As **smart devices** become more and more prevalent, there's a real risk that installers are missing out on the opportunity to work more efficiently. Keld van Schreven looks at how making the most of your smartphone or tablet can save time and make money.

Photo: 'indigo_girl'

Get smart

Within the past ten years, everything has entered the 'smart' age. What started with smartphones has progressed into smart TVs, smart kitchen appliances, smart light switches, smart cars, and even smart footballs. It's no surprise that small businesses have to be smarter to succeed today. Always competing with larger companies with bigger marketing budgets, more employees, and a wider reach means that they have to be smart to take on the big names.

What's a 'smart' business?

Everyone knows what a smartphone is, but what makes a business smart and how can installers make their businesses smarter than their competitors?

As with other 'smart' things, a smart business uses advanced technology to accomplish more tasks more efficiently. Just like a smart thermostat that responds to instructions, learns patterns and adjust to help save money on energy, a smart business is good at adapting to changing conditions. A smart business can easily deal with any added complexities or new challenges because it uses technology that's versatile and scalable.

In short, smart businesses get more done with less. The pro-active installer needs tools that can deliver advantages in winning customers and keeping them. This can help improve efficiency and boost profitability without working harder.

A by-product of this new efficiency is more time at home – but not in terms of being stuck at home quoting until midnight. It means more relaxation time and the end of the 12-hour working day.

Payments on the move

Smart business is all about using technology to do better business and make more money. One of the simplest ways to achieve this is to become equipped to take mobile payments. It makes perfect sense because without the ability to take credit card payments at the job site, there's a real chance that business is going to be lost.

An iPhone credit card reader or mobile payment app will let card details be taken quickly, easily, and cheaply. For example, with SmartTrade there is no need to buy any expensive extra hardware for a phone, sign a contract, or open a merchant bank account. No other mobile credit card reader offers this level of convenience.

A recent report suggested that mobile payments would rise by 65% this year and not having a mobile payment solution could seriously harm a business. When it only takes a few minutes to get set up to take payments on a smartphone, it makes sense to get started as soon as possible. ■

FIVE REASONS FOR CHOOSING SMARTTRADE

1. Get invoice receipts sent automatically after a payment without doing anything.
2. Get quotes approved without chasing customers.
3. Get all jobs and payments automatically stored – ready to send to an accountant in one electronic spreadsheet file with a click.
4. Get customer info such as location (with driving conditions) and any previous jobs, quotes and payments.
5. Get automatically notified when payments are cleared or rejected, quotes are accepted or there's a potential new job* (*coming soon).

The author

Keld Schreven worked 'on the tools' in the summer of 2012 and witnessed how stressed engineers were with all aspects of running their business. Keld approached the card companies and was shocked at the cost. His mission, with his business partner Catherine Woolgar, is to give engineers an app to help them keep their passion for their work.