Why Do Boeing 747s Still Use Floppy Disks?

Many small business owners would relate.

August 27, 2020 4 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

If you're old enough to remember floppy disks then, well, you're old.

I'm one of those people. I remember carrying around stacks of the little storage devices with me whenever I needed 1.4 MB of data to save. I remember when, just to install Microsoft Office, I had to insert, remove and reinsert dozens — yes, dozens — of those little things. I remember feeling cool because the little floppy disk was so much more advanced than those old-fashioned 5.25-inch ones. And I remember the excitement when (ready?) "zip" drives were introduced that had these newfangled looking floppy disks which could hold almost 100 times the data! That's 100 megabytes!

Wow. And then I remind myself that my smartphone how holds the equivalent of 177,000 floppy disks — yes 177,000 — and I just feel old.

Related: Did Bill Gates Really Offer a TV Interviewer a Blank Check?

The Boeing 747 plane is old too. But hey, it's still in service. In fact, even though it first hit the market in 1969, there are more than 400 Boeing 747s flying around the world even today. Most of the technologies that drive the Boeing 747 have been upgraded to keep up with the times. Except for one.

Apparently, the jet still uses floppy disks.

What?

According to The Verge, security researchers doing tests on the plane found a 3.5-inch floppy disk drive in the cockpit which is still in use so that it can “upload important navigation databases” every 28 days. And although the use has been declining, many of the planes still require engineers to “sit and load eight floppies with updates to airports, flight paths, runways and more.” By the way, Boeing isn’t the only major organization that still uses floppy disks. According to the Verge report, the U.S. Defense Department only ended the use of 8-inch floppy disks for coordinating the country’s nuclear forces in October, and the International Space Station is “full of floppy disks.”

You know what? As a small business owner, I get it. I really do.

I’m not a tech luddite. In fact, my firms sells cloud based applications. We’re also Microsoft partners. I spend my life trying to persuade small business owners like me – many of them old like me – to upgrade and replace their tech with the latest and greatest new stuff. Many of these business owners comply, but a fair number of them don’t. And when they don’t, I always get asked the same question: What’s my ROI?

Whether it’s a floppy disk or an older laptop, making technology changes costs money. The big tech firms will try to convince you to spend your money with them because it will improve your productivity, enhance your company’s security and make your life better. In some instances this is absolutely true.

But not infrequently I run across the savvy person who’s been running a business for decades and who doesn’t necessarily buy into that narrative. These are the people that drive a 10-year-old car, only buy used equipment and have never watched a

TikTok video. They’re not ignorant. They’ll spend on technology and other things that will make them money. But they don’t believe in spending their hard-earned money on anything unless there’s going to be a genuine return on their investment.

Related: Ellen, Just Apologize Already

When I tell them that Boeing 747s still use floppy disks they immediately understand. “Hey, if it works,” they say. “Don’t break it.” Maybe you can argue with their opinions, but given that they’ve been around for so long, I often find it difficult to argue with their success.

loading…

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/354919