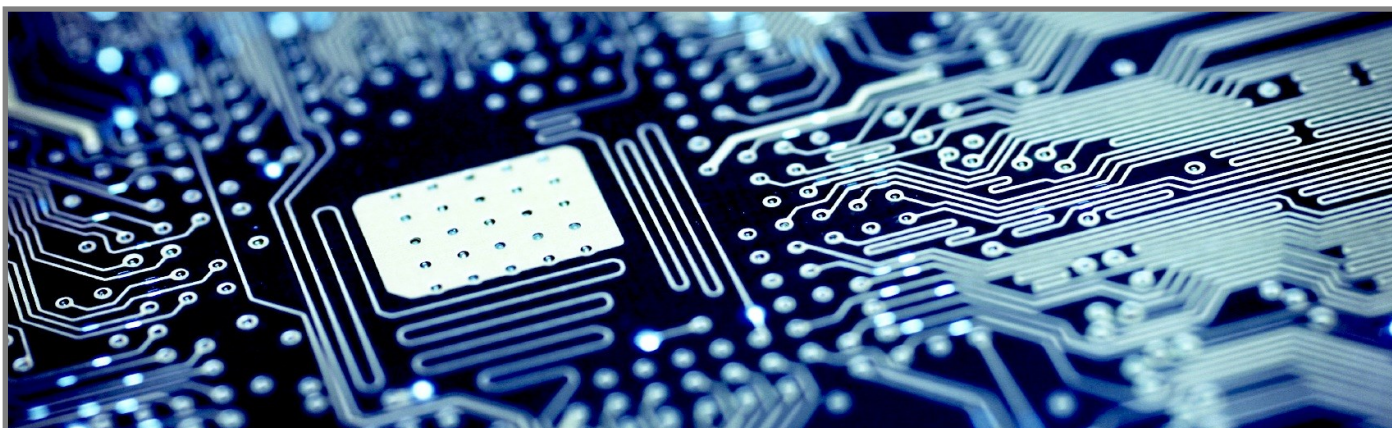# Managing Technology

Has 21st century technology made my business more effective and efficient?

Unemployment at a low – but pay and productivity no better

17 Sep 14 | Author Lindsey Kennedy | UK Business News

11 Business tasks we wish we had time for

All Business Experts weekly roundup, 27th September 2014

There is one question that we feel really deserves an answer.

Why are we not achieving greater productivity and having sufficient time to do all we would want?

With the above articles delivered earlier this year by e-newsletters, and the reality of operating in an increasingly tech-driven environment, there is one question that we feel really deserves an answer. *Why are we not achieving greater productivity and having sufficient time to do all we would want?*

With the potential of an improving economy and a more prosperous period for businesses, any increase in efficiency and productivity will be a valuable benefit for organisations to maximise returns.

Our "ever more connected" media channels are evidence enough of more and faster communication. Apple's latest phone launch clearly shows the demand for mobile connectivity. Apps are available for seemingly anything, purporting to make our business and private lives easier and more efficient. Cloud solutions and improving hardware specs add to the options and choices (or confusion) available.

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Marketers perpetually remind us of the opportunities wasted by not embracing new developments and risking our competitors rapidly forging ahead. Some 20 odd years ago business owners embraced the groundswell of advice to get a website for fear of their businesses failing. How many rushed to have a site built but never really fathomed out what the website would / should / could do for them or, perhaps more significantly, understand how they strategically incorporate this new wonder-tool into their business?

The warning signs are evident that attempting to embrace all that is new in our world could, in fact, cause confusion rather than anticipated improvement. For many SME's, it's not just in-house technical knowledge and rapidly draining battery life that struggle to keep up but also the geographical variance of broadband speed that are sources of frustration that cannot be ignored.

SME owners face pressure to commit to the digital world yet all too easily become seduced by individual solutions that may appear ideal. The need to also invest time, finance, training and planning into fully understanding options and implications must also be considered to be certain the desired end result will be realised and that its integration with other existing business functions is assured.

So where does this leave us? Blissfully confused, eternally optimistic or fully confident?

One thing is certain – jumping on a trending bandwagon is risky so consider asking yourself some fundamental questions at the beginning:

- Why are you considering changing what you do now?
- What do you want to achieve from making any changes?
- What are my competitors doing?
- What is the impact on the client if you make changes?
- How will any changes impact on the existing business operation?
- What, if any, external support is required?
- What is the impact on me/my staff?
- Have we considered all possible options?
- What new developments may appear in the next 12 months?
- Do we have the right skills to make this work effectively?
- When is the best time to start?
- What is the lead time to implement, test and finalise our plans?
- Have we checked our budget, cash flow and profitability as a result of these changes?
- How will I know if the changes are working as well as they should?
- How will we know our customers appreciate the changes?
- Who will manage and control the changes?
- When and how will we review the effectiveness of our changes?

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A simple route map describing the A to Z of what your business does and how it operates can be useful. Identify the various contact points between you and your customer; think how those contact points are best managed and if new technologies and approaches will be better suited than more traditional methods to achieve and support the desired results. Here's an example:

Business Process - Contact Point	Options to manage or implement	What needs to happen? Outcome	Issues & Challenges How?
Phone enquiry from a new customer	Landline Mobile VOIP Skype In car	Record contact details Take an order Book appointment Respond with email	Decide HOW these will be done and tracked
Promote something – product/service/event	Newspaper Magazine Flyer Website Social Media Networking TV Radio A -board	Increased sales Know how many people saw the promotion Opportunity for introductions Act on results/ effectiveness or feedback	Which social media? Work out percentage return Update CRM Decide on opportunities from the campaign to follow up on
Tracking customer activity – CRM system	Sticky notes Handwritten ledger Spreadsheet Database tool Off-the-shelf system Bespoke, customised cloud based system	Record all customer activity and provide management information as specified	Written or typed? Who needs to see data? What locations need access? Data protection requirements Sales history Average sale value Trends over time Links to social media activity Monitor effectiveness of marketing campaigns

In essence, unless you have a clear understanding of what you require as an end result, it will be difficult to establish what you need to do to get there. Benefit from ensuring you allow appropriate time and energy to research, establish the pros and cons, understand how it works and impacts on other areas of the business and how the client will respond before you can be satisfied with your conclusion. Accept the need to be flexible and live with a level of ambiguity.

Take control over how your business applies new solutions rather than be dictated to by technology you think would be good. Fully understand the benefits that technology will bring and control how it supports your business. Harness the improved efficiencies and time saved and enjoy the rewards your diligent approach can bring.

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