5 key IT areas

you must address in your business's 2021 growth strategy

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As we finally approach the end of – **what we can all agree has been a difficult year** – it's likely that the last thing you want to think about is your IT next year.

However, being the IT super-fans that we are, we'd suggest that now is the best time to do this. We're about to begin a new year. It's going to be another challenging one. So what greater way to start than with a clear strategy for the months ahead?

A solid IT strategy is a critical part of your business growth plans for the year. You can't grow the business unless your technology serves and enhances what you want to do.

Of course, we're biased. But a powerful IT strategy really is the foundation of moving your business forward. Especially when times are tough.

With the right strategy and implementation plan, your IT will be one of the greatest tools you have working for you

Perhaps you haven't created an IT strategy before. Or maybe you have, but your business has outgrown your original plan.

Or it's possible that good old 2020 has thrown yet another spanner in the works and your business direction has completely changed.

So, where do you start?

It sounds like a huge undertaking. But with the right advice and guidance, it's actually a lot simpler than you'd think to create a personalised IT strategy.

Here, we've listed the 5 most important areas to include in yours.

Before we begin, it's worth noting that your strategy should take into account business goals for the:

- Short-term (let's say 6 to 24 months)
- Long-term (3 to 5 years)

We'd always suggest that you focus on a strategy that has plenty of room for movement. Because as we've seen this year, things can change... and quickly.

You and your team must be adaptable in order to survive – no, to ***thrive*** – in these tougher times

Here are the 5 areas that need to be addressed in your IT strategy >>

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OUTLINE YOUR BUSINESS GOALS

As a successful business owner, it's likely that you already have clear goals. After all, this is what drives you to keep pushing your business forward.

But it's also important to consider how your IT infrastructure will accommodate them. Your IT strategy should support and complement your goals.

You'll need to think about your sales pipeline and sales targets too. How can your infrastructure make achieving those goals realistic?

What about any future partnerships you plan on making? Will you make any acquisitions or mergers along the way? How will your infrastructure support this kind of growth?

You should also consider action plans for individual departments. Will some departments require additional IT tools or support? Will the whole business benefit from your plan, or will it need adapting for key people or departments?

IDENTIFY YOUR KEY PEOPLE, AND A TIMELINE

You probably already know the key people within your business, but they may not be the same people you make responsible for delivering your IT strategy.

Will you have an internal department handling things, or does it make better financial sense for you to partner with an external company? Who will manage liaising with your IT partner? And who does your strategy apply to?

Consider these questions carefully, and take some time to speak to key people in each department. Find out how they currently use the technology you have, how they feel it could be improved, and which elements are vital for them to fulfil their roles.

When are you looking to implement any changes you may need to make? If you need to make some dramatic changes, will it be a company-wide roll out? Or will you do things gradually to help with budget and troubleshooting? If the changes are smaller, when do you anticipate completing the update?

REVIEW YOUR CURRENT IT INFRASTRUCTURE

You really need to understand how well your current infrastructure is working, in order to see what improvements (if any) need to be made.

As mentioned above, speak to your key people in each department to find out how they're currently utilising their resources:

- What improvements do they feel could be made?
- What would make their job easier?
- What is making things more difficult than they need to be?

It's important everyone understands that this step needs some critical thinking. The sky's the limit. Your people should be telling you how they'd love things to work in a perfect world; if there were no limitations on what you're able to do. That way, you can work to find solutions as close to perfect as possible.

Remember that each department will have a different take on this, because they will be using your technology differently, depending on their roles. The key is to find the sweet spot in keeping everyone productive, motivated, and happy.

CREATE YOUR IT ROADMAP

This might sound like the hardest step, but creating a roadmap for your new IT strategy is vital. If you've followed the above advice and planned properly, it shouldn't be too complicated.

This is probably where you could do with some help from a strategic IT partner, such as us. You'll need to think about your overall technological architecture, which includes hardware, software, and other tools your people will be relying upon.

Your IT partner should be able to make the appropriate recommendations to fit your requirements. And suggest tools that will all work with each other seamlessly.

Section your roadmap into departments, and the differing technologies they will require. This will help to give you an overview of how everything will fit together when the time comes for implementation.

DEFINE NEW METRICS

While your new IT strategy should work to make your business life easier, it's also of vital importance that it's cost effective too.

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Again, breaking it down into departments is critical. And we suggest creating new KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) to help you monitor exactly how performance is changing over time.

It's worth remembering there may be a short period of adjustment for your people. So you may not immediately see the results you're hoping for if you've made some dramatic changes. But it shouldn't take long for you to notice longer-term improvement.

Creating and tracking a range of metrics will give you a fantastic insight into how well your new technology infrastructure is working for you. It will also allow you to be more proactive in identifying and solving minor issues as they arise. And importantly, before your team is impacted.

Your choice of strategic IT partner is critical to getting this right

This might all sound a little overwhelming if it's not something you've done in your business before. However, hopefully you can see the many benefits of creating an IT strategy, as part of your overall growth strategy.

Bring in the experts if it still seems daunting, and you will definitely see improvements to the way you do business.

If your current IT support company can't act strategically, then it's time to switch. Lots of businesses trust us as their strategic partner.

Book a no obligation 15 minute video call so we can learn more about each other, and assess the value of arranging a proper discovery meeting.

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