

Putting technology to work in your small business

It's obvious that many small businesses want to grow, but growing your small business isn't easy - and the methods that worked in the past may no longer work in a world where disruption is the new normal, suggests Doug Woolley, general manager of Dell EMC South Africa.



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“Today, almost any business can be ‘Amazoned’ - and you can’t afford to get stuck on what used to work. As a small business owner, you must understand the key trends that are impacting businesses of all sizes - and adapt your business to stay ahead of the curve,” says Woolley.

According to Woolley some very big trends are converging that threaten to prematurely age business if the owners are not paying attention.

“ The workforce - and the workplace - are undergoing radical transformation, as millennials enter their prime working years and baby boomers retire. The gig economy is growing, and businesses are relying more on contractors and

freelancers to get work done. More people are travelling and telecommuting. "Power is shifting from sellers to buyers. With the internet in our pockets, everyone can access information, ratings and reviews about almost anything, anytime, anywhere - raising the bar for what customers expect from your company. "

"Political and regulatory turbulence is changing tax, labour and other laws and requirements. Figuring out what laws and regulations will impact your business is tough, but the onus is on businesses to stay on top of these regulatory twists and turns".

"Technology is increasingly intertwined with business results. Your businesses must figure out how to use technology to modernize the business and capitalize on change - or risk becoming a dinosaur," says Woolley.

Using new technology effectively is key

In the past, most businesses looked at technology as nothing more than a way to support what they were already doing. But according to Woolley, SMB Group research shows that today, three-quarters of small business respondents (companies with 1–99 employees) agree that using new technology effectively is key to their company's survival and growth, and that technology is reshaping their business models and their industries.

"Using outdated, cumbersome technology can put your business at risk. For instance, if you neglect cyber security, your company can suffer financial and brand damage if data is compromised. If you put off deploying CRM or analytics tools, sales may dip if you can't tap into changing customer requirements and preferences. If you overlook backup capabilities, a storm could destroy your systems - and wipe out your financial and customer data.

"In contrast, the right technology solutions can not only help to support day to day business requirements but also serve as a springboard for growth. As change becomes the only certainty, you need to use technology to facilitate the innovations that will help your business to grow," he says.

Woolley says it is important however for businesses to interrogate the willingness of vendors and their partners to be there for the long haul when choosing the right technology solution.

"Vendors that only push price without much care for the sustainability of those purchases end up doing a lot of damage to digital cultures. Some vendors are often too eager to promote the cost angle and not long-term value that they should deliver, and it is of critical importance that businesses focus on the sustainability of the technology solution and not just on the price."

According to the SMB Group research, just 21% of small businesses strongly agree that they have a well-defined strategy to use technology to transform their businesses for growth.

"With so many new solutions and technologies to choose from, just figuring out where to start can be challenging. But you don't have to go it alone. To get the best outcomes from technology investments and figure out what's right for you, you need guidance and support. Dell Small Business Central gives you direct access to Dell Small Business Technology Advisors who are there to answer questions, demystify technology and help solve the problems that keep you up at night.

"Our new SMB Group Perspectives report, *Putting Technology to Work to Help Your Small Business*

Grow, examines this topic in detail. We discuss key business and technology trends, the initiatives and technology solutions that small businesses are betting on for to protect and grow their businesses, and how Dell Small Business Technology Advisors can help you to prioritise and select the solutions you understand and capitalise on technology - so you can focus on running your business," concludes Woolley.

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