

Free Office Software

800 words

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August 17, 2017

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Office software makes our lives better, increasing productivity, sharing drafts, collating information with graphs, words, and presentations, effectively bringing our communications alive.

Ever wonder if there is cheap office software for your business that rivals the functionality of the expensive brand? LibreOffice (<https://www.libreoffice.org/>) is a free-office download, having: Writer (word processing), Calc (spreadsheets), Impress (presentations), Draw (vector graphics and flowcharts), Base (databases), and Math (formula editing), according to their website. Obviously this is a lot to get for no cost, but does it actually work?

The personal computer created the need for more sophisticated applications, encompassing millions of lines of code, making our offices more productive. Word processing is the lynchpin of any office suite, allowing users to create documents in different formats that print well, convert to PDFs (Portable-Document Format), and are emailed. Spreadsheets handle the money, and any business owner knows that money is the life's blood of a business. Presentation software enjoys a special status, illuminating the ideas of your favorite keynote speaker. A big plus for collaboration is all the programs are able to access cloud-based services like Google Drive with the Remote Files Feature built into LibreOffice.

Draw encompasses vector graphics with no need to buy an expensive alternative. Base is database software, manipulating data from purchasing requests to customer-service initiatives. Math handles specialty requirements for the engineering staff.

Businesses need solid-software tools, enabling them to run productive offices, perhaps without the overhead of \$300 - \$400 per desk licensing fees. Take this per-desk fee as an example, multiplying it times the number of employees in your organization, and operations gets expensive. Reallocating these funds to grow your business or save your taxpayers money may be a better use of capital. Imagine you have 200 employees times \$400 per seat, equaling \$80,000 you save, installing LibreOffice software instead of buying the next rollout.

Migrating to another software suite instead of upgrading requires planning, getting your people onboard, dealing with the blow-back, knowing your employees are comfortable in their jobs and do not like change. This is especially true of managers who are not always comfortable with technology upgrades, resulting in more work for them. Why do we have to change? Can we go back to the old way? Why does the screen look different? Where are my documents?

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All these hiccups can be resolved with forethought, ingenuity, contacting the vendor's team, and working with your IT Department. The reality of having the savings in hand represents a big win for the people you report to.

LibreOffice must be equal to its competitor, especially in functionality. "Free. Open-source. Suitable for government and other security-conscious offices. The only desktop suite available for Windows, macOS, and Linux. Can open and convert almost any legacy document or worksheet," according to PC Magazine.

As a business manager or family manager you must consider the cost savings versus the small headache of re-orienting your people to the benefits of the lower cost. The updates are always current, being open source the security is better, with constantly improving features, and regular downloads. The software is written by the open-source community for the greater good as opposed to maximizing profits, allowing governments to have modern software without spending tax-payers' monies, allowing businesses to modernize without additional cost, allowing families to save money too.

Don't forget to compare what you have now with the free-version, understanding that file compatibility is the most important thing to look for, knowing LibreOffice is compatible with major file formats like docx will help. Constructing a matrix of the other differences will bring out possible training problems you may encounter, and if these nuances are a deal breaker for your family or organization.

The biggest thing against the free product is "extra templates have to be downloaded and installed manually," according to TechRadar. Another downside: LibreOffice is not ribbon based so everything is out in the open, old school with drop-down menus. I must add that collaboration is not as easy as Google Docs. Finally, "It is not as good-looking as suites from Microsoft, Google, and Apple," according to PC Mag.

For those who need Outlook, it is not available, being easily purchased online, knowing some employee or family member may get heartburn from not having this particular email client installed.

LibreOffice works for me. I downloaded it onto a Windows 10 machine, having the Creators Update already installed. The process was easy, following the prompts, taking the default installation.

All the programs worked as expected, being forgiven for being slightly retro in appearance. I typed this piece on LibreOffice, hoping you are motivated to give it a try, enjoying the thrill of not paying a computer-licensing fee for your family, government office, or business.

ENDS.