



From reactive to proactive:

Building an IT strategy to fuel small business growth

How to build greater resilience, efficiency and scalability into your IT infrastructure.

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The critical role IT plays in powering small business growth

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) make an outsized contribution to Canada's economy. They employ more than three out of every five workers and bring in over half the national GDP.¹

Many small businesses also have big aspirations. A survey by global SMB IT market research firm Techaisle found that "increase business growth" has taken precedence in recent years, going from the third-ranked objective in 2022 to the second-ranked in 2023 to the top priority in 2024.²

Achieving ambitious goals, however, comes with its own challenges. Notably, resources are often more limited for SMBs. As a result, they tend to allocate resources to their main focus areas and the business-critical functions that define and differentiate them in the marketplace. In such cases, this often means that SMBs lack a formal IT budget and that any urgent technology needs are addressed using only what little operating revenue can be spared.

If this situation sounds familiar, you're probably also accustomed to an IT strategy that's more reactive than proactive. Many SMBs find their IT investments are spent on resolving issues rather than preventing them.

Why is this such a problem? Simply put, IT capabilities have become business-critical for companies of all sizes today. Technology infrastructure powers everything from external consumer-facing experiences to internal operations and workflows. So those big goals – whether delighting your customers, delivering excellent products and services or driving growth – may lack the IT infrastructure to back them up.





The evolving challenges of modern IT

Small businesses may find it difficult to hire the talent they need to address evolving challenges of modern IT and achieve their business goals. They may not have a Chief Information Officer (CIO) or dedicated talent well-versed across a variety of IT areas – and the team members who do have IT skills and experience may be tasked with numerous other duties and pulled in multiple directions. After all, the market for IT expertise is highly competitive and can be very expensive for a small business.

Even SMBs that manage to secure internal staff who can build a modern, connected IT infrastructure, can often find their valuable time distracted by day-to-day maintenance and management activities, instead of focusing on how technology can help the business evolve.

While the lack of on-demand IT expertise can be a major impediment to growth, an inadequate IT infrastructure could also result in risks to the productivity, profitability and security of SMBs in many other ways. Jean-Marc Dumonceaux, TELUS Business Virtual CIO explains, “Everyone defers some form of maintenance on their vehicle, in fact I'm guilty of it too. But when your vehicle can't start in the morning and now you're late to that important meeting, that routine maintenance seems less mundane.” Outdated systems may lack the capacity to scale to the needs of your business, eroding consumer confidence and employee morale – all of which can be detrimental to achieving your objectives.

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Jean-Marc Dumonceaux
Virtual CIO, TELUS Business

The importance of a proactive IT strategy

Time and resource constraints, and technical inadequacies such as low processing power, system outages and downtime can all impact a business' ability to support operations and unlock new opportunities for innovation and growth.

Businesses that don't have an IT strategy in place can also open themselves up to greater cybersecurity risk, which can have lasting adverse effects. If a data breach were to occur for example, it could take your operations offline, incur huge costs in terms of recovery, remediation and regulatory penalties, and damage your brand reputation for years to come.

Here are some common IT challenges that are top of mind for SMB leaders and their teams:



A deeper dive into the business impacts of operating without an IT strategy



Poor network resilience

Uptime is everything when it comes to operational efficiency and customer satisfaction, and faulty networks or servers impede productivity.



Inability to scale

The demand for your product and service can change with the seasons or market conditions, and your IT infrastructure should be able to flex to meet the changing demand.



Lack of innovation

Without an IT strategy developed to support your business goals, you could limit your competitive advantage and hinder your ability to innovate.



Vendor fatigue and vendor lock-in

Having an IT infrastructure pieced together from different providers can create needless complexity, especially when some vendors require you to invest in new products to support existing ones.



Cybersecurity risk

The average Canadian company experiences five security incidents per year, each costing approximately \$88,000.³ Only 16 per cent of Canadian SMBs are confident they know what to do in the event of a cyberattack.⁴



Decentralized systems

Not having a centralized environment to help streamline all IT systems and processes may create friction in workflows, while a lack of integrated tools, technologies and applications can hinder onsite and remote collaboration.



Hardware failure

Beyond establishing a frustrating experience for your employees and customers, outdated IT systems and processes can create vulnerabilities, as do misconfigurations and human error. These problems can become especially prevalent when there's a lack of intelligent automation and orchestration.

As these potential impacts compound, the immediate proposed solution is to invest time creating an IT strategy that will help build greater efficiency, scalability and resilience, tangibly and actionably guiding your business forward.

What a small business IT strategy should include

According to McKinsey, the most successful businesses are those that have aligned their IT infrastructure to strategic business objectives and invested in modernizing and securing their foundational IT, including their infrastructure, data management and cybersecurity systems.⁵ Having a well-defined strategy, such as a roadmap, is a great way to align your IT infrastructure to concrete goals.

As an SMB, what should your IT roadmap specifically entail? This will depend on your specific business goals, which could include growth targets being met, the need to unlock opportunities for scalability and efficiency or mitigating the impacts of breaches or system downtimes.

What is an IT roadmap?

An IT roadmap is a strategic plan that outlines how a business will use technology to achieve its objectives. It can help businesses prioritize their investments to support the business' overall growth strategy.

Spotlight: FrontWell Capital Partners enlists TELUS Business for their IT needs

FrontWell Capital Partners enlisted TELUS Fully Managed, TELUS Business' managed IT services, to help them build a more reliable IT infrastructure. They saw immediate cost savings due to the cleanup, re-configuration and optimization of their network, which enabled the decommissioning of half of their servers.

With their streamlined systems, FrontWell could then work with TELUS Business to implement a more secure, productive and efficient IT infrastructure. This improved collaboration and communication capabilities for their workforce and heightened security measures while lowering recurring costs.

[Read the case study](#)



Elements of an IT roadmap to consider

Building an IT roadmap that supports your business today and in the future can be a lot to manage. So, where do SMBs start and what should they consider? According to Dumonceaux, "The first step is to envision where you see the business in one to three years. From there, you should work on aligning business goals with technology objectives and work backwards to develop a transition plan from your current state to future state." Businesses can prepare an itemized checklist of achievable priorities, but at the same time, design a future state that will be flexible and scalable enough to support your changing business needs.

From there, depending on your business goals, your IT roadmap could include some or all of these key elements:

Technology adoption

The digital world is constantly advancing, and the need to provide the right tools to enhance cloud-based productivity is critical for success. This means implementing new technology to keep teams connected should be a priority for any IT roadmap. Technologies such as Microsoft 365 and SharePoint can help to increase productivity for employees, for example.

Migration to the cloud

Cloud migration is a major step in an IT roadmap, as it can help support the performance and scalability you need to achieve your growth goals. Different types of cloud servers have distinct advantages as well as diverse pricing models. Here are the three types of cloud-hosting options you could be assessing in your own IT strategy:

Public cloud

Public clouds are hosted by third-party vendors and offered to the general public. Your team isn't tasked with managing the cloud's maintenance and performance, but you don't have proprietary control over hosting or protecting your data.

Private cloud

Private clouds often run on shared hardware in a data centre, while a provider can offer hardware management. Companies with stringent security requirements may opt for this, but managing your own servers can be costly.

Hybrid cloud

Hybrid clouds combine components of public and private cloud environments. For example, they may have on-premises infrastructure as well as third-party cloud services. This provides convenience, but it can also create some complexity.

It's important to choose the right type of cloud for your business based on the specificity of your compliance requirements, your budget and the internal and external functionality you need to support.

Enhanced data backup

A plan for disaster recovery and data backup is a must. This isn't just important in the event of a cyberattack, but for any natural or human-made crisis that can derail your operations.

Smaller businesses use an average of 11.8 digital solutions for their everyday workflows, and many employ distributed workforces with decentralized IT environments.⁶ Keeping track of your tools, systems and data – and being able to bring them back online after a disruption – is critical.

Layered cybersecurity

Speaking of distributed and decentralized systems, Techaisle's survey results also show that security – including secure remote collaboration – remains a top concern for SMBs.⁷ The caution is warranted, as a survey by the Canadian Internet Registration Authority found that 55 per cent of cybersecurity professionals view their organization as more vulnerable to an attack due to a fully or partially distributed workforce.⁸

According to the Thales Data Threat Report, breaches due to human error were the leading cause of cloud data breaches in 2023.⁹ It's imperative that your employees are also trained on cybersecurity best practices and know how to handle company data and digital systems safely.

How the right IT partner can help develop your strategy

After you consider what your business will need in order to stay competitive over the next three to five years, the next step is to put your plan into action. A modern tech stack can be expensive to implement, and time-consuming to manage and maintain. A managed service provider (MSP) can work with you to help prioritize elements of your roadmap to roll out in alignment with your business needs. An MSP can also assist in mapping your budget with your business goals to help ensure greater success.



The benefits of a managed service provider

Some small businesses may look at an MSP as another cost they need to account for in their already limited budgets and resources. However, when IT can't keep up with the needs of the business, owners may unknowingly open themselves up to risk, while ultimately spending more on additional IT overhead when they take a reactive approach to addressing business needs and issues that may arise.

An experienced partner can help develop an IT roadmap that aligns with your goals over time to help get a higher return on investment. From continuous monitoring and data backup to mitigate risks, as well as preparing, replacing, updating or upgrading systems as needed – it's important to work with a partner that helps identify your needs.

In addition to helping SMBs scale up and down as their business changes, there are external factors that you'll need to prepare for, such as disaster recovery. It's not just power outages or service interruptions that businesses need to guard against; fires, floods or other crises are possibilities that make data backup and protection so essential.

When you combine this with the fact that your managed IT partner can work with you to help develop and build an IT strategy and roadmap to help enhance operational efficiency, employee productivity and customer satisfaction, you realize that the return of working with a managed IT provider may be substantial.

Establishing a partnership with a trusted IT provider means you can streamline processes and operations, mitigate security risks and let the specialists handle the day-to-day operations of your IT systems. This frees up your in-house talent to concentrate on other strategic initiatives and priorities.

Spotlight: TELUS Business helps Cambie Surgery Centre enhance their cybersecurity

For Cambie Surgery Centre, a Canadian healthcare facility, software systems are integrated with specialized onsite hardware and have to abide by strict medical privacy regulations.

Building a roadmap with an experienced managed IT provider allowed the team to support optimal technology performance and compliance, while freeing up time to focus on their core business priorities.

[Read the case study](#)



Partnering with TELUS Business

Small business owners are often very passionate about running their business, providing a product or service that delivers a meaningful impact. They're not necessarily passionate about managing IT. Likewise, your people probably want to focus on the roles and responsibilities they specialize in and care about rather than acting as auxiliary tech support at a moment's notice.

This is where TELUS Business can help. TELUS Fully Managed provides comprehensive IT services that are adaptable to the needs of your business. Our Virtual Chief Information Officer (vCIO) team of professionals customizes their approach to suit your IT needs and collaboration style. They can integrate with your internal team to function as an organic extension of your business or operate as third-party specialists who deliver the support you need, when you need it. Our team also provides a thorough IT assessment to recommend the best approach and conduct regular evaluations to help ensure your roadmap remains up to date.

Whether day-to-day IT management, cybersecurity or tech strategy, we have experienced specialists who are invested in your business. Our team works with you to co-create tailored roadmaps for a scalable IT infrastructure that directly aligns with your most important objectives.



Take IT issues off your to-do list with TELUS Fully Managed

Our managed IT services provide comprehensive support for a wide variety of day-to-day IT needs including **managing user accounts, updating workstations and maintaining servers, networks and Microsoft 365 services.**

Day-to-day IT management

Complete infrastructure management frees up your team's time with round-the-clock monitoring for devices, servers and the cloud. Day-to-day management isn't just seven days a week, but up to 24 hours a day, with a help desk that's available anytime, anywhere.*

Tailored IT solutions

A pre-emptive approach to help you detect and prevent threats include recommending measures to help secure users and workstations, provisioning access to tools and servers and automating patch management. Get the support you need to keep antivirus, anti-spam and anti-phishing solutions up-to-date.

Data security

Your TELUS Fully Managed specialists work with you to evaluate, envision and help implement your digital transformation initiatives, integrate effective solutions and help you improve your cost savings at every opportunity.

**Subject to the plan of choice and connectivity in your area*

Connect with a specialist to learn how TELUS Business can help with your evolving IT needs.

Visit telus.com/FullyManaged

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