

In the Zone with MWEB Entrepreneur: Prioritise tech; cut overheads

Running your own business can be challenging at the best of times, not to mention financially draining. But there are ways to cut costs, and all you really need is a fast, reliable Internet connection.



On the back of some extensive research, a recent [study released in Australia by Telstra](#) showed that financially savvy small businesses are waking up to the reality of reduced overheads, and one way forward is to focus on technology to reduce costs.

For more than half of these growing businesses, the increasing cost of doing business was pointed out as a key frustration, and the majority of them identified investing in updated technology as a priority for the year ahead, with a view to reducing costs.

[Another study in the US](#), albeit not as recent, also pointed to the fact that entrepreneurs could save "big money" with broadband service.

(Handy Interactive Website - [START-UP SAVINGS: 10 ways entrepreneurs can save money through broadband internet](#))

Go solo and save

The US study, conducted by the Internet Innovation Alliance and the Small Business and Entrepreneurship council, goes on to claim that solo entrepreneurs can save more than R160,000 in their first year by using broadband-based services like printing and logo design, instead of traditional vendors. Start-ups can also save more than R10,000 in travel costs by using video conferencing instead, and R61,000 a year by working from home with a broadband connection instead of renting office space.

The study also calculates significant savings by using online accounting services ([Wave Accounting](#) comes highly recommended) and online website design and hosting. This accounts for a year's broadband subscription service at R4,900 in the US.

In South Africa, a similar [ADSL subscription with MWEB](#) would cost around R4,068 (using the 1 Mbps premium uncapped ADSL model at R339 per month, including data and line rental, but excluding voice line rental).

If you're following the trend here, then yes, one of the easiest ways to reduce your overheads, as a small business, is to tap into broadband as well as the latest available technology - a fairly simple and (eventually) cost-effective solution.

So without further ado, here are a few tips to help you chip away at those expenses:

5 online tools & resources to save entrepreneurs money (Source: [CFED](#))

1. WordPress

In the modern era, a functional website is an essential part of establishing a professional business identity. While it can cost thousands of dollars to design a high-end e-commerce website, just about anyone can use [WordPress](#) to create a beautiful website or blog at a minimal cost. Registration is free, and the initial process is simple and straightforward, allowing users to choose from an array of themes and options to customize a website's look and functionality. You'll find all



of the support you need to get started on the WordPress website, including information on choosing hosting and advanced strategies that enable even a novice to create an online home for an entrepreneurial venture.

2. Google Voice

Communication is a basic concern for any business entity, and [Google Voice](#) provides a comprehensive free solution for transforming the capabilities of an existing personal line without taking on the additional expense of a business phone. After registering with Google Voice, a unique phone number is assigned that can be used and distributed as a professional contact. Incoming calls are then forwarded to whichever line is chosen (you can use your home number or a cell phone), allowing the user to set preferences for personalized greetings, voice mail forwarding, call screening and more. There are even options for sending SMS to email, conferencing in multiple callers and low-cost international rates.

3. FreshBooks

Accounting and invoicing can be extremely expensive to outsource, as well as intimidating and time-consuming to tackle on your own, making [FreshBooks](#) cloud accounting a welcome lifeline for low-income entrepreneurs. With a free basic version to help get started (with up to three clients) and inexpensive monthly fees for a complement of professional features, FreshBooks is designed to make it simple for businesses to save time billing, get paid faster, record expenses and keep time sheets for individual projects. From providing revealing reports that demonstrate ways to be more financially efficient, to supplying records for everything you need at income tax time, FreshBooks is a time-saving tool for keeping a personal business financially fit.

4. Nolo

Starting a venture, whether it's a small business or charitable non-profit, requires legal expertise to ensure that best interests are protected. [Nolo](#) is a comprehensive source that can potentially save startups thousands in legal fees, providing a library of expert-level advice and do-it-yourself instructions on everything from forming an LLC and registering a business name, to insights on businesses taxes, contracts, and litigation. Beyond a huge database of legal topics, Nolo supplies access to the gamut of necessary forms, documents and reference material, as well as a directory of law professionals available for consultation.

5. oDesk

When hiring a human resources representative or paying expensive head-hunters is out of the question, [oDesk](#) is a powerful tool to help you locate the staff needed to grow a business. oDesk not only helps low-income entrepreneurs connect with service providers through free online job posting, but also features a qualified database of top freelancers working in everything from customer service and sales, to administrative and Web development. With features that help you contract employees on a need-basis, monitor workflow from remote locations, and make safe, direct payments, an independent business can get the high-quality support it needs on its own terms without an additional investment of resources.

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