

# INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

:A Guide to Small Business Technology in 2024



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## **ABSTRACT**

In today's dynamic business landscape, small enterprises face both challenges and opportunities in adopting and leveraging technology to drive growth and efficiency. This guide serves as a comprehensive resource for small business owners and entrepreneurs seeking innovative solutions to navigate the technological landscape of 2024.

Covering a spectrum of cutting-edge technologies, this guide explores practical strategies and implementation tactics tailored to the unique needs of small businesses. From harnessing the power of artificial intelligence and machine learning for enhanced customer experiences to fortifying cybersecurity measures in an increasingly digital world, each section offers actionable insights and best practices.



Furthermore, the guide delves into the integration of IoT devices for operational optimization, the transformative potential of blockchain technology in supply chain management, and the indispensable role of remote work tools in fostering productivity and collaboration. It also highlights the importance of customer relationship management systems and e-commerce solutions in driving customer engagement and market expansion.

By synthesizing industry trends, case studies, and expert perspectives, this guide equips small business owners with the knowledge and tools necessary to stay competitive and thrive in the ever-evolving technological landscape of 2024. Whether embarking on digital transformation or refining existing strategies, this guide empowers entrepreneurs to harness technology as a catalyst for innovation and sustainable growth.

### **LET'S GET STARTED**



In today's fast-paced digital era, small businesses stand at the forefront of technological innovation, leveraging cutting-edge solutions to drive growth, efficiency, and competitiveness. "Innovative Solutions: A Guide to Small Business Technology in 2024" serves as a comprehensive roadmap for small business owners and entrepreneurs navigating the dynamic landscape of modern technology

This guide is a curate collection of strategies, insights, and practical advice tailored specifically for small businesses seeking to harness the power of technology to their advantage. Covering a diverse range of emerging trends and established technologies, it equips readers with the knowledge and tools necessary to adapt, thrive, and lead in their respective industries.

The guide begins by exploring the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), showcasing how small businesses can leverage



these technologies to enhance customer experiences, streamline operations, and make data-driven decisions. From AI-powered chatbots for customer service to ML algorithms for personalized marketing, the possibilities are vast and promising.

Next, the guide delves into the realm of cloud computing, highlighting its role in facilitating remote work, enhancing scalability, and enabling seamless collaboration. With cloud-based solutions for everything from storage and software to infrastructure, small businesses can unlock new levels of agility and efficiency while minimizing costs and complexity.

Cyber security emerges as another critical focus area, with the guide offering insights into best practices, tools, and technologies to safeguard business assets, data, and reputation in an increasingly digitized world. From multi-factor authentication to employee training, small businesses are empowered to proactively defend against evolving cyber threats.

The integration of Internet of Things (IoT) devices is also explored, illustrating how sensors, smart devices, and connected systems can drive operational efficiency, optimize resource utilization, and enable real-time insights across various business functions.

Blockchain technology takes center stage as well, with discussions on its potential applications in supply chain management, transactional transparency, and decentralized finance. Through smart contracts and immutable ledgers, small businesses can enhance trust, traceability, and efficiency in their operations.

Remote work tools, customer relationship management (CRM) systems, and e-commerce solutions round out the guide, offering practical strategies and recommendations for fostering collaboration, nurturing customer relationships, and expanding market reach in a digital-first world.

Overall, "Innovative Solutions: A Guide to Small Business Technology in 2024" empowers small business owners and entrepreneurs to embrace technology as a catalyst for innovation, growth, and success in today's rapidly evolving business landscape. With insights from industry experts, real-world case studies, and actionable advice, this guide is an indispensable resource for those looking to thrive in the digital age.

## HOW CAN YOU GROW YOUR SMALL BUSINESS?

Expand your product or service range, export goods, explore online options to reach new customers, hire staff, franchise your business and sell your goods or services to government or other businesses.

Do you want to grow your business? You may be considering opportunities to expand into other locations or markets, innovate, capitalise on your success and hard work and employ more staff to respond to increased demand.



Growth can put pressure on staff and resources, as well as financial and management structures.

There are different ways to grow your business, depending on what you want to achieve.

- **Get personalised support to grow your business**

For free, ongoing and personalised support when planning the next stage of your business, talk to a Service NSW Business Bureau. They can provide information on government regulations, financial support and programs, and opportunities for growth. You can also book an appointment with a Service NSW Business Connect advisor. They can help you plan and research the growth of your business so that it's sustainable, and talk to you about mitigating risks, such as financial, legal, staffing, resource or supplier problems. Business Connect advisors have experience running their own

business and provide independent, tailored support suited to your individual circumstances.

- **Expand your products and services**

Add new products or services to your business offering. You may be able to improve a product or service your business already offers.

Research your market to help you understand what might succeed. Look at customer feedback, what's existing in the marketplace, consumer insight and other research.

- **Reach customers online**

Make sure customers can find your business on the internet. This will increase awareness about your products and services. Having an online presence for your business can range from a social media account to a website to a mobile app. If you have a unique product or idea, finding a way to sell or trade it online makes good business sense. It may help you reach more customers. When growing your business online, key considerations include:

1. online marketing – including paid advertising, email marketing and search engine optimisation (SEO) and analytics
2. social media
3. omnichannel strategy
4. e-commerce
5. cyber security

- **Develop a marketing plan**

Effective marketing techniques can help you gain and retain your customers.

To develop your marketing plan and goals, you should consider your:

1. products and services
2. marketplace
3. customers
4. competitors

It is important to focus on who your customers are, and their wants and needs. A marketing plan will help you manage your marketing activities. This will also provide a clear understanding of what budgeting is being used.

Having marketing goals and objectives will mean you can measure results of your marketing spend. You should update your marketing plan as your circumstances change.

- **Hire staff including trainees and apprentices**

If your business is getting more work or orders than you can handle, or you need a specific skillset, you may need to employ staff.

There are different types of employment arrangements in Australia, from shift workers to full-time employees. Employment conditions, employee entitlements, pay rates, and other costs vary for each type.

- **Trainees and apprentices**

A Service NSW Business Connect advisor can connect you to local professional services, including HR support.

Taking on an apprentice or trainee may be a good fit for your business. Apprenticeships combine time at work with training. They can be full-time, part-time or school-based. The NSW Government Smart and Skilled scheme provides government-subsidised vocational education and training.

- **Train yourself and your staff**

Upgrading the skills of your team can help you to continue delivering quality products and services while staying competitive.

Training and industry events can help improve your business skills, update you on new products, services and technologies, and grow your network.

- **Export goods or services overseas**

Exporting is selling goods or services you produce in your home country in another. It may mean selling into a new or bigger market. Products and services with a high demand in overseas markets offer the best potential for success.

It's important to research the places you plan to export to. This will give you an understanding of the suitability of your product or service in that market.

- **Franchise your business**

If you have a successful business, franchising may be an option to consider as a way of expanding your operations.

Franchising is where you as the owner of the business providing the product or service (franchisor) allow franchisee/s to sell and distribute your goods or service or intellectual property.

Service NSW Business Connect advisors can support you to understand your options and take the next step.

- **Supply goods or services to government**

The NSW Government assists businesses to engage with industry supply chains and offers procurement opportunities in a variety of ways.

The main way the NSW Government buys is through contracts and schemes. Schemes can be used by NSW Government agencies to seek proposals or quotes from a limited number of approved listed suppliers.

There are special rules to make it easier to supply to the NSW Government if you run a small-to- medium-sized enterprise (SME), are regionally based or are an Aboriginal business.

- **Resources to help your business sell to Government**

The NSW Small Business Commission's *Selling to the NSW Government: A Guide for Small Business*, provides key information about the processes and requirements involved in supplying goods and services to the NSW Government. In addition, in partnership with TAFE NSW, they offer free online training modules on how to become a successful supplier to the NSW Government. The modules cover four topics: Getting Business Ready, Finding Opportunities, Selling to Government and Successful Supplying.

- **Supplying to other businesses**

ICN distributes information via an online marketplace known as the Gateway. This provides an opportunity where businesses and suppliers can create free online profiles about the products and services they offer.



## **WHY AUSTRALIAN COMPANIES NEED TO HELP SMALL BUSINESS EMBRACE TECH?**

The last two years have shown that small business owners are falling on the wrong side of the digital divide, and this is about to become a significant problem for many larger Australian companies. Research conducted by Xero showed that 70% of surveyed businesses admitted they would prioritise other matters over upgrading technology, and 60% acknowledged they have been using the same digital solutions since they started their business.



Many of our larger companies rely heavily on small businesses as a significant part of their client base. What effect would it have on your bottom line if just 10% of Australian small businesses failed due to their lack of digital literacy? As Andrew Hunter, CEO of CPA Australia, said: “Other markets made major in-roads on digital transformation during the pandemic; clearly, Australian small businesses need more help than they’re getting to leave the digital dark ages behind.”

Fortunately, there are three straightforward ways Australian companies can assist small businesses to embrace technology.

### **1. Encourage small steps, not giant leaps**

Working with small business owners, I see a common misconception that embracing technology means they need to overhaul everything in their business at the same time. You can address this by showing your small business clients how to implement the one piece of technology that will give them the biggest win.

This helps them avoid overwhelm by limiting the size of the project and lets them see the success that technology can drive in their business.

In its research, Xero reported that encouraging small steps overcomes the perceived apprehension or difficulty of adopting something new. Helping your small business clients to reframe their first technology adoption project will build trust and create more loyalty to your brand.

### **2. Embrace ‘old school’ training**

To help small businesses overcome their fears around technology, you need to go a little ‘old school’.

Many small business owners are so concerned about making mistakes with technology that they are unwilling to try something new.

My experience is that face to face training programs get better results in upskilling and are faster at creating comfort with technology.

Digital literacy and technological skills are muscles that need to develop.

Once your small business clients have confidence in their abilities, it’s significantly easier to transition them to online learning solutions. According to the Xero research, clients using digital solutions see increased revenue of 120% over those small businesses that do not invest in digital adoption.

### **3. Celebrate their wins**

Small business owners really appreciate being seen and recognised by their larger cousins. That’s why I recommend a program to acknowledge and share your small business clients’ wins with their digital implementation.

When you help your small business people with their technological development, you’ll increase their feelings of loyalty, future-proof your relationship and incentivise other business owners to use your products and services.

Consider creating a community where your small business clients can learn, grow, implement and celebrate together. Research I've conducted in my own small business tech club has shown a greater sense of accountability to learning and implementing, and a shared sense of accomplishment when a member has a significant digital win in their business.

Over the next 12 to 24 months, larger companies that actively assist small businesses to embrace technology will be rewarded with increased loyalty and revenue. Fortunately, the small business community is looking for trustworthy people to help them access high quality, timely information. That's a true win-win for you and for the small businesses you rely on.

### **IMPACTS OF TECHNOLOGY ON SMALL BUSINESS**

Small businesses rely on technology to help them operate on a daily basis. From laptop computers with Internet capabilities to printers, online file storage and Web-based applications, technological advances impact small businesses across various industries. Technology has the potential to affect small business in positive and adverse ways, depending on the goals a business has in place, the products they chose to use, and how well entrepreneurs and their employees adapt to new systems.



## **Share and Collaborate**

Small businesses work closely with their clients to provide them products and services that add value to their lifestyles. Going from an idea to a finished product or service requires small business owners and their employees to collaborate with each other and external vendors. E-mail and instant messenger tools paved the way for online sharing and collaboration. With the ability to instantly connect, share information and get feedback, e-mail and instant messenger are beneficial technological advantages for small businesses. Web-based project management programs such as 5pm, Basecamp and Zoho Projects offer a Web-based approach to keeping track of projects, delegating tasks, updating team members and clients, tracking time, and sharing documents in real-time. For small businesses, this means up-to-date information available in a central hub, regardless of a person's location.

## **Flexible Work Environments**

Technology gives small business owners and their employees the option to work in the office, from home, on the road and even from across the country. Affording small business owners the opportunity to hire talent from all over the world, technology can help businesses gain a competitive edge in the global environment.

## **Instant Connection With Customers**

Small business owners no longer have to mail surveys to customers and wait for weeks for replies, nor do they have to call customers for feedback. Technology gives small businesses the ability to connect with their customers via e-mail, through blogs, social networks and forums. Small business owners can take advantage of this instant connection by getting feedback from customers and applying it to their businesses immediately, if they see fit.

## **Online Stores**

Technology allows crafters, clothing and accessories designers and painters an option to set up online stores, rather than investing in costly storefronts. With consumers migrating to the Internet to find everything from gifts to ordering groceries, the popularity of online shopping increases with the variety of products and services. Businesses with storefronts can create online stores to expand their

visibility and reach target markets beyond their neighborhoods and surrounding communities.

## **Employee Training**

As small businesses implement new technologies into their processes, they are tasked with providing training to new and veteran employees. While new employees are likely to easily adapt to the technologies, veteran employees may resist the new technologies or experience a learning curve, which may temporarily reduce productivity.

## **SMALL BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY TENDS TO INVESTMENT BOOST**

Small businesses with an aggregated annual turnover of less than \$50 million will be allowed an additional 20% tax deduction to support their digital operations and digitise their operations. The boost applies to eligible expenditure incurred between 7:30 pm AEDT on 29 March 2022 and 30 June 2023. The boost is for business expenses and depreciating assets and is capped at \$100,000 of expenditure per income year. You can receive a maximum bonus deduction of \$20,000 per income year.





To access the small business technology investment boost, your business needs to meet the standard aggregated annual turnover rules (with an increased \$50 million threshold).

**The expenditure must:**

- already be deductible for your business under taxation law
- be incurred between 7:30 pm AEDT 29 March 2022 and 30 June 2023.

If the expenditure is on a depreciating asset, the asset must be first used or installed ready for use for a taxable purpose by 30 June 2023.

**What you can claim**

**Eligible expenditure may include, but is not limited to, business expenditure on:**

- digital enabling items – computer and telecommunications hardware and equipment, software, internet costs, systems and services that form and facilitate the use of computer networks
- digital media and marketing – audio and visual content that can be created, accessed, stored or viewed on digital devices, including web page design
- e-commerce – goods or services supporting digitally ordered or platform-enabled online transactions, portable payment devices, digital inventory management, subscriptions to cloud-based services and advice on digital operations or digitising operations, such as advice about digital tools to support business continuity and growth
- cyber security – cyber security systems, backup management and monitoring services.

Where the expense is partly for private purposes, the bonus deduction can only be applied to the business-related portion.

If your business is registered for GST and the expenditure is not GST-free, the bonus deduction is calculated on the GST-exclusive amount plus any GST you cannot claim as a GST credit incurred in carrying on your business.

## **SMALL BUSINESS LAGS BEHIND IN ONLINE BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY**

Yet despite market constraints, 2022 has been the strongest year for Australian small businesses since 2017, with 47.6 per cent reporting business growth, up 15.4 percentage points from 2021.

CPA Australia's Business Investment Policy Adviser Gavan Ord says small businesses are generally enjoying a better business environment, reduced employee absenteeism and stronger sales, adding to higher growth.

However, compared to some other countries, they are still down the growth scale – Australia had the third lowest growth in the Asia-Pacific small business sector.

The survey showed 55.1 per cent expect to grow – significantly lower than the 65.7 per cent average – and only 43.3 per cent expect the local economy to improve in the next 12 months, compared to the survey average of 62.5 per cent.

2022 was a strong year for small business.

### **Innovating to build growth**

The CPA Australia survey also found that a relatively low percentage of Australian small businesses invest in or undertake activities in areas including innovation and export.

Only 14.3 per cent intend to introduce a new product, process, or service that is unique to their market or the world in 2023 – well below the 34.4 per cent average.

However, Robinson believes this may improve as market confidence returns.

He says many of his clients – spanning fields from manufacturing to commercial cleaning – are optimistic about their ability to develop new products and services and “go to the world as well as their next-door neighbour”.

“I have a machinery client who has developed a petrol-driven post hole driver, as well as a remote control pro-loader that can be used in tight spots, and both pieces of equipment are leading the market,” he says. Likewise, an electrical services client continues to innovate around the development of standalone power systems.

## **Getting to grips with technology**

Australian small businesses continue to be less likely to earn revenue from online sales (46.3 per cent earned more than 10 per cent of revenue from online sales compared with 89.1 per cent of Mainland Chinese small businesses).

They are second-most likely not to use social media for business purposes (30.4 per cent compared with just 2.1 per cent of Mainland Chinese small businesses). And they ranked second-last in receiving more than 10 per cent of sales through new digital and payment technologies such as PayPal and Apple Pay (55.2 per cent compared to 94.1 per cent of Mainland Chinese small businesses).

This contrasts with the fact that high-growth small businesses continue to be significantly more likely to sell online, receive payments through new payment technologies and use social media in a variety of ways, including learning more about existing and potential customers.

Robinson believes he's fortunate to work with family businesses that are dynamic and enterprising, including in the online space.

"I have one client in disability support, for example, who is selling a substantial amount of product online," he says. "I also have an optometry client delivering training to optical dispensers in Europe and the United Kingdom using a digital platform."

However, he agrees that many small businesses are weak in terms of social media because "they still believe in the depth of relationship with the customer" – ironically, something the survey found was characteristic of high-growth small businesses. Even so, Australian businesses do need to generate some kind of social media post or content regularly as part of a business growth strategy, he says.

"I do a weekly newsletter that has generated more than six figures of income for me from non-clients. Consistent social media is key to engagement."

## **7 SMALL BUSINESS TECH TRENDS OF 2024**

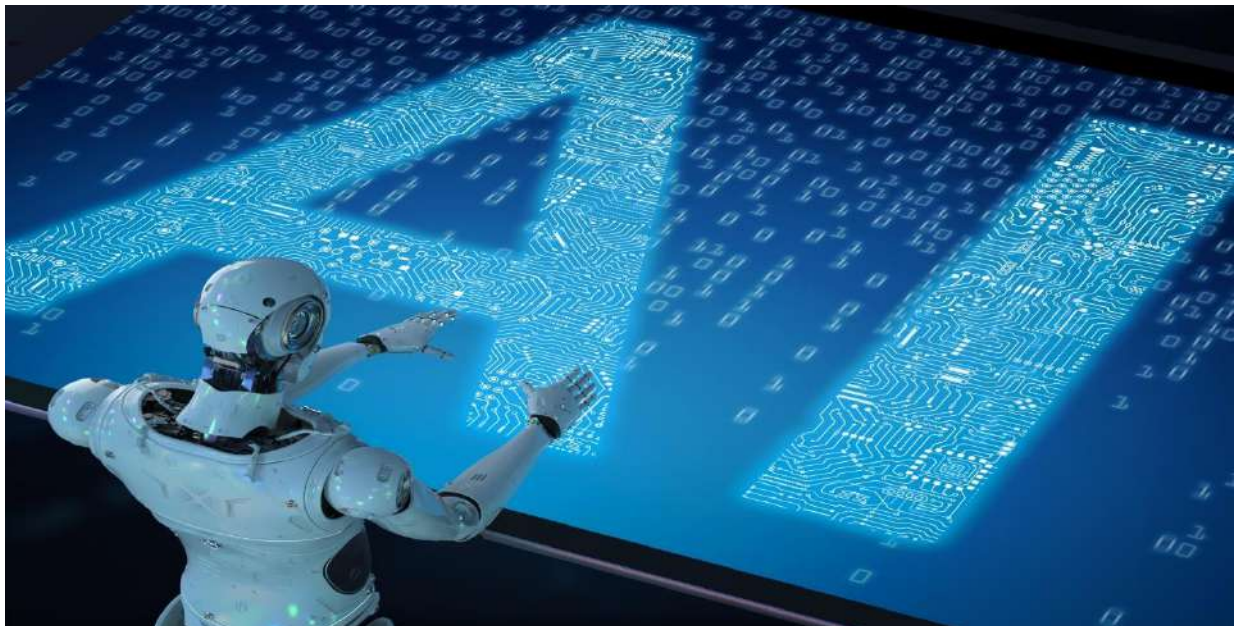
Technology is making the world go round in the current scenario.

Technology is making the world go round in the current scenario. The latest advancements have opened new avenues and built bridges that have closed gaps created over the years. Smartphones, voice assistants, spatial computing platforms, augmented reality, etc., have brought a paradigm shift in the way humans live, interact and use technology. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning are making those things possible that were heard only in sci-fi movies.

We are moving into the era of digitisation, where technology is taking the spotlight and reducing the need for human intervention. Businesses have benefitted profusely from this development as they have become more productive, agile and profitable. Here is a list of seven small business tech trends of 2024 that can play a significant role in growth. These will become indispensable for entities because of the changing consumer behaviour and market conditions.

### **Dependency on Artificial Intelligence**

According to a recent estimate, AI can contribute close to \$4 trillion to the Australian economy. Most large businesses are planning to adopt the tech in 2024, and small businesses must follow suit. It can help to reduce costs, accelerate work and increase efficiency. Generative AI is another domain of this technology that has created a furore in the marketplace with its human-like capabilities.



It can improve customer support, content creation and network security. It decreases dependency on humans and makes it easy to fulfil customer needs. Small businesses can achieve more with little resources if they adopt AI tools. It will benefit them by increasing the success rate of customer acquisition. So, if you are looking for business opportunities in Sydney, make sure to use this trending tech for higher profits.

### **Use of Augmented and Virtual Reality**

Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR and VR) are being utilised by businesses to create interactive and engaging advertisements. The tech can be used in retail spaces to offer exceptional customer experiences to buyers at the store, such as virtually trying a product or browsing a virtual aisle to save time and effort.

Marketing campaigns designed with this tech can help increase brand awareness, and in-store branding can promote loyalty. AR and VR can be used by small businesses to train their employees for real-life customer interactions through simulations. The tech can also prove beneficial for collaboration when the employees are working remotely or have a hybrid work arrangement.

### **Increased Focus on Cyber Security**



With the growing use of technology, data privacy has become a matter of concern for businesses. Thus, most of them are diverting their attention to developing a



robust cyber security system that can keep confidential information safe from potential thefts and breaches. These attacks can lead to instant failure because of loss of customer trust and sales.

Entrepreneurs who purchase a business for sale Sydney must reduce the risk of cyber attacks by hiring experts in cyber security. The business should have a protocol that the employees must follow to maintain security standards. The remote workers must be trained to comply with the security measures to stay on track and prosper with vigilance.

### **Small Business Apps for management**

Every business process is time-consuming and expensive when performed by humans. However, it becomes cost-effective when it is conducted with the help of software and apps made for the task. These customisable tools are made for small businesses that have limited resources and cannot hire experts for every task, such as inventory management, marketing, payroll management, etc.

These apps help to improve processes and increase productivity by eliminating delays and downtime. They are influential in enhancing data accuracy and scaling the entity quickly without hiring too many employees. It reduces unnecessary expenses and helps in organising processes and streamlining the workflow.

### **Big Data Will Be At the Forefront**

Small businesses have always struggled with data analysis because it requires time and resources. However, it is essential to understand the behaviour of the target audience and their changing taste and preferences. Big data technology has made this task easy for small entities with inadequate resources.

It allows the interpretation of large datasets available to entrepreneurs who purchase businesses for sale Sydney. The patterns and insights revealed by this technology are beneficial in creating improved products and services. It ensures that the target audience gets what they expect, and it helps to increase sales and revenue. Entrepreneurs can price the products correctly and recruit talented employees with the help of tech. In addition, it can aid in enhancing operations that make the business more productive and primed for growth.

## **Invest More in Digital Marketing**

Small businesses can effectively use digital marketing to accomplish their goals in 2024 because 96.2% of the country's population uses the Internet. Smartphones have made it easy to reach customers through social media, text messages, emails and search engines. It is the most potent way to engage a wider target audience with a minimum budget.



While businesses are already utilising this marketing method, they will be investing more in these efforts. In this category, email marketing, social media marketing and influencer marketing will continue to be the most used techniques to attract and retain customers. They effectively amplify loyalty and become brand advocates, which helps with word-of-mouth publicity.

## **Pay Attention to E-Commerce**

E-commerce has been evolving and has become highly popular in the past few years. While customers prefer it because of the convenience offered, businesses can use it to grow exceptionally. It has lower operating costs because it does not

require physical stores. Online selling gives the advantage of catering to a large customer base that is restricted by geographical boundaries. If you intend to purchase a Sydney business for sale, you must develop an e-commerce-enabled website for the entity to increase revenue quickly. It is also helpful in gathering and analysing traffic and customer buying behaviour. In 2024, if your business does not offer customers an online ordering facility, it will lag behind competitors. So, make sure to follow the trend and grow effectively.

### **Wrapping Up**

Small businesses have to navigate their way to stability through several challenges. Lack of expertise and resources is the most significant problem and can be easily rectified with the adoption of technology. The trends mentioned above can help overcome problems and move ahead without hassles.



### **CONCLUSION**

"Innovative Solutions: A Guide to Small Business Technology in 2024" encapsulates a vision of empowerment and adaptability for small business owners and entrepreneurs in the digital age. As we conclude this guide, it's evident that the

landscape of technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace, presenting both challenges and opportunities for small businesses.

Through the exploration of emerging trends such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, cybersecurity, Internet of Things, blockchain, remote work tools, CRM systems, and e-commerce solutions, this guide has provided a comprehensive roadmap for small businesses seeking to thrive in the competitive marketplace of 2024.

The convergence of these technologies offers unprecedented possibilities for innovation, efficiency, and growth. By embracing AI and machine learning, businesses can enhance customer experiences and streamline operations. Cloud computing enables flexibility, scalability, and collaboration, while robust cybersecurity measures protect against evolving threats. IoT devices provide real-time insights and optimizations, while blockchain technology ensures transparency and trust in transactions.

As small businesses navigate the complexities of the digital landscape, this guide serves as a beacon of knowledge and empowerment. It empowers entrepreneurs to leverage technology as a strategic enabler, driving innovation, efficiency, and sustainable growth.

Ultimately, "Innovative Solutions: A Guide to Small Business Technology in 2024" equips small business owners with the insights, strategies, and tools necessary to navigate the ever-changing technological landscape with confidence and agility. By embracing innovation and leveraging the power of technology, small businesses can not only survive but thrive in the dynamic marketplace of tomorrow.

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