

Some Personal Reviews of Home-Working Business Support software

- **On-line working**

- **Office 365** - Peter Franklin and Ian Campbell have used Microsoft Office 365 for several years. It is a cloud-based subscription service that for the business option costs less than £10 per person per month and includes Outlook (mail, calendar, contacts, etc.) Excel (spread sheets), Word (word processing), PowerPoint (slide creation), OneNote (note taking/web clipping) and Teams (web meetings and team collaboration). We see this as great way of getting started in the On-Line Business World as it covers all the basic business support requirements without needing much set up or administrative support. If using for business, make sure you sign up for the business licence since using a personal licence for business would be in breach of Microsoft's licence conditions. Having the business licence brings with it Microsoft's excellent online and telephone technical support which has proven itself to us over the years.
- **ToDo** – Ian Campbell has used Microsoft ToDo for many years, and Peter Franklin became an enthusiastic user in 2019. Originally it was Wunderlist (Managing ToDo Lists). They both prefer it to other standalone ToDo List software as it is integrated with many other Office 365 applications – and is available on all devices (PC, IPAD,Phone)

- **On-line meetings**

- **Zoom** – Peter Franklin has experience of Zoom both for business meetings of 6-10 people (paid for), and personal meetings of 2-3 (free). The paid for platform is extremely stable with high quality video and audio, and screen sharing. It also enables participants to raise a hand when they want to make a point which helps manage larger meetings. Highly competitive pricing which has now been matched by the established players Webex and GoToMeeting.
- **GoToMeeting** – Peter Franklin has used GoToMeeting for many years. Backed by Citrix, an IT giant, this has proven to be a highly stable platform hosting meetings up to 25 people. Very good quality audio and video. New kid on the block Zoom – seems to have the edge on all the features and the price competitiveness today.
- **WebEx** – was the corporate market leader offering a highly stable platform and in meeting controls such as hand raising. However, was much more expensive than other options for small businesses. They have now changed pricing policy and compete with Gotomeeting and Zoom.
- **Skype** – was the original alternative to international land-line calls which then added video. Never managed to be a stable platform with audio and video issues commonplace – but it was free. They were then bought by Microsoft, who then integrated it with Office 365 and called it Lync – which has now become the video-conferencing functionality of Teams. The free version of Skype still exists but can only handle limited participants, really geared for 1 to 1, and still suffers from

reliability issues.

- **TEAMS** - If you have Office 365, this is a free service. You can run multi-person video calls but all participants need to have a Microsoft account (which can be obtained for free). It is very good for collaborating on projects since you can set up separate channels with different participants for each project and store shared documents in each channel. What you don't get is integration with low cost local dial-in from anywhere in the world so participants have to use VOIP

- **Note Taking**

- **Evernote** – Peter Franklin is a long-time user of Evernote. Whilst there is free version for a small annual charge you can upgrade to a premium version which allows you to integrate with Outlook so you can take notes in a meeting and then send it to yourself for forwarding to attendees. The premium version makes notes available on both the desktop and mobile phone. The iPhone app allows you to scan any document into Evernote using the phone's camera. Evernote has very powerful text search facilities for retrieving notes you may have filed away some time ago.
- **OneNote** – Ian Campbell is a long-term user of OneNote, the Microsoft Note taking Solution. OneNote synchronises across Windows and iOS devices and as with Teams is well integrated with the Microsoft Office product portfolio, even allowing you to make notes on Word documents and PowerPoint slides. OneNote Notebooks can be shared with multiple users to support collaboration with co-workers or family and can capture all types of media in them e.g. web clippings, audio files, video files and most of the common business application file types, e.g. PDF, JPG, etc.

- **Expense tracking**

- **BizXpensTrkr** - Peter Franklin and Ian Campbell have used BizXpensTrkr an App for the iPhone for tracking and reporting Expenses, Mileage and Time for several years and find that it is an easy way of tracking key business dimensions for internal cost control or client charging.

- **Meeting facilitation/task management**

- **Mind Manager**

MindManager is the market leader in mind-mapping software. During a meeting it can be useful to capture the conversation and ideas in a spatial diagram with each node representing an area of discussion. A mind-map is ideal for this and MindManager can provide simple mind maps and a whole host of graphical templates e.g. SWOT analysis for particular forms of discussion. Peter Franklin has used mind mapping software to facilitate both face to face and on-line meetings very successfully over the years.

The software is also excellent for project planning. The tasks that need to be undertaken can be brainstormed in a mind-map and then at a click of a button transformed into a project plan complete with Gantt chart.

- **Diary Management**

- Doodle. This is a web-based service for enabling people to indicate when they are available for a meeting. It is available as either a free version with adverts or a paid for one without. It can also be used for quick polls