of our nation. We recognize that small business is critical to our economic recovery and strength, to building America's future, and to helping the United States compete in today's global marketplace. Although SBA has grown and evolved in the years since it was established in 1953, the bottom line mission remains the same. The SBA helps Americans start, build and grow businesses.

## **12 Cool Web Tools for Small Business**

<http://www2.inc.com/ss/12-cool-web-tools-small-business>

### **Find Out Who is Visiting Your Website**

Demandbase (<http://www.demandbase.com>) lets you know when those blue-chip customers are knocking at your virtual door. Its free real-time ticker analyzes your visitors' IP addresses and compares them with information from sources such as Dun & Bradstreet and LexisNexis. With those data, Demandbase can tell you the names of the companies at which many of your visitors work. Click on a company name, and Demandbase will sell you the name and contact information for a lead at that company. Demandbase has been called the iTunes of CRM, and it's almost as affordable: The average cost per lead is just \$1.80.

### **Calendar, Meet Social Networking**

LuckyCal (<http://www.luckycal.com>) aims to make it easier for you to meet up with friends or business contacts. The free Web tool, which launched in December, integrates your work and personal calendars with those of your employees, friends, and business associates (as long as they give you permission). The main benefit could be for road-weary sales teams; LuckyCal will scan your colleagues' and clients' Outlook calendars and Facebook profiles and e-mail you when they are in your area. LuckyCal plans to charge for an enterprise version that launches later this year.

### **Reduce Your Carbon Footprint**

Three new software programs can help companies cut carbon emissions. Edison (<http://verdiem.com/edison>), CO2 Saver (<http://co2saver.snap.com>), and Carbon Control Software ([carboncontrolsoftware.com](http://carboncontrolsoftware.com)) all use Windows power settings to reduce the energy consumed by computers while they are idle. All the programs provide information on how much carbon you have saved, and Edison estimates how much money you have saved as well. The personal versions of the programs are free. Carbon Control Software's business version costs \$10.50 and up per license per year and Verdiem, the maker of Edison, has a corporate version that sells for \$20 per computer per year. It may be worth the price: Globally, IT

infrastructure emits as much carbon as the aviation industry, according to research firm Gartner.

### **Ditch That Phone Tree**

[Fonolo.com](http://Fonolo.com) has mapped out the automated customer service phone trees of 200 companies. Log on, click on the department you want to reach (reservations at American Airlines, for example), and Fonolo will make the call, navigate the system, and call you when it has reached your desired department. When we used it to call Citibank, it connected us with a rep in less than 20 seconds, compared with two minutes when calling directly. Fonolo has an iPhone app as well.

### **Save Money on Travel**

When you cancel a flight, you are entitled to a refund of the taxes and fuel charges you paid -- even on a nonrefundable ticket. For 25 euros (\$32), [MissRefund.com](http://MissRefund.com) will get that money for you. The company has secured refunds as large as \$262; the average is \$101. If you don't receive a refund, you don't have to pay. Meanwhile, [Vayama.com](http://Vayama.com) is an airfare booking site focused on routes and destinations that aren't generally available online, like Seattle to Denpasar, Bali. But it doesn't always have the best prices, particularly on run-of-the-mill trips, so make sure to shop around. [Airfarewatchdog.com](http://Airfarewatchdog.com) scours listing sites such as Travelocity and Orbitz to find the best deals, even on small airlines like Allegiant. And [Yapta.com](http://Yapta.com) will alert you when a good price appears on the flight you want. If the price falls after you have bought the ticket, Yapta will, for \$15, try to get you a refund or credit for the difference.

### **Name Your Price for Coding Help**

The world's largest community of software developers and graphic designers is now ready to serve small companies. Since 2001, TopCoder (<http://www.topcoder.com>) has been holding coding and design competitions to help companies like ESPN develop new software tools, websites, and logos. Late last year, it launched TopCoder Direct, a do-it-yourself version that allows small and midsize companies to get in the game. Log in at [topcoder.com/direct](http://topcoder.com/direct), describe what you want, and determine how much money you will award the first- and second-place finishers. When the submissions come in, you pick the best. A prototype for a simple website might cost \$1,200.

### **Skype on Steroids**

Chances are you have a cell phone, a work phone, a home phone, a couple of e-mail accounts, and maybe an instant-messaging program. With free software from VoxOx (<http://www.voxox.com>), you can keep them all in one place. Import contacts from all of your e-mail and IM accounts. Then, e-mail, IM, text, or call anyone you know, all through VoxOx. Every user gets a phone number, which shows up in the caller ID of the person receiving the call. If someone uses the number to call you, you can pick up at the computer or have the call forwarded to any phone. But there is one drawback: VoxOx gives users only two free hours of calls. Then, you can either pay a fee or get more free calls by watching ads.

## **Top 10 Online Small Business Collaboration Tools (from ReadWriteStart)**

<http://www.toolkit.com/tools/index.aspx>

With the growing number of online services, it's becoming more economical for small business to rely on web-based tools rather than expensive enterprise software. Not too long ago we brought you [5 Web Apps To Keep Your Startup Organized](#), and now the website Business Pundit

(<http://www.businesspundit.com/>) has released their top 10 list of online collaboration tools for small businesses.

Call it Web 2.0, or Enterprise 2.0; the fact of the matter is that online services just make more sense for businesses on a budget. Because these software platforms are web-based, users can use any computer to access them at work, at home or even on the road. They eliminate the need for expensive software and fewer IT employees are required for setup, updates and patches to systems.

Considering these benefits of online tools, Business Pundit's list of collaborative services is an excellent resource for startups and small businesses looking to save some cash while still getting things done as efficiently as possible.

Topping their list is OfficeMedium (<http://www.officemedium.com/>), a service we profiled last fall which provides a wide variety of collaborative features wrapped up in an elegantly designed interface. With live chat, user profiles, polls and calendars, OfficeMedium is a social collaboration network for your company. While the service is relatively inexpensive with monthly costs of just \$6 per person and \$1 per gigabyte of storage, you may be disappointed by a lack of mobile application and developer API if your company is constantly on-the-go.

Coming in just behind OfficeMedium is Basecamp (<http://www.basecamphq.com>), a service that we use daily here at ReadWriteWeb and which made our top 5 list of organization apps for startups (<http://www.readwriteweb.com/readwritestart/2010/01/5-web-apps-to-keep-your-startu.php>). While the two services are more or less functionally comparable, Business Pundit puts Basecamp in second place due to its less-than-thrilling (though customizable) interface design and a few functionality gripes. For the mobile business, Basecamp's API has allowed for over a dozen mobile applications, which could be a feature that makes it the #1 choice.

Rounding out the rest of the top 5 are CubeTree (<http://www.cubetree.com>), WizeHive (<http://www.wizehive.com>) and SocialText (<http://www.socialtext.com>) -- three powerful web applications which were deprived of the top spot by a few lacking features, design problems and ease-of-use issues. The remainder of the top 10 includes:

CentralDesktop (<http://www.centraldesktop.com>),  
Onehub (<http://app.onehub.com/login>),  
PBWorks (<http://pbworks.com>),  
Zoho Projects (<http://projects.zoho.com/home.na>) and  
Socialcast (<http://socialcast.com/>).