BT successfully demonstrates Xero at the BT Business Experience in London

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BT Business has launched a new web-based accounting application, to replace the complex software blighting smaller firms, forcing their employees to work longer hours.

The launch of Xero, a new online tool designed for firms and their advisors, is supported by new research by BT Business which finds that almost 50 per cent of smaller business staff work extra hours to clear their current workloads, with 41 per cent admitting that they actually waste work time because of poor technology and systems.

Accessible from any internet or mobile connection, Xero is aimed at helping businesses access, update, review and control their finances in the downturn anywhere, from any device. The simple, software-as-a-service (SaaS) package will provide customers with 24/7 secure online access to bank transactions, invoices, reports, VAT returns and management reporting.

Chris Lindsay, general manager at BT Business applications, said: "Customer feedback is that traditional accounting packages are complicated to use, and can only be accessed while in the office. As a result, managers put book keeping off and spend too many late evenings or weekends in the office. Owner managers tend not to be finance experts, and dread having to file their accounts with these systems. The research shows that employees are working harder and longer during the downturn anyway, so we hope that Xero users will instantly be more productive and redress an often dire work/life balance."

Xero is available as a free 30 day BT Business trial. Features include a real time dashboard of a firm's transactions, online accrual to keep book-keeping up to date, daily bank reconciliation function, web-based accounting from anywhere with an internet connection, expense claim processing and reporting for financial advisors.

Andrew Sandiford, head of Business Advisory and Assurance at Target feels that Xero eliminates all the problems of not feeling 'part of the client's business' for his accountants: "With Xero, you can access a client's accounts at any time. More importantly, you know you are looking at the same 'version' of the accounts as the client because there is only one ledger. Xero is fantastic for us, as it means we can offer 'real-time' advice, basing our recommendations on the up-to-date financial data we can see."

Delivered as SaaS, Xero can also be implemented quickly without the upfront licence fees, maintenance or upgrade costs associated with on-premise software. Cloudcomputing applications like Xero reside online and are accessed by a simple web browser. Businesses only pay for the resources they use.

BT Business provides everything from handsets to applications to help smaller firms work, share and manage common operational processes including Ribbit for Salesforcewhich is designed to improve sales team productivity, eSignature and CRM systems salesforce.com, Netsuite and SugarCRM.

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BT is one of the world's leading providers of communications solutions and services operating in 170 countries. Its principal activities include the provision of networked IT services globally; local, national and international telecommunications services to our customers for use at home, at work and on the move; broadband and internet products and services and converged fixed/mobile products and services. BT consists principally of four lines of business: BT Global Services, Openreach, BT Retail and BT Wholesale.

In the year ended 31 March 2009, BT Group's revenue was £21,390 million.

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