

Small Business News & Notes

Expert Looks Back Fifty Years

by Jane Applegate

(NAPSA)—If you were running a small company in 1953, your workday would be radically different than it is today. For example, if you wanted to pitch your products or services to a potential customer, you would type one letter at a time on a manual typewriter (remember carbon copies?). After mailing the letter, you could call to follow up, but there would be no voicemail to take a message. There were telephones, but no call waiting, call forwarding or the ability to instantly “redial.”



Applegate

It's hard to imagine life without personal computers, Internet, e-mail, fax and overnight delivery. Today, managers are expected to respond and make decisions in minutes, not weeks. Even the smallest U.S. company can do business overseas and operate 24 hours a day on the Web.

If you can't imagine life without your wireless phone, consider this: in 1947, the first wireless phones were being developed as a type of two-way radio. But, that year, skeptical members of the Federal Communications Commission passed a rule limiting frequencies, allowing only 23 simultaneous conversations in one service area—not exactly an incentive for growth.

Finally, in 1968, the agency reconsidered its position and the mobile phone boom began. Today, business people are among the more than 110 million wireless phone users in the U.S. By 2005, the number is expected to hit 1.2

billion worldwide, according to the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association.

Unlike 50 years ago, today's entrepreneurs have many choices, making it easier to save time and money. An integrated communications provider like Sprint, for example, can provide everything a growing business needs—local and long distance service, high-speed Internet access and wireless.

Why am I comparing life today to the life of an entrepreneur 50 years ago?

Because the U.S. Small Business Administration is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. The agency, whose administrator is a member of the Cabinet, is responsible for making sure America's entrepreneurs are treated fairly.

The SBA Office of Advocacy monitors legislation and keeps Congress informed when pending regulations will harm entrepreneurs. Since 1953, the SBA has provided \$170 billion in government loan guarantees to encourage banks to lend money to small business owners. If you need help, SCORE, the Service Corps of Retired Executives, provides free counseling, workshops and business support services.

Many advances have been made in the last 50 years. Small businesses continue to be the backbone of this country and contribute to its economic growth. I'm looking forward to the next 50 years.

Jane Applegate is the author of "The Entrepreneur's Desk Reference" and founder of The Applegate Group, a multimedia production company based in Pelham, NY. For more information, visit www.sprint.com/janeapplegate.