THE RAPID PACE OF TECHNOLOGY CHANGE

If you have been in business for a very long time you have seen an unbelievable change in technology in your company. There was a time when you used a land line telephone, fax machine and general ledger for bookkeeping. If you were a substantial size company then may have had a mainframe computer using punch cards, reels of tape and a lot of printouts.

Listed below are some relevant elements of the timeline in general chronological sequence:

- Landline telephone
- Mainframe computer
- Fax machine
- Mini computer
- Basic Internet
- Desktop PC
- Desktop accounting programs
- Email
- Simple mobile phone
- NAFTA
- Portable computers
- GATT agreement
- Smart phones
- Social media
- Cloud storage
- Cloud based accounting programs
- Tablet computers
- The explosion of on-line shopping
- Wearable computers
- The Internet of Things connecting everything in your business or house
- Personal drones
- Artificial intelligence

The rapid pace of technology is much like getting older. It seems the years just pass by quicker as you age. Technology feels the same. The time from one technology generation to a new one is decreasing at a frightening rate.

We used to say jokingly in the technology business
“ If you are buying a new PC get the fastest one you can as it will be obsolete in a year”

It turns out that it is not a joke. The pace of technology is yielding faster Internet speeds, smaller devices, more computing power. On the geographic front four things have happened. The world is smaller, information is in real time, free trade agreements have made impacted the cost structure and on-line shopping has changed the landscape forever.
How does this impact business? Some industries are seeing rapid change as with the demise of many of the big box stores in favor of on-line shopping. If you’re in any form of retail, you have seen the impact of social media and Internet advertising changing the way you do business.

But what if you are a contractor, job shop, builder, small lot/custom manufacturer? You are facing a difficult problem. It is so easy to get comfortable with your current situation until suddenly you realize that your competitors have passed you by. The difference is probably one or more of the following:

- Use of the latest in technology and software
- Movement to cloud based solutions
- Business processes streamlined for maximum efficiency
- Real time monitoring of their business through business automation

The latest technology allows business owners to stay in touch with their employees, vendors and customers in a more efficient manner. A good Internet presence keeps them at the top of the pecking order when new customers are looking for service or a supplier. The best business owners are aggressive instead of waiting for the telephone to ring or the email to hit their inbox.

Even with the latest in technology you can still suffer low profitability or losses unless the business processes that drive the information in your business are optimized for maximum efficiency. Manual paperwork, duplication of services, not making informed decisions are all contributors to potential problems in your business.

**Technology cannot overcome bad information**

**GIGO – Garbage In Garbage Out**

Technology also cannot overcome poor business practices. You must get your “house in order” before you can fully take advantage of the latest in technology.

The most progressive and profitable businesses not only have their business processes streamlined and are using the latest in technology but have gone to the next level, business automation. Their information is real time and the data has the least possible touches to save support staff cost and reduce human error.

No one can forecast with certainty what the next 10 years will look like. But it is safe to say that the pace of technology change will be more rapid than in the past. Don’t let it pass you by!