



Digital Transformation

How technology can help your business grow faster than ever before

In the course of my daily interactions with business owners and entrepreneurs, I can't help but notice the effect of technology (or the lack of it) on customer experience. We see people driving around looking for information that will ease the customer engagement, leaving a better taste for the customer.

One recent experience that left me pleasantly surprised was a creative agency with whom we worked with some years ago.

I made a call to request some of the design fundamentals and artwork that they had created for us. In the interim, they had kept a low level of contact but impressively had kept up to date with our movements, new services etc.

They explained how they tracked "retired clients" through the clever use of automation and built a short book of free

recommendations to use with our internal marketing department. It was a revelation to us and pulled us back into their orbit to seek advice and some professional services from them.

By the end of the encounter, we reflected on how we manage our own customer experience and have made several changes to enhance that experience — all that leverage technology.



Use a technology roadmap to launch technology initiatives

This episode got me to thinking about the many companies who want to achieve automated, synchronised and efficient operations, but who hesitate to invest because they fear the cost and complexity of technology, don't know where to start and don't yet have firm plans in place.

Major technology initiatives, like the implementation of new enterprise systems such as CRM or ERP, can be intimidating. They are usually expensive, take a long time to complete, carry a high risk of failure and can be very disruptive to the company's day-to-day operations. Applications that focus on specific business functions such as scheduling software, while less costly, often come with their own set of challenges such as limited functionality and the need to integrate multiple systems.

Despite these challenges, companies that have invested in digital technologies are reporting increased productivity, lower costs and improved product quality. They are also better positioned to react more rapidly to market changes and have better growth prospects.

A technology roadmap can help you move forward with confidence and purpose while avoiding costly mistakes. It will help you align your IT projects with your strategic priorities, plan for the long term, and define your needs and goals before making an investment.

Here are six steps you can follow to build your technology roadmap.



1 - Identify your strategic objectives

What are your strategic priorities? What is the financial and operational impact you hope to generate?

Staffing is a huge concern for almost all industries these days. The No1 priority for new staff in choosing a new role is work flexibility. How can you leverage technology to allow for this?

What tools and information can help your team become more insightful, proactive and responsive?

How can you deliver a better experience or create additional value for your customers?

In what ways can you make it easier to do business with your company?

Clearly defining your strategic objectives and how technology will help you achieve them is a critical step to a successful IT strategy.

2 - Plan for the future

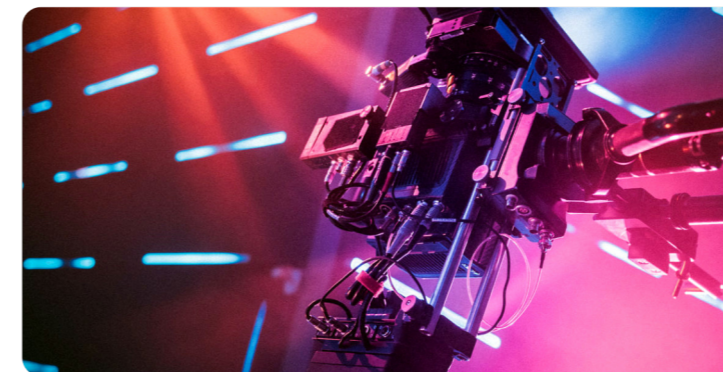
Investments that only address immediate needs result in fewer benefits, duplication of effort and higher costs. Customers today expect to interact with you through multiple channels—mobile apps, social media, websites—and they want an experience that is seamless and consistent.

The explosion in affordable connected devices, for example, has allowed many companies to use real-time data to build close relationships with their customers, to optimise resources and track performance. The Internet of Things (IoT) and other technology trends are becoming competitive advantages that

draw in customers and create winners or losers in the marketplace.

Your business can't afford to stay behind.

In developing your roadmap, set your sights on a longer time horizon and consider what you will need to stay competitive over the next three to five years. Technology that is flexible, scalable and expandable enough to accommodate your long-term needs will help you get the most out of your investment.



3 - Define your functional needs and priorities

Without clearly defined needs and priorities, there is no way to properly assess your options and plan effectively.

When creating your roadmap, you'll want to:

- Review your business processes and highlight inefficiencies
- Identify technology gaps or areas where your existing systems fall short
- Identify the functional capabilities needed to adequately support or improve your processes
- Prepare an itemised, prioritised checklist of what steps need to be taken

From my own experience, I have seen my clients inevitably express a desire for better reports, performance metrics and predictive analytics to help them plan, execute and deliver to expectations. But it's essential that you determine what underlying data is needed to achieve such visibility as well as how, when, where and by whom will it be collected.

4 - Measure the cost

Major technology initiatives can be expensive and capital intensive.

The investment required can vary significantly depending on the size of your company, your industry and the complexity of your requirements.

Make sure you research pricing and

include a realistic cost estimate for each project in your roadmap. Also take account of additional or ongoing costs such as new infrastructure costs, subscription fees, annual maintenance and support fees.

5 - Establish realistic timelines

Ensuring your projects are adequately resourced is critical to their success, but you can't tackle everything all at once. Your roadmap should include a realistic schedule and timeline for your projects based upon your priorities, the duration of each project and available resources. Don't forget to account for constraints that may limit your ability to execute —such as busy seasons.

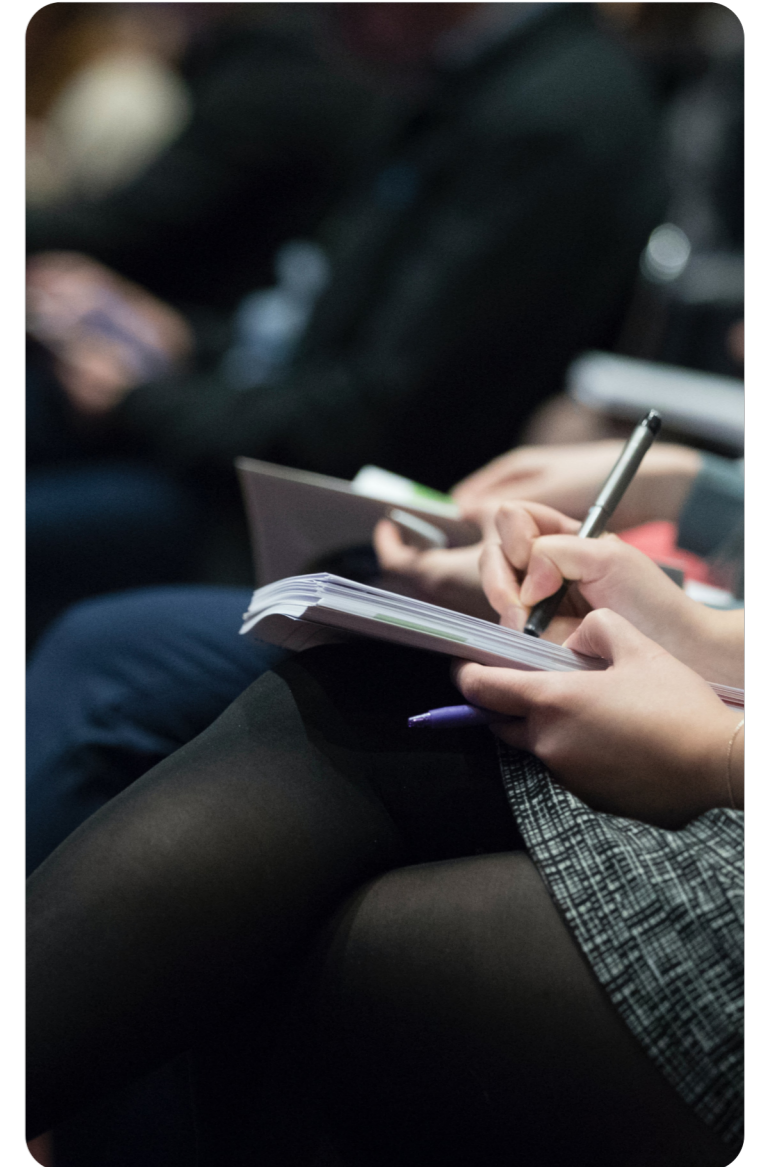
Leveraging external resources such as consultants can be an effective way to relieve the workload on your in-house

staff. As an added benefit, external support can contribute valuable knowledge and experience, helping you avoid pitfalls and learn from the success of others.

6 - Appoint an IT steering committee

Departmental needs and individual opinions vary greatly, so building consensus and ensuring support for the technology roadmap can be difficult.

Appointing an IT steering committee comprised of leaders from IT and other key departments can facilitate communication and help overcome departmental or individualistic thinking. The steering committee can also use the roadmap to monitor project progress and assess the achievement of project objectives.



A document that evolves over time

As your business grows, your priorities may shift, and new opportunities or challenges may present themselves.

Your IT strategy may also change as a result. Preparing your technology roadmap is not a one-time event. Rather, it is a living document that should be regularly updated, reconsidered and revised.

Don't worry about getting your technology roadmap perfect the first time around. Just get it started and keep working on it so that you move closer to achieving your goals.

I'd love to hear about your own experiences. Have you ever created a technology roadmap for your business? How did it go? Let us know if we can be of any assistance.



Mark Hurley is the founder and CEO of Spector Information Security. He has been in the business since backups were made on tape. He has over 10 qualifications in IT and business management, and continues to be curious and learning with partners.

Getting there, faster

Now that you have a clearer picture of what you need to build your roadmap, you can start to focus on getting your plans out of paper.

To do that, you need to have excellent execution capacity and robust processes in place, to make sure that things are done correctly and verified.

You can choose to incorporate these functions in your structure or to outsource both strategic and execution capacity to a trusted partner.

We understand most businesses want to be focusing on their core activities and find IT frustrating to deal with, which is why we specialise in helping companies to eliminate stress and leverage the power of technology to transform their businesses.

If you are looking for advice or would like some help to get started, book a call with us via one of the channels below:

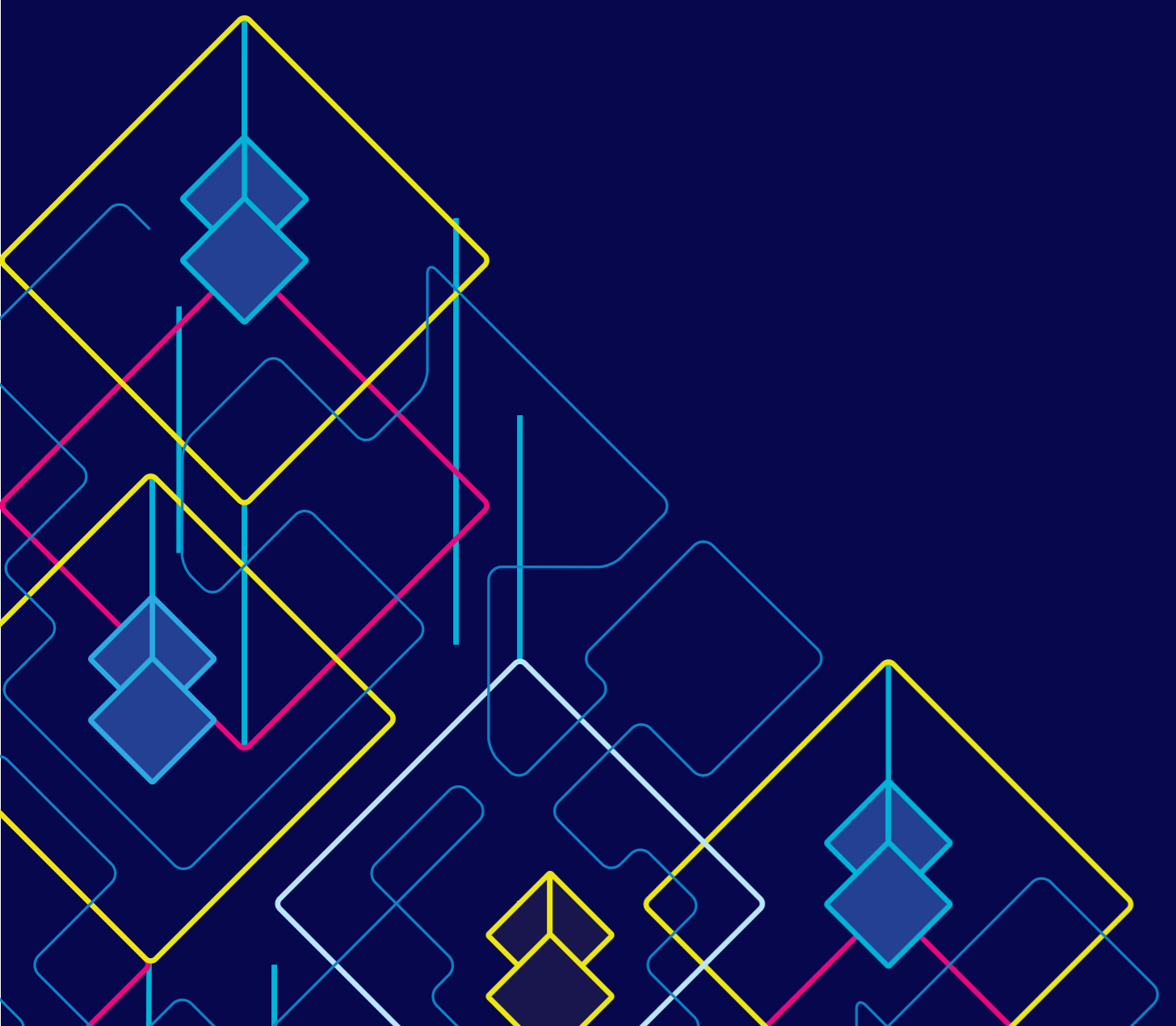



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