

# Putting Technology to Work to Help Your Small Business Grow

## Perspectives Report



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	<i>Laurie McCabe</i> <i>Sanjeev Aggarwal</i>	
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## Introduction

Seeking growth is a small business constant. But the means to achieve that end are changing—fast. Some very big trends are converging that threaten to prematurely age your business if you're not paying attention:

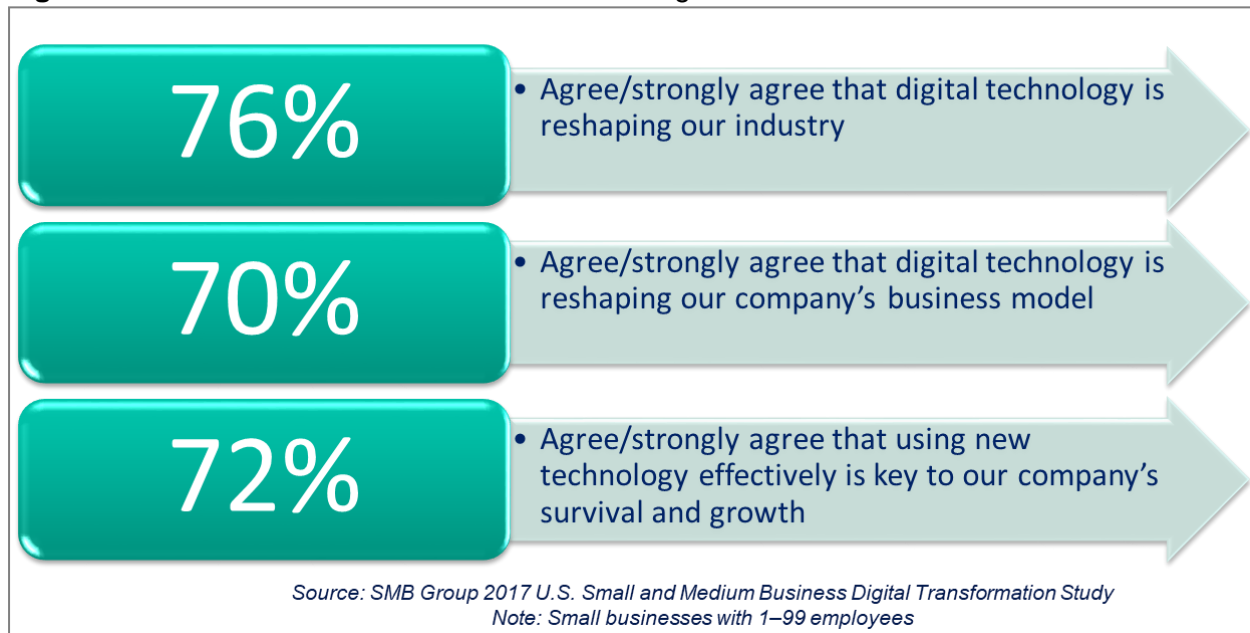
- The workforce—and the workplace—are undergoing radical transformation, as millennials enter their prime working years and baby boomers retire. The gig economy is growing, and businesses are relying more on contractors and freelancers to get work done. More people are traveling and telecommuting.
- 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, labor 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 intertwined with business results. You need to figure out how to use technology to capitalize on change—or risk becoming a dinosaur.

## It's No Longer a Question of If or When, but How You'll Need to Put Technology to Work for Your Business

To survive and thrive, you can't afford to get stuck on what used to work. As a small business owner, you have to understand these changes and how they'll affect your business, customers and industry—so you can adapt to stay ahead of the curve.

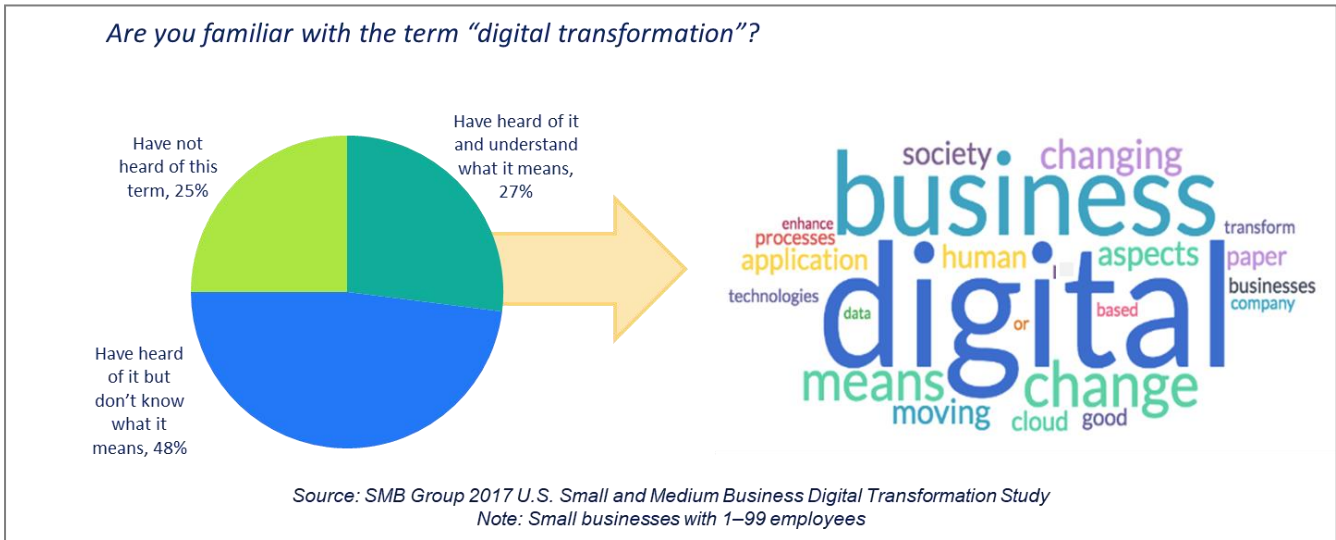
The odds are that you understand this. SMB Group's 2017 U.S. Small and Medium Business Digital Transformation Study revealed that about three-quarters of small business respondents (companies with 1–99 employees) agree or strongly agree that using new technology effectively is key to their company's survival and growth, and that technology is reshaping their business models and their industries (Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Small Businesses See the Ground Shifting



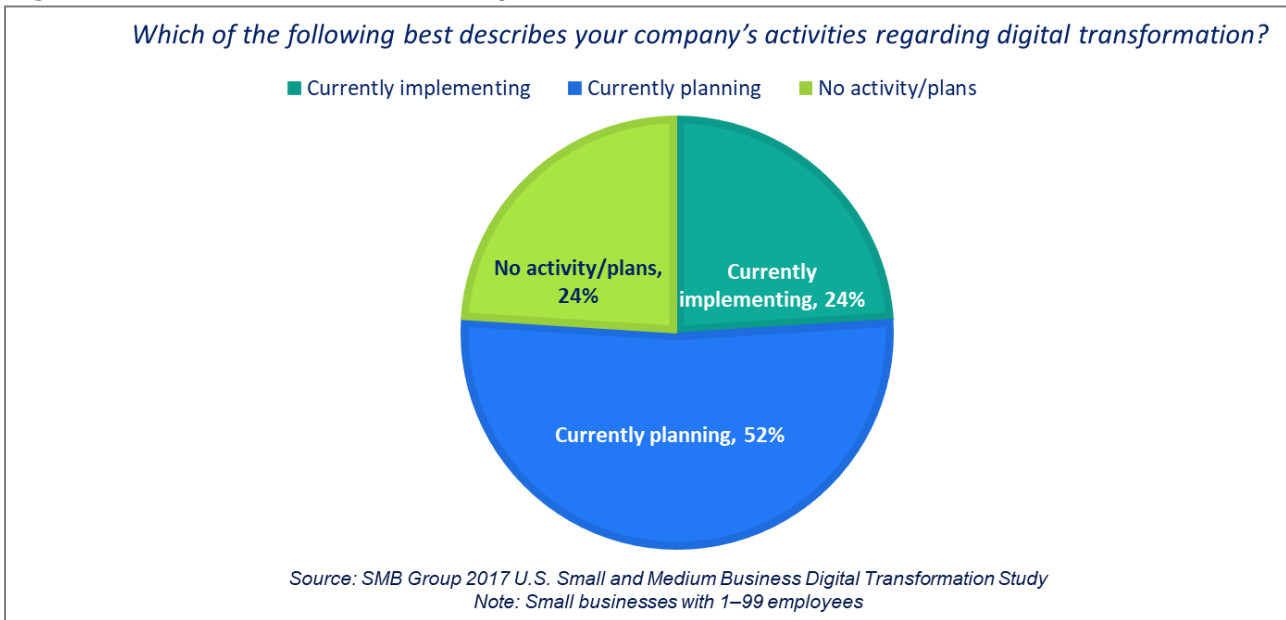
But chances are that the term “digital transformation”—and what to do about it—may not yet have come into focus. The study showed that 25% of small business respondents have never heard of the term, and only 27% understand what it means (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Small Business Understanding of the Term “Digital Transformation”**



So, we defined “digital transformation” for respondents as “how businesses use digital technologies to create new/modify existing business processes, practices, models, culture and customer experiences.” Then we asked them, “What is your business doing about it?” We learned that about 24% are actively implementing initiatives to support it, 52% are planning to implement changes and 24% have no plans underway (Figure 3).

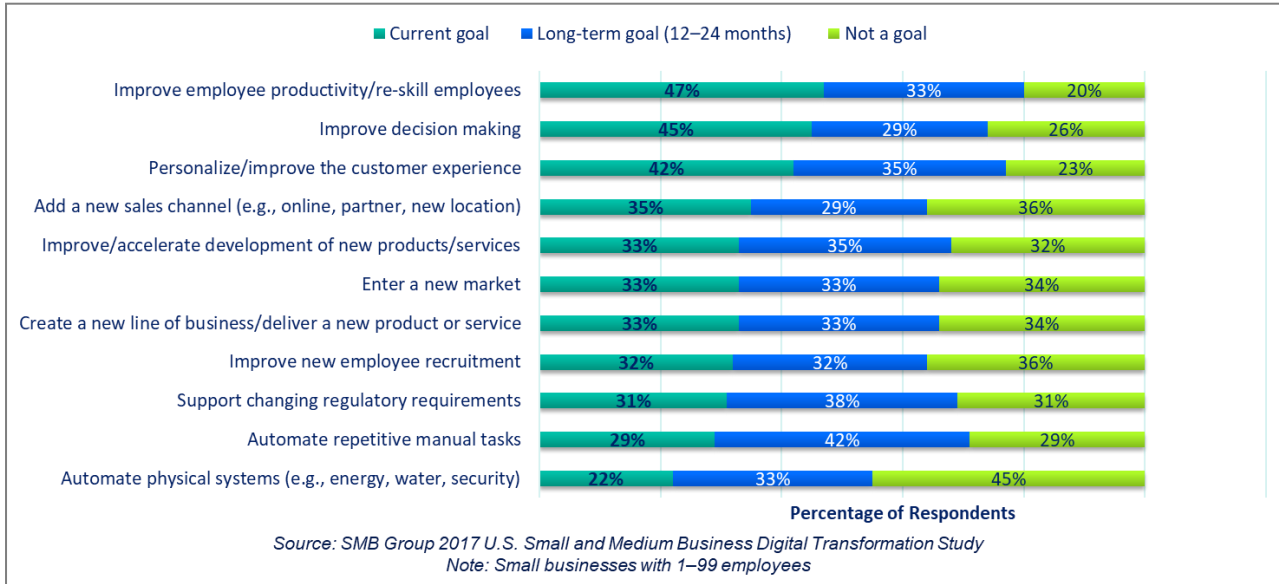
**Figure 3: Small Business Phase of Digital Transformation**



## Placing Your Digital Bets

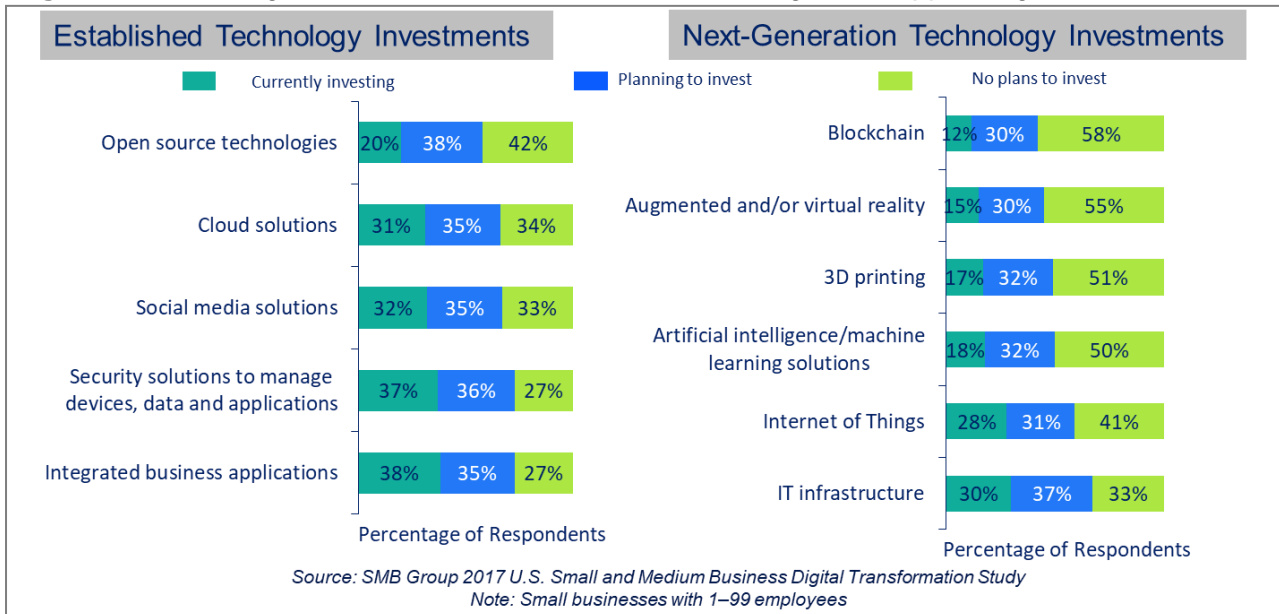
Not surprisingly, small businesses that are using technology to prepare their organizations for the future are most likely to be investing in initiatives to support top- and bottom-line growth goals. These small businesses are most likely to be investing in innovative technology solutions to improve employee productivity, enhance decision making, and personalize the customer experience (Figure 4).

**Figure 4:** Business Initiatives That Small Businesses Are Supporting with Technology Investments



Small businesses tend to invest first in more established technologies—including security solutions, application integration, social media and the cloud—to help improve business performance. However, a sizable percentage are already delving into newer technology areas, such as modernization of IT infrastructure, the Internet of Things (IoT), and artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (Figure 5), and roughly one-third are considering investing in these newer, innovative technologies.

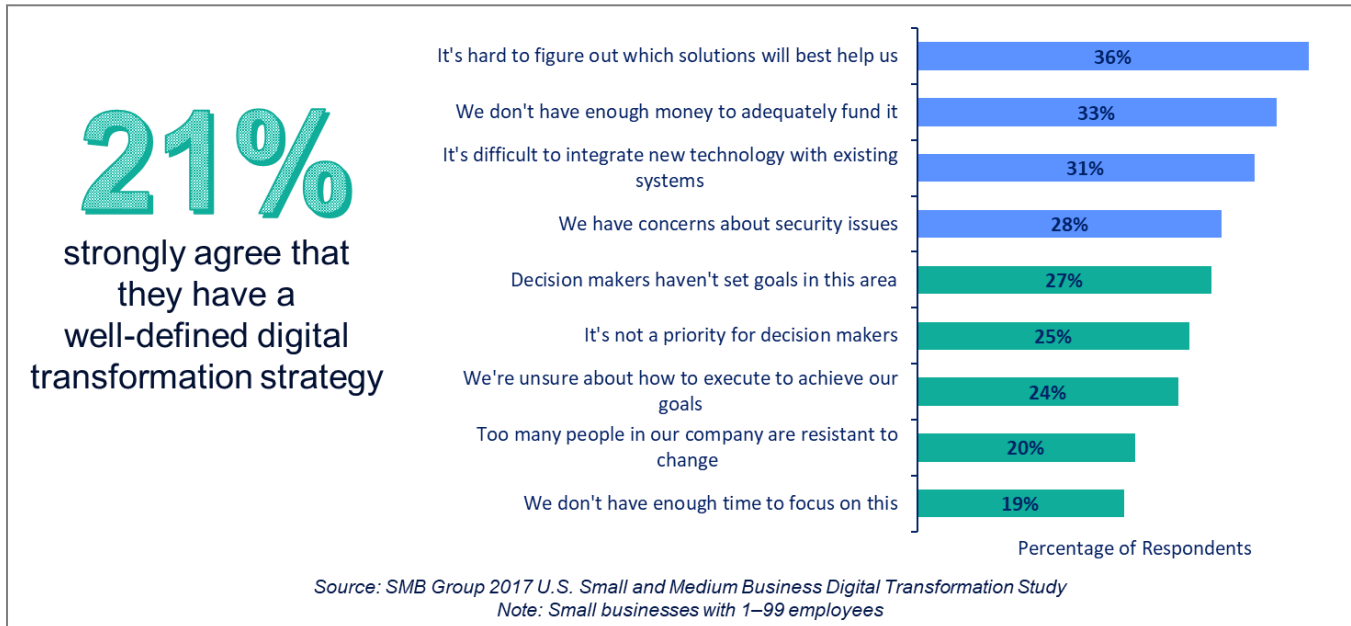
**Figure 5:** Technologies That Small Businesses Are Investing in to Support Digital Transformation



## Most Small Businesses Feel Unprepared to Meet the Digital Transformation Challenge

With so many investment options and the wealth of new technologies available, just figuring out where to start can be challenging. If you're like many small business owners, determining which solutions will best help your business may be your top challenge. Just 21% of survey respondents strongly agree that they have a well-defined strategy for digital transformation (Figure 6). And once small businesses zero in on top priorities, issues such as the lack of expertise and resources often hinder execution.

**Figure 6:** Top Technology Challenges for Small Businesses



But continuing to plug along with old, cumbersome, disconnected solutions is like death by a thousand cuts—and will hamper your ability to take the proactive measures you need to grow.

For instance, if you neglect cyber security, you can suffer financial and brand damage if data is compromised. If you put off deploying CRM or analytics tools, new and repeat sales might dip because you don't have a good handle on customer requirements and preferences. If you overlook backup capabilities, a storm could destroy your systems—and wipe out business-critical information.

But developing a strategy to tackle these challenges and ensure that you've got the right solutions to meet a range of requirements and challenges is a tall order for any business. This begs the question: how can small businesses—with limited resources and budgets—get on solid footing today and innovate for the future?

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## Partnering with a Trusted Technology Advisor

The right partner can help you to prioritize and select the solutions you need to build a foundation on which you can innovate both now and in the future. They can help you solve the problems that keep you up at night, such as the following:

- What solutions will really help my business?
- How can I protect my data and company from cyber threats and system failures?
- How can I contain technology costs?
- Where can I get the help I need to deploy new solutions to grow my business?

You may be surprised to learn that Dell has made a big investment to provide you with the guidance you need, every step of the way—regardless of whether your business is located in a big city, small town or rural area. When you need one-on-one advice, Dell small business technology advisors in Round Rock, Texas and Nashville, Tennessee, are ready to answer your questions, from simple to complex, via phone (1-877-BUY-DELL) or live chat on Dell's Small Business website (link to <http://www.dell.com/learn/us/en/04/campaigns/chat-splitter-usbusiness>).

Dell's small business technology advisors are not only tech savvy, but also small business savvy. With more than 30 years of experience serving small business customers, they function as an extension of your internal team. They provide personalized expertise to help you understand and capitalize on technology—so you can focus on running your business. Their goal is to help you get the answers you need to critical questions, such as the following:

- Is my server secure, or do we need to add a firewall?
- How can we make it easier for employees to get work done anytime, anywhere?
- How can we protect company data on our employees' devices?
- What's the best way to back up my data?
- How can I integrate Windows 10 into my existing infrastructure?

You can also take advantage of Dell's small business website (link to <http://www.dell.com/learn/us/en/04/campaigns/smallbusiness-partners>) to discover and learn about security, productivity, new technology and services that you can use to help your business to flourish.

If you need financing, Dell Financial Services\*\* (link to <https://dfs.dell.com/>) offers fast, affordable options. And Dell Services can deploy your solutions and keep them up, running and optimized. As you move beyond the basics, Dell can help you figure out which new technologies can best benefit your business and how to put them to work.

You can also offload IT support and maintenance to Dell. Dell's ProSupport Plus suite provides monitoring, maintenance and support services designed to save you time, money and aggravation. ProSupport Plus gives you a designated Technology Service Manager, 24/7 priority access to engineers, same and next-day on-site support after remote diagnosis, and automated support with SupportAssist.

## Perspective

Technology is a make-or-break ingredient in business: small businesses that are investing in digital technologies to transform their businesses are 56% more likely to expect revenues to grow than those who have no plans to do so (Figure 7).

**Figure 7:** Small Business Phase of Digital Transformation and Revenue Forecast



But to get the best outcomes from technology investments, you need guidance and support. Dell Small Business technology advisors can answer questions, demystify technology and provide assistance with everything from financing through maintenance and service. They can help you set the right goals, choose the best path forward and get the best outcomes—both now and in the future—so you can make the most of technology instead of being overwhelmed by it.

**Note: This post is sponsored by Dell.**

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