

# Nick's Mac Software Picks

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In 2007 I began using a Mac for a research project. When that project was finished I decided to stay on the Mac! Some say if you try a Mac you'll never go back; I stayed with it because it helps us support many of our clients who use them. The switchover has been a little challenging, however, because I'm used to using business-class software. In this article I'll share what software I use to keep me as productive as I was on the Windows platform, which may help the Mac users on your team.

Software comes in three basic categories: operating systems, applications, and games. Although games are the most fun, in this article we will only look at operating systems and applications.

## Operating Systems

The operating system software (often called the OS) is what tells computers what to do with the commands they receive from users and programs. The Mac OS is *OS X*, which is version ten of their OS (thus the Roman numeral *X*). Each release of version ten is named after a big cat. I use Leopard (v10.5), and Snow Leopard (v10.6) is just about to hit the streets.

The minimum specs for 10.5 & 10.6 are:

- 64-bit Intel processor (multicore needed for certain features)
- 1gb RAM (I recommend at least 2gb)

One of the things I've learned about the Mac OS is that it's usually a good idea to upgrade to new releases fairly soon.

One of the benefits in the soon-to-be-released Snow Leopard— for those of us who work in organizations using Microsoft Exchange email servers— is that it is fully Exchange aware. That means a Mac user can use Apple programs like Mail, iCal, etc to connect to an Exchange server.

## Hypervisors

Most churches and ministries use some applications, like congregational databases, that only work on Windows-based computers. A recent category of software that allows you to run many *virtual* computers on one *physical* computer is called the hypervisor. Hypervisors are one of the best ways to run Windows-only programs on a Mac. My favorite is VMware's Fusion ([www.vmware.com](http://www.vmware.com)).

When you install Fusion and set up a virtual Windows PC, a window opens that looks just like a real Windows PC! And in that window you install and run software just like you would on a physical Windows-based PC... only it's in a window running on your Mac! This is a great option for those who need to run applications that only run on a Windows-based PC. But there is another option...

## RDC

The two drawbacks to running a virtual PC are complexity and cost:

- *Complexity*. Setting up a virtual PC is like setting up any physical Windows PC: you go through all of the setup, software installation, and configuration. Those are some of the reasons many Mac users avoid Windows— Macs are easier to use out of the box.
- *Cost*. Virtual Windows-based PCs require all of the same licenses, such as Windows and Office, as physical PCs. Each application on the virtual PC needs to be licensed.

Most Mac users rarely need a Windows-based PC unless they need to run software that only runs in Windows. In ministries that have a Terminal Server (a free feature of the Windows Server *Network Operating System*) on their network, a simpler method is available.

A free Microsoft utility that allows Macs to run Terminal Server *sessions* is the Remote Desktop Connection client, or RDC.

Terminal Server sessions provide a Windows desktop in a window, similar to what a Mac user would have in a *virtual* Windows-based PC. But instead of running the Windows session from the local hard drive, RDC requires a network or Internet connection and the Terminal Server address. This is much easier, and the only cost is for the Terminal Server client access license, which for churches and ministries is only \$22.

The easiest way to get this utility is to go to [www.microsoft.com/downloads](http://www.microsoft.com/downloads) and search for *mac rdc*. Make sure you get the most current version based on the release date!

## Applications

The programs we use to get work done (I refer to this category as productivity software) can come in separate pieces or in suites, like Apple's iWork or Microsoft's Office.

Many Mac users like the small applications that come with the OS, often referred to as applets. Those who want more software features and capabilities prefer iWork or Office. In church and ministry settings, most users need features beyond those included in applets.

The good news is that these tools keep getting better and better! That translates into higher productivity and more effective ministry!

The two suites Mac users prefer are iWork and Office. Both are good. If your church or ministry team is focused on Microsoft Office and/ or Exchange, for compatibility I recommend Office 2008— which is less expensive than iWork with Microsoft's charity licensing. If your church or ministry is not focused on Microsoft Office and/ or Exchange, iWork is very capable.

## Documents

Church word processing is highly layout and mail-merge oriented, as opposed to simple document processing. If your team uses Microsoft Word, then Windows users probably augment the layout function with a light desktop publisher like Microsoft Publisher. In Word 2008 (the most current Mac version), the layout abilities are better than in the Windows version. They're also great in iWork's word processor, Pages.

## Tables

The best spreadsheet program available is Microsoft Excel. The formula, charting, and diagnostic functions are powerful and easy to use. Excel can also link to many databases by using pivot tables, providing real-time diagnostic charting to help make good management decisions.

iWork's Numbers has a new option where you can add a slider to a cell to change values. It's a very nice way to test how changes might affect formula results. Excel and Numbers spreadsheets and charts paste easily into documents.

## Graphic Presentations

This category of software lets you put together lessons, sermons, classes, and more in outline form. Those outlines can be presented as attractive slide shows that can be projected through monitors or projectors with attention-getting graphics and animation.

The two greatest benefits we've found are:

1. Reduced preparation time since the software works in outline form; and
2. Enhanced delivery of your message because it involves more senses and can be graphically memorable.

I've found that it's important to keep your slideshow from looking like all of the others your audience may have seen. So I create custom templates, keeping my content feeling fresh.

Microsoft PowerPoint is very good for this. iWork's Keynote is also great, and has some advanced tasteful animation and transition options that will keep your audience's attention. iPhone users will also like the ability to run Keynote slideshows directly from their iPhone via WiFi!

## Email, Calendars, & Task Management

Microsoft Entourage 2008 and Exchange 2007 are the combination of choice in this category. Exchange 2007 is the email server, and Entourage 2008 is the client that presents Exchange's contents to the user. Entourage 2008 has a free update to version 13 (Web Services Edition) that closely integrates it with Exchange 2007's features and capabilities.

## Database

Most ministries are best to buy a ministry or church management system (CMS) that is designed to serve the needs of ministries rather than to buy a database application and develop a CMS of their own. There are many good CMS providers listed in this journal. Don't buy a database application and develop your own; it takes too much time and is too hard on the staff.

## Internet Browser

There are a growing number of people using Mozilla's Firefox Internet browser. Download it free from [www.mozilla.com](http://www.mozilla.com). Firefox easy to use and has some nice features that Safari doesn't. It does a great job at securely remembering website IDs and passwords, and is safer to use than other browsers.

## Internet Porn Protection

Our favorite utility to stop the Internet porn problem is Covenant Eyes ([www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com)). It adds unavoidable accountability to browsing, and its benefits far outweigh its cost.

## Bible Study Tools & Libraries

There are many good tools to help in this area. My favorite is the Logos Scholar's Library, which now has a Mac version! One that many like to run on their SmartPhone is simply called Bible (see [www.youversion.com](http://www.youversion.com)).

## Brainstorming / Note Taking Tool

A great tool for brainstorming and note taking is Mindjet's MindManager Pro. It is terrific for meetings, workshops, sermon preparation, and more. Free twenty-one day trial downloads are available at [www.mindjet.com](http://www.mindjet.com).

## Notebook Synchronization

My MacBook Pro connects to our network when I'm in the office. To participate in our disaster recovery/ business continuity (DR/BC) strategy, I save all my data on the network server. The challenge is data synchronization between my Mac and the server.

A great application that synchronizes changes I've made while gone to the network and changes made on the network while I was gone to my Mac is Econ Technologies' ChronoSync ([www.econtechnologies.com](http://www.econtechnologies.com)). It fully automates the process very nicely.

## Windows Mobile Smartphone Sync

I'd love to have an iPhone, but our firm uses Verizon Wireless because of its superior nationwide coverage. That means I have a SmartPhone that uses Microsoft Windows Mobile, which doesn't natively synchronize with Macs.

Mark/Space ([www.markspace.com](http://www.markspace.com)) has a great solution called *Missing Sync for Windows Mobile* that works very well.

## Happy Shopping!

For ministries, many of these applications can be purchased for their best price from Consistent Computer Bargains, also known as CCB (800/342-4222). CCB only sells to not-for-profit organizations, and as a result is able to negotiate great prices on your behalf. But shop around; there are plenty of good bargains out there to help maximize your team's productivity!

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