

A globe of the Earth is centered in the background, partially obscured by a complex, glowing network of white and blue lines and dots that represent a global communication or data network. The background is a deep blue space with streaks of light and stars.

Technology Insight

The Future of Technology for SMEs

An e-book for business leaders

synergi



Page Contents

This e-book explores the key transformational technologies available for small to medium enterprises as well as addressing important changes and trends in the digital marketplace that business owners should be aware of.

This e-book is divided into 4 key topics:

Building a modern workplace

This section introduces the latest industrial revolution, exploring the disruptive technological trends organisations need to respond to.

Enterprise-level technologies for SMEs

This section highlights the leading technologies available to support SMEs in innovating and transforming their operations.

Technologies on the horizon

This section explores emerging technologies that have the power to transform the way businesses work.

Uncovering the value of technology

This section addresses the process of building digital transformation strategies and implementing technologies effectively.



Synergi

Founded in 2013, cloud solutions and managed services provider, Synergi, was created to meet the fast-growing demands for cloud-based technologies in the North. Recognising the need for SMEs in the region to harness powerful enterprise-level solutions to empower innovation, growth, and agility, Synergi was launched to provide a next generation “born in the cloud” technology partner.

Meet the authors



Justin Short

*Chief Operating Officer, Synergi
Nintex vTE (Technical Evangelist)*

Justin co-founded Synergi in 2013 with a mission to support businesses digitising and transforming their processes.

With over 25 years of IT experience, Justin specialises in business intelligence, automation, collaboration and modern workplaces.



Paul Burns

*Chief Technology Officer, Synergi
Advisory council member for Datto, Symantec,
Sophos, Microsoft UK and Microsoft Global*

Paul joined as Synergi's CTO in 2020. With nearly 30 years of IT experience, over 20 of which have been spent in leadership roles, Paul is passionate about digital security. This is reflected in Synergi's managed services offering.



Building a modern workplace

A New Industrial Revolution

From mechanisation and steam power, through to mass production, electricity, or physical automation, businesses have always had to adapt in order to survive in the face of industrial revolution.

We are in the middle of a new revolution, one in which automation and teamwork are key. Disruptive technologies, such as the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI), are changing the way we work, emphasising a focus on uniting human agents with digital and physical systems. As businesses move forward, in order to remain competitive they will need to embrace the ways in which technology can reduce the volume of repetitive, highly-manual tasks and can instead allow employees and users to focus their knowledge and energy where it is most beneficial.

How can organisations adapt?

It is important that organisations and individuals are proactive in shaping technology and disruption. This may mean partnering with a digital specialist who can offer guidance and knowledge on both how to implement technologies to improve efficiency and maintain competitive advantage and how to ensure that these disruptive technologies are being used responsibly and ethically. Microsoft Partners must commit to the Microsoft Partner Pledge which supports diversity and responsible and ethical AI.

The four main pillars of focused transformation:

📍 Empowered employees 👤 Engaged customers 🏆 Optimised operations 🔑 Transformed products



Experience-focused

Modern services are looking to create personalised, connected experiences for employees and customers. Data used within this comes with privacy and security responsibilities.

Ever changing

Whilst automation will see many job types disappear, entirely new categories of job are also emerging to support this new working style. This places a focus on continual learning in which users are training to better understand new necessary aspects of their roles.

Multi-disciplinary

Businesses will need to ensure they have access to the right mix of skills to keep pace with changing technology. Often this will be achieved through partnering with a digital specialist.

Enterprise-level solutions for SMEs

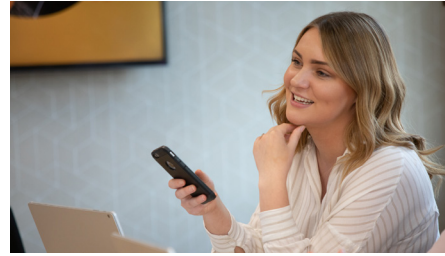


Teamwork

Communication and collaboration are at the heart of successful operations.

The central hub for most of this teamwork currently is Microsoft Teams. However, many organisations aren't making the most out of Teams.

With integrations such as the Microsoft Power Platform, the power of essential business tools can be harnessed from within Teams. Additionally, third-party tools, such as Valo Teamwork, can unite the content management and information architecture of intranet tools with the centrality and common usage of Teams (which is usually used for individual, project, and team sites rather than larger departmental or corporate areas and portals).



Automation

Automation of and visibility into processes is a key factor in improving operational efficiency.

Process management tools, allow organisations to understand their processes using highly visual diagrams. These processes can then be automated using workflow tools, mobile apps and forms, document generation and e-signature tools, and bots. Data from these processes can then be visualised using analytics tools, offering business the opportunity to monitor, analyse, and improve their processes.

Automation, moving forward, will require united teams of low-code, citizen developers (business users) and professional developers who can extend the capabilities of low-code tools.



Business Apps

Hosting your process in Excel or Visio? It's time to reimagine your business management.

Digitising process maps onto Office suite tools poses the risks of varying duplications of the same process and difficulty ascertaining ownership. This can make communicating processes to teams difficult.

Business management solutions such as Microsoft Dynamics 365 can centralise business processes and relationship tracking, making communicating processes simple. Designed to work natively in the Microsoft Cloud, Dynamics 365 provides unequalled interoperability across Microsoft 365, Azure, and Microsoft Power Platform, integrating its capabilities into business' daily operations.



Data & AI

Data is king. Businesses looking to successfully innovate are reliant on data-powered insights to thrive.

Data-powered, analytics tools allow businesses to go from data to insights in minutes, with a graphically bold, centralised dashboard making trends easy to spot. The ability to access this data anywhere, on any device, means actions can be made on the go or when working remotely. This allows geographically disparate teams to communicate on data trends, knowing they are referring to the same dataset and insights.

With robust and complete information available at the click of a button, data and AI tools support quick and simple strategic decision making.

The tools

Now the solutions available to SMEs have been categorised, it is important to look at the individual technologies that could power such solutions.

Teamwork

Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams is a secure central platform for communication and collaboration, combining chat tools, video meetings, co-authoring capability, file storage and management, and third-party app integration.



Valo and Powell are award-winning, out-the-box, digital workplace solutions built on Office 365 and SharePoint to provide mobile-friendly, modern, and easy-to-use intranets with powerful search capabilities and simple customisation.



Box provides a single place to manage, secure, share and govern all of the content for both internal and external collaboration and processes, with the ability to integrate apps and automate related processes.

Business Apps

Dynamics 365 Business Central

Business Central is an all-in-one business management solution that helps businesses manage financials, reporting, order processing, project accounting, stock and warehousing, and manufacturing and service quickly from a centralised location. This easy-to-deploy ERP solution is embedded within the Microsoft stack and is designed to help small to medium-sized businesses streamline their processes, boost their growth and make informed decisions.

Dynamics 365 Sales and Marketing

Dynamics 365 Sales and Marketing is an integrated CRM solution that works to go beyond sales force automation, boost seller productivity, understand customer needs, win more deals and help businesses outpace their competition.

Automation

Microsoft Power Platform

Microsoft's low-code powered tool suite, Power Platform (consisting of Power Apps, Power Automate, Power BI, and Power Virtual Agents) is more than the sum of its parts. Power Platform comes to life when its four tools connect to each other and integrate with Office 365, Dynamics 365, Azure, and additional applications or interact with existing data sets to build end-to-end business solutions.



Nintex offers a suite of tools covering process management, automation, and optimisation. Nintex's drag and drop tools allow businesses to easily update processes. With Nintex Connectors, businesses can also integrate their regular-use business apps into their workflows, integrating with systems such as Microsoft, Adobe, Box, Salesforce and more.

Data & AI

Power BI

Power BI allows businesses to turn data into better business decisions across their organisation. This business analytics tool allows businesses to easily connect to data sources, create visuals and gain business intelligence quickly. Power BI offers the ability to seamlessly connect with Microsoft and third-party cloud services, and with on-premise data sources and create data-driven visuals.

Nintex Analytics

Nintex Analytics offers analytics beacons and data visualisation, allowing businesses to define key metrics, collect data and understand workflow status, ownership, design proficiency, and business impact to pinpoint any process improvements.

Technologies on the
horizon



Whilst it is important for SMEs to know which tools are widely available to them, it is also important to keep an eye on the disruptive technologies and trends that are emerging in the business landscape. Often once an SME has partnered with a digital partner, this partner will have specialists remain informed on emerging trends and inform business of relevant disruptions.

Working from anywhere

Recent circumstance has of course necessitated a rapid adoption of cloud services and remote working by many organisations. However, moving forward, hybrid working may be a reality for many businesses, making an effective digital workplace vital. Many existing and emerging technologies are looking to facilitate seamless and effective working with a secure and consistent experience from any device or location.

Democratised development

With the demand for digital transformation outpacing IT resources and professional developer availability, businesses are having to reimagine their approach to automation and digital transformation. This is reflected in the prevalence of drag-and-drop, low-code, automation, and development platforms. These low-code tools allow business users to own their operations, mapping, automating, and optimising the processes they interact with, rather than solely relying on IT resource availability.

What to watch out for

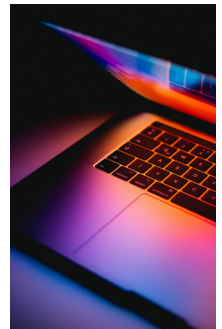
Rise in AI + Bots

With a predicted increase in both artificial intelligence (AI) and robotic process automation (RPA) revenue in the coming years, these technologies are becoming increasingly more commonplace in the business landscape to remove the burden of highly repetitive manual tasks.



'Zero Trust' Model

Modern workplaces now support flexible, mobile, hybrid, and remote working, posing new security challenges. A 'zero trust' model assumes breach, verifying (authenticating, authorising, and encrypting) every access request before granting this access.



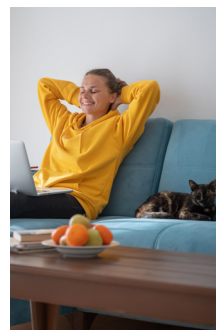
Going Passwordless

The sale of credentials on the Dark Web is a concern for businesses and can lead to ransomware attacks. With the ability to counter this threat by implementing passwordless multi-factor authentication, passwords are quickly becoming a thing of the past.



Microsoft Viva

Microsoft Viva is a bundle of new and existing Microsoft 365 capabilities that support employee experience, supporting engagement, learning, well-being, and knowledge. Viva can help businesses to provide wellbeing and foster engagement within the new digital workspace.



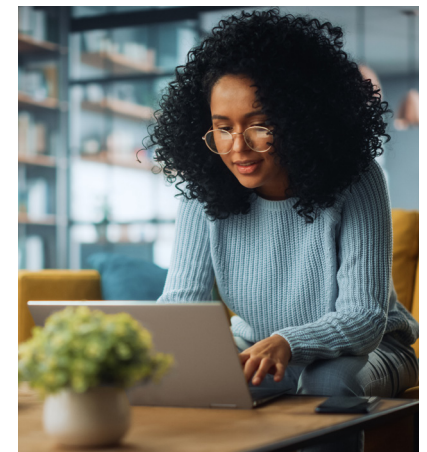
Uncovering the value of
technology

Develop A Clear Strategy

Often the implementation of new software is the product of reactive decisions based on immediate risks. However, to achieve highly effective transformation and to cultivate a modern business that can remain competitive in the current business landscape, organisations need to cultivate a planned strategy guided by deep-dive learning.

So what should businesses be considering?

Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Growth plans• Risk prevention• M&A activity	Process <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate processes• Identify inefficiencies• Review automation	Investment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget plan• Timelines• Contingency	Agreed Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Map out delivery objectives• Focus on outcomes
Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness• Evaluation• Alignment - Objectives	People & Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand organisation needs• Align technology & people	Continuous Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review progress• Reset objectives	Ongoing review <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technology review planning• Adjust budget elements



Co-managed approach

When it comes to ensuring security, many choose to take a co-managed approach. This involves working with a Managed Services Provider (MSP) or technology partner, but not fully outsourcing.

Co-Managed agreements allow the inhouse teams to have the option to share the MSPs resources allowing both parties to deliver one joined-up service.

This may fill capacity gaps within an organisation and allow progression of a delivery roadmap.

Creating a roadmap

Often digital transformation is an iterative process. Breaking this process down into a roadmap can help organisations to:

- Establish priorities
- Avoid critical technology projects slipping
- Simplify complex areas for decision making
- Avoid spending on unnecessary or less critical areas
- Drive improvements in a focused manner
- Provide clarity to staff on technology decisions



Key Takeaways

Businesses are in the midst of a new industrial revolution

Automation and artificial intelligence (AI) powered tools are transforming the workspace. These offerings are reducing the onus of repetitive, manual tasks for many job roles and facilitating accurate, data-rich reporting anywhere, on any device.

The relationship between IT departments and business users is changing

With drag-and-drop, low-code automation tools becoming increasingly commonplace in businesses, business users are able to take more ownership of their processes. These business users can then work with professional developers to extend their in-house authored solutions.

Implementing a layered, multi-faceted security solution is vital

As technology develops, so do cyber security threats. It is important for business to stay up-to-date on new potential threats and ensure that they are adequately protecting their sensitive data as well as training their users. Enterprise-level tools are now accessible for smaller organisations, ensuring improved security.

Digital partners can support businesses in continuing to innovate

A digital partner can offer the expertise to support development and security measures. Digital specialists ensure they are informed on the latest technologies and licenses, informing businesses of those most pertinent to their requirements.



Confused about your next move and need help building a modern technical roadmap? Contact Synergi for a free business health check. Our highly skilled and experienced team are helping businesses across the UK with the technology strategies detailed in this e-book. Speak to one of our team today.

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We put the **i** in transformation

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