

Ahead in cloud computing

Solutions for smooth operators

Sophie Foster

ARMED with just two iPads, two iPhones and cloud-based accounting software, plumber Sean Currie slashed an hour off his day in the office.

The Plumline Contracting owner, 43, knew his invoicing system was unnecessarily guzzling up administration time, but didn't realise just how bad it was until he jumped on the technology bandwagon.

Pushed by accountant Tanya Titman from Consolid8, whose clients work off a range of cloud solutions including Xero, Quickbooks, Saasu and MYOB LiveAccounts, Mr Currie and apprentice Josh Gilliland, 23, now do most of their paperwork online in the field.

"When you go home you can't really start charging the client for sitting in your office for half an hour doing invoices," Mr Currie said. "The accounting package is really good, but also just the use of these sorts of media devices is really beneficial. I do a lot of quoting from this. For requests to do roof and gutter inspections, I can just go on to Google Earth to see straight on to what sort of roof it is, if it's tiled, metal, or if there's trees over it if it's going to be a problem.

"If there's something Josh needs a hand with, he can take a picture of it and send it straight to me so I can see what he is seeing and say try this or that. It just makes my job a lot easier. It's speeding things up and you don't lose the information."



PIPE DREAMS: Plumbers Josh Gilliland, 23, (left) and Sean Currie, 43, use iPads and iPhones to streamline work on the road.

Picture: Liam Kidston.

That sort of enthusiasm has driven the big end of town into ploughing millions of dollars into technological solutions, as some of the country's biggest firms compete for a greater share of the lucrative small business market.

As part of its \$1.5 billion Banking on Australia program, ANZ Bank last week said it would integrate personal and business accounts into a single app geared for small business people on iPhones.

GO FIGURE

Source: Intuit

98%	"Not using cloud computing", but actually were	19%	Used cloud computing
90%	Limited understanding of cloud computing	88%	Said benefits to cloud computing

"We know small business customers want to do their banking when and where it suits them. Increasingly this means using mobile devices, so we've made enhancements to ANZ goMoney that enable

small business owners to be on top of their banking when they're on the road, just as they are in the office," ANZ general manager small business banking Nick Reade said. Commonwealth Bank has

also moved fast on mobile and online solutions, last week launching Australia's first social banking app, CommBank Kaching for Facebook.

Commonwealth Bank's chief marketing and online officer Andy Lark said the decision made sense given more than 55 per cent of Australians were on Facebook and CommBank Kaching had already recorded more than \$416 million peer-to-peer payments.

As services grow, advisers

need to boost understanding on the technology in use, according to research by SME financial management service provider Intuit.

The survey of 1000 SMEs found that although 88 per cent of small operators believed there were benefits to cloud computing, only 19 per cent were currently using it.

About 45 per cent of small business owners said they were likely to introduce cloud computing into their business.

Juicy profits in Honey Gold mangoes

» From P23

Mr Scurr and his brother and co-owner Stephen Scurr rebranded their third-generation family pineapple farm Pinata Farms in 1992.

Gavin Scurr said it was among the first growers to sell fresh pineapples to consumers when most of the industry was sending produce to Golden Circle to be canned.

He said pineapples and mangoes each accounted for about 40 per cent of the business, and strawberries made up the remaining 20 per cent.

But he said the success of the Honey Gold mango had caused Pinata to change its focus from pineapples to growing Australia's premium mango.

Over the past five years Pinata's Honey Gold sales have grown about 30 per cent a year compared to pineapple sales, which are steady at 10 to 12 per cent each year.

"Certainly in 10 years' time we see mangoes as half of our business and strawberries at 20 per cent and pineapples at 30 per cent," he said.

The success of the Honey Gold shows investment in new varieties is important for growers to stay at the head of the \$140 million mango industry.

But, unlike the fluke of the

Honey Gold, most of the top-selling mango varieties in Australia are the result of intensive breeding programs.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (QDAFF) has breeding programs for all types of fruits and vegetables and developed the R2E2 and the Calypso mango varieties.

Business manager for horticulture and science Jodie Campbell said the department's main objective was to improve production costs for growers and meet industry needs.

She said apart from its taste, the Kensington Pride was a poor mango: its shelf life was the shortest of all the mangoes, it was an unproduc-



tive tree and only yielded bi-annually (lots of fruit one year, very few the next).

"The cost of production is very, very expensive and growers can't make money on it," she said.

The Calypso was bred to overcome the problems seen in the Kensington Pride and is the second-biggest selling mango in Australia, with a market share of about 25 per cent.

Ms Campbell said Calypso trees averaged about 15 to 25 tonnes of fruit per hectare, compared to the Kensington Pride which produced about 5 to 10 tonnes of fruit per hectare.

She said the fruit had "a lovely red blush" which attracted customers and it had a good seed-to-mango flesh ratio, so you got more mango for your money.

But to get the Calypso to where it is now took a lot of expertise, time and money.

Ms Campbell said breeding programs were complex and therefore she couldn't give an exact figure on how much it took to develop the Calypso mango.

But she said the breeding programs for tree crops - such as apples, mangoes and citrus - could cost anywhere between \$100,000 to \$150,000 dollars per year for

up to 20 years to develop the fruit to a point where it could be commercially successful.

QDAFF chose Brisbane-based Harvest Company as its commercialisation partner for the Calypso mango.

Harvest is responsible for growing, marketing and distributing the Calypso and now has about 300,000 trees in Australia.

Carlo Lorenti (pictured), the owner of Clayfield Markets Fresh, visits the Brisbane Markets at Rocklea most mornings to pick out the best produce on offer.

A huge stack of Pearls, a smaller-selling variety Mr Lorenti said had only really been available this year, had pride of place in the middle of the room. He had bought some of them the day before, but he wasn't sure if these mangoes would make it yet.

A few stalls down there was a small stack Honey Golds. The stack was bigger a few weeks ago, but the recent floods wiped out most of the remaining crop.

"The Honey Gold was one of the best things that ever happened for the industry as far as mango-type," Mr Lorenti said.

"If I've got good Honey Gold mangoes to sell, I've got to put them in a prime spot and let (the customers) know that Honey Golds are in season and they taste fantastic."

NAB invests in technology

NAB boss Cameron Clyne admits that the bank has had a history of neglecting investment in IT but says it is now ahead of its rivals. Larger rival Commonwealth Bank is often seen as the industry leader but NAB last week released a five-year plan to invest heavily in technology.

"It's no good having some whiz bang customer interface if your data centre's not working, if your security's not up to date, you haven't got the network and the connectivity right, so we're saying we are embarked on an entire end-to-end transformation," he said.

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