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March 26, 2017 9 min read Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur Contributors are their own. You're reading Entrepreneur Middle East, an international franchise of Entrepreneur Media. Being an entrepreneur is not easy. You have to wear many hats – CEO, finance, marketing, sales, admin, IT – and multitask your way through the different roles, constantly trying to grow and grow your young business. Thankfully the advent of business applications is to bring systems and solutions that were once reserved for large organizations right into the palm of their hands. Do you need to plan your week, schedule work for your teams, map your cash flow? There's an app for that. In fact, as we approach a decade since the launch of Apple's App Store – followed a few years later by the Android/Google equivalent – it's fair to say there's an app for everything. The Enterprise app market was estimated to be worth about \$150 billion in 2015, but is projected to nearly double in size, to about \$290 billion, by 2024. And all entrepreneurs are resorting to business apps to keep their businesses running smoothly. A 2015 survey found that a third of SMEs had used more than five apps in the previous year for everything from documentation and workflow to electronic signature of contracts and work orders. Let's look at seven standout apps to help you maintain and grow your business—no matter what hat you're wearing.1. The best business app for... better communication As an entrepreneur, it is just as important to keep in touch with other members of your team as difficult. Especially in the modern business world where many startups – and larger companies – operate remotely, with the help of staff and freelancers who may be based anywhere in the world. What's more, as entrepreneurs are often on the go rather than chained to your desk, you need a line of communication with colleagues that is all-inclusive and easy to understand. Fortunately, there is such a platform – and it is called Slack. Slack enables organized and searchable communication channels sorted by type – projects, pitches, finance, HR – so that anyone who needs information about a particular business function can access it quickly and easily. Communication can be done via instant or private message, and links and attachments are easily shared via a drag-and-drop system. Slack has won high praise in the industry, with some experts even claiming the platform could spell the end of email altogether. Awards like Best Startup of the Year at this year's TechCrunch Crunchies Awards go some way to backing up such claims.2. The best business app for... Increasing Sales Organization is important at every level of your business, but when it comes to sales it can mean the difference between sealing the deal and watching it sail on off. As any seller knows, few companies are ready to buy at the first point of contact. In fact, according to a Marketing Donut survey last year, almost thirds thirds leads will not be ready to confirm a purchase for at least three months, with 20% needing over a year. Pair this with research from Inside Sales that found that when companies are ready to buy, up to half go with the seller they first spoke to and it's clear that you need to keep track of your sales pipeline at all times. Nowadays there are several large Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems to help you. One that continues to improve with each iteration is Zoho CRM. Zoho gives you all the information you might need on your customers and prospects – contact information, sales notes, last contact, next contact, and so on – wherever you are, on any device. And of course, it integrates really well with other Zoho apps such as SalesIQ, website tracking software and analytics in an easy-to-use platform.3. The best business app for... Effective Marketing Staying on top of your sales pipeline is important, but if you don't communicate your message to your audience effectively then you have nothing going on in the first place. That's where marketing comes in. Marketing is a feature that is often overlooked by entrepreneurs. Partly because they focus their efforts on taking care of the customers they already have. Plus it can be time consuming and difficult. This proved by a 2016 survey that found that nearly half of small business owners are unsure if they market effectively – with 14% admitting they are not doing enough. But now it's much easier thanks to innovative applications like Buffer – which let you drive marketing content across a range of platforms in minutes. The buffer brings together all your social accounts – Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and more – and allows for easy scheduling of posts across all channels, whether you're in the office or on the road. The app's Pablo feature also enables the creation of original marketing content in just a few clicks. Engagement can then be analyzed and monitored from an online dashboard or mobile app.4. The best business app for... improved HR function Managing the HR function in a small and growing business is notoriously difficult: both finding the right hire – which 36% of SMEs admitted to finding difficult in a recent Conference Genie survey – and managing existing staff alongside the new starters. Again, there is an app. Step forward BambooHR, an award-winning HR platform that makes life easier for businesses of all sizes. Available through an online portal and mobile app, BambooHR helps companies find high-calibre candidates and track, evaluate and share applicant information easily throughout the business. When it comes to managing current staff, both managers and individual employees can access a customizable and automated online portal where they can track leave, training, benefits, and salaries – and manage their personnel information. The app's potential to save entrepreneurs time and money is huge, and everything from your your device, if you select.5. The best business app for... Managing your time As an entrepreneur, time is your most valuable resource. When you're dragged in so many directions through the workday – not to mention trying to fit into a family or social life – it feels like there just aren't enough hours in it. Technology can help here too. There isn't an app to actually make the day anymore, but there are plenty that can help you better manage the time you have. One of these is Cal, from the multi-award winning productivity apps company Any.do. Cal lets you view and manage your to-do list and calendar from a handy app – giving you a view of each task that's ahead of you that day. From there, you can create new events and invite contacts to meetings and appointments – split time, dates, and location details in just a few taps.6. The best business app for... taking control of your projects With the entrepreneur's many infamous hats comes a wide range of different projects that need active management and control. For example, a pitch project can involve contacts with a designer, a vendor, and an opportunity. While a customer campaign may require organizing a wide range of in-house colleagues, customers, and external support staff. Managing a variety of project tasks across many different stakeholders with different needs and deadlines is not easy – and certainly not a job for e-mail. A robust solution for project management is required. One of the best out there is Basecamp. Essentially, Basecamp serves as a single port of call for each task your company undertakes. Rather than having work strewn across separate workflows and hidden in inboxes and notepads, basecamp provides everything – to-do lists, purchase orders, invoices, quotes, chat logs, and more – under one roof. By using a centralized portal, everyone in your business and beyond can know where things stand – what has been done and what needs to be done. Such is Basecamp's ability to get companies working more productively to in a recent survey of their customers, nearly 90% of respondents said they had a better grasp of their business since using app.7. The best business app for... stay on top of finances We end up with an app to help entrepreneurs keep track of the lifeblood of their business – cash. Simply bad cash flow – running out of money – is the main reason why startups fail. You need a way to know exactly what funds are coming into your business and what is happening out – both today and in the future. When it comes to managing your business finances, QuickBooks makes the party: quotes, invoices, salaries, expenses, taxes, anything that falls under the umbrella of finance. You can also link it directly to your bank account to make the process fully automated. Plus the quickbooks mobile app gives you a picture of your company's cash flow at the touch of a button. With so many great features, there is a reason why it is the world's number one online accounting software – it allows to stay on top of the economy super easy. None of these apps provide a magical solution. To make it as an entrepreneur you still need a good idea, a good team, bags of hard work and luck. But the margin between success and failure is sometimes good, so you need all the help you can get to manage your business smoothly and keep things under control. Business apps like the ones shown in this article can make the difference. Related: Five Signs That You Have a Good Business Idea Idea

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