Digitalise to Thrive

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How digitalisation can drive your business in the pandemic and post-pandemic era.

Digitalisation (noun): The use of digital technologies to change a business model and provide new revenue and value-producing opportunities.

Digitalisation in the workplace is nothing new, but the pandemic has accelerated changes that were already gathering pace, such as remote working, the automation of manual tasks and the use of online tools and platforms to facilitate workplace collaboration regardless of geographical location.

More than twelve months of government-mandated working from home has fundamentally changed the way businesses operate, not just in where their employees are, but in how they collaborate and communicate with them - and their clients and customers.

A new reliance on digital platforms and tools brings with it challenges and opportunities. For those businesses not already geared towards remote working when the pandemic hit, solutions may have been hastily patched together to enable them "get by". While this may have sufficed in crisis mode, a lack of integration and consistency will undoubtedly slow down processes and have a negative impact on productivity.

As we face an economic downturn, investment in digital to rectify these issues, better meet client and customer needs and prepare for the post-pandemic world of work might seem unthinkable, but it could be the route to new revenue streams, new customers and even financial savings through tax relief and credits.

In this whitepaper, we explore five opportunities in digital transformation that are available to all businesses, right now.

DIGITISE VS DIGITALISE

Before we begin...

Technology is filled with confusing terminology and buzzwords that sound so similar that they're often considered to mean the same thing. This is no exception.

Digitisation and digitalisation are often used interchangeably, but they are fundamentally different. To digitise is to take analogue data - such as physical paper files - and convert it into an electronic format, like a text document. It's doing the same thing differently, replacing an analogue format or process like-for-like, with a digital or electronic one. With digitisation in the workplace, processes get faster, efficiency is improved - but the business model does not change.

Digitalisation, on the other hand, is a transformation. Using new and emerging technology to change whole business models. Instead of just improving efficiency and speed, it adds or creates value as well. It's disruptive and can be lucrative.

Over the past year, we digitised to survive. Now is the time to digitalise to thrive.

1. MAKING REMOTE WORKING SUSTAINABLE

The 'work from home' order of the last 12 months has accelerated a shift to remote working that was already in progress. Without central office bases there has been a complete change in how workplaces across the country operate. Suddenly our reliance on technology that allows employees to collaborate and deliver day-to-day work has increased, with collaborative platforms such as Google Workspace and Office 365 vital to everyday operations.

Between February 17 and June 14 last year, Teams usage was reported to have grown 894% from its base usage, followed by Zoom at 677% and Cisco WebEx at 451%. Only just emerging from our third national lockdown, businesses are continuing to lean on these tools to keep their staff, clients and customers safe, and businesses running.

For many sectors, remote working is likely to be here to stay, but the hasty infrastructures put in place as we responded to the unfolding crisis may not be suitable or sustainable in the future workplace.

Businesses now have an opportunity to look at their IT and digital infrastructure afresh. Are the systems you use consistent, are you still using legacy software that creates additional layers of admin and slows down processes, do your systems talk to one another and work seamlessly, or are manual processes needed to join things up?

There is upfront work to be done, but the benefits of using digitalisation to streamline systems and automate manual tasks, bring consistency to processes and find ways to enable tech to add value to your businesses is worth the initial upheaval and investment.

CASE STUDY : BDO

CHALLENGE:

Streamline the admin-heavy onboarding process for clients and potential clients wishing to move their business into other territories through BDO and allow company employees to work collaboratively across global locations.

APPROACH:

The project started with a scoping session attended by Mashbo and key stakeholders from BDO, to understand and map out the current process. This highlighted a significant amount of tasks that could be automated through an internal app, such as gathering complex information about the client and taking down the answers to a series of questions before the client could be passed over to the relevant international BDO office. The onboarding process allows staff to ask the correct questions and transfer the relevant data to other global offices seamlessly.

IMPACT:

- Reduced time spent on admin for BDO staff

- Ability to input, review, complete and edit submissions all via one app

- Streamlined to help clients get the information they need faster

- Provides better experience, promoting business growth

- Less admin frees up time to deliver exceptional client experience

Mark Sykes, Partner at BDO, said:

"Working with Mashbo helped us not only develop the tools we needed to deliver our new groundbreaking service to support local SMEs in the North West, but the team helped us think around user experience and ease of use. The system helped increase our efficiency, equip our teams to deliver a consistent service and supported us in quickly collating insights to help us support growing businesses."

2. AUTOMATION OF MANUAL TASKS

In recent years artificial intelligence (A.I.)/automation and the Internet of Things (IoT) have been tipped as the technologies that will transform our workplaces, however a poll of senior staff from more than 300 companies, published in January 2021, revealed that they were the least important technology topics for IT leaders.

In a way, it's not surprising. There are a lot of sexy, exciting concepts out there that most workplaces are just not ready for, nor do they need. But what shouldn't be overlooked is automation in its simplest form - the automation of the labour-intensive manual tasks that eat up the time (and often enthusiasm) of employees at all levels.

Processes that can be automated and will make a difference to your business can usually be identified by scoping sessions that pinpoint problems - blockers to efficiency and profitability. Our previous whitepaper "What's Your Problem?" looks at how starting with the issue, rather than the tech, allows businesses to find transformational and revenue-generating solutions.

Quite often, the integration of business systems and automation will be the answer to companies' problems. Harnessing digital technologies to streamline operations and automate manual processes will deliver greater speed, less waste and more focus on revenue-generating activities.

Furthermore, by digitalising a workplace we make more data available. If used effectively, this data can be used to inform future development and harnessed to personalise staff, client and customer experiences, potentially transforming businesses.

CASE STUDY: CHURCHILL

CHALLENGE:

Churchill Recovery collects debt on behalf of various types of companies, in particular, utilities. This involves phoning debtors, visiting residential and commercial properties, executing warrants and other logistical challenges. Our challenge was to design and build an application that supports its existing processes, but is less prone to errors and reduces manual work as much as possible, through streamlining and automation.s.

APPROACH:

Introduce a prototype of a new, integrated system as early as possible to ensure that it can be used, tested and adapted as it is developed. Using this iterative approach, we prioritised the most important features and made them accessible to Churchill staff, their self-employed field staff and client account staff from the utility companies. Future scope includes access for debtors, allowing people to see their payment plans, make payments, review previous correspondence.

IMPACT:

Implementing a new system that streamlines and automates Churchill's processes, where possible, will:

- Reduce administration time required to process records
- Reduce errors introduced by manual data entry
- Improve the quality of the job done by field agents
- Remove the possibility of data breaches

3. A CONTACT-FREE WORKING WORLD

When it comes to technology, the concept of contactless is no longer reserved for payments. The post-pandemic workplace will aim to allow human interaction through low-touch experiences.

The shiny, futuristic view of this includes sensors might adjust hotdesks to the settings of a particular user - and only power back up after previous use if it's been fully sanitised - or tech that might be able to detect if someone is potentially unwell.

Once again, the practical and more likely implementation of tech to create contact-free workplaces will be fobs and scanners to reduce contact with doors and switches, online meeting and conference facilities, online and virtual training/assessment tools and - with people splitting work from home and some time in offices - tools to manage workplace capacity and use of space.

CASE STUDY: DANPARK

CHALLENGE:

We were tasked by international nutrition brand, Danone, to find an efficient solution to manage the car park at the company's Chiswick Park offices in London and maximise its usage

APPROACH:

We built a native app, named DanPark, that was compatible with Apple and Android devices. The app allows space users to log in, see a list displaying when spaces are available Monday - Friday and submit a request for available parking spaces. Bookings are confirmed with a unique car park space identification number, informing them where to park when they arrive. Space owners are also able to log in through the app and view the weeks ahead, selecting the days they wish to surrender their space.

IMPACT:

- Increased car park occupancy
- Reduction in staff lateness
- Improved staff morale
- Positive environmental impact by boosting opportunities for car sharing
- In a post-pandemic world, this technology reduces the need for human contact and can be applied to other office management challenges, such as booking meeting rooms, facilities and workspaces in hot-desk based offices

My Booking

May 10th - 14th

Monday	3 spaces
Tuesday	1 spaces

4. GET MONEY BACK ON YOUR TECH INVESTMENTS

The initial investment in tech solutions can be a scary prospect, particularly in the current climate, but there are a number of reasons that the investment may be a wise one. Not just because the solution could be a productivity boosting and revenue-generating one, nor because it could set your business in good stead for navigating future crises, such as the pandemic - but because it could also save you money.

For businesses that have been forced to digitise during the pandemic, Research & Development or R&D Tax credits may not be on radar, but they are a form of tax relief that many more companies may now be eligible for.

Software development companies like us here at Mashbo, are developing software to sell. The broad explanation of R&D tax credits is that they are an incentive designed to encourage companies to invest in innovation. Based on that, it feels like something that only development companies would have access too, but the reality is that the reach is much further.

Companies who need software licences or bespoke software developed to enable their various systems and equipment to run efficiently or to enable their wider R&D projects to be progressed could be eligible. There was even the indication in the Chancellor's spring budget that data and cloud costs might also be moved into the scope of R&D tax relief.

Simply put, if you are digitising or even digitalising your business, you may be eligible to claim R&D tax relief on software development, making tax savings of around £25 for every £100 spent.

If you want to explore R&D tax credits, we recommend that you consult your accountant and a tried and tested R&D tax credit specialist - we'd be happy to refer you to ours.

5. MAINTAIN A HUMAN TOUCH...

We believe that the future of work in the post-pandemic era will focus on three things - digitalisation, data and empathetic leadership. There will be an ever-increasing reliance on technology for the day-to-day of businesses, both in the office and for employees working from home.

Customer and client behaviours will change. In a digitalised workplace, data will drive the decisions we make, to how werespond to these new behaviours and how we meet new expectations and needs.

Automation will see job roles will change. Some will become obsolete and other new roles will emerge. New training and recruitment requirements will need to be met, possibly in a virtual format.

As a software development company, you'd be forgiven for thinking that we believe that technology will be able to do it all. It won't, nothing will be possible without empathetic leadership, that understands how change and transition will affect its workforce. Without the right support, in periods of change, employee wellbeing and mental health can be adversely impacted.

People should be at the centre of digital transformation. Rather than thinking that one should replace the other, but to truly transform a business, its leaders need to identify how to best leverage both the technology and the human beings they employ.

As you start on your journey of digitalisation, make sure you're considering your people as well as your profits. If you find any that are struggling, you can always direct them to the Hub of Hope, a free-to-use mental health support app that we created for national charity, Chasing the Stigma.

Visit it here: www.hubofhope.co.uk.

There's always somebody to talk to...

Talking to some could be the start of you feeling better

DIGITALISE TO THRIVE: QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

1 Is your digital infrastructure fit for purpose in a world where employees are blending office-based work and work from home?

2 Are there legacy systems and labour-intensive processes that are impacting your employees' productivity and the efficiency and productivity of your business?

3 Do your IT systems and digital tools support your processes and work together seamlessly?

4 How do you know how people use your IT systems and digital tools?

5 Are labour-intensive manual processes holding you and your team back from revenue-generating opportunities and activities?

Want to chat it through? Why not contact us for a [virtual] brew?

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ABOUT MASHBO

We build things people use

Mashbo is a UK-based software development consultancy that uses automation to create digital solutions that transform organisations. We use technology to solve complex challenges and transform the efficiency, capability and profitability of global organisations, improving the lives of their employees and customers.

Our products include custom CRM systems, automated administrative software, automated audit software, cloud-based web applications, progressive web applications and online management systems, to name just a few.

Mashbo was founded in 2011 by Managing Director, Gavin Sherratt and Technical Director, Steve Todd. Clients include The English Football League, Liverpool FC, Everton FC, and Everton in the Community, BDO, Manx Telecom, Nugent, Swiss Re and Danone.

As well as our core business we also bring our professional community together to share knowledge and best practice through our community brand Creative Kitchen.

We play a key role in the business community of our hometown, Liverpool, championing the city on a national and international platform and facilitating global working opportunities. We do this through Mashbo's role as strategic digital and technology partner to the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, as well as by creating working links with Tech Nation UK, You Tube, Twitter and Google.

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OUR VALUES

We pride ourselves on "keeping it Mashbo" - adhering to six core values in everything we do, with our primary aim being to change everything we touch for the better and deliver positive impact to people, organisations and communities.

We strive to always:

1 **Make a positive difference** - Change everything you touch for the better and deliver positive impact to people, organisations and communities

2 **Push the boundaries** - Never stop exploring, playing and pushing the boundaries of our technical ability. Tech doesn't stop, so neither should we

3 **Be go-givers** - Pursue and embrace opportunities to help others and encourage education, collaboration and knowledge sharing for the greater good

4 **Have self-belief** - Take on any challenge with the knowledge that you have the skills, support and capability to succeed and deliver. Know your worth and respect the worth of others

5 **Say it as it is** - Ditch the small print and be honest. Build relationships on a strong foundation of trust and transparency

6 **Keep it Mashbo** - Commit yourself to doing the right thing, in the best way possible, in everything that you do

Managing director

GAVIN SHERRATT

Gavin is the pioneering and entrepreneurial heart of Mashbo. With 23 years' experience working at the forefront of technology in senior level creative and technical roles he is no stranger to working with global brands and big multinational clients. He drives our team to push the boundaries of new and emerging technologies and build innovative, transformational products and solutions with the power to revolutionise whole industries. The proud recipient of the BIMA100 2020, Big Chip Leadership Award in 2017 and a name check in Forbes magazine in 2015, Gavin works closely with clients and investment business partners to develop their business strategy, identify challenges and commercial opportunities and advise how they can invest in digital to future proof their enterprises and organisations. He is also committed to the development of our industry locally and nationally, founding Creative Kitchen to encourage knowledge sharing between agencies, businesses and freelancers in the creative and digital sector.

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Technical director

STEVE TODD

An experienced project manager and natural digital problem solver, Steve is an expert in an extensive range of computer languages, frameworks and tools. He uses this expertise to push the boundaries of our technical ability, leading projects for global companies, SMEs and social enterprises, future proofing their businesses through automation and AI, as well as delivering business-transforming solutions for whole industries. A great communicator, Steve is also responsible for building client relationships, ensuring our projects deliver the best solutions on time and in budget. Committed to the future of the industry, Steve mentors students in the Computer Science Department at Liverpool University. He was also recently shortlisted in the Insider Young IT Professional Award 2019.

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NEXT STEPS

**Are you ready to Digitalise and Thrive?
Perhaps we can help you on your journey?**

Contact Mashbo:

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Find out more at www.mashbo.com

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