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**25**  
**PRODUCTIVITY**  
**TOOLS**  
**RECOMMENDED**  
**FOR YOUR**  
**TECH STARTUP**

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The recent Brexit vote has caused a wave of concerns amongst small businesses, with the first and totally not unexpected reaction being a recruitment freeze to allow businesses to assess the long term impact. There will likely also be a push from concerned employees and contractors to move to more settled business markets, which we expect will see a rise in the digital nomad entrepreneur, for which productivity tools will be an essential element of getting work done for client's efficiently and visibly. We at Nuvem9 love living in the cloud and run our entire business operations over cloud applications and from varying locations internationally. Not only does this allow us to run a streamlined business to minimise costs and overheads and keep our fees down, we have the flexibility to work in different places and countries without any break of service to our valued clients. This list comprises our current list of essential cloud productivity tools and resources that we operate the business on daily and recommend to give your business the flexibility and efficient cost base that ours enjoys:

## Operational Productivity Tools

### Google Apps

A great email platform, free 15 GB file storage, integrated calendar, video hangouts and Google docs with which we share and collaborate files with clients. Accessible on a browser and mobile device anywhere, we can simply pop into a wifi zone wherever we are and connect. Irreplaceable.

### Unroll.me

Digesting content is an invaluable part of our ongoing learning; it keeps us abreast of what is happening, what new products are out there which could help us help our clients and simply learning from thought leaders and influencers. The problem is getting too many emails throughout the day becomes a serious distraction to getting stuff done. Unroll.me is a free tool which simply hides these emails and instead presents in one daily digest email which you can scan and expand from at will. We have our digest email set to arrive around 7am during breakfast but pre the work day starting which is a perfect time to catch up.

### Boomerang

There are a large number of email Productivity Tools, but our approach is, with so many instant communication tools around, see below, it is no longer appropriate or effective to use email for instant messaging. Boomerang is a Gmail add-on that we use to send emails at a specific time in the future. The benefit is that we can schedule emails to arrive with our clients and partners at a time that suits them and ourselves.

## **Inbox Pause**

Similar to Unroll.me, Inbox Pause is a fantastic email productivity tool to get urgent work completed and keep emails out of the way. Rather than just close your email browser completely, Inbox Pause sends an out of office message to the sender stating you are unavailable to a certain time, but critically, hides the email from you until after the specified time. The result is you can deal with emails in batches and urgent needs from the sender are diverted to a more appropriate platform. Batched working through emails = immense productivity gains!

## **Hellosign**

We have become recent converts to Hellosign and now wonder why we bought a scanner. It's not just the fact that agreements now don't need printed, signed, scanned and/or posted. It's the sheer ease of use of Hellosign and the fact that we can now get projects kicked off and earnings coming in much more quickly.

## **Lastpass**

Of all the productivity tools on this list imagine the time you would save by never having to check or remember a password again. You will by now appreciate that using all the tools comes with a critical choice. Do I use the same password for everything or do I need to carry round a big book with my passwords in it? Not very secure or practical. The Lastpass vault allows you to store all your passwords under 1 secure login. At the last count I had over 200 passwords and not having to look for these saves so much time. (Just don't lose your Lastpass password and you are fine, which I did last year and turned the air blue while I resolved it!)

## **File Storage Productivity Tools**

### **Dropbox**

Quite simply our business couldn't operate without Dropbox. It removes the need for costly servers, it is accessible across platforms and devices, and sharing folders allows 2-way access to upload and download files.

### **Google Docs**

As noted in Google Apps above, Google docs allows collaboration and real time changes to be made to documents, visible by the other user(s). Alerts can also be set up to allow changes to be tracked and reviewed by the other user(s) later. We find this type of collaboration is extremely effective for ongoing cashflow models for example.

## Task and Project Management Productivity Tools

### Asana

Asana can be used for free for small teams, with a small paid version for larger teams. We find this invaluable for setting tasks for each client, assigning responsibilities and tracking progress. Using repeatable tasks is great for recurring monthly or quarterly reports, whilst the ability to send an email direct to Asana and create a task, plus link Dropbox folders, further improves the efficiency between applications.

### Trello

An online whiteboard for projects and collaborating ideas. The sheer pleasure as you see projects moving from left to right as projects progress is something to behold! Or maybe we're just geeks....

## Accounting Productivity Tools

### Xero

As a Xero Certified Partner, and a Company that has built its entire business around Xero, it had to be on the list of essential productivity tools. Our other pages and blogs go into the features in much greater detail but having real time access to my business finances, plus integrated bank feeds, makes me wonder how any business can operate without that.

### Receipt Bank

One of my mantras is that, in this day and age, no-one should do the same task twice and especially no-one should key data from one system to another. Yet we work with so many businesses that print off pdf invoices from their supplier, give the paper to a junior and then ask the junior to type it into Xero. We use Receipt Bank and have all our clients doing the same. Automated processing of invoice from email box to draft invoice on Xero without a single second wasted.

### GoCardless and Directli

Another area of finance we simply hate wasting time on is credit control. GoCardless allows a simple online direct debit mandate to be authorised while Directli then steps into automate the collection of payments via a Xero integration. So we raise an invoice and the money comes in at a later date with No. Extra. Work. Involved. How much time and money does that save over the course of a year? For any clients not on direct debit we highly recommend Satago or Chaser for automating credit control communications.

## **Transfermate and Payoneer**

The Brexit vote caused the currency markets to go into chaos. So many of our clients still used high street banks for currency transfers when we started working with them and were amazed at how easy it was to transfer money via Transfermate, never mind how much money they had been wasting using the bank. With an integration to Xero, Transfermate also allows invoice details to be pulled in automatically, payments to be batched and the information to be fed back into Xero so the invoices are marked as paid. Payoneer is vital for Companies who will be seeking to trade in new territories post Brexit; if you don't have a USD account for example but are required to bid and bill in USD, Payoneer collects the money in local currency for you and pays you in your base currency. It also comes with a Xero plugin for further efficiency savings.

## **Training & Learning Productivity Tools**

### **Fizzle**

If you haven't listened to the Fizzle podcast then we highly recommend it. It's entertaining but filled with nuggets of wisdom from entrepreneurs who have all ran their own small businesses. Aimed towards a startup, solopreneur or sidepreneur audience, the main Fizzle site provides a subscription service with a huge vault of online training. It has been of tremendous value to is for learning new ideas, assessing and streamlining our own business and progressing new ventures.

### **Medium**

It is almost impossible to spend more than 5 minutes on the blogging platform Medium without having come away and learnt something. We just love the ease of use, the audience that use it and the value of the content published. Integrating with social feeds and blogs on your own site it can be used to great effect for generating leads and new additions to your network.

### **Pocket**

Do you ever find that the most valuable content you want to read and learn from comes just before you are due to meet someone, get a call, get not so gently nudged by your wife for being on your phone again? (maybe that last one just happens to me?). In comes Pocket. A simple swipe on mobile or click on a Chrome browser plugin and the article is saved to Pocket and accessible online and offline. The ability to tag articles means we can also now research multiple pages in a fraction of the time and then scan and read in batch later. Pocket now also allows you to follow and be followed meaning you can engage with people with your interests.

## **Audible**

When people say men can't multitask they didn't consider Audible. I can now listen to a book while cutting the grass, commuting, exercising. If you are very keen I recommend turning the speed up to 1.5 or 2 meaning you consume content twice as fast. I maintain the library and continually go back and re-listen to the best books.

## **Podcasts**

Like audible I can consume content on the move with Podcasts. Our current favourites are Fizzle (as noted above), Startup, Foundr Magazine and the Xero podcast but we listen to so many, many more. A special shout out also to our friend Paul McAnallen who has started his own podcast "Big ideas for SMEs and Startups".

## **Deezer**

If, like me, you work best with some level of background noise, I recommend Deezer. For a £9.99 per month subscription I can essentially access an entire library of music, switch on playlists and start work with a theme of soft, easy listening music, or more inspiring indie and rock depending on what I am doing. (As a further shout out I also have Simple Radio for access to a wide range of international radio stations if I fancy something completely different and eclectic).

## **Communication Productivity Tools**

### **Slack**

My favourite tool on this list. We have the Slack app on our laptop and phones meaning we can communicate with our clients quickly and efficiently, exchange files, set-up sub groups etc. We now operate a customer support channel for our clients via Slack and have integrated our twitter feed so we can get alerts and engage with followers mentioning or posting to us. Slack is effectively meaning we don't have to spend anywhere near the time we used to on email. Slack also allows us to join likeminded communities and potential customers in the many niche channels we have found and joined.

### **Skype**

An oldie but still vitally important while we are across borders and need to video call with our clients and service providers. We have also set up Skype diverts and Skype landlines to ensure that more traditional client enquiries can be provided via a local rate landline, even if we are currently in Portugal answering it on a laptop or mobile.

## Whatsapp

Via Whatsapp we can text and call for free internationally while online. Our business now offers Whatsapp as a support channel and it can become a vital business tool, as a next stage in its massive rise in the personal communication territory.

## Social Media Productivity Tools

### Buffer

If you are not familiar with Buffer it creates two time saving advantages. Firstly, scheduling. This means you can schedule posts at the time they will most likely be seen by the target audience. Secondly, you can post across multiple social channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest and now Instagram). We can now create campaigns for weeks and often an entire month in one session. (We recommend Buffer but Hootsuite is an alternative).

### Quuu

I love the premise of Quuu in two ways. Firstly, I can set up automated curation of our industry via their find a tweet service. We send out regular posts via Quuu each day, with Quuu finding interesting and relevant articles based on keywords we have educated it to find. Integrating with Buffer means we can schedule these posts over multiple social networks. This leaves time for engagement with respondents to the tweets and it is a vital business development tool. I also like the ability to distribute our own content, for a small fee, which means other Quuu users can pick up and distribute to their network. A great productivity aid for any serious social campaign.

Nuvem9 are location independent, cloud accounting and business application specialists and full time users of all these productivity tools. We would love to hear from you to discuss how our cloud services can save your business time and money. [Contact us for more details.](#)

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