



SMALL
TECH,



BIG
IMPACT



Technology that
helps all around camp

When it comes to implementing new technology, there are two basic kinds of people: Technophiles and Luddites. When the shiny new technology is released, the Technophiles drool, while the Luddites groan.

Whichever “camp” you fall into, you likely want the same thing out of your technology: More efficiency, higher quality, cost-savings and reliability. You want the tech to work for you so you can work for the ministry. Fewer distractions and better communication are good things for the world of Christian camping. In that spirit, consider the following list of small-tech solutions you can implement that are easy, inexpensive and extremely helpful. ►

■ Google Forms

What is it?

Google Forms is a Web form creator. A Web form is a tool for collecting information from users through a series of questions. The answers to the questions are then automatically put into a spreadsheet for easy consumption.

How does it help camp?

In any situation where you are asking the same questions over and over, you should consider using a Web form. This might include registrations, group inquiries, feedback forms or staff training (try the quiz feature!). Google Forms is easy to learn, fast and simple. If you could eliminate a 15-minute phone call that is made 200 times a year, you've just earned 50 hours of your life back. Once you start, you'll find dozens of ways to use this great resource!

How much does it cost?

Free!

■ Canva

What is it?

Canva uses thousands of pre-created templates to help you design like an expert. This online tool uses drag-and-drop technology to build digital ads, postcards, posters, Facebook covers, presentations and more. Think of it as Photoshop plus Microsoft Publisher, only easier.

How does it help camp?

Canva is the secret your expensive Web design company doesn't want you to know about. Eliminate costs and time by creating your own high-quality artwork. The pre-made templates help you stay consistent in your branding, and you can use your own logo. Canva is a no-brainer for any camp looking to polish up their donor and camper materials.

How much does it cost?

Freemium (free basic features, inexpensive premium features)

■ IFTTT

What is it?

IFTTT stands for "If This Then That." Terrible name aside, it's one of the best services available for outside-the-box thinkers. IFTTT is a tool that makes two pieces of unrelated technology talk to each other. The service uses "applets" — tiny programs that make your tech work the way you want.

For example: What if you could receive a text message every time a certain person emailed you? Or what if you could have a spreadsheet showing every phone call you ever received? What if you could have a folder online that contained all of the email attachments ever sent to you? This is the beauty of IFTTT — where actions in one tech auto-magically trigger actions in another tech.

How does it help camp?

This tech saves you time by automating unique processes in otherwise unconnected technology. Your maintenance team can use it to log building usage; your summer staff can clock in and out with a text message, you can receive an alert on your phone whenever an incident report is completed. The list goes on and on. IFTTT puts programming into the hands of users without requiring the scary knowledge of how to write programs.

How much does it cost?

Free!

■ MeisterTask

What is it?

MeisterTask is a task management app that is highly visual and team-oriented. It's a communication tool that turns group to-do lists into group to-done lists. Its design is so intuitive that after you set it up you can show it to your team and they will get it in less than five minutes. It also has a free mobile app for both Android and iPhone users.

How does it help camp?

Imagine that next month you have 10 groups coming, eight maintenance projects and two programmed camps. How do you keep it all straight? MeisterTask is the big whiteboard you wish you always had with you, allowing you to see at a glance the status of each project — who is responsible, due dates and a log of all that has been done on each project so far. The keyword here is "communication."

How much does it cost?

Freemium. Tip: Give your tech nerd the paid account and everyone else the free account.

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MeisterTask is a task management app that ... turns group to-do lists into group to-done lists.

■ Google Hangouts Chat

What is it?

Google Hangouts Chat (not to be confused with Google Hangouts) launched in March 2018 and is a part of G Suite (formerly known as Google Apps). This is a direct challenge to Slack, a team communication tool. Think of old-school chat rooms, but with the ability to share text, send files and have video conference calls. Virtual rooms are created around teams, topics or events, so all discussion taking place in that “room” is related, and easy to go back to.

How does it help camp?

You have too many emails, and those emails are all about different topics. Communicating to groups of people in real-time and in whatever way makes the most sense at the moment is efficient and effective. Better communication with your team means fewer distractions for your group, which makes for better evangelism, discipleship and worship for your guests.

How much does it cost?

Free if you have the G Suite. Just have your network administrator turn it on.

■ Google Voice

What is it?

Google Voice is a free phone number for your organization that can be used to text or receive and send calls and can be programmed on a whim to forward to any specific phone. Other features include cheap international calling and the ability to screen incoming calls before answering.

How does it help camp?

Instead of sharing a list of cell phone numbers for your overnight guests to decipher, give your guests one phone number. When your day host goes home, they can seamlessly change the settings so the evening host will receive any calls to the Google Voice number on their own cell phone. Groups do not get your personal number, and the number transitions to different employees when there is turnover. Go the next level by providing a text number on your website that forwards to your phone, or multiple phones.

How much does it cost?

Free to anyone with a Gmail account!

■ Google Sheets

What is it?

Google Sheets is Excel in the cloud, but easier and free.

How does it help camp?

The beauty of Google Sheets is collaboration and integration. A Google Sheet can be worked on simultaneously by multiple users, and is simple to share, even with people outside of your organization. Google Sheets integrates with many other online platforms. Most notably, Google Forms can automatically populate Google Sheets — a very useful combination.

How much does it cost?

Free! Just get a Gmail account.

■ ScreenCloud

What is it?

ScreenCloud is a Web-based digital signage solution that uses pre-made templates and internet-connected apps to communicate to guests. Used primarily in high-traffic convention centers and hotels, the tool is made to efficiently get information to the masses.

How does it help camp?

Because it is Web-based, ScreenCloud can provide dynamic content. This means you can hang a TV and rotate several slides, and some of them will be “smart” slides, such as a weather update that automatically renews its information. Imagine revolving a welcome slide, a slide of your guests’ schedule and a traffic or flight update slide that writes itself. The tool also works on a schedule, so from 3 p.m. – 5 p.m. it might show the bio of that evening’s speaker, then automatically it will take that slide out of the rotation. You can also post different things to different TVs. If you can post to Facebook, you can operate ScreenCloud, making it an easy and effective tool that won’t eat your prep time.

How much does it cost?

The plan is \$20/month, but there is a 25 percent discount for nonprofit organizations. You’ll also need a TV and a smart device, like the Amazon Fire TV. ►

■ Gorgias Templates for Gmail

What is it?

Gorgias Templates for Gmail is a tool that embeds itself into your Gmail to save you time by helping you never have to write the same email twice.

How does it help camp?

Let's say there's an email you tend to write far too often, like the answer to a basic question such as, "What kind of lodging does your camp have?" Instead of re-writing the same email you've used countless times, you simply click a dropdown list that is added to Gmail, choose your "lodging" template, and the email writes itself. You can then customize it before sending, or send it on its way.

How much does it cost?

Freemium. Tip: Use the free version. The paid version lets you share templates with a team, but if you regularly send each other text to copy/paste into your own accounts, you'll never need to pay.

■ Evernote

What is it?

Evernote is a digital bookshelf of notebooks filled with your own notes or your team's notes.

How does it help camp?

Imagine you're planning a major event, like a women's retreat. You are collaborating with a team and working on about a dozen mini-projects within the big project. In Evernote, you would have a "Notebook" for the event itself, and then individual "Notes" for each project within the project. By clicking on the Marketing Note, you see text notes you've taken, photos, scanned PDFs, links, checklists and any other digital content related to marketing the big event. In the Vendors Note you might have a list of your suppliers, people to call, pricing and additional information. Evernote keeps you organized by allowing many media types to sit in one multi-level system.

How much does it cost?

Freemium. The free version limits the number of devices you can connect to your account. The business version costs about \$15/user, with discounts for non-profit organizations.

■ Board Management

Options:

- Boardpaq.com
- Boardable.com
- MyBoardPacket.com

What is it?

These packages help organize board life and streamline documents and processes necessary for a well-functioning board.

How does it help camp?

Camp boards, by their very nature, involve a lot of documents and protocol. Much of that can be managed with software that allows your board members to focus on the work at hand. Good packages include online posting of documents, digital signatures, calendar management, documentation of minutes and online voting.

How much does it cost?

Some packages have sliding scales for small to large camps with pricing starting at \$99/month up to \$350/month.

■ GovPredict

What is it?

This app is for government and business professionals tracking, participating in and influencing government activity.

How does it help camp?

The app is separated into 15 different resources, offering updates at both federal and state levels. Resources include legislative real-time monitoring for all 50 states, a hub for legislative prediction and analysis, bill text comparisons and live updates on keywords, committee hearings and lobbying disclosures.

CCCA's legislation, electoral and government relations consultant Jamie Lord says, "I'm often asked 'How would an organization like ours know if a bill introduced would impact our organization?' — especially if the organization doesn't have a lobbyist or isn't a member of an association that has one. Resources like this can help groups know when a committee hearing will be so they can participate." This is probably most beneficial for a Section to purchase or for larger camps.

How much does it cost?

Pricey at \$12,000 a year for five licenses.

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■ Lodgepole.net

What is it?

Lodgepole is a facilities-tracking package that allows your team to upload their knowledge about renovation, replacement and materials used on your property.

How does it help camp?

Keeping track of facilities issues is only as good as the systems you have in place. As staff members leave, often the knowledge of the maintenance, construction and operations of a camp or conference center goes with them. Lodgepole allows you to track just about anything on property and to customize that tracking so it's most helpful to you.

How much does it cost?

Price depends on property size and scope, and the module that is best for your property.

■ YouthMinistry.com

What is it?

This community of youth workers and ministry experts create resources to help those who work directly with youth.

How does it help camp?

Games and graphics are already created and tested with a group, so you know they'll be fun. They provide an easy plug-and-play programming option on those days when the unexpected happens, driving you inside with a couple hundred guests you need to engage. The games are also great ice-breakers.

How much does it cost?

\$1 – \$20, depending on the game. YouthMinistry.com members receive a discount. ►



Photo courtesy of Camp Timberline



Photo courtesy of Camp Timberline

Parents want to know what their kids are doing at camp; kids want photos to keep as a way of preserving their memories.

■ WaldoPhotos.com

What is it?

Waldo is facial-recognition software that identifies each camper in your uploaded camp photos and sends a mobile message to their parents with only the photos their camper appears in.

How does it help camp?

Parents want to know what their kids are doing at camp; kids want photos to keep as a way of preserving their memories. This saves parents time so they don't have to scroll through your entire photo stream to find their kids. It also allows you to keep a running photo album of campers over the years.

How much does it cost?

The service cost parents \$1 – \$2 per day, depending on whether the camp has decided to use half of the subscription price to fund camper scholarships. For camps who opt to pay for Waldo for all of their campers, it costs between 70 cents and \$1 per camper, per day, depending on a number of variables.

■ Star Gazing Apps

Options:

- Star Walk 2
- Sky Guide
- Night Sky
- SkySafari 5
- GoSkyWatch Planetarium

How does it help camp?

These apps make it easy for you to enhance your environmental education programs, or to create nighttime programming for youth or adult guest groups. Find out exactly what's in the sky over your camp using these apps.

How much does it cost?

Free to \$14.99

■ MenuWorks

What is it?

MenuWorks is a resource inside the customer portal for Entegra customers.

How does it help camp?

Entegra provides this resource for existing camp and conference centers to plan menus and to access new recipes. Recipes are updated regularly.

How much does it cost?

Included for customers through your customer portal.

■ Lightning Detection Tools

Options:

- WeatherBug (mobile app)
- AccuWeather (mobile app)
- Ambientweather.com/lightning

What is it?

WeatherBug doesn't send notifications, but will show lightning strikes in your area when you open the app, along with a weather radar and forecast. AccuWeather can be set up to send severe weather alerts to your phone. Ambient Weather is a more sophisticated tool — the market leader in weather station and environmental monitoring instruments — offering a variety of lightning detector devices.

How does it help camp?

Unpredictable weather places camps and campers in vulnerable situations. While no tool is a complete safeguard, apps and devices can help provide valuable information to help you plan for potential emergencies and implement those plans in a timely fashion.

How much does it cost?

Most weather apps for smartphones are free. The Ambient Weather lightning detectors range in price, and start around \$189. ■



Michael Miller is the director of events at Cedar Lake Ministries in Cedar Lake, Indiana. A TEDx Talk speaker, Michael is a technology enthusiast and entrepreneur. Michael is a consultant who has had the privilege of assisting large international manufacturers with process management and leadership training. He's passionate about ministry, enjoys technology and strategic processes and loves to help other camps (as long as his family can come along!).



Penny Hunter has been a marketing consultant for 30 years, working with major U.S. companies and nonprofits and leading campaigns for feature films. She also served as a vice president for International Justice Mission. Follow her on Twitter @pennyhunter. Email her at hunterpg@gmail.com.