

SelfInformed

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Member Spotlight

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New Trends, Software, and Hardware to Improve Your Small Business

Small business owners have always needed drive and dedication in order to see their business ventures succeed. However, since the global pandemic that hit the world back in 2020, the working economy has evolved and adapted to circumstances, and small businesses were no exception.

New technological trends and business practices have emerged in the last two years, many of which can significantly benefit small business owners. Unfortunately, many small business owners are not implementing the new trends and tools made available to them.

Remote Operations

While 2020 saw a massive portion of the workforce completing their tasks from home rather than an office, the idea of decentralizing operations was already growing in popularity. Many companies had begun transitioning from expensive offices to remote work and communications beforehand, and millions more followed suit at the beginning of the pandemic. Countless businesses, large and small, were able to 'keep their doors open' through the aid of online tools and software.

Digital tools and programs, such as Zoom and Google Teams, were able to help small businesses worldwide with their video chatting capabilities. Programs like Zoom made keeping in touch and holding meetings easier while supporting excellent business communications. Millions of small business owners also came to rely on cloud-based sharing and data programs that allowed employees to share information, work, and documents seamlessly.

As the world continues to adapt to life post-pandemic, some employers have opted to have their employees return to their offices. Other companies have adopted a hybrid practice of only having a handful of their workforce return to their offices while keeping other employees working remotely.

There are also the businesses that found that cutting out the expense of having an office, or unnecessary storefront helped them significantly, allowing them to adopt decentralized operations permanently.

Technological Customer Relations

With a solid portion of the workforce operating remotely, the growth of online client interactions was to be expected. Larger businesses could adopt online business practices easily, while some small business owners struggled to make the shift as quickly. Small businesses across the country were adopting less personal customer contact, such as email or online chats, but this was not the best option for some companies.

Many small business owners, especially those in sales, knew the necessity of speaking to their customers face to face. Implementing video connections with clients helped keep countless small businesses from going under.

Tech companies and programs began popping up to meet the economy's demand. The program **Loom** allows small business employees to share their screens and share recorded videos with clients or their co-workers easily. Programs like Loom help a small business add a personal touch to client interactions.

Online client transactions became simpler during the pandemic as well. More technologically advanced websites and online assistance improved user experiences, which helped maintain client bases for businesses. Millions of transactions for goods and services also moved over to apps like Venmo, PayPal, and Cash App, which are easily accessible to everyone.

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Keep in mind that the more user-friendly your business' online practices and operations are, the more likely your customers will remain loyal to your company.

Automated Tasks and Artificial Intelligence

Small business owners who implement automation practices through their companies know that the list of benefits is a lengthy one. Automated tech can show higher productivity rates, streamlined compliance, and more in-depth financial insight while saving your business money.

Artificial Intelligence, or A.I., is another digital tool aiding small business owners. By adopting artificial intelligence programs and practices, companies can automatically complete a variety of repetitive tasks. A.I. can assist in automated responses to customers' frequently asked questions and collect crucial customer data entries.

As the implementations of A.I. increase exponentially, small business owners who adopt these practices now will be ahead of the curve. Artificial Intelligence also helps employees focus on their work, which promotes efficiency and profits.

Another type of automation that can be implemented into your small business is outsourcing clerical tasks to professionals outside of your company. Instead of using a software program for payroll, timesheets, and human resource needs, you can hire out the tasks to freelance professionals or payroll companies.

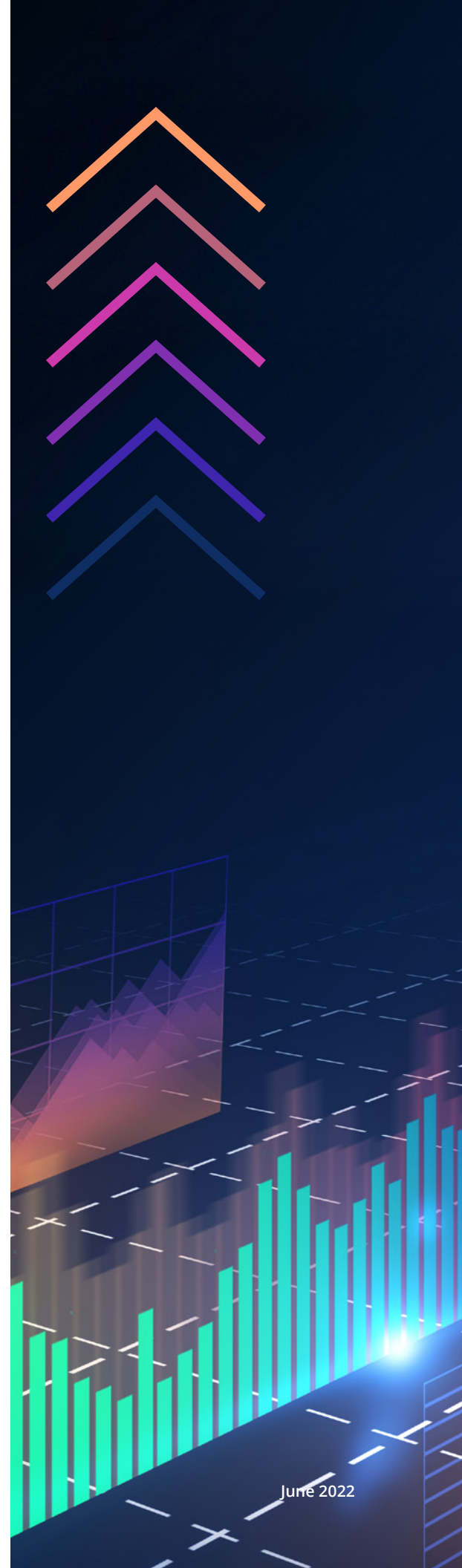
A significant benefit of outsourcing is that it typically costs between 30% to 40% less than hiring a full-time employee to do the job within your small business.

Online Advertising

With society's ever-growing technological advances, a small business' only presence is more vital than ever. The majority of the world shop online, especially with the pandemic, making the internet a prime location to pursue sales. However, as expansive as the internet may be, the number of advertisements and business promotions online has made the market overly saturated.

Small business owners should consider hiring a marketing professional to assist in an SEO campaign, which can help generate online clicks, sales, and revenue. Companies, large and small, are investing more every year into online marketing and promotion as a means to drive business.

You can also use your business' online presence to keep your current customers informed on your company's news and updates. The fastest way to inform customers of a sale, an event, or business change is through social media and emailing lists.



Utilizing Software Integration

As your small business grows, so does your need for technology integration. Single software programs are great when you need one specific task completed. However, if your small business has multiple channels that need to be addressed, software integration is an ideal option.

Software integration has made partnering software programs achieve high levels of efficiency when they work together. The software integration process is when multiple software programs are linked together to create a single, unified system. These software programs can communicate your business' information and client data across all platforms.

Instead of needing to open one program for information and then open another to cross-check it, the software would combine them. With your information shared across all the software, the accuracy of your business records will be increased.

Programs such as **Quickbooks** have integrated their software with many other programs to be more versatile and to meet a business' needs better. When you partner Quickbooks with programs like Paychex, Fundbox, Hubdoc, Certify, and TSheets, you can seamlessly operate your bill payments, employee timecards, payroll, and expense management.

Increased Cybersecurity

As technology evolves, so does cybercrime. Cyber security is vital for any business that needs to protect themselves, their clients, and their businesses while online. Cyberattacks on your business can result in hackers having access to your financial records, your personal information, as well as the private information of your employees and clients.

If you own a small business that needs to collect your customers' data, such as their driver's license number, social security number, email, phone number, address, credit score, or bank account, then an investment in a cyber security system would be beneficial. If your online business information is hacked, it not only costs you damages, it also will be costly on your reputation. Customers are less likely to do business with a company that has been cyberattacked.

In order to protect you and your clients, investing in cyber security is a must. While online programs can be highly effective in streamlining tasks for your business, information kept in the digital cloud is susceptible to hacking and theft.

Steps your small business can take to promote cyber security are:

- Make sure all your company software is caught up with their manufacturer updates
- Maintain passwords on all programs and update the passwords regularly
- Invest in encryption software for online transactions
- Train your employees to watch out for online scams and malware
- Invest in a physical security system for your business' location, therefore protecting yourself from stolen computers and hard drives
- Consider hiring an I.T. expert for consultations and expertise
- Invest in cyber insurance for your business if you are a victim of a security breach



Evolution of the Job Market

Currently, in 2022, the job market is filled with ample employment opportunities, allowing those in the market for employment the freedom to choose which company is the most ideal for them. You may find yourself competing with other businesses when it comes to hiring new, quality employees.

Also, it is worth noting that with advances in technology comes better connections for freelance workers. Although freelance and independent contractor work is not for everyone, many people are choosing this career path over a typical employment option.

Finding ways for your small business to stand out in the employment market may seem daunting, but there are several key ways that you can be more appealing to prospective employees:

- Implement changes to your business model that would allow for a more flexible working schedule
- Offer suitable health insurance and other benefits
- Take steps to improve the cultural climate of your company's work environment
- Offer rewards and recognition to employees who excel in their positions
- Consider offering remote working options

To learn more about new trends and software that can help your small business, contact the experts at **NASE**. Our licensed professionals will be happy to answer any questions you have.

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Member Benefits

Visit [NASE.org](https://www.nase.org) to learn more about the following benefits!



NASE Partners with Payanywhere for \$4,000 June Growth Grant

Payments Solutions Company Poised to Help Small Business Owners

The National Association for the Self-Employed (NASE), the nation's leading advocate and resource for the self-employed and micro-business community, and Payanywhere are proud to announce the sponsorship of the **June \$4,000 Growth Grant** designed to help small businesses grow and expand.

"Payanywhere has always focused on empowering small business owners by giving them the tools they need to compete with their larger competitors," said Jim Parkinson, Chief Experience Officer of North American Bancard, parent company to Payanywhere. "That's why partnering with NASE on a Growth Grant initiative is so important to us — we know that when you're self-employed, you need as many people in your corner as possible. Our hope is that by empowering the livelihoods of small business owners with the best payments experience possible, we can make a larger difference in the world."

An all-in-one hardware-software solution, **Payanywhere** is designed to offer you and your customers maximum payments flexibility, allowing you to accept nearly any payment method at your business, on the go, and online.

- Traditional magstripe payments.
- EMV chip cards.
- Contactless payments like Apple Pay and Samsung Pay.
- Orders made over the phone or through the mail.

Use a Payanywhere Smart Device to accept payments in or around your store or wherever your business takes you. You can even transform your own smartphone or tablet into a portable point of sale solution with a Payanywhere Bluetooth Credit Card Reader. Get paid with one-time or recurring invoices that your customers pay online while choosing from pay as you go or custom pricing with Same Day or Next Day Funding to keep your cash flowing.

The Payanywhere app and secure, online merchant portal (Payments Hub) level the playing field for small to mid-sized business owners like you who are trying to keep pace with larger competitors. Generate customizable reports to help you make data-driven decisions to increase your profits, all while getting the tools you need to manage your customers, employees, inventory, and chargebacks more effectively.

To get started, simply create your **account**, download and install the Payanywhere app, and pick the hardware and pricing that suits your business best.



SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH GRANTS

Sponsored by Dell Technologies

Dell Technologies is supporting small business growth by sponsoring the July 2022 **NASE Growth Grant**.

New!



Member Benefits

Visit [NASE.org](https://www.nase.org) to learn more about the following benefits!

crowdspring

Brand Studio creates free branded templates in seconds from a website or existing logo. We created Brand Studio to help businesses, nonprofits, and solopreneurs create stronger and more memorable branding.

This product is positioned between Canva and crowdspring's custom design services. It works like Canva, but instead of forcing businesses to create their own designs, it automatically creates the most needed designs using their branding.

[Check it Out](#)



The better way to grow your local business!

Easy-to-use tools to get more customers and give them a better experience, so you can stay focused on what you do best.

Podium is the easiest way to improve your online reputation, connect with clients, and make your team more efficient, so you can deliver a better client experience—every time.

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OneDayDecisions.com is the only online entity that conveniently resolves dollar-based disputes from anywhere, in a legally binding manner, in as little as one day, with no litigation, faster payments, higher collection amounts, easier terms and no credit damage.

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Insuring Self-Employment

Mabelyn Lopez is the Owner and Operator of **4 Insurance LLC** located in Lynn, Massachusetts. Mabelyn is a first-generation American with deep roots and love for the Dominican Republic where her family immigrated from. Her father received his masters in Engineering and her mother was a business owner for over 35 years. It's through their examples that she continues the tradition of entrepreneurship and a commitment to give back to her community. 4 Insurance LLC offers many types of personal and business insurance as well as a variety of industry insurance options. Their ability to provide services in various languages allows them to meet community needs and truly understand their unique situations.

Member Spotlight

When and why did you join the NASE?

I became a member of NASE in June 2021 initially because I was excited about the business-to-business opportunity as well as accessing resources for financial assistance and financial education. I also appreciate the one stop nature of NASE that provides discounts, payroll services, tech information and so much more. This feature has saved me months of research. NASE is a convenient way and time saver for both start up and seasoned businesses.

What inspired you to enter the field you are in?

When I think about this question, I laugh to myself because it is an ironic twist of fate. I happened upon this industry by going into my agent's office to pay my car insurance. He asked me if I spoke Spanish, I said yes and then he offered me a job. I took the job and never looked back. As a bilingual professional I am blessed and honored to provide education and services to Spanish speaking individuals and business owners.

When and why did you start your business?

My inspiration to start my own agency was my passion for helping my clients. A restaurant owner approached me about his insurance. He, along with his 4 brothers, own 4 Mexican Restaurants. Reviewing his policies, I quickly noticed he didn't have Liquor Liability. I asked him if maybe he had a separate policy and he was not sure. I called his agent at the time to ask if there was a separate policy. The agent informed me the policy had cancelled two years prior. The agency tried communicating with the client, but the language barrier was an issue. In being able to speak with the owner, I was able to determine that 40% of the restaurant's revenue came from liquor sales. That was a huge exposure that had no coverage just because there wasn't an agent able to communicate with the client. I started my business in 2021 because I found that the average person is not educated enough about insurance. My goal is to change the misconception about insurance being a "waste of money" or "insurance carriers are thieves."



My goal is to change the misconception about insurance being a "waste of money"

Insurance is meant to protect your personal and business assets.

How do you market your business?

The main ways I market my business are social media and word of mouth through networking.

What challenges have you faced in your business?

The biggest challenge I faced was lack of Capital after investing in everything I needed to create a strong foundation for my agency. I overcame this by joining networking groups which aided in building business relationships and referral resources. I also learned to utilize local marketing and advertising and I added a self quoting platform on my webpage to allow consumers to generate their own quotes. I also collaborated with the SBA and a local financial institution called Mill Cities Community Investments.

Do you have any employees?

I am planning to hire a full-time employee by the end of the year.

Member Spotlight

What's your schedule like, what's a typical day for you?

As a new business my schedule is quite fluid. I begin Networking from 7:00 a.m. until the office opens at 9:00 am. My days consist of checking emails, calling clients, servicing clients, reviewing and remarketing upcoming renewals. While the office officially closes at 5:00 pm, I normally continue to work long after.



What's the best thing about being self-employed?

Being able to offer products and services that competitors may not have thought of

What's the best compliment you've ever received from a client?

The best compliment I ever received was "You made my insurance life so much easier and have taught me more about insurance than I ever knew". I get a sense of pride when I am able to help people and I love what I do.

What's the most important piece of advice you would give to someone starting their own business?

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Recognize your strengths and weaknesses. Start with a simple business plan and grow as needed.

Which NASE member benefit is most important to you?

The all-around resource that NASE provides its members is incomparable to other memberships. Being able to ask a professional about specific laws, taxes, accounting, health benefits is so imperative to start-up businesses. There is so much to learn as a start-up and the education provided by NASE is appreciated.

Any other information you would like to share?

4 Insurance LLC offers a range of insurance products for all individuals and businesses. From Auto, Home, Condo, Renters, to Malpractice, Directors & Officers, Professional Liability for all industries, Truckers, Workers Compensation, General Liability, Pet Insurance and Pet Health. We are a one stop agency that also Networks heavily and provides great referral sources for professionals in all industries such as Employee Benefits, Key Man Insurance, Life Insurance, Real Estate Attorney, Mortgage Lenders, Commercial Lenders, etc. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. Call: 855-322-4509 or Email: quote@4insurancellc.com



Digital Tools Key to Self-Employed and Small Business Growth

It is clear from the data, small businesses are still in recovery mode from the Covid-19 pandemic. It fundamentally altered not just every aspect of life, but also forced small businesses to adapt to a new landscape in order to survive.

The past two years, we have seen acceleration in small businesses utilizing and leveraging digital commerce in an exciting new way. Businesses had to quickly pivot and develop new ways to engage with their customers and clients, primarily online or with the support of digital tools. And as the pandemic wanes, the demand for digital services shows no signs of slowing down.

For many business owners, they were comfortable with digital payment tools and accounting software. But many didn't have an "online" store or presence to connect with their customers. They had to expand, quickly, their toolbox of resources, including figuring out how to advertise and engage with customers online. We know in a post pandemic world, small businesses have come to rely on these tools and it will be harder to successfully run a business without them.

Facebook's 2021 [Global State of Small Business Report](#), of which the National Association for the Self-Employed

supported through our partnership with Small Business Roundtable, found that small and medium sized businesses (SMBs) have steadily increased their use of digital tools for advertising and selling their goods and services. The State of Small Business Report also indicated that many businesses feel pressure to maintain digital services.

Given the growing use of digital technology in business and consumer environments, improving digital engagement among small businesses may have a significant impact on future growth for both businesses and the larger economy. We need to ensure that small business owners benefit from the improvements and expansion of the many ways digital tools will continue to evolve over time.

The NASE believes strongly that we must work in coordination with our legislative partners and advocates to ensure access to digital tools for small business remains a priority and we look forward to working with our partners across the policy and political spectrum to continue to advocate for digital tools and small business investment.

Katie Vlietstra is NASE's Vice President for Government Relations and Public Affairs; You can contact her at kvlietstra@nase.org.