



THE KEY TO SME SURVIVAL IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL DISRUPTION

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SMEs that embrace new technologies in the age of digital disruption are giving themselves a future. There is much opportunity to be found in rethinking and reworking how you deliver your products and services. It's not about reinventing what you do, but how you do it. And the key advantage an SME has over a larger entity is agility. You can implement process change swiftly and reap the benefits quickly too. As long as you've got a good plan.

IF IT AIN'T BROKE WHY FIX IT?

Because of the pace of the change around you. Digital technology has already transformed the way we conduct business. SMEs that are reluctant to adopt new technologies and start utilising the data that these provide are endangered. To avoid extinction, planning around how to use the tools that will support change is essential.

The Internet of Things (IoT) and transformative technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), 3D printing, robotics and automation are all tools that can enable SMEs to revitalise their operations and stay relevant in this time of rapid change.



WHERE DOES AN SME START?

In this period of disruption there are a few constants:

- 1. the unending use of acronyms and tech-jargon and**
- 2. the sheer amount of information available.**

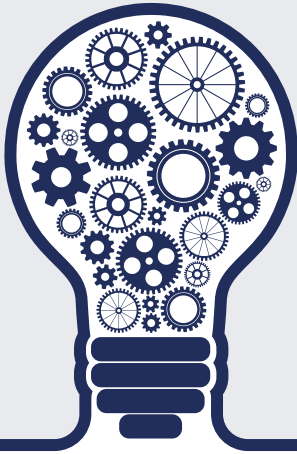
Many of us experience information overload.

Understandably, there is also an apprehension about investing in concepts. As well as valid concerns about being taken for a ride by tech-perts. You don't want to invest a lot of money into technology or systems that you don't actually need.

So, the first step is in gaining an understanding of how these concepts – such as IoT and Industry 4.0 – and how their corresponding technologies will apply in practical terms to your business. You're taking that first step now.



THERE IS NO SURE FORMULA TO SUCCESS BUT CAN AN SME FUTURE-PROOF THEIR BUSINESS?
YES. BUT THAT FUTURE NEEDS TO START NOW.



THE CASE FOR INNOVATION

The phrase **‘innovate or perish’** may be a cliché but clichés exist for a reason. SMEs that have the ability to evolve their business through innovation are more likely to succeed.

Unfortunately, the word ‘innovation’ has become an overused buzzword in industry. You’ve probably even forgotten what it means. The literal meaning of innovate is to invent or to come up with new and different ways of doing something.

Innovative SMEs can supplant established players by launching new products and services in existing markets, OR by creating new markets for their own products and services by addressing new or unrealised consumer needs.

Remember Toys R Us? Enough said.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Australian Centre for Business Growth identified in 2018 that one of the key reasons SMEs fail is due to a lack of innovative planning and direction from their CEOs.¹

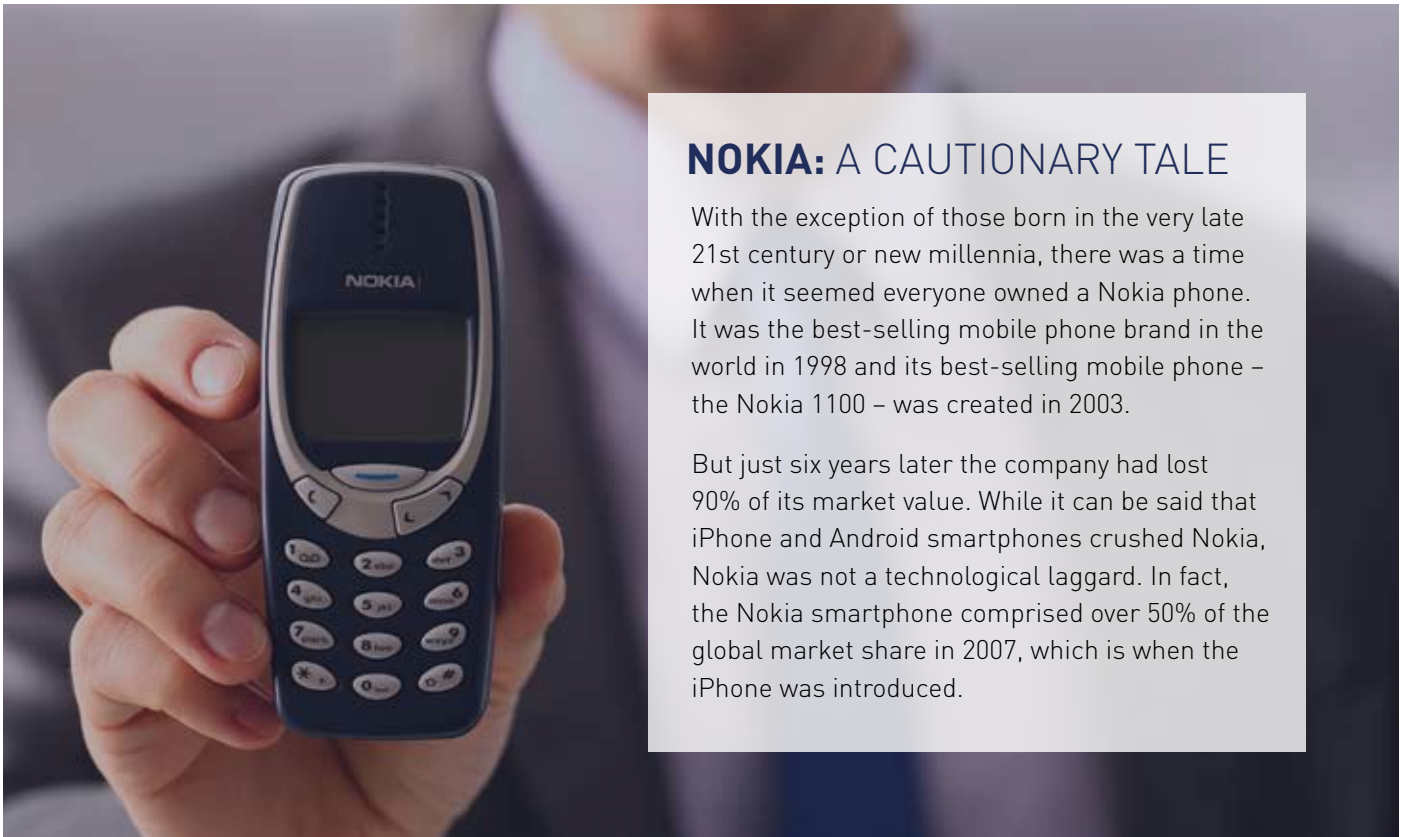
SMEs play a key role in Australia’s economy. According to a report by PwC, Australia’s Gross Domestic Product would have increased by almost \$6 billion in the period of 2012-2013 if SMEs had adopted innovative business processes.²

Despite the case for innovation, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics reveals that only 38.3% of Australian businesses invested in at least one type of innovation in 2017.³

1. New study reveals why SMEs fail, Nov 2018: <https://unisa.edu.au/Media-Centre/Releases/2018/new-study-reveals-why-australian-smes-fail/>

2. Economic impact assessment: SME tech adoption – Technical note, PwC, May 2014, Research report prepared under request by Microsoft.

3. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Innovation in Australian Business Summary, <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/06B08353E0EABA96CA25712A00161216?Opendocument>



NOKIA: A CAUTIONARY TALE

With the exception of those born in the very late 21st century or new millennia, there was a time when it seemed everyone owned a Nokia phone. It was the best-selling mobile phone brand in the world in 1998 and its best-selling mobile phone – the Nokia 1100 – was created in 2003.

But just six years later the company had lost 90% of its market value. While it can be said that iPhone and Android smartphones crushed Nokia, Nokia was not a technological laggard. In fact, the Nokia smartphone comprised over 50% of the global market share in 2007, which is when the iPhone was introduced.

WHAT HAPPENED?

In short, Nokia's failure to innovate was the root cause of their demise. The company had developed and forecast the smartphone future but chose not to do anything about it. Rather than put more innovative product out to the market, they continued to saturate the market with low cost, hardware-driven mobile products.

Meanwhile, the iPhone continued to 'wow' consumers with innovative, software-driven applications, and not long after Samsung joined forces with Google and Android to create similarly 'smarter', innovative mobile phone offerings.⁴

4. Distributed Attention and Shared Emotions in the Innovation Process: How Nokia Lost the Smartphone Battle, 2015. https://knowledge.insead.edu/sites/www.insead.edu/files/images/asq_2015_print_vuori_huy_distributed_attention_and_shared_emotions_in_innovation_process.pdf

THE CORONA-CATALYST

The COVID-19 pandemic has been globally devastating. We have yet to fully realise its impacts.

For SMEs, this has been a challenging period to say the least. Most of you will have experienced a sharp decline in sales. Many have had to dramatically change processes to keep functioning and generate income. The way you engaged with staff and customers was altered, without being physically able to go out on site or have in-person meetings. Likewise, everyone has had to ensure the safety of their employees and colleagues, which meant for the most part, people had to set up office in the home or follow strict physical distancing and containment measures in the workplace.



USING PLATFORMS SUCH AS ZOOM, MICROSOFT TEAMS AND SKYPE BECAME THE NORM. ASK YOURSELF, DID YOU USE THESE PRIOR TO THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS IN A PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT?

The silver lining?

The coronavirus has been a catalyst for those who have stalled on digitalisation to make it a priority. The phrase “necessity is the mother of invention” is a relevant one here. SMEs have been forced to manage their businesses remotely – from outside the plant or office – and change their practices to go digital and interact with customers online. And you can expect this wave of digitisation will only intensify over the next few years. Don’t fall behind. Look at what you’ve achieved in a short period of time, and take this opportunity to make lasting, positive changes for your business.



What does normal look like now?

SMEs peering through the fog of COVID-19 uncertainty would be right to ask themselves, what is the 'new normal'? The crisis has certainly demonstrated that investment in digital technology is not a luxury, but a necessity. Yet while SMEs have had to rely on technology to operate, it's important to recognise that post-COVID-19, the path to digitisation requires assessment, focus and clear planning if companies are to remain competitive in this 'new normal'.

KPMG Australia identified a three-phased journey that SMEs can use to respond to COVID-19 challenges. Take a look at the steps within each phase of the below graphic and consider how these have or could apply to your business.

01 RESPOND (Immediate)

Survive, adapt and contain

- Decision making - act fast, pick the least worst option
- Identify business critical functions to maintain - plan for contingencies
- Control costs and protect cash
- Manage supply chain risks - renegotiate where required
- Establish teams to manage centrally and cohesively disruption
- Implement first-aid enablers for operational continuity
- Engage your people
- Monitor for exceptions - frauds and cyber attacks

02 REBUILD (June-Dec 2020)

Reimagine, reshape and redesign

- Continue management of disruption, centrally and cohesively
- Recalibrate short term and long term goals and directions from Brand, Products and Services
- Redesign short term operations and delivery model to improve the 'new normal,' from people, process and technology perspective
- Stabilise financial through robust credit risk modelling, cash flow analysis, investor reporting, and insurance and government grant claims, etc.
- Build resilience and contingency for key third parties

03 REBOUND (Jan 2021 onwards)

Reenergise, improve and innovate

- Validate brand, products and services long term strategy
- Plan strategically to manage new scenarios with a comparable crisis
- Prioritise omni-channel over single channel
- Optimise operations extending the value chain to trusted and resilient partners and suppliers
- Use data to understand potential for new streams of revenue

5. COVID-19: Helping SMEs survive to thrive, KPMG Australia, <https://home.kpmg/au/en/home/insights/2020/04/covid-19-survival-for-sme.html>



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Digital transformation is the adoption and integration of digital technology into all areas of your business, fundamentally changing the way your business operates and how you deliver value to your customers. It involves the coupling of real-time data with technologies such as cloud-based applications to enhance your products, processes and decision-making.

Q

What does **digital transformation** mean for My Enterprise (ME)?

A

OPPORTUNITY. Being able to identify and avoid waste and inefficiencies through higher flexibility, faster reaction times and informed decision-making.

KEY ACTION POINTS

• • • • → **GET SOCIAL.** Take advantage of your professional network to find out what technologies other SME owners are using. Peer-to-peer learning is an inexpensive, practical resource.

• • • • • → **DO YOUR HOMEWORK.** Have a proper look at your business before creating a digital strategy. What are your pain points? What takes up the most time? Establish these first, then look at different tech options.

• • • • • → **MAKE A PLAN.** Planning is critical. You need to make the most of your ability to scale up with agility. However, scaling up swiftly is not the solution. Making smart business decisions and having the right people on board is the best way for you to grow long-term. A large enterprise can weather a poor business investment, can you afford to?



BRING YOUR 'A' GAME

The words agile and agility keep surfacing in discussions about digital disruption and transformation. What does this mean for ME?

Unlike large enterprises, SMEs are inherently suited to being agile. The 'agile method' focuses on putting the customer first. In essence, it is about leveraging relationships and being responsive and adaptable to what your customers want.

According to an article in Forbes, organisational agility is the ability to:

- Adjust strategies on a continuous basis
- Empower employees to make key decisions on challenging projects
- Respond to ambiguity and uncertainty with flexibility and speed
- View unanticipated change as an opportunity for transformation ⁶

INNOVATION IS
GOOD; SMART
INNOVATION
IS GREAT;
INNOVATION FOR
THE END USER IS
UNBEATABLE ⁷

01

LISTEN

Listen to your customers and respond through action.

02

MANAGE

Give your people power. Let capable staff manage their respective fields.

03

CHANGE

Be ready to change repeatedly in order to provide customers with what they want.

04

GROW

Own your past mistakes. Take lessons from them. Grow.

6. To Jump Through The Hoops Of Digital Disruption, Be Agile <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesinsights/2017/11/16/to-jump-through-the-hoops-of-digital-disruption-be-agile/#60241f34559b>

7. Succeeding as an SME in the age of digital disruption <https://realbusiness.co.uk/succeeding-as-an-sme-in-the-age-of-digital-disruption/>

IOT AND INDUSTRY 4.0 EXPLAINED

The terms Internet of Things (IoT) and Industry 4.0 are frequently bandied about at conferences and in think pieces. But what do these actually mean and how do they apply to ME?

Simply put, the IoT refers to smart devices that communicate information. The objective of IoT is to enable connectivity and data exchange between any object that has a readable identity.



Your smart phone is an IoT device. It has technology such as Bluetooth and radio-frequency identification (RFID) tracking. It includes a series of built-in sensors that can determine movement, light, temperature or verify your unique biometric information (such as a fingerprint sensor or facial recognition). Your phone will also have near-field communications – this is the tech that enables you to pay with card (such as your Apple or Google Wallet) or use an electronic ticket (like Myki or Opal cards) from your phone. Ever used the Maps app on your phone? This is a great example of you using IoT in an everyday situation.

Now, *imagine the possibilities with your business.*

Industry 4.0 refers to the fourth industrial revolution. It is categorized by the merging of the physical and digital world through transformative technology.

WHAT ARE TRANSFORMATIVE TECHNOLOGIES?

- Advanced automation and robotics
- Machine learning
- Machine-to-machine and human-to-machine communication
- Sensor technology
- Artificial intelligence (AI)
- Data analytics





The implications of industry 4.0 and the impact it will have on industrial processes will be profound. But guess what? The revolution's already here. It's happening. The question is, are you ready to start adopting industry 4.0 Technologies?

1784


FIRST INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION



Mechanical weaving loom:
Introduction of mechanical production assets based on water and steam power.

1923

SECOND INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION



Introduction of a "moving" assembly line at Ford Motors:
Introduction of mass production based on division of labour and electrical energy.

1969

THIRD INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION



First programmable logic controller (PLC):
Introduction of electronics and IT for higher automatization of production.

2014

FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION



Real time, self optimizing connected systems:
So far ← 10% advanced.



ANCESTRY.COM: MAKING HISTORY

Ancestry.com is a prime example of how innovation coupled with technology can ensure a company's success as time evolves, particularly in an age of rapid development and disruption.

FACTS ABOUT ANCESTRY.COM:



It is the largest for-profit genealogy company in the world. It reported a revenue of US \$1 billion in 2017.



As of 2019, it had 3 million subscribers and had tested more than 15 million people's DNA.



It started as a publishing company in 1983 with 40 family history magazine titles.



By 1996, Ancestry.com was launched and all articles and genealogy had been digitalised. It also went international.



In 2002, the company partnered with Relative Genetics to start offering DNA testing.



In 2010 the groundbreaking TV series 'Who Do You Think You Are?' was launched.

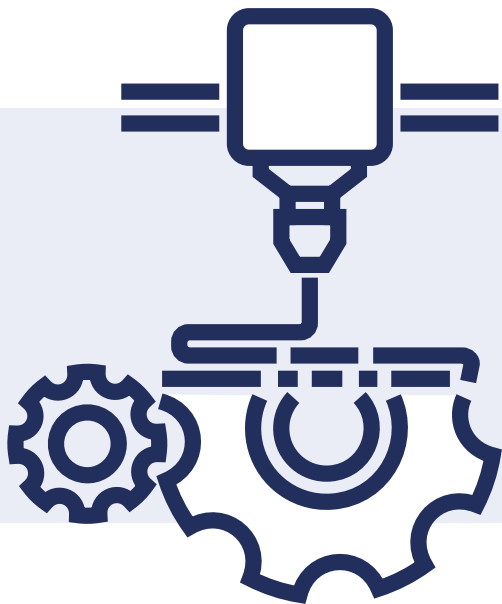


In 2016, Ancestry.com extended its product availability to 30 countries.



AncestryHealth was launched in 2019 – to provide people with “actionable insights” regarding their health using DNA and family history.⁸

8. Ancestry.com <https://www.ancestry.com/corporate/about-ancestry/company-facts>



In 2017, Gartner predicted that by 2020, 70% of manufacturing operations worldwide would be using 3D printed tools, jigs and fixtures for the production of finished goods.⁹

**Are we there yet? We are.
Keep an eye on this space.**



FASTBRICK ROBOTICS: CONSTRUCTING THE FUTURE

The core philosophy of Australian company Fastbrick Robotics (FBR) is captured in the company tagline: Innovation in the making. What is it? An autonomous bricklaying system provided through robotics.

While it started with one groundbreaking idea, it took a lot of work – the sum total of 100 prototypes and 150 engineers – to develop and deliver FBR's precision bricklaying robot, the Hadrian X. But they got there.

ONCE IN A LIFETIME, IF YOU'RE LUCKY, SOMETHING YOU INVENT GETS THE OPPORTUNITY TO TACKLE A MAJOR GLOBAL NEED. SO, WE SCALED UP, BUILT OUR OWN TESTING FACILITIES AND BROUGHT TOGETHER BRILLIANT MINDS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE TO BRING THIS IDEA TO LIFE.¹⁰

– Mark Pivac, Chief Technology Officer and primary inventor of FBR's technology

9. Gartner, Predicts 2017: 3D Printing Accelerates, November 15, 2016: <https://www.gartner.com/en/documents/3514717>

10. Fastbrick Robotics website: <https://www.fbr.com.au/view/our-story>



There are a number of exponential technologies that are already shaping change across industries, particularly in the manufacturing segment.

Start thinking about how you can apply them to your business.



3D PRINTING

US President Barack Obama brought attention to 3D printing in his 2013 State of the Union address, saying it “has the potential to revolutionize the way we make almost everything.”¹¹

He wasn't wrong. The potential for 3D printing is significant. And there has been rapid progress in this area with 3D printers becoming faster, more versatile and more pervasive. 3D printing has already established its role as one of the most transformational and consequential technologies of Industry 4.0.

What is it exactly? 3D printing is a form of digital fabrication referred to as additive manufacturing. It is different from traditional manufacturing in that it builds objects layer by layer from 3D model data and as a result there is minimal waste.



ADVANCED ROBOTICS

Advanced robotics can be used to define any sensor-based robots that perform complex tasks with minimal human intervention. These are already employed in industrial applications such as welding, chemical detection, construction activity, and mining extraction.

There are multiple uses for robotics in the future – they are more precise than humans which = less error, increased productivity and cost-savings.

The fourth industrial revolution is enabling unprecedented change, and the pace of this change is no longer incremental; it is exponential, disruptive, and nonlinear. It is imperative that manufacturers quickly move to adopt and use exponential technologies to tap into this disruptive change; the longer they wait, the further behind they may fall.”

– Deloitte, Exponential technologies in manufacturing, 2018.¹²

11. Transcript of President Obama's 2013 State of the Union address: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/12/remarks-president-state-union-address>

12. Exponential technologies in manufacturing: Transforming the future of manufacturing through technology, talent, and the innovation ecosystem, Deloitte, 2018: <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/manufacturing/articles/advanced-manufacturing-technologies-report.html>

Artificial intelligence is already infused in everyday life – one only needs to think of Siri or Alexa. In fact, by the end of 2020, Gartner has predicted that 20% of all people in developed nations will be using AI assistants for everyday tasks.¹³



AI EXPLAINED

Artificial intelligence (AI) is when computing systems or devices act with the intelligence of a human. AI is another 'exponential technology' in that there is a rapid increase in its use. There are a number of examples where AI has already been successfully applied to robotics in industry, such as in the programming of tasks and processes and the enabling of predictive maintenance. Machine Learning is an adjacent technology that emanates from AI, based on the idea that with access to data, machines can improve their performance autonomously, without the need to follow programmed instructions.

TWO COST-EFFECTIVE WAYS AI CAN IMPROVE YOUR BUSINESS

01 AUTOMATED ANSWERING SERVICE

Who answers the phones at your business? An AI answering service will free up valuable human time and also ensure your calls are all answered and directed to the right people.

02 DEPLOY CHATBOTS

Think of a chatbot as a virtual customer service operator. They can answer most customer enquiries, follow through on bookings or appointments, and action deliveries of goods and services.

13. Gartner, Machine Learning, Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, <https://www.gartner.com/en/conferences/apac/data-analytics-australia/agenda/featured-topics/topic-machine-learning>

SWARMFARM: EMPOWERING AGRICULTURE

Swarmfarm is an Australian company **founded by farmers for farmers**. Their vision is to **empower** the agricultural sector with **better farming systems** and enable a transition to **autonomous agriculture**.

The Swarmfarm philosophy has been to build new farming systems from the 'soil up' and create a paradigm shift in how machinery is utilised – diverting farmers from using larger, more complicated agricultural machinery, to 'small and nimble' robotics.

“Currently, everything we do in agriculture is limited by what we can hook on the back of a tractor or what we can tip in the spray tank. Our robots put new technology in the hands of farmers,” says Andrew Bate, SwarmFarm Co-Founder. SwarmFarm’s other Co-Founder, Jocie Bate adds: “Our technology isn’t about the robot, it’s about how we’re actually going to farm into the future.”

One of key benefits of the robotics is their precise delivery of crop protection products, which leads to improved efficiencies and more sustainable farming.¹⁴

REAL PEOPLE.
REAL ROBOTS.
WE’RE PROUD TO
HAVE OUR TEAM
BASED IN REGIONAL
AUSTRALIA, WITH
DIRT ON THEIR
BOOTS KEEPING
THE TECHNOLOGY
REAL.

- Andrew Bate



14. SwarmFarm website, including company video: <https://www.swarmfarm.com/>

SWARMFARM: Innovation in agriculture



2012

The SwarmFarm journey started in 2012, using the Bate farming operations in Central Queensland as the testbed. Partnering with two universities, they developed their first prototype: the Agbot 1, an autonomous Rugged Terrain Vehicle (RTV).

2014

In 2014 they build their first SwarmBot – a three-wheeled, single drive machine that weighed just 300kg.

2015

The next generation platform was introduced in 2015: Swarmbot 3. These machines were adopted with customers in commercial spraying applications.

2017

2017 saw the development of an attachment that could be fitted to a Swarmbot platform: the turf mower.

2015–2018

From 2015–2018 they developed over 11 prototypes that were used in field contracting services to spray weeds for grain and cotton farmers.

2018

In 2018, they delivered their first commercial robot called “Indigo” – the first of SwarmBot 5 platforms.¹⁵

working with ifm



In more recent years, SwarmFarm have worked with ifm to optimise their SwarmBot range and make the technology more affordable for farming clients. The controls and sensors on the latest SwarmBot range are supplied by ifm. It is a natural fit – both companies are committed to providing customised solutions that meet an individual client’s needs.

15. SwarmFarm website, including company video: <https://www.swarmfarm.com/>

A PRACTICAL START

If the prospect of digital transformation is daunting to you, you're not alone.

A global survey by Deloitte and MIT found that while 90% of respondents agreed digital trends would disrupt their industries to a moderate or great extent, only 44% felt their organisation had adequately prepared for digital transformation.¹⁶

And while it's time to emerge from the cocoon, it's important to note that the transition can be incremental.

There are a number of ways that you can improve the efficiencies of your operations without having to invest in fancy AI or robotics. Using sensor technology to improve processes as well as the reliability of your equipment is a cost-effective way of adopting future-forward technology.

A BUSINESS SURVEY OF SMES ACROSS AUSTRALIA FOUND THAT 25% OF SMES SAW DIGITAL DISRUPTION AS AN OPPORTUNITY WHILE 29% CONSIDER IT A THREAT.¹⁷



There's an old saying that if you don't ask, you don't get.

How you decide to future-proof your business should be based on what your actual needs and goals are. There's no fee for asking ifm for advice. We specialise in getting SMEs Industry 4.0 / IoT ready. We're not interested in selling you a bunch of products you don't need.

We're interested in partnering with you for the long term so that your business will not just survive, but thrive in this age of digital disruption.

16. Deloitte and MIT Sloan Management Review, Aligning the organization for its digital future, July 2016, <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/projects/aligning-for-digital-future/>
17. SME sector divided on digital disruption <https://dynamicbusiness.com.au/topics/technology/sme-sector-divided-on-digital-disruption.html>

THE RIGHT PARTNER

From an individual sensor to an overall business solution, ifm solutions are scalable so that the digitalization of your company can be implemented in steps, and in line with your vision and budget. With the right partner, Industry 4.0 is feasible – and easier than you may think.

Our advice is to start with a pain point. Let us monitor an aspect of your plant or operation where you think there is potential waste. Once we've identified inefficiencies, we can make recommendations as to how you can improve or eliminate those. The savings you'll make from that first step can then fund your next steps in the digital transformation process.

See the next page for real examples of Australian SMEs that ifm have helped in becoming Industry 4.0-ready.

What's the ifm story?

We began as a sensor specialist company in 1969. We're a Germany-founded, family-owned company with family all over the world, including Australia. We have always – and currently – promote the optimizing and solving of technical processes by offering sensors, system communication, controllers and engineering services to our customers.

We'll work with you to configure your operations in the digital transformation process, so that you are set up for success in a digital world and achieve rapid improvements in customer experience, innovation, revenue, and costs.

We promise:

- To offer outstanding product quality, service and reliability
- To mean what we say and act accordingly
- To help you grow successfully and securely
- To help you translate your digital vision into a prioritized set of value-rich opportunities





FREDDIE HAS WATERSHED MOMENT WITH FRESH FOOD PRODUCER

Freddie Coertze leads the ifm IoT team in Australia with regards to Industry 4.0. He gives an example of how ifm helped a fresh food producer in Australia achieve ROI and fund the next step of their digital transformation process with an ifm solution.

“This producer just didn’t know where or how to start in regards to Industry 4.0. So after consulting with them and getting an understanding of their operation, we offered to monitor all their water usage for a period of time. This was to see if we could identify any waste. And we did, we basically found that nobody was closing the tap at the business and they were wasting a huge amount of water! So we provided them with a solution to optimize their water usage. And the result is amazing. They’re saving \$30,000 every month on their water bill. And they’ve paid for the solution we provided to them in under 2 months.”

DARRYL OFFERS OUT OF THE BOX SOLUTION FOR BOTTLER

Darryl Blackeby is a Key Accounts Manager with ifm who specializes in logistics solutions for SMEs. He gives an example of a bottling company who kickstarted their Industry 4.0 process with a practical ifm sensor and IO-link solution.

“Our customer is a bottling company who palletises bottles and provides warehousing solutions. They were having an issue with leaking and broken bottles. If either of these were put into a carton, the wet carton would cause the pallet to collapse in the automated warehousing system. This caused significant product losses, downtime of the warehousing system and an occupational health and safety problem due to the broken glass.

As they had different packaging styles, it was not possible to use a switch to determine if the boxes were wet. So we suggested capacitive sensors with an IO-Link output. We could determine if the boxes were dry and good to be loaded, or if they were wet, and they would be ejected before entering the palletiser.”



AKMAL SWEETENS CHOCOLATE FACTORY OUTCOMES



Akmal Yang is a Senior Sales Engineer that consults with SMEs, particularly in the manufacturing segment, to improve their operations with Industry 4.0 solutions.

“We work with a medium-sized chocolate producer who are planning major expansions at their site. After consulting with them several times, including on-site visits, we proposed a wiring solution to the customer that incorporates AS-I and IO-Link as well as diagnostics and Industry 4.0 capabilities. Within a month from their initial order, we estimate a savings of \$20,000 due to simpler maintenance, diagnostics and troubleshooting. This solution has the additional long-term benefit of expandability and scalability as the customer continues to grow their business.”

DAN DEPLOYS FINE WINE SOLUTION

Dan Buzatu is the National Technical Manager for ifm Australia. He has worked with numerous SMEs. He talks about how he helped a small winery in Australia adopt an IoT solution to monitor and control their fermenting tanks.

“Since this is a small winery with a small number of staff, the owner wished to automate the fermenter tanks as this process does not stop when people leave for home at 5pm. ifm provided a simple, cost effective and decentralised solution through our SmartPLC and IO-Link masters, collecting relevant information and controlling the required process. Due to the IO-Link capabilities, each sensor potential was fully unleashed, by not just giving the required precise values e.g. temperature, levels and so on, but also the status and health of the sensor, thus providing predictive information and improving the quality of the process. Moreover, since this is a small winery, and the staff do not work on the weekend, the owner wanted to monitor the process in real time during the weekends too. Since the backbone was already present (IO-Link and SmartPLC) ifm simply provided the next step in the form of SmartObserver software for monitoring and data analytics. The customer has been so impressed with this solution – and the production value it brings – they have since replicated it throughout all their fermenter tanks.”



NECESSITY, THAT MOTHER OF INVENTION

During the coronavirus crisis, ifm was able to confirm to partners that their products were available without restrictions. The company also **fast-tracked a hygienic door handle solution**. Their ability to do this was down to two key points: vertical integration and digitalisation. It also is a great example of **innovation** – and coming up with a **solution** that could be **implemented quickly** to address an **immediate need**.



In the coronavirus crisis, everyone is called upon to take actions in order to slow the spread of the virus. The ifm group has no competence in the textile domain, so producing makeshift masks was not an option. Instead, we put our expertise in tool design, tool construction and plastic injection moulding to use to produce hygienic door handles. Only three weeks passed from the initial idea and prototype to the start of production.

– ifm group of companies, global news¹⁸

18. Hygienic door handle reduces risk of infection <https://www.ifm.com/gb/en/shared/news/hygienic-door-handle-reduces-risk-of-infection>



DIGITILISATION – DEAL WITH IT

Chairman and Co-CEO of ifm, Michael Marhofer, pointed out that while the company had learned from the global financial crisis, and drew on this knowledge to manage the corona crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic had proven that ifm could not remain complacent or passive in its own digital evolution.

In an interview with a German media company, Michael advised his business leaders to be accountable and “deal with” the digitalisation process, because without advances in this area, failure looms. This same advice can be applied to any SME owner.

“We shouldn’t see digitalisation as someone else’s problem but deal with it ourselves. At ifm, we will be taking big steps in this direction. One of the most important points is that we intensify our commitment to digitalisation and further adapt our products and sales channels so we are prepared for the next time,” he said. “One of the main effects of the coronavirus is that we will see a wave of digitalisation as a consequence and we will have to make an effort to keep up.”

FREE ADVICE 1300 365 088

Please get in touch if you have any questions. We’re here to support you. Our staff have both the passion and application know-how to help you in the digital transformation process.

You can reach us from Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m at the ifm Service Centre or email us any time: sales.au@ifm.com.

