



The PULSE of IT

"Insights for forward-thinking small and mid-sized business leaders"



A Proactive Adopter's Guide to Harnessing New Technologies

SMBs that successfully harness the power of IT today position themselves to grow into the business they dream of tomorrow. Here's what they can learn from proactive adopters and how they're harnessing four key technologies that are shaping today's business world: security, mobility, big data, and cloud.



AS A BUSINESS OWNER, THE WORDS “SMALL” AND “MIDSIZE” MAY ACCURATELY DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION, BUT THEY DON’T DESCRIBE YOUR MIND-SET OR AMBITIONS.

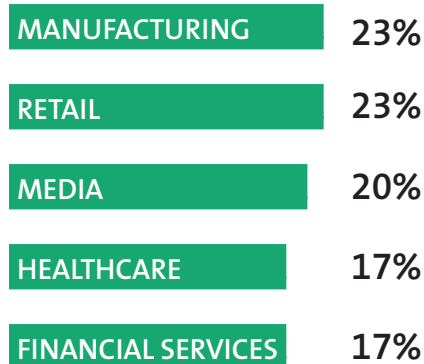
You have dreams for your business, and technology paves the way to make those dreams reality. The right technology choices will allow you to compete “big,” no matter the size of your company.

On some level, you may suspect your competitors are using technology more effectively than you. These leaders in your field and other top contenders are considered “proactive adopters,” and they tend to harness the power of new technology before their rivals. They understand how IT helps their business thrive, and they wield the power of technology accordingly.

In the past, you may have chosen a wait-and-see approach to technology adoption, based partly on lack of confidence, fear of unwise investments, or the unknown costs coming with new technology. But really, it all comes down to making the technology work for your small or midsize business (SMB). Even if you feel trepidation about making this move, it’s clear the disruption in IT has made it easier and less expensive to wisely utilize technology to reach the desired goals for your business.

A quick review of the current business landscape shows there are four major technology areas shaping the way business is done: security, mobility, big data, and cloud. For SMBs to survive and thrive, business owners must harness these technologies, and who better to show the way than those who have been there? A recent Hewlett Packard Enterprise study, as created and fielded by Coleman Parkes, surveyed 1,500 senior-level decision-makers at SMBs from around the world and across numerous verticals, including finance, healthcare, manufacturing, and retail.

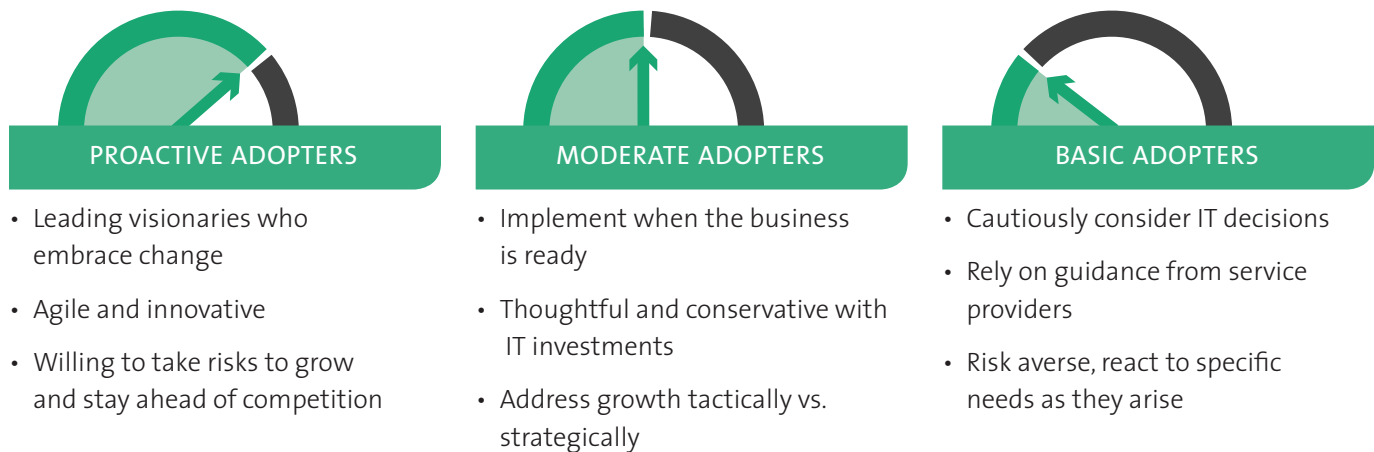
Industry



Proactive adopters have a history of embracing change and believing in growth.

These decision-makers were broken down into three adopter profiles: basic, moderate, and proactive, each with its own reasons and reservations regarding technology adoption. Basic adopters tend to be more cautious. Like most businesses seeking to flourish, they recognize the benefits of disruptive technologies, but have a more tactical approach to adoption. They're more likely to view technology as something to adopt when a specific issue arises and needs to be addressed as opposed to a business decision. On the other end of the spectrum, proactive adopters have a history of embracing change and believing in growth. More often than not, they've incorporated all four technology areas into their IT infrastructure. Proactive adopters view IT as an integral part of their business priorities. Their goal is to look at how IT can help them do business better to stay ahead of competitors.

Over the next four books, we'll dive into each of the four areas and share how these SMBs are effectively harnessing the power of technology. Here's a preview of what's to come.



SECURITY

Protecting your gateway to other technologies

Security paves the way for other technologies to be used successfully. The proactive adopter group views security as the fundamental technology in helping their company address top business priorities. Without strong security in place, you can't effectively use transformative technology trends, like mobile, cloud, and big data.

According to the survey, 60 percent of respondents have not yet fully adopted or implemented an IT security solution. As the Aberdeen Group report "Network Security for Small and Mid-Size Businesses" (September 2015) states, "Security risks have become an issue both in the headlines and in executive boardrooms, and smaller organizations would be unwise to believe that they are somehow immune."¹ Hackers view small and midsize businesses as stepping stones to bigger, more lucrative targets. When an SMB is the target of a security incident, the chance of success for the hackers is extremely high. In the 2015 Verizon Data Breach Investigations Report, of the 694 security breach incidents reported by small businesses, 573 of those incidents (83 percent) resulted in a confirmed data loss. This compares to 2 percent for incidents in medium and large businesses.²

Knowing your company could be the gateway hackers use to attack other organizations is a scary prospect. This type of attack could irreparably harm your reputation and essentially end your business. The loss of revenue, legal fallout, and fleeing customers accompanying a security breach can destroy even the strongest business.

The downtime, lost productivity, and lost revenue resulting from security breaches are equally detrimental. According to the Aberdeen Group's "The Fall of SMB Networks and How Security and Reliability Will Help Them Rise Again" (August 2015), it's projected 33 percent of organizations face the risk of downtime events, which can exceed \$2 million in costs.³ The longer your systems are down, the more you have to lose in revenue, customer trust, and public goodwill.

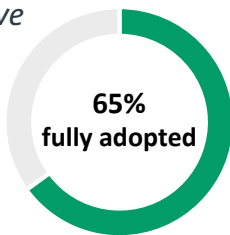
Additionally, as industry compliance regulations grow, data security should be a top concern for you and your clients. Assuring your customers their data is both secure and compliant helps keep current clients happy and is essential to gaining new ones.

In this series, we'll take a deeper dive into why security plays a pivotal role as SMBs embrace today's disruptive, difference-making technologies, and how your business can use security to your advantage.

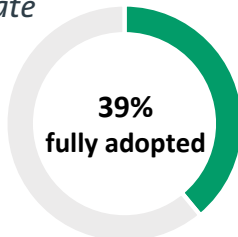


ADOPTION RATE

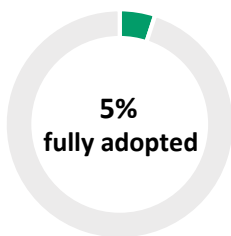
Proactive



Moderate



Basic



¹ Derek E. Brink, "Network Security for Small and Mid-Size Businesses," *Aberdeen Group*, September 2015, <http://www.aberdeen.com/research/11093/11093-RR-network-security-smb.aspx/content.aspx>

² "2015 Verizon Data Breach Investigations Report," *Verizon Enterprise Solutions*, 2015, <http://www.verizonenterprise.com/DBIR/2015/>

³ Jim Rapoza, "The Fall of SMB Networks and How Security and Reliability Will Help Them Rise Again," *Aberdeen Group*, August 2015, <http://www.aberdeen.com/research/11098/11098-KB-network-security-smb.aspx/content.aspx>



MOBILITY

Enabling the frenzy for immediate knowledge

Mobility is a two-sided coin. The mobile workforce is on one side. Mobility allows your team to conduct their jobs from anywhere, allowing for productivity regardless of location. It also provides quicker communication between people, departments, vendors, and customers.

Mobile-based apps provide additional aid to your employees. These can be internally developed or outside apps, all designed to help your employees do their jobs. Ease of communication from employee to employee, employee to customer, and employee to vendor frees your workforce from the constraints of time and place. The convenience mobility supplies should be accompanied by availability, safety, and security.

Proactive adopters of mobile solutions revealed the need for teleworkers as their businesses expanded. Mobile devices allow their businesses to grow and connect workers better, while encouraging a better work-life balance and enabling employees to access information from anywhere.

Shifting to a remote workforce has become a reality for many SMBs, and employees are enthusiastic about this new option. A survey from technology staffing firm Modis⁴ found flexible work hours to be the most desired benefit among workers. In their survey of US workers, over half chose flexible hours as their top perk, chosen far more than free food, unlimited vacation time, and on-site child care or paid parental leave. Offering remote work options can make for happier employees and help recruit future employees.

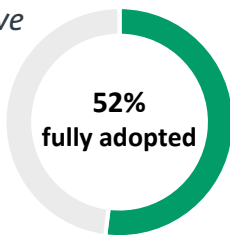
The shift to a remote workforce impacts operational costs, too. It can reduce office lease expenses and may lower the operational expenses of powering, heating, and cooling those offices.

The other side of the mobility coin is customer demand for knowledge. Your customers want information now, regardless of location. The availability of information increases competition, and businesses must know how to provide this information in multiple platforms and on-demand to their customers. For many companies, there is a huge gap in providing this information on mobile platforms. This gap represents a possible revenue source many SMBs have yet to tap.

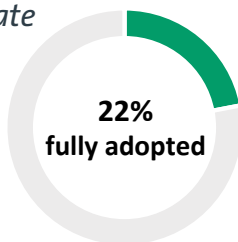
In this book, we'll look into how delivering mobile, on-demand access of information to both your employees and customers could be the advantage you need to elevate your business to the next level.

ADOPTION RATE

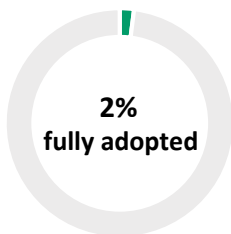
Proactive



Moderate



Basic



⁴ Bob Sullivan, NBCNews.com, "Flexible Hours Rated as Most Important Perk at Work." October 14, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/business/careers/flexible-hours-rated-most-important-perk-work-n444616>



BIG DATA

Mining existing data to gain a competitive advantage

Much of the customer demand for information is fueled by big data. Many small and midsize businesses recognize the promises inherent in data analytics and business intelligence, and they hope to use big data to gain customer insight, develop new products, and improve the customer experience. This is the cornerstone of strategy for both customer acquisition and retention.

Businesses gather and store data in record amounts today, but most fail to tap the knowledge found within that data. This knowledge helps define the customers your business can help most and uncovers valuable prospects. Big data is opening up to businesses of all sizes, and the power of big data is available right now for SMBs as an untapped source of revenue and competitive advantage.

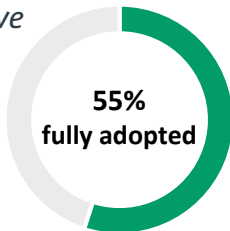
Proactive adopters of big data solutions found analytical technologies helped transform big data into a competitive advantage, leading to a deep understanding of customer behavior. With this knowledge, businesses could create innovative solutions for their clients and customers.

The data can also reveal other products and services you may want to offer to help retain current clients. Big data can put you far ahead of competitors who don't use this information.

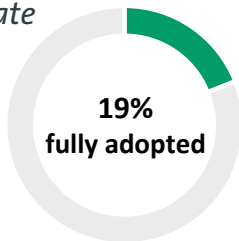
Here, we'll look at how big data can provide valuable insight into internal business changes and enable you to see how your business is changing in real time, as well as how you can use that information to adapt and be more agile and responsive as a business. At its core, the true value in big data comes from your customers, and ultimately, it will be your customers who will be best served by it.

ADOPTION RATE

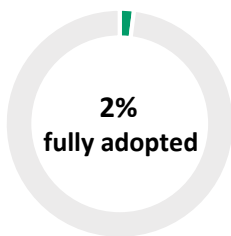
Proactive



Moderate



Basic



HYBRID CLOUD

Offering the best of both worlds

Many businesses continue to use private, on-premise infrastructure. These networks deliver security, but costs can be high.

According to the HPE survey, some businesses are turning to cloud services for the cost and productivity benefits they can provide. Among proactive adopters, the move to the cloud is seen as a way to modernize IT and lower technology expenses, as well as create greater business profitability. Here, we'll look at the available cloud structures and what they can (and in some cases cannot) offer your business.

Private cloud can provide companies with a safe way to manage and control their internal infrastructure. The security is generated by its dedication to your organization, protecting everything behind a corporate firewall. In turn, your internal IT team retains control of the private cloud, which allows for increased IT functionality and productivity. This option can be easier to scale than private, on-premise infrastructure, though it's typically not as inexpensive or scalable as public cloud. This option has its place inside certain sectors, such as the financial sector or other heavily regulated industries where public cloud options may not deliver enough security.

Public cloud can provide companies with a cost-effective and simple way to scale certain business functions, such as email, CRM, and communication, by using the resources of an external service partner. It allows for the quick provisioning of server resources and offers a pay-as-you-go model, which makes building out data storage options cheaper. It's less intensive than building your own infrastructure, and can work well as a supplement to traditional on-premise systems.

You can have and pay for capacity, where and when it's needed, allowing your SMB to quickly provision server and data storage and respond to growth needs as they occur. Costs will closely align to use and business needs. You can save on capital expense by investing in the cost-effectiveness of the public cloud. However, this option can be less secure and may not be suitable for sensitive or high-value data. This also may not be a wise option if your industry is governed by strict regulations. Your business must carefully weigh the pros and cons of its cloud options.

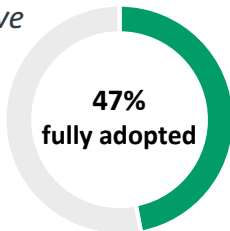
While both public and private cloud options can lower the total cost of operation and shift IT personnel to more strategic, business-involved projects, most businesses will benefit from a hybrid cloud model. This model combines the best of both worlds, by providing ease of management and increased mobility of the workforce, combined with the security of keeping business-critical operations on premise.

In the end, what it really comes down to is your business's needs. In this book, we'll look at the catalysts and ideal business outcomes that are driving SMBs to the cloud, and what lessons their experience can provide for others looking to take the leap.

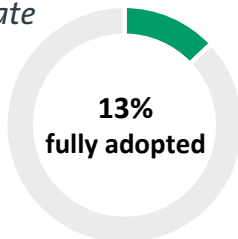


ADOPTION RATE

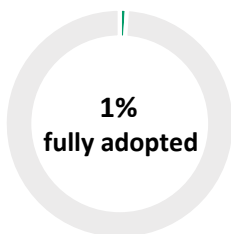
Proactive



Moderate



Basic



PROACTIVE ADOPTERS

Is this your next move?

Wise use of these four technologies paves the way to meet some of your greatest needs and desires as a business. These technologies allow for customer acquisition and retention, greater IT productivity, and improved employee productivity, creating a business that is continuously up and running and lowering the overall costs of conducting business.

Standing on the sidelines and watching how technology changes business won't help your SMB. Your leading competitors are proactively adopting technology, and if you want to survive and thrive, you need to determine how your business can move in the same direction.

Is your organization facing the challenge of adopting today's new, disruptive technologies? Here's how today's technology adopters are using security, mobile, big data, and cloud to have a huge impact on their business, and what their experience can teach you in the process.

SECURITY, MOBILITY, BIG DATA, AND CLOUD

