

## You Don't Have To Be A Techno-Geek!



The following article appeared in the November issue of 'Kent Business', in which Wealden Business Group member Mike Parmar explains why you don't have to be a techno-geek to get the best out of office technology.

Technology – don't you just love it? Or not, particularly if you are one of the army of less technically adept people who look on in silent envy at that work colleague who can apparently make their whizzy new phone and laptop perform the Seven Wonders of the World while you're still struggling with text.

It was ever thus, since the days when technology really came to town, and big companies introduced IBM mainframe computer systems, smaller operations bought those Amstrad green screen PCs, and every self-respecting professional had a mobile phone, even if it was the size of a house brick.

Tempus fugit, and with it has come a new era in which business computer and telephone systems can be meshed. Today, for example, a busy rep on the road can send a presentation from his mobile to a client's PC and talk it through over the phone, or have customer emails sent to the office forwarded to his mobile.

Helping businesses understand how these systems - or even their existing one - can save them money and time is what I've been doing for the past five years, after setting up my Wave2 Communications consultancy at my home in Appledore (proving comprehensively that another benefit of new technology is the ability to work effectively from wherever you like).

Not that anything technical was on my mind when I was a kid. I was brought up and went to school and college in Bolton, but when it came to deciding what I wanted to do for a living, I only knew it had to be a job with plenty of day-to-day contact with people.

So I started working in a local fashion shop, then joined national retailer Jean Jeanie, and ended up as manager of their store in Oxford Circus, London. However, in the '80s it was becoming clear that computers and new generation phones were going to have an enormous influence on everyone's lives, so I went back to college to get some additional technical qualifications.

After a gap year in India, I came down to Kent to work in a small office supplies business in Maidstone. But I kept thinking about the business potential offered by computers and phones, particularly mobiles which were just coming into fashion, so I joined a firm pioneering in communications technology.

But inevitably I wanted to become my own boss, and now I now sell computer-phone network systems to clients throughout London and the southeast. It's hard work, but the business is growing, and that's helped by the fact that I'm independent, rather than representing any particular manufacturer.

Oddly, I get the biggest kick out of the money my clients save as a result of my advice, rather than anything I might sell to them. One of my major customers, a London law firm, has cut line and call charges by £1,500 a month and £6,000 a year on maintenance, while a two-employee business near Ashford is looking at annual savings of £200 a month, important to them in these difficult economic times.

Operating from home means I can keep my costs to a minimum, although I value the benefits of networking – I've just stepped down after a year as chairman of the Wealden Business Group – and invest in my website.

But like anyone who works at home, I like to get out and about and achieve that much-talked-about work/life balance. That includes going to a martial arts club twice a week, where I'm an instructor and can let off a bit of steam. It keeps me alert and focussed, vital qualities for anyone in business, particularly the self-employed!

I also enjoy visiting my 'maison secondaire' in Picardy, France, which I've had for eight years. Still haven't finished all the DIY it needs – but I'll get there one day.

Wave2 Communications. Tel: 0844 880 7610. Website: [www.wave2c.com](http://www.wave2c.com)