Module 1

Going digital – developing a strategy

Taking your business online requires planning so you can make the most out of the budget, people and resources you have.

In this module, you'll learn to create a digital plan, including where to seek advice, how best to measure your progress, and how to manage and grow your online business with the support of your employees.

With this module and others, complement your learning with research and examples you search for and find online. Keep focused on what you want to achieve by using the headings in each Module as a guide of what you want to put into practice.

PART ONE: SETTING INTENTIONS AND GAINING FOCUS

Part 1: Setting intentions and gaining focus

Digital business, including Social Media, covers a broad set of possible activities and as such, setting your intentions upfront can help significantly with your team's focus, expectations, planning and in budgeting and resourcing.

Be clear on why you are aiming for - is it to raise brand awareness with your current and future customers? is it to increase sales leads (and have them be as high in quality as possible)? Is it both?

Oftentimes digital programs work best if they're one or the other so be as ruthless as you can in choosing your intentions at this planning stage.

PART TWO: GET TRUSTED ADVICE

Part 2: Seeking advice

Every business is different, which means every business will have unique and specific technological needs. What works for one person, may not work for you.

If you're looking at using customer relationship management (CRM) systems, building a social media presence, updating your website or adopting cloud technologies, get trusted and professional advice from technology advisers, suppliers, workshops or trade magazines. This will help you understand what technological solutions you need for your business, and help inform the direction of your research.

When seeking advice, think about your business size, age, current technology capabilities, activities, processes and future plans.

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PART THREE:
ALIGN YOUR
STRATEGY &
DEFINE GOALS

Part 3: Building your strategy and defining your goals

Technology is highly accessible and much more user-friendly (to increasing numbers of people). Much online communication is free. People find interesting things and information...and share them. Focused words reach many online and creates sales, brand awareness, collaboration and change.

And you know the generations who have only known life with the internet. Over 38 years old is considered a digital "immigrant" and under 38, a digital native. Generally both groups have different ways of using and consuming information. To reach your market, these nuances can be helpful.

It's no longer true that online media is for young people. The Average Twitter User is 39.1 Years Old, LinkedIn: 44 years old, Facebook: 38 years old.

A good strategy is like a road map through new terrain. It will give you the most direct and efficient route from one destination to the other, and it won't just rely on the roads you already know.

A poor strategy, or none at all, will likely lead you to dead ends or places you don't want to go.

This is why before you take your business online, the first step is to draft a digital plan document or presentation that details how you're going to grow your business digitally.

A digital plan can cover:

- Intentions - what do you hope to achieve using digital technologies - for the company, for staff, for your customers, for your stakeholders, for you and other individuals (such as those working on digital)?

- Who is your customer? Detail as much as you can - it can work well to write a page of 2-3 example customers - what do they do for a living, where do they work and live, how many kids do they have, what do they do on the weekends, weeknights, what are their values (likes, dislikes, things they'll stand up for), their digital preferences and tools (e.g. Customer "Mark" has a smartphone, laptop and iPad. Mark uses his iPad watching TV of a night-time to research cost comparison sites and the family's annual holiday in September. On Saturday afternoon, at kids football he uses his iPad and uses his laptop to do the family finances on Sunday mornings) and what sites they like, what style (images, photos, videos, and social media accounts they follow).

- What will you sell, what unique selling points will customers like, and what makes you different? Note any of your product or service challenges or concerns to manage and how.

- Who is the competition and what are they doing online? What will we track?

- What technology and processes will be introduced?

- Who are the experts in your organisation that people will turn to as they learn how to use it well?

- How will people learn the new system/technology? (This may involve mapping out everyone in the organisation, how each group will use the new techonology and processes, and what will engage them to be involved and use it as intended.)

- What needs to happen to achieve your goals? When will this happen?

- Who will do it?

- What budget is allocated?

- What obstacles, challenges and risks are there and how will you overcome?

- How and when will you involve and engage staff and what opportunities and risks are there?

- How we will measure success?

- And how regularly will we celebrate! This is particularly important when online is not a physical representation - it's great to get people together to show off the new website, launch of social media sites and success when sales or engagement soars!

As you work through each of the modules in this Kit, add to your Plan, review and tweak at the end, distribute it as a draft to relevant people in the business.

How will you navigate challenges, including resource constraints, budget, technology adoption issues or staff resistance?

Visit www.digitalbusiness.gov.au for more help.

It's important that your online goals reflect and support your current business plan and strategy. This will ensure staff, business partners and suppliers clearly understand your aims and objectives.

" Taking your business online can be of great benefit by supporting existing marketing and sales activities and increasing productivity. But don't use technology just for technology's sake. Be smart about what you're using and why."

Part 4: Implementation and Experimentation

Once you've finalised your Digital Plan, keep it as an editable document to tweak each quarter or 6 months as you learn more about your customers' online engagement and what works for you.

Keep a healthy, questioning mind as you implement your plan. It helps to remember how many people, what budget and resources you have allocated and balance this with what you want to achieve. Like any other business activity, set realistic metrics around what you want to achieve and regularly check progress with respect to allocated resources, people and budget.

Part 5: Embracing change

Work with staff as you would with other business activities to present opportunities, plans, challenges, and risks, and to hear their insights so you can adjust plans accordingly. Provide ways to engage staff and have them become experts and comfortable. Provide test technology, visits to other organisations who have similar systems, send staff to relevant training and conferences, and always acknowledge the great achievements over time.

Part 6: Measuring outcomes

If you can track your progress and measure your outcomes against your objectives, you'll be able to see what's working and what areas can be improved. You can then alter your strategy as you go to get the best results for your business.

You might set goals such as: 30 percent sales increase by year-end; reduction of costs by 10 percent in two years; or winning five new customers in six months. Whatever you choose, try to match technology adoption to those criteria. For example, to reduce costs your online strategy might include the use of cloud services to store and backup data, while an implementation plan template may help to keep you on track.

Further Resources:

If you're planning on getting online, building a digital presence and working to a strategic plan, these resources may help. All information was current at the time of writing.

Digitalbusiness.gov.au - Online business plan templates, case studies and helpful tips.

Bluewiremedia.com.au - Digital strategy planning templates that will help you define your customer, understand what digital marketing tactics to use and the best way to communicate online.

Fastcompany.com - Digital and business trends.

Readwrite.com/connect - Digital news.

Flyingsolo.com.au/marketing - News and tips on Digital Marketing.

Lifehacker.com - Personal productivity and digital news.