

Several ways small businesses can succeed in a digital world

The grit and innovation shown by small and medium businesses (SMBs) during a time of great change has been a triumph. It has also been a testament to the perseverance and creativity of SMBs and the communities in which they operate.

By [Richard Chambers](#) 16 Sep 2021



Richard Chambers, area vice president, Africa/MED, Salesforce | image supplied

While many businesses suffered in the pandemic, others seized entrepreneurial opportunities. This is according to Salesforce's latest [SMB Trends Report](#) which surveyed more than 2,500 SMB owners and leaders globally to discover what has changed for them over the past year and how that impacts their future.

The results highlight several ways SMBs can succeed in a digital world.

Prioritise employee and customer trust

The most successful SMBs are those that are taking action to earn employee and customer trust. Research shows that communicating transparently (51%), responding to personal needs (42%), and asking for feedback (40%) rank as the top three ways SMBs are earning employee trust.

To boost customer engagement, SMBs are working hard to innovate. Around the world, SMBs have adopted new practices to meet rising customer expectations; nearly half (47%) globally are more careful about their customer communications, and 42% have expanded the ways customers can reach them.

After more than a year of adjusting to customer demand and bringing new innovations to the fore, however, SMBs still face significant hurdles such as personalising customer engagements, responding quickly to inquiries, engaging customers on preferred channels, and providing a connected experience. It's clear the effective use of technology will continue to be a differentiator for SMBs.

Embrace a digital-first world

Despite some new restrictions on in-person interactions, communities and customers still want to support SMBs. In response, SMB leaders are prioritising moving their business online so they can connect with customers from the comfort of their homes. Safety and convenience for customers and employees are driving this shift.

It's fair to say that the pandemic and its economic impact forced many SMBs to digitise. They had to make sure their employees could communicate, collaborate, and do business safely in a changing world. Global in addition to their accelerated tech investments, growing SMBs are more likely than stagnant/declining ones to leverage technologies like customer service software, email marketing software, and e-commerce software. Notably, project or task collaboration tools saw the largest uptick in adoption over the past six months.

Foresee long-term changes from the pandemic

Running an SMB has never been easy — and recently, it's only become harder. However, certain traits can set SMB leaders up for success. Those characteristics include market knowledge, problem-solving skills, and being flexible and agile. The shifts they've made to business operations over the past year will benefit business long term. In an increasingly unpredictable world, perseverance and adaptability will help them succeed whatever the future brings.

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