



FCS TECH TALK

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THE HIDDEN VALUE OF FAST INTERNET FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

For most small businesses, the internet is as essential as electricity. It powers day-to-day communication, supports cloud-based tools, connects teams to customers, and drives everything from sales to service delivery. Yet many businesses underestimate just how critical internet speed is to their success. They put up with sluggish connections, dropped video calls, and slow payment processing, not realizing that these issues cost far more than a slightly higher monthly bill from their internet provider.

A reliable, high-speed internet connection isn't just about convenience — it's about competitiveness. In today's fast-paced digital economy, slow internet can quietly eat into productivity, frustrate customers, and even limit opportunities for growth.

How Slow Internet Hurts Small Businesses

When your internet is slow, the impact is felt everywhere, often in ways that aren't immediately obvious. Employees lose valuable minutes (or hours) waiting for files to upload or download. Cloud-based software lags, leaving staff frustrated and less productive. Customer-facing applications like websites or point-of-sale systems stutter, creating the impression of an unprofessional or outdated business.

Video conferencing has become the lifeblood of many small businesses, whether for client meetings, vendor discussions, or internal collaboration. Poor connections that freeze or drop during calls don't just slow down conversations — they affect how your business is perceived. Clients and partners expect smooth, reliable communication, and interruptions can damage credibility.

Beyond day-to-day operations, slow internet can also hold businesses back from adopting new technologies. Cloud hosted applications, Software Updates and Backups or Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platforms often rely on strong bandwidth. If your speeds can't support them, you may miss out on innovations that competitors are already taking advantage of.

The Hidden Costs of Poor Connectivity

Many small businesses accept mediocre internet service because they want to avoid higher monthly bills. But the truth is that slow internet comes with hidden costs that add up quickly.

When employees waste time waiting on lagging systems, productivity drops. Over the course of weeks or months, that wasted time translates into lost revenue. If a sales team spends just 10 minutes a day fighting slow connections, that's nearly an hour per week — multiplied across employees, the cost becomes significant.

Customer satisfaction is another area where slow speeds can quietly drain revenue. If a retail store's point-of-sale system takes too long to process, some customers may abandon purchases. If a consulting firm struggles with glitchy video calls, potential clients may question their professionalism and choose competitors. In industries where reputation and efficiency matter, internet problems can directly affect growth.

Why Speeds Vary — And What You Can Do About It

Not all slow internet is caused by your service provider. In fact, many small businesses experience poor speeds because of issues inside their own networks. Outdated routers, underpowered Wi-Fi systems, or even poor physical placement of wireless access points can create bottlenecks.

Network congestion is another common culprit. When multiple employees are streaming video, uploading large files, or running bandwidth-hungry applications at the same time, the entire office can slow to a crawl.

Without proper network management in place, critical tasks like video conferencing or payment processing get stuck competing with less important traffic. Even your connection type matters. Older copper-based connections (DSL or traditional cable) can struggle to deliver consistent speeds, especially in peak usage times.

Newer fiber-optic connections offer far greater bandwidth and reliability, but not all areas have access yet.

Practical Steps to Improve Internet Speeds

The first step in addressing slow internet is understanding what you're actually getting. This is where FCS can help! We can run a speed test and comparing it against the speeds your provider promises will show whether the problem lies with the service itself or with your internal network.

If your speeds are consistently below what you're paying for, contacting your internet service provider (ISP) may be necessary. In many cases, businesses are eligible for higher-speed packages or fiber upgrades that can significantly improve performance. It's often worth exploring whether your provider has updated technology available in your area. We can help run your business address across all available providers in your area and get you the best speeds and price possible.

Inside your office, upgrading equipment can make a dramatic difference. Replacing outdated consumer-grade routers with business-class networking gear ensures that your hardware can keep up with modern demands. Installing multiple wireless access points can eliminate dead zones and ensure consistent coverage across your space. Setting up traffic management, sometimes called Quality of Service (QoS), allows your network to prioritize essential tasks — for example, ensuring video calls always get bandwidth before background software updates.

Our team can perform a full network assessment, identify bottlenecks, and determine whether the problem is bandwidth-related or equipment-related. Often, businesses discover that they don't need to pay for the most expensive internet package — they simply need a smarter, more efficient setup.

Why Faster Internet is an Investment, not a Cost

It's easy to look at internet bills as just another expense.

But when you consider the productivity gains, improved customer experience, and ability to adopt new technology, fast internet is better understood as an investment. A smoother, more efficient workflow helps employees accomplish more each day. Better customer experiences build loyalty and trust. And with reliable bandwidth, your business can embrace new tools that make you more competitive in your market.

For small businesses especially, where every resource matters, reliable high-speed internet can be the difference between struggling to keep up and staying ahead of the curve.

The Bottom Line

Internet speed isn't just a technical detail — it's a cornerstone of modern business success. From employee productivity and customer satisfaction to the ability to adopt future-ready tools, the quality of your connection plays a bigger role than most owners realize.

If your business has been settling for slow or inconsistent internet, now is the time to reevaluate. Whether it means upgrading your plan, modernizing your equipment, or working with FCS to optimize your network, improving your internet speed can unlock efficiency, reduce frustration, and position your business for long-term growth.

In the digital world, slow isn't just inconvenient — it's costly. The good news is that with the right strategy, faster, more reliable internet is within reach for every small business.





THIS MONTH'S PRODUCT
SPOTLIGHT

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VIDEO!



MICROSOFT
365 MONITORING

24/7 ACCOUNT
MONITORING



IMMEDIATE ALERTS



ACCOUNT
REMEDiation



STOP ACCOUNT
TAKEOVERS



5 SIMPLE WAYS TO KEEP YOUR BUSINESS DATA
CLEAN

Data is everywhere, and if you are not utilizing it to your advantage, you are missing out. It is found in emails, customer profiles, inventory systems, or basically throughout your entire workflow.

But relying on outdated or inaccurate information can lead to confusion, slow down your team, and ultimately cost you a lot of money.

With these simple steps, you can keep everything clean and running smoothly.

1. Decide What Info Actually Matters

Identify the key data that keeps your business running smoothly, like customer contacts, order details, or payment terms. Then, create simple guidelines your team can easily follow.

2. Show Your Team the Right Way to Do It

Most data errors occur when people aren't sure what's expected of them. Rather than overwhelming your team with lengthy manuals, provide a simple, clear guide. It makes a big difference in maintaining consistency.

3. Tidy Things Up Often

Don't wait too long to clean up your data. A quick monthly review helps you spot duplicates, fix mistakes, and update old info.

4. Use Smart Tools to Prevent Errors

Use form validations so emails, dates, and numbers follow the right format. Then make certain fields required, like phone numbers or email addresses. If your CRM allows it, set up automatic checks for common errors.

5. Keep Your Documentation Updated

Things change fast with new systems, tools, and teams. That's why it helps to keep a simple note on where your data comes from, who handles it, and how it should be used.

Don't Forget to Backup Your Data

Better data means smoother work, clearer decisions, and happier customers. But this is all for nothing if your data is lost or corrupted. Ensure this never happens by having a Data Backup designed to securely store all your data so you are protected from loss.



HELPFUL TOOLS BUILT INTO WINDOWS 11

Windows 11 isn't just a refreshed look for Microsoft's operating system — it also comes with a suite of built-in tools that can help small businesses work smarter, faster, and more securely. By taking advantage of these features, you may be able to boost productivity without investing in additional software.

One of the most useful additions is **Snap Layouts**, which makes multitasking much easier. Instead of dragging and resizing windows manually, you can instantly arrange open apps into clean, pre-set layouts. For example, you could keep your email open on one side of the screen while working on a spreadsheet or video call on the other, staying organized without juggling windows.

Virtual Desktops is another helpful feature, giving you the ability to create multiple workspaces for different needs. You might dedicate one desktop to client projects, another to internal work, and a third for personal use. Switching between them is seamless, helping you stay focused and avoid clutter.

Communication is also more streamlined with **Microsoft Teams integration** built directly into the Windows 11 taskbar. With one click, you can start a chat or video meeting, making it easier than ever to connect with coworkers or clients without searching for the Teams app.

Security has been strengthened as well. **Windows Hello** allows secure, password-free sign-ins using facial recognition, fingerprints, or a PIN, which both speeds up login times and reduces password-related risks. In addition, Windows 11 includes enhanced protections against malware, phishing, and ransomware, keeping sensitive business data safer by default.

Taken together, these tools make Windows 11 more than just a cosmetic update — it's a productivity and security upgrade designed for the way modern businesses work. By using what's already built into the system, small businesses can save time, improve collaboration, and better protect their data.

THE PROS AND CONS OF USING AI AT WORK—AND HOW
TO STAY SECURE

Artificial intelligence (AI) has quickly moved from science fiction into the workplace. From drafting emails and analyzing data to automating repetitive tasks, AI-powered tools are reshaping how small businesses operate. But with every opportunity comes risk. While AI can help organizations work faster and smarter, it also brings new challenges around security, privacy, and responsible use.

Understanding both sides of AI is crucial for business leaders deciding how to incorporate these tools into daily operations. Let's look at the benefits, the drawbacks, and the best ways to use AI securely at work.

The Pros of AI in the Workplace

AI offers a range of advantages that can make a meaningful difference for small businesses. One of the biggest is efficiency. AI can automate routine tasks—such as scheduling, data entry, or customer follow-up—freeing up employees to focus on higher-value work. For businesses with limited staff, this time savings can have a direct impact on productivity and growth.

Another benefit is better decision-making. AI tools can process massive amounts of data in seconds, spotting trends and patterns that humans might miss. Whether it's forecasting sales, analyzing customer feedback, or predicting inventory needs, AI can give business owners insights that lead to smarter strategies.

AI can also enhance customer service. Many companies now use chatbots to handle basic inquiries, provide 24/7 support, or direct customers to the right resources. This reduces wait times and ensures customers get faster responses.

Finally, AI supports creativity and collaboration. Writing assistants can help employees overcome "blank page syndrome," while design tools can generate graphics or layouts in minutes. These tools don't replace human creativity but instead act as accelerators, helping teams get from idea to execution more quickly.

The Cons of AI in the Workplace

Despite its promise, AI comes with limitations and risks. One major concern is accuracy. AI tools can produce incorrect or misleading results—often called "hallucinations." If employees rely on AI without verifying information, mistakes could make their way into reports, client communications, or decision-making processes.

There's also the issue of data privacy. Many AI systems require access to sensitive business data to function effectively. Sharing this information without proper safeguards can expose companies to data breaches or compliance violations.

Another drawback is over-reliance. Businesses that depend too heavily on AI risk losing critical human skills, like problem-solving or relationship-building. Employees might also grow frustrated if AI feels like it's replacing their judgment or creativity.

Finally, there are ethical and reputational risks. If AI is used carelessly—for example, generating biased content or mishandling customer data—it could damage a company's reputation and erode trust with clients.

How to Use AI Securely at Work

The key to getting the most out of AI is using it responsibly and securely. Here are some best practices:

- Set clear guidelines. Establish rules for when and how AI can be used. For example, AI might be approved for drafting internal memos but not for sending external client communications without review.
- Protect sensitive data. Avoid entering confidential or proprietary information into public AI tools. Instead, look for enterprise-grade solutions with strong privacy controls.
- Verify outputs. Treat AI-generated content as a first draft, not a finished product. Always review and fact-check results before relying on them.
- Train your team. Educate employees on the strengths and weaknesses of AI, emphasizing both its potential and its limitations.
- Stay compliant. Keep an eye on evolving regulations around AI use, especially in industries with strict data protection requirements.

Final Thoughts

AI has the potential to be a powerful ally for small businesses, boosting productivity, improving decision-making, and helping teams work more creatively. But it's not without risks.

By balancing innovation with security, and by treating AI as a tool rather than a replacement for human judgment, businesses can harness its strengths while avoiding common pitfalls.

Used thoughtfully, AI can be an asset that supports growth, enhances customer service, and strengthens day-to-day operations—all while keeping sensitive data safe.





HOW MICROSOFT PLANNER CAN TRANSFORM THE WAY YOUR TEAM WORKS

In nearly every workplace, projects move quickly and responsibilities overlap. Emails pile up, deadlines shift, and it's not uncommon for important details to get lost in the shuffle. Many businesses rely on spreadsheets or long email chains to manage tasks, but these approaches rarely provide the clarity teams need. The result is missed deadlines, duplicated effort, and frustration. Microsoft Planner offers a solution to this common challenge by giving organizations a central, visual way to keep track of work and ensure everyone stays aligned.

What is Microsoft Planner?

Microsoft Planner is a project and task management application included in most Microsoft 365 business subscriptions. While other project management platforms can feel overwhelming with their complexity, Planner is designed to be approachable, simple, and tightly integrated with the Microsoft tools that employees already use every day. The goal is straightforward: give teams a clear way to see who is doing what, when it's due, and how it fits into the bigger picture.

How does Microsoft Planner work?

At its core, Planner organizes work into what it calls "plans." Each plan represents a specific project, department, or business function and acts as a dedicated hub where tasks, files, and progress are collected in one place. Within a plan, work can be divided into categories, often called buckets, that reflect the natural stages of a project or the priorities of a team. For example, a marketing team could create buckets labeled "Content Drafting," "Design," "Approval," and "Published."

Tasks themselves are the heart of Planner. Each task can be assigned to one or multiple team members, given a deadline, and expanded with subtasks, notes, and even file attachments. Because these tasks live inside Planner, they don't get buried in email threads or scattered across different platforms. Instead, every team member can log in and instantly see what's on their plate, what's overdue, and what's coming up. Tasks update in real time, so if someone checks off a subtask or attaches a new file, the entire team has access to the latest information.

What are the advantages of Microsoft Planner?

One of the biggest advantages of Planner is its visual approach to project management. The default board view uses a Kanban-style layout, where tasks are displayed as cards and can be dragged and dropped between categories as they progress. This makes it immediately obvious when a project is moving forward—or when something is stalled. For teams that prefer a broader perspective, Planner also includes a chart view that breaks down tasks by status, priority, and person, giving managers a quick snapshot of overall progress. A calendar view provides another layer of visibility, showing deadlines across days, weeks, or months to help teams prepare for busy stretches.

Microsoft Planner Integrations

Planner's power becomes even more apparent when you consider how it integrates with the rest of the Microsoft 365 ecosystem. In Microsoft Teams, Planner can be added as a tab within a channel, so conversations, meetings, and task management all happen in the same place. Instead of switching between applications, employees can discuss a project in Teams chat

while simultaneously viewing and updating related tasks in Planner. Deadlines automatically sync with Outlook, ensuring due dates appear on personal calendars.

Files stored in SharePoint or OneDrive can be linked directly to tasks, keeping resources close at hand. Notes from meetings captured in OneNote can also be attached, reducing the risk of losing context between platforms.

These integrations are critical because they allow teams to work where they're already comfortable without duplicating effort. Instead of manually updating a spreadsheet or emailing status updates, Planner quietly keeps everything connected. For many businesses, this alone is enough to eliminate a significant amount of wasted time and confusion.

Boost Accountability and see Real Time Changes

The benefits of Microsoft Planner extend far beyond convenience. By centralizing task assignments, it creates clear accountability. Everyone knows what they're responsible for, which reduces the risk of things slipping through the cracks. Real-time updates encourage transparency, as progress is visible not just to managers but to peers as well. This visibility often helps teams self-correct; when someone sees that a task is overdue or stuck, they can offer assistance or reprioritize work without waiting for a formal meeting.

Another strength of Planner is its flexibility. While it was built with project management in mind, businesses use it for a wide range of purposes. Human resources departments rely on it for onboarding new employees, ensuring each step in the process is completed on time.

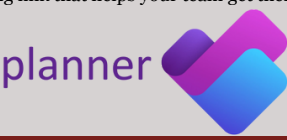
Marketing teams use it to coordinate campaigns across multiple channels, keeping designers, writers, and managers aligned. IT departments track support requests and system updates. Event planners map out logistics, schedules, and vendor tasks. Because Planner doesn't force a rigid methodology, it can adapt to almost any business process where tasks need to be tracked and managed.

How is Microsoft Planner Cost Effective?

For small businesses, cost is another important factor. Many organizations pay extra for third-party project management software without realizing that Planner is already included in their Microsoft 365 subscription. While more advanced tools like Microsoft Project are available for organizations with complex scheduling needs, Planner often strikes the perfect balance by being powerful enough to manage real work while remaining simple and cost-effective.

Implement Microsoft Planner Today!

If your organization already uses Microsoft 365 but hasn't explored Planner, it may be one of the most valuable tools you haven't tapped into yet. It's an opportunity to streamline how your team works, reduce friction, and create a more organized, productive environment. Businesses are always looking for ways to do more with less, Planner might just be the missing link that helps your team get there.



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TECHNOLOGY TRIVIA TIME

Technology Trivia Question of the Month! Send the correct answer to winner@fcskc.com to be entered to win a \$50 gift card to Amazon.

Here is August's question of the month:

What everyday tool is often disrupted by slow internet, leading to frustration in client meetings?

