



Microsoft® Office Live Small Business: Take Your Business Online

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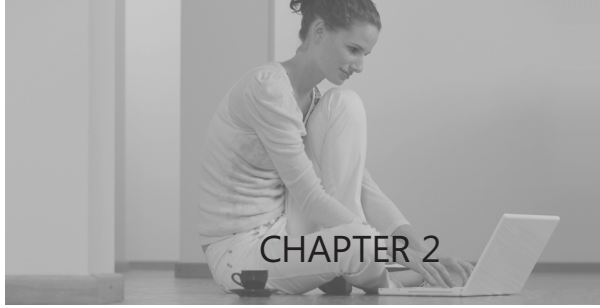
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Introducing Microsoft Office Live Small Business

IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL

- Think through your site preferences.
- Stay in touch with Microsoft Office Live Mail.
- Get organized online with calendars and contacts.
- Sell products on your site.
- Advertise online with search marketing.
- Create e-mail marketing campaigns.
- Know your Web traffic.
- Manage your business data.
- Cultivate your client relationships.
- Tailor your account to meet your needs.

ONE OF the biggest challenges of starting and running a successful business involves keeping everything moving along at a good pace. If everything depends on you, it's hard to care for all the important things equally. You've probably heard the phrase "lots of irons in the fire"—that phrase might have been used to describe you! But, at least in the early stages of your business, you need all the irons to be in the fire at the same time—they are important. You need to create your product *and* promote it. You need to find new customers *and* cultivate the relationships you already have. You need to do the practical tasks your business requires—getting funding, doing the bookkeeping, managing your data—and still be able to move effectively into the future, creating the systems and communication channels that ultimately get your business moving smoothly on a successful path.

This chapter gives you a bird's-eye view of ways you can use the different features of Microsoft Office Live Small Business to bring together your important business tasks and manage them effectively. The support built into the program helps you accomplish three huge things: get your business online, promote your business, and manage your business data and relationships. What's more, you get to benefit from the creativity and vision of others—you don't have to spend your time reinventing the wheel.

That's good news, right? Let's take a look at some of the ways Office Live Small Business can begin lightening your load right away.

■ Your Web Site, Your Way

Web sites, done well, require time and effort. And some creativity, too. A good Web site meets some basic communication goals that your customers and potential customers appreciate (and they'll reward you by coming back to your site, again and again, and hopefully buy something!). Think of the sites you visit regularly, as well as those you don't. What frustrates you on certain sites? What do you like about the sites you consider top-notch?

Although our preferences for things such as colors, fonts, and media (how much and what kind) differ, there are basic guidelines that apply to sites that care enough to create a good browsing experience for consumers. A good Web site

- Knows why you are visiting and what you want to see.
- Makes it clear how to find what you need.
- Provides something of value.
- Gives you an option to send feedback.
- Builds trust by presenting a professional, competent look and feel.

Getting on the Web is a great thing for your business, but it also presents challenges. For example, who is going to design your site? Where will you find the server space? How will you find time to learn the software? And how in the world do you get a domain name?

Your Web site is the hub of all your activity in Office Live Small Business. Designed to make creating a site as simple as possible, Office Live Small Business includes an easy-to-use design tool that provides ready-made templates to work with but still gives you the flexibility to make the site look the way you want it. With the Web site features in Office Live Small Business, you can

- Find and register a domain name for your business.
- Choose from a collection of professionally designed themes for your site.
- Select a style that fits the look and feel you want.
- Customize the colors and fonts.
- Choose the navigation style you want to use.

- Create and add pages.
- Choose and change your page layout.
- Add images, modules, and tables.
- Insert horizontal lines and hyperlinks.
- Ensure the security and stability of your site.

The Site Designer in Office Live Small Business, shown in Figure 2-1, gives you everything you need to choose the look and feel—and navigation style—of your site. Using one simple interface, you can choose from a variety of themes that offer designs created for different industries. You can add your own touches, modules, images, and more by using the options on the Page Editor tab.

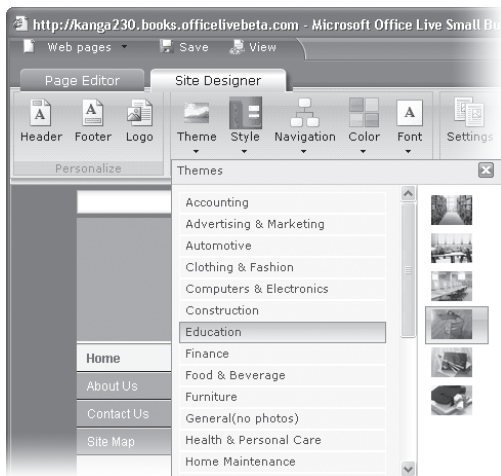


FIGURE 2-1 Use the Site Designer to choose a professionally designed theme for your Web site.

TIP



The themes available in the Site Designer are offered as great starting points for your own ideas. Don't feel locked in to a specific theme—if you are launching a small restaurant and want to use the Education theme, feel free!

SEE ALSO

Chapter 4, “Designing Your Site,” is all about designing your site, working with pages, and adding content.

■ Stay in Touch with Office Live Mail

In addition to your Web site, you need e-mail to present a unified, professional image for your clients. E-mail is an important part of your overall business communications strategy. The domain name you use in Office Live Small Business includes up to 100 company-branded e-mail addresses that you can use to provide a consistent communications front.

Being more than a temporary, fly-by-night Web business is important. Even—or especially—if you are a new business, customers will want to know you’re going to be around after they order your products. By using Office Live Small Business’s e-mail accounts, you can set up e-mail addresses that match your domain for the other people in your business (or different roles that you manage yourself for now). Plus you have the added benefit of being able to receive and manage your e-mail without buying Web server space.

Because your Office Live Small Business account is available anywhere you have Web access, you can read and respond to your e-mail anytime you want. This flexibility is perfect for home-based businesses and gives you the credibility and the professionalism you need to inspire confidence in clients, vendors, and more.

You check your e-mail by clicking E-Mail in the navigation panel on the left side of the Office Live Small Business window. The Tools To Manage Your E-Mail page offers a variety of ways you can connect with your customers and staff (see Figure 2-2). You can also use Microsoft Office Outlook Connector to synchronize your Office Live Mail with Microsoft Office Outlook 2003 or 2007 so that you can work with it offline if you choose.

SEE ALSO

What does your e-mail address say about you? For a closer look at setting up your e-mail, managing contacts, and reducing spam, see Chapter 7, “Staying in Sync with Microsoft Office Live Small Business Mail.”

TIP



Being accessible to your customers is an important part of building relationships. If you count on instant messaging to provide your clients with quick answers to their product questions, you can use Windows Live Messenger in Office Live Small Business to chat online with your clients in real time, using text, voice, and even video. You can download the software directly from your e-mail page.

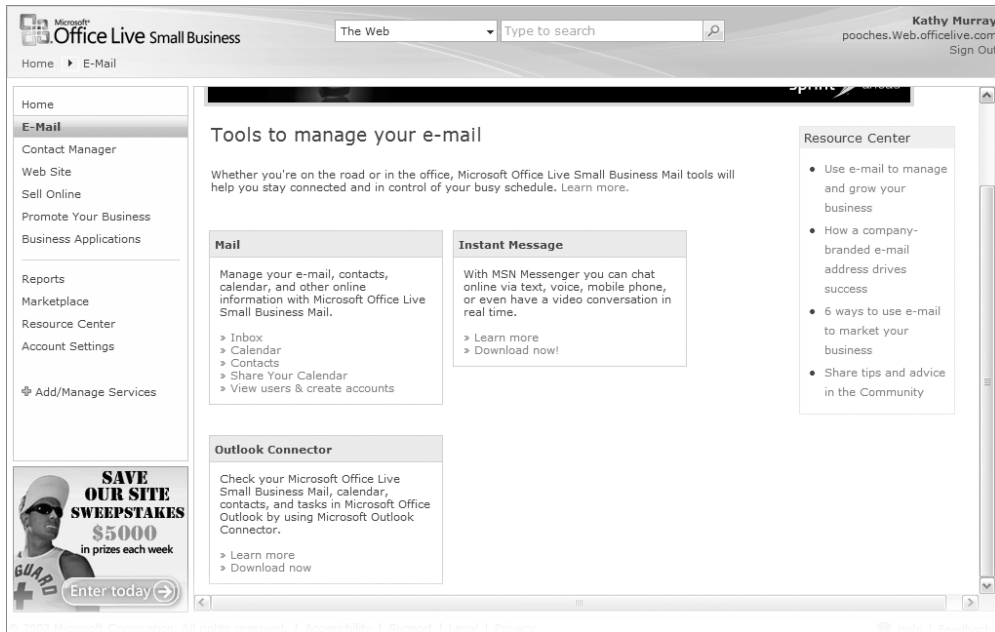


FIGURE 2-2 Office Live Small Business provides you with a number of ways to connect to customers, vendors, and more.

Get Organized Online with Calendars and Contacts

Scheduling and contact management might be two of the big unsung features of online organizing—how do you keep everyone in sync about upcoming meetings, events, demonstrations, and more? How do you know whether anyone has followed up on the pending customer service issues? In a traditional office, you might use company e-mail or send and receive invitations by using Outlook to schedule your meetings. Perhaps you have contact management software in which you log the times you contact clients for proposals, follow-ups, and more.

If you are always on the go, out visiting clients—or running your business from your porch overlooking Hanalei Bay on the island of Kauai—you might want a more solid way of making sure everyone important is notified about upcoming events and important contact issues. You can use the scheduling and contact features within Office Live Mail to create, manage, and alert people about upcoming meetings (see Figure 2-3). You can also share your calendar so that everyone involved can easily see the schedule for the day, week, month, or even the year.

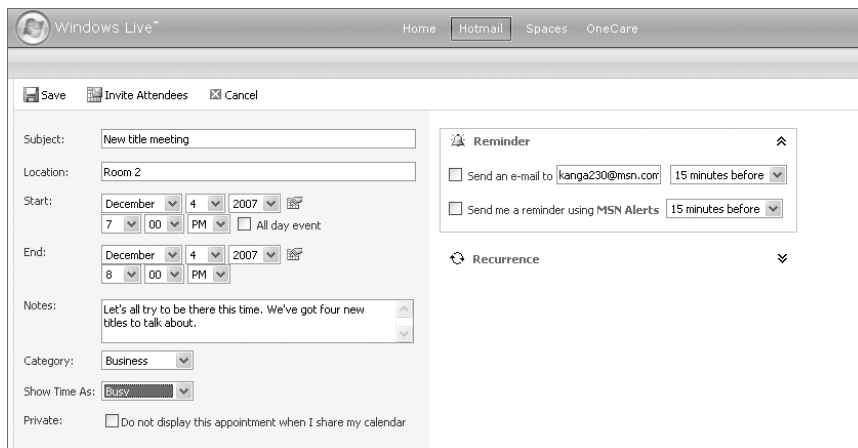
The screenshot shows the 'New Meeting' window in Office Live Mail. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Hotmail', 'Spaces', and 'OneCare'. Below this is a toolbar with 'Save', 'Invite Attendees', and 'Cancel'. The main form is divided into two columns. The left column contains fields for 'Subject' (New title meeting), 'Location' (Room 2), 'Start' (December 4, 2007, 7:00 PM), 'End' (December 4, 2007, 8:00 PM), 'Notes' (Let's all try to be there this time. We've got four new titles to talk about.), 'Category' (Business), 'Show Time As' (Busy), and a 'Private' checkbox. The right column contains a 'Reminder' section with two options: 'Send an e-mail to' (kanga230@msn.com, 15 minutes before) and 'Send me a reminder using MSN Alerts' (15 minutes before). Below the reminder section is a 'Recurrence' section with a circular arrow icon and a dropdown arrow.

FIGURE 2-3 Office Live Mail, accessible within Office Live Small Business, provides scheduling and contact capabilities.

Sell Products on Your Site

Office Live Small Business offers a complete, secure e-commerce solution you can use to add an online store to your own site and create product listings for eBay auctions. By adding a shopping cart feature to your Office Live Small Business site, you can sell your own products, process order fulfillment online, and view reports that keep you current on your site's sales statistics.

An easy-to-use e-commerce template walks you through the process of setting up your products and getting started with orders and payments. The result is a professional looking e-commerce site that provides a secure, simple checkout experience for your customers. Click Sell Online in the Office Live Small Business navigation bar to start the process (see Figure 2-4).

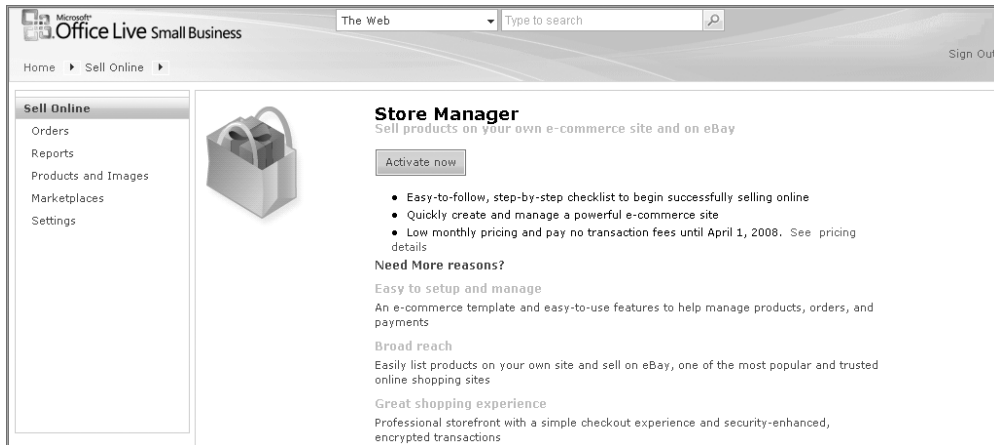


FIGURE 2-4 Get started setting up the Store Manager by choosing Sell Online.

■ Advertise Online with Search Marketing

Getting your site online is only the first step in getting visibility for your business and bringing customers to your site. As you learn in Chapter 9, “Promoting Your Business,” adManager in Office Live Small Business can help you spread the word about the products and services you offer. When you purchase search advertising by using adManager, your site title, description, and URL appear at the top of results pages on MSN, Live.com, or Ask.com, set off with other sponsored sites. You specify whether you want the ads displayed to a nationwide or local audience, and you also choose the search engines you want to use.

When potential customers search for an item listed as one of your keywords, the name, description, and URL of your site appear in the Sponsored Sites box. The user can click the link to move directly to your site.

Search advertising is affordable and manageable—you set the budget for your advertising (for example, \$50 per month), and your account is charged only when a user clicks the link to your site in a displayed ad.

With adManager, you can

- Advertise effectively and affordably by choosing, purchasing, and tracking your keywords.
- Create and manage a monthly keyword budget so you know exactly what you’re spending.

- Avoid huge advertising expenses by doing it yourself.
- Create reports that show your keyword results for different search engines.

■ Create E-Mail Marketing Campaigns

How many e-mail newsletters do you currently receive? If you're like most of us, you probably get a few from sites you visit regularly—and some that seem to appear out of the blue. When you sign up for a newsletter, generally it's because the company offers something you're interested in. You want to know when the organic cotton sweaters go on sale. Or you want to know about upcoming dates for a triathlon. Or you're waiting for that end-of-year closeout announcement on high-definition televisions. (Who isn't?)

When you sign up, or opt in, to receive a company's newsletter or other ongoing e-mail communication, you are giving the site permission to send you things. This permission is important, if you're concerned about happy customers. Otherwise, your newsletters and e-mail fliers will go directly into the customer's Junk Mail folder, and what's worse, you might get earmarked as a spammer, which could have longer-term ramifications (such as causing your site to be blocked by search engines).

Office Live Small Business includes an e-mail marketing feature that helps you design, create, send, and track responses to e-mail campaigns you create for customers and prospects (see Figure 2-5).

Create Campaign Current credit balance: 200

Use this page to create a new campaign, including specifying the campaign recipients, message, and delivery schedule.

Recipients and credits Edit

Add recipients

Group name	Campaign subscribers	Total contacts in group
Customer	0	1
Lead or Prospect	0	1

Credits required to send this campaign

Credits required for this campaign: 0

Campaign details Edit

From: lisa@pooches.com
Subject: June specials from Pampered Pooches! - Copy
E-mail address for replies: marketing@pooches.com
Turn on click tracking: Yes
Campaign message: Preview your campaign

FIGURE 2-5 Create and track e-mail marketing campaigns to invite new and existing customers to your site.

HOW WILL YOU USE E-MAIL MARKETING?

Office Live Small Business makes it easy for you to reach customers who opt in to receive communications from your company. You might want to put an e-mail signup field on your Home page or include a check box at the bottom of an order page. (This makes the most of customer information you've already gathered.) After you have permission, you can send a variety of e-mail communications, which might include

- A product announcement with links to reviews.
- A newsletter providing tips, suggestions, and news from your industry.
- A flier promoting a special Web offer.
- A product fact sheet.
- An invitation to an online event.
- A press release sharing company news.

Know Your Web Traffic

Part of managing your Web site effectively involves knowing who is visiting your site, where they come from, and which marketing events helped bring them to you. That way, you can do more of what works (and yes, less of what doesn't).

Office Live Small Business gives you a whole slew of reports you can use to view your site statistics in different ways:

- The Visitors report displays information about the number of unique visitors per month and average time spent on your site.
- The Site Usage report shows you overall site visit statistics for the entire site.
- The Referring Sources report lets you know where your visitors are coming from.
- The Keywords report tracks the results of the keywords you've purchased.
- The Page Usage report shows you which pages in your site are getting the most attention.

- The System Statistics report lets you know about the systems (operating system, browser, and monitor resolution) your visitors are using when they view your site.
- The Administration reports enable you to manage the functionality of your overall site by managing the pages users see after they complete an action, getting tracking codes (for any sites you might operate independent of Office Live Small Business), and downloading specific reports.

Sometimes, Web statistics just jump and you're not really sure why. Perhaps a blogger mentioned one of your products and caused a (happy) ripple effect that brought people to your site. At other times, you can see a surge of hits after sending out a marketing communication. With Office Live Small Business, you can add marketing events to your reports so that you can view your Web results in light of influencing factors.

NOTE

Marketing events include newspaper ads, phone book ads, seminars, site map submissions, coupons, Web site changes, and press releases.

■ Manage Your Business Data

Office Live Small Business includes two primary business applications you can use to manage the documents and other files you use in day-to-day business. With the first application, Team Workspace, you can create a workspace that your staff can use to share information, post announcements, and work with documents (see Figure 2-6). You can also create a calendar, assign tasks to members of your team, and even host online team discussions.

Document Manager is another business application included free with Office Live Small Business. Use Document Manager to upload, post, store, and share documents and pictures that are important to your business operations. You can easily create a document library with all the documents, pictures, logos, and more you use for correspondence, sales letters, newsletters, annual reports, and presentations (see Figure 2-7).

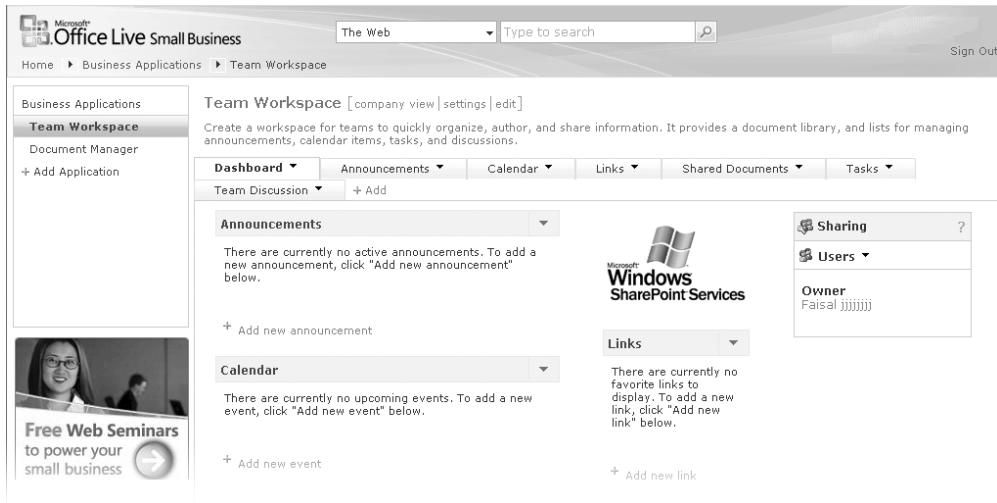


FIGURE 2-6 With the Team Workspace application, you can organize your business data and keep everyone in sync.

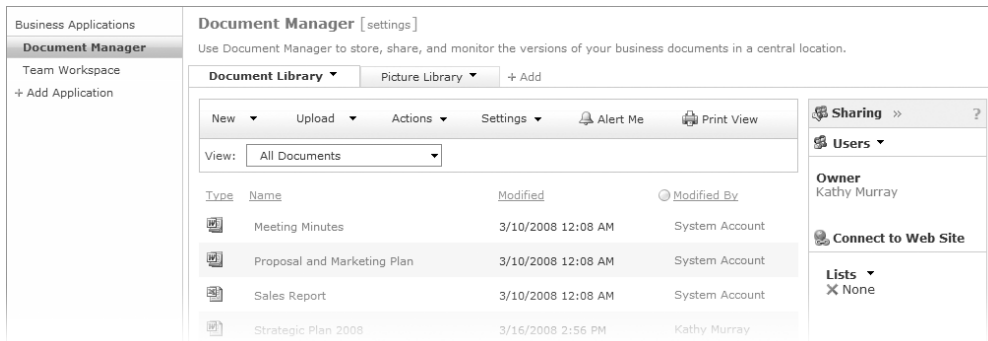


FIGURE 2-7 Document Manager provides you with an easy-to-use document library for business files you use often.

In addition to the Team Workspace and Document Manager applications, you can choose from a number of applications in specific areas. For example, when you click Add/Manage Services in the Business Applications navigation bar, the Select An Application window appears (see Figure 2-8). Click a category to display the list of applications available for that selection.

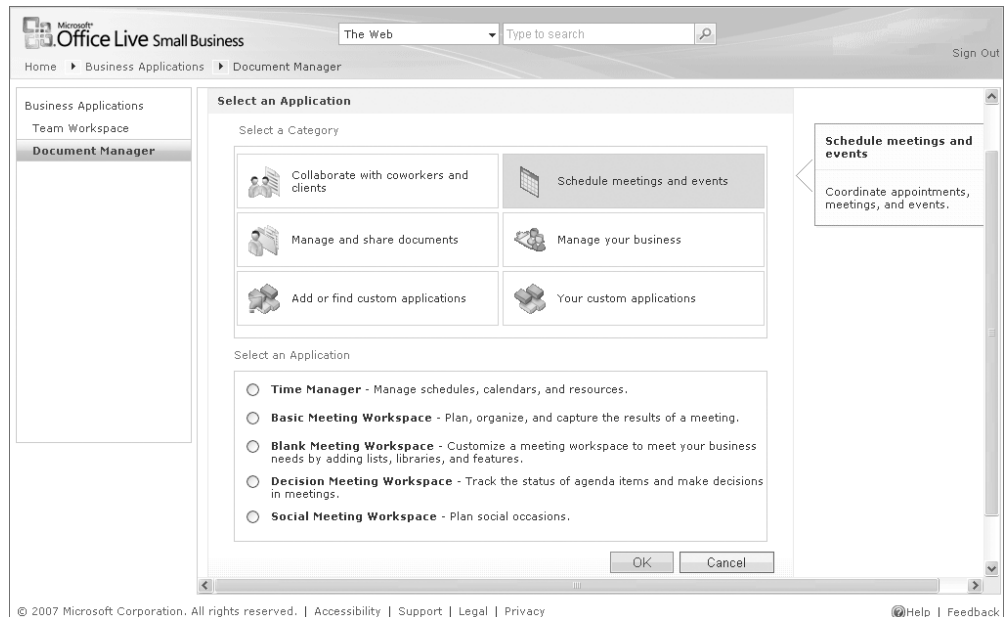


FIGURE 2-8 You can add several applications to help you better manage your business, develop custom applications, manage your time, and collaborate effectively.

■ Cultivate Your Client Relationships

Few things in your business can be considered as important as your customers. Yes, you need a great product or service. Definitely, you need good management, terrific staff, and great customer service. But knowing your clients and being consistent, reliable, and timely in your communication with them goes a long way toward building credibility for your business and ensuring you have long-term, happy customers (who will return to your company and bring their friends).

Office Live Small Business recognizes the key role relationships play in your day-to-day business life. Your clients aren't the only people who matter—cultivating good relationships with your vendors, partners, employees, and prospective customers is important,

too. For that reason, Contact Manager is built right into the program so that you can create client and company accounts; synchronize your contacts seamlessly with Outlook; and track companies, opportunities, products, and more (see Figure 2-9). You'll never again have to cross your fingers and hope that someone followed up with the person who was interested in a huge special order last week. Now you can simply look it up in Office Live Small Business and see when the follow-up contact was made—and by whom.

In addition to tracking all this important business contact information, you can also create and share Web forms and lists, and enable alerts so that you receive notification when the contact information changes on your site. Used effectively, Contact Manager can help you streamline your contact management in a smart way that saves you time and trouble and helps you avoid the heartache of unhappy customers.

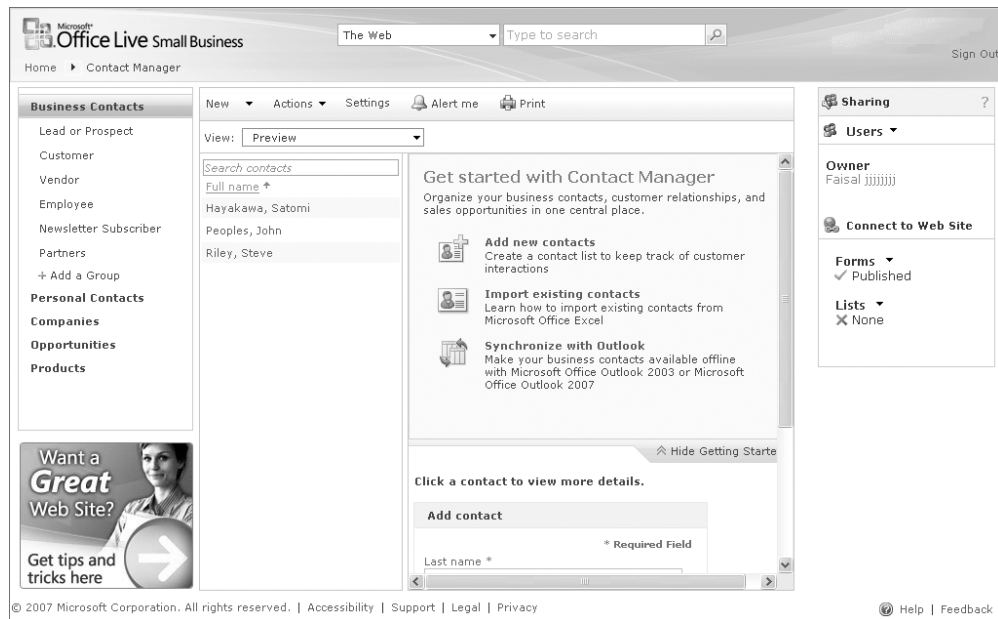


FIGURE 2-9 Contact Manager helps you organize, track, and manage important business contacts.

Your Account, Your Way

Even though Office Live Small Business takes care of a lot of things for you, setting up your account the way you want it is totally your call. You can use the Account Settings feature in Office Live Small Business to set the permission level for your site, manage your Office Live billing, add users and e-mail accounts, manage your domain names,

and purchase additional services (see Figure 2-10). In addition, you can add alerts so that you receive e-mail prompts when changes are made on the site.

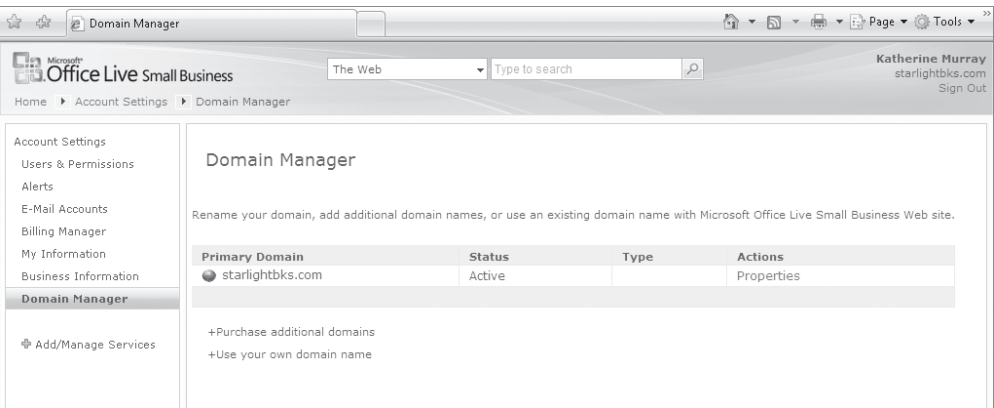


FIGURE 2-10 Use Account Settings to set up your business information and add users, permissions, e-mail accounts, and more.

YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE: Q&A INTERVIEW

Jay Harper, Managing Director and CTO
Planet Earth Friendly: www.planeteearthfriendly.com

- Q** *What are your favorite features in Office Live Small Business?*
- A** Two big things have been the most helpful. The first is the ease of use and a complete out-of-the-box experience. Click, point and shoot, and your Web site is on the air. The second would be the helpful community within Office Live. I am at no means a Web designer or code writer, but I did not have to be with the friendly and helpful experts in the Office Live community. Any question or help I needed to embed Java, run live streams, install banners and other creature comforts to my Web site and pages all came from my Live community of smart, family members. Their LPE (lots of practical experience) made my first shot at Web design a home run, way out of the park!

Q *How does having a Web site help your business?*

A Shakespeare said that all the world is a stage, and if that is true, then the Internet is the theater everyone is sitting in. Paperless way of doing business is what we champion, and e-marketing/e-commerce is the way of the present and the future. The response has been overwhelming from our client base and the industry. We have experienced 'instant credibility' by having a site that gives greater insight to our commitments and services.

Q *How do you use the marketing and management features in Office Live Small Business?*

A adManager and beta words have improved our search engine responses with Google, Yahoo, Excite, and many others. Best of all was that it did not cost a whole lot. Just a simple ad account set at a certain amount per month, and it is that simple. Management of the site is extremely easy and adaptable. I have never had issues adding and deleting user and content to the site, and site reports make Office Live a real-time monitoring entity. Office Live gives the end user a way to track visits and hits with accurate signatures and history data.

Q *What do you want to do next with your site?*

A Re-launch the company as a nonprofit appealing to schools, retirement communities, and hospitals to go with green initiatives.

Q *What advice would you pass along to a small business owner trying Office Live for the first time?*

A Quit thinking small. With Office Live, big thinking is encouraged, and big performances are only a few mouse clicks away. Launch with great flair with minimum design time. No one got big by being small!

GETTING STARTED IN BUSINESS: A STARTUP TOOLKIT

If you're just getting started in business, you're probably in that falling-in-love period with an idea that is just burning to be acted on. You've developed a new product the market needs or you have a service you think will really fly. Knowing the how-to's is an important part of putting down a good foundation and taking steps toward realizing your dream.

Although having specific tools—computers, software, and more—will be an important part of your success, the most important tools you have to work with when you're first starting out are thoughts. Your thoughts will help you plot your course and stay on it. Your thoughts will calm you (or send you running for the hills!) when the doubts and challenges begin to pop up. Here are some important ideas to put in your startup toolkit and pull out as you need them:

- **Clarify your vision.** As an entrepreneur, a lot rides on your talent, your passion, and your energy. Chances are that if you are starting a business now, you are an idea person and have quite a bit of courage (and an independent streak, too). Before you begin investing money, time, and energy in creating your business, spend some "seasoning" time testing, expanding, and getting to know your idea from all directions. Know what you think—and feel—about your idea. Resist the temptation to get caught up in the wave of your own enthusiasm and believe your own marketing spin. Do the work to put all the financial projections together, ask yourself whether the business matches the "real" goals you have in life, and test the image of the business thoroughly. (Startup Nation, at www.startupnation.com, has a number of great tools for developing a life plan and establishing your business in the context of a life well lived.) Once you've gone through this clarifying stage, you'll be able to start building on your idea with confidence.
- **Identify your resources.** Nobody does this alone. You might bootstrap your business through its first few months, but soon you will need resources to help manage and build on your success. Business resources such as Office Live Small Business help you manage business data and relationships effectively and flexibly; resource roles—such as finding the right accountant, banker, attorney, and insurance agent—are invaluable. As you begin to pull together the pieces of your business, count your resources as a huge part of your overall assets and be intentional about the way you include them during your startup stage.

- **Gather your supports (and use them!).** Having business advisers is an invaluable part of navigating a small business, whether you're a sole proprietor working at your kitchen table or part of a progressive team that spans the globe. Early on, identify four or five friends, peers, or professionals who understand the nature of your industry, the challenges you are likely to face, and the various responsibilities you are balancing. If someone you respect agrees to mentor you, even better. Look for examples of people who have been successful in the area you aspire to and set up a planned meeting schedule (for example, once a month for lunch) so that you can regularly check in and get feedback.
- **Create (and work) your systems.** We tend to spend a lot of time doing things we've already done—worrying about this particular problem, bumping up against that personality type, freaking out over a specific deadline that rolls around at the same time every month. Save yourself a lot of time and psychic energy by setting up systems to help manage things for you. Do your marketing on Mondays; end the work week on Fridays with follow-up thank yous to new clients. Pay your bills on a specific day; plan presentations for Wednesdays. Thinking of your work in month-long blocks of time helps you release the stress of wondering when you'll get to something. Once something is scheduled, you'll know it is being taken care of and you can free your mind to be creative in this moment. And that makes room for the great ideas you need in order to grow your business today.
- **Keep the inspiration flowing.** Entrepreneurial exhaustion is the downside of passion—it's that moment when you flop into the recliner, feeling worn out and used up, knowing that you've done as much as is humanly possible in a single day. This state of mind is not unusual, even for high-energy, high-output people. When you feel an energy crash coming on, relax into it and take it as just another form of inspiration—the type that's inspiring you to rest and rejuvenate. Allow your mind to get quiet; do something you enjoy; take an evening or weekend off; let your mind, body, and spirit rejuvenate. Having a startup business is a lot like having a newborn in your household—it needs almost all your attention and energy at first. Like a new parent, enjoy moments of quiet (yes, your business will nap once in a while) and look for opportunities to talk with others who understand and support what you're dealing with. If you build time and opportunity for inspiration into your business right from the start, it can blossom in creative ways as your business begins to grow.

■ What's Next

This chapter introduced you to many of the features included in Office Live Small Business that can support you as you get your business online, promote your business, and manage your data and relationships. The next chapter launches into the practical pieces: you'll find out how to sign up, set up your account, choose the business services you want, and begin using Office Live Small Business to introduce your business to the world and position it for growth.