

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO TRANSFORMING YOUR BUSINESS WITH TECHNOLOGY



select
technology
Your lifetime IT partner

From the mind of Nick Ellis

CONTENTS

- 03** Why is digital transformation important?
- 07** STEP framework
- 09** Strategy
- 18** Technology
- 24** Environment
- 30** Process
- 35** Selecting your framework
- 40** Thoughts on consultancy
- 42** Your workbook

How to transform your business: **The Workbook**



Hello, I'm Nick. How's your day going?

I'm Select Technology's Customer Experience Manager and spend my days talking to people about technology.

I consult with SMEs on how to make the best of their technology, and how to frame their businesses to enable that.

When I'm not at work I mess about with rock music, Star Trek, and science-fiction novels. I am, it's fair to say, a bit of a nerd and I'm OK with that!

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Let's set the scene...

I'm typing away on a blisteringly hot day in 2022, wearing cargo shorts, a baggy Pink Floyd t-shirt, and bright pink Converse to share with you:

How to Transform Your Processes

This is the kind of guide that you'll not only learn about why you need to jump on the digital transformation train but actually HOW you can implement change in your business.

We go through our very own framework, STEP, that we use for all our clients.

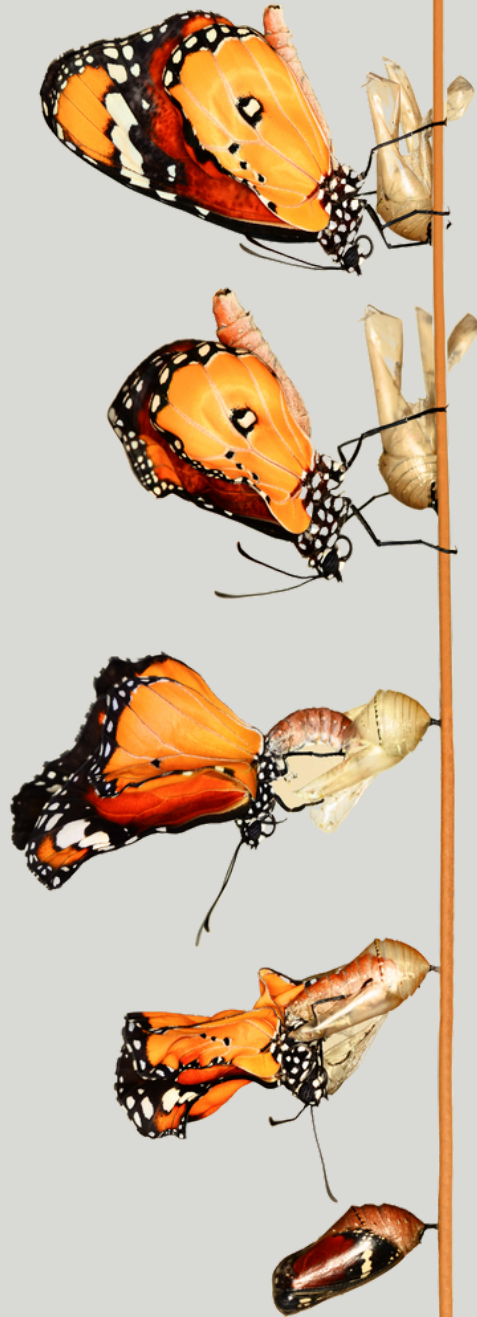
Each section has questions aimed to identify and challenge how you currently do things so you can reach the goal of how you want to be doing things.

If you're serious about the digital transformation of your business then print off pages 42-48, and get a pen and some paper ready to explore your answers.

(I personally prefer using a roll of brown paper, coloured pens and sticky notes!)

Here's the first question to ask yourself...

Are you ready to transform your business and enter the ever-evolving digital world?



We all know Albert Einstein said,

"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results"

There is some truth to this, although not to the attribution to Albert Einstein who never said it.

So why is digital transformation important?

Increasingly, customers want to engage digitally.

We live, as the cliché goes, in a multi-channel world. There are people who want to talk face to face, and there are those who would rather do things by phone.

But more and more we live in a world where people want to do things remotely, digitally, and at a time of their choosing.

There are several elements converging on businesses everywhere, forcing us to change if we want to stay in business. But no business is static, you're either growing or contracting. And if you're struggling now and not considering change, it will only get worse.

This guide looks at a number of those pressures:

- Process
- Communication
- Management styles
- Business functions
- Productivity
- Efficiency vs Effectiveness
- Differentiators

We underestimate how much the 'informalisation' of business-to-business sales is changing the world.

Micromanagement has gone from being the norm to a bit dated to actively discouraged. Dress codes have become very informal – I now regularly wear shorts and Converse to the office. Along with all these have gone the formalities of business process.

In these more social days, we like to do business with those we know, like and trust. Just having the right contract is no longer enough. That requires us to find new ways to build trust through digital interaction, branding and most importantly through integrity.

We need a way to address the fact that our customers simultaneously want to do business online and inherently mistrust digital interactions. And at the same time:

We need to adapt to the changes in the workforce.

More recently, the rise of Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp and FaceTime, has meant a switch to video calling. Video gives people more information about the other person – we can see their facial expressions and understand more about their emotional state, which gives us more sense of control.

Another is the expectations they bring to the workplace.

Every generation has to deal with the one before and the one after. We need to be supportive of those coming after us and make sure we don't dismiss them in the way we were dismissed.

And again, that means offering communication in the way that works for them.



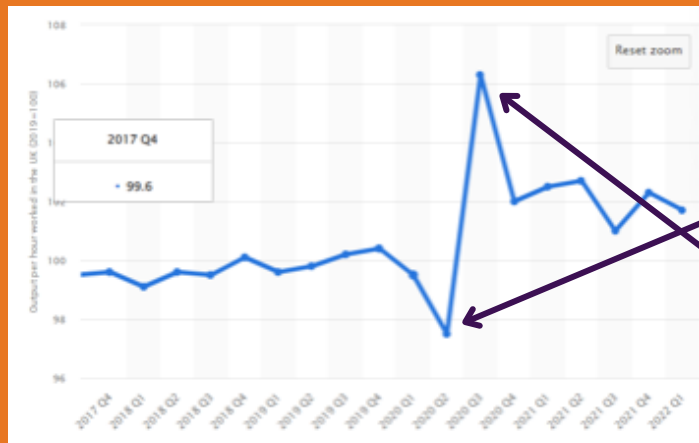
Some thoughts on productivity

Productivity is a problem at the moment. Not necessarily in your business (unless it is a problem), but across the UK.

Between 1997-2007 UK productivity growth was the second fastest in the G7. Between 2009-2019 it was the second slowest.

A particular problem in the UK is that the contribution of capital to productivity growth is weak – that's economist speak. But it means that the improvements we do see are mainly a result of individuals working harder, not the product of companies and the public sector investing in new tools and technologies.

It's important to understand how productivity is calculated by governments, economists, and other people you probably wouldn't want to have a pint with. It's illustrated really clearly by this chart.



The chart says that:

In the first six months of 2020, UK productivity fell sharply. (Not surprising, since we were all banned from going out for most of that period.)

But then it shot up between July and September 2020.

The reason productivity shot up is because parts of the economy reopened – some retail, the Eat Out To Help Out scheme and some tentative steps toward public transport.

That spike is not a recovery in productivity, it's a reflection that a few people were working very hard, and a lot of people were unable to work at all.

So, if productivity is at best a little confusing, why worry about it here?

Productivity in the context of this book is:

- How much can your business produce in an hour?
- How many hours does your business work in a year?

If you're a small business with 30 full-time colleagues (regardless of their seniority) you're probably doing something like 50,000 hours a year (allowing for public holidays, five weeks annual leave and time for sickness and training)

The challenge, then, is to produce more per hour without driving your workforce into an early grave.


What percentage of those 50,000 hours is spent doing things that the customer isn't paying for? It's probably more than you think.

Let's take an easy example – billing.

The customer isn't paying for it in their mind, although they are hopefully covering the cost.

So, if you can reduce the cost of your billing process you can increase profitability without increasing costs to your customer. They will pay the same for your product and service however you produce your bills.





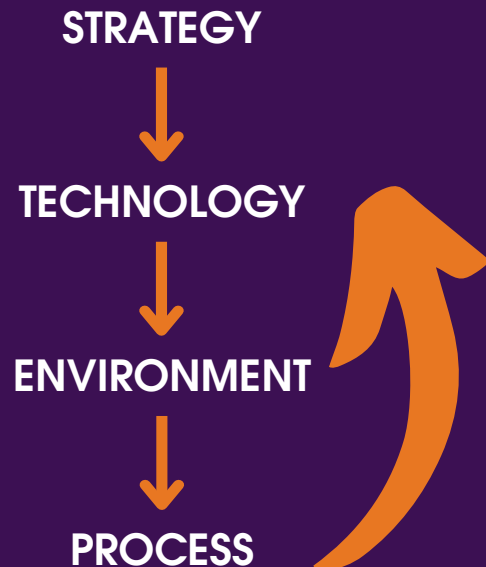
STEP FRAMEWORK

STEP up

The structure of this e-book is based on the STEP framework - the way we at Select Technology approach these discussions.

It's of our own making, based on decades of experience having these conversations (including when we worked elsewhere, but don't tell anyone that part).

STEP is one of those slightly contrived acronyms that businesses all love so much:



STEP TEP TEP TEP TEP TEP TEP TEP TEP TEP TEP



Strategy

The long-term plan, but also the purpose and the distinctiveness of your business. Why are you running the business you are running? What makes it unique?



Technology

The equipment you use to run your business. The most important tools in my job are my phone, my car, and my pack of multi-coloured felt pens.



Environment

The business environment, which may include the green and the built environment around it. It's the culture of your business, the daily experience of being an employee, customer, or director of the business, and the practical issues which everyone has to deal with.

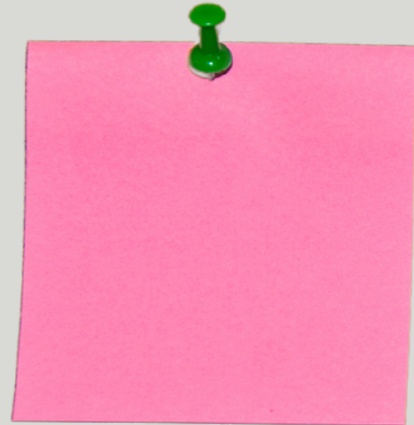


Process

The stuff you do. Most managers know about process, even if they know it's something they should really get around to thinking about soon. Once you have a process, you can loop back to technology to make it happen.



STRATEGY



Strategy is not planning.

There is certainly an element of planning, but that is not the whole of strategy.

This is a mistake a lot of businesses make...

“I have a plan, therefore I have a strategy”

A good strategy has three components:

1.

A vision of what you
want your business
to be

2.

A purpose that
explains why it
exists at all

3.

A plan of how you
intend to achieve
the vision

We like to represent these attributes of a strategy with personas, people that every business needs:

- The Daydreamers
- The Protest Singers
- The Grand Old Duke of York



Vision: The Daydreamer

Every business should have a daydreamer, the person who asks,

“What if...?”

If you look at some of the most famous brands in the world today, many of them started from that question.

Apple's history is much storied and often told, but it did start with a dreamer: Steve Jobs who wondered...

- What if everyone had a computer of their own, rather than booking time on the university computers?
- What if we had a better way of listening to digital music?
- What if phones could do more than call and text?

That's a big part of why Apple is now the biggest company in the world.

But we can all daydream. The daydream is easy, bringing it to reality is much harder.

It was Steve Jobs partnership with Steve Wozniak, a true nerd, who in the early years built the things Jobs dreamt up, that made Apple the business it is today.



Purpose: Protest Singers

Protest Singers can change the world. Steven Van Zandt sang that he was “never gonna play Sun City”, and the world joined in with the chorus.

The Specials wrote Free Nelson Mandela with very similar aims. And they made a difference.

The purpose of a business is to change something. There are obvious changes such as employing people and generating profit, but there is a greater purpose to any business.

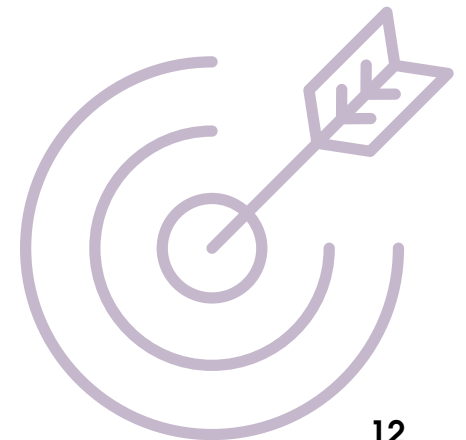
Select Technology’s purpose is...

“To create opportunities for everybody to be happy and successful”.

That doesn’t mention technology, nor does it mention growth or profit, though clearly, all three are important to the business. These are tools to deliver the goal of happiness and success.

Protest singers achieve great things because they have the backing of multinational corporations to spread the message.

A protest singer acting alone will change very little.





Plan: The Grand Old Duke of York

I assume you're familiar with the Grand Old Duke of York?

He was a very effective planner. He could organise troop movements of 10,000 people and affect them without issue.

Of course, there was a slight issue – he didn't actually have anywhere to take them. So, he marched them first to the top of the hill and then, having nowhere else to go, he marched them down again.

The Duke's problem was not a lack of planning. It was a lack of anywhere to go. He had no vision of where his soldiers should be, nor purpose of what they would change. They simply marched up and down hills.

In the modern world, busyness is highly prized. We all like to show off about how 'mad' our week has been, how hectic our lives are and how shattered we are at the end of the week.

But without a vision or a purpose, are we running ourselves ragged marching up and down hills for no reason?



Differentiators

With due deference to Shannon Byrne Susko, let's talk about differentiators: the things that make your business different to someone else's.

Perhaps your coffee shop has a particular vibe or product range that others cannot replicate?

Perhaps you can get fresh produce into the retailer's warehouse faster than your competitors, extending the shelf life?

Perhaps your canvas sneakers have a brand that was cool when I was in my 20s and I'm sticking to them?

Whatever it is, you need to understand a few, say five, things that make your business different from the others in your field.

For Select Technology we see these as our differentiators...

- Our service levels
- Our capabilities in Teams Phone
- The fact that we include consulting as part of the service
- Our multi-channel engagement methods
- Our deep security offerings
- The fact that we are all charming and incredibly good-looking

(I may have made one of those up.)



Your differentiators, whatever they may be, are how you define and make concrete your vision.

They don't need to be things you already have, though they should build on your existing capabilities.

There would be little point in an apple grower deciding that an ability to build nuclear submarines would be a differentiator.

It would certainly be different, but it wouldn't be terribly helpful to their customers.



The Combined Strategy

Combining Vision, Purpose and Planning creates a strategy.

As you can see in the graphic, even having two out of three can be more disruptive than beneficial.

PLAN AND PURPOSE without a vision or a destination is directionless and can be a little self-satisfied.

VISION AND PURPOSE without a plan is chaotic, decisions made on the hoof that never make any real progress toward anything.

VISION AND PLAN without a purpose is business for its own sake.

The "Vision and Plan" approach has been the operating model of most businesses throughout history.

The purpose, if they have thought of it at all, has been expressed entirely in shareholder value.



Ask yourself these questions:

Grab a pen and paper and jot the answers down!

1. What is your business now?

Literally, what is it? Is it a fruit grower?
Or a haberdashery? Or a manufacturer of
extruded plastic products?

But also, is it successful? Is it growing?
Is it well known? Profitable? B2B or B2C?
And so on...

2. What do you want your business to be?

This is basically the same question, but I
want you to imagine what you want the
answer to question 1 in, say, 5 years.

What's the aspiration?

3. What's the gap between these two, and how can you close that gap?

This is tough and you won't solve it in one
session on your own.

You need your team to tell you the reality
of their daily lives operating your business.
They know what the gap is, and they
know – or can imagine – ways to close it.

4. What is your purpose?

What function does your business serve in
society? How is it useful? What would your
customers do if you ceased to exist?

5. What are you doing to deliver your strategy?

If you can answer questions 1 to 3
confidently, well done! That puts you
ahead of many small businesses.

But now you need to implement a plan
that will actually close that gap and put
you where you want to be.



The point is there is no 'one size fits all' solution.

The consultant and the client need to fit together and make it work. Sometimes it doesn't, and that's OK.

We can't expect every business to like every consultant, and sometimes it's a great relationship at the wrong time.

Be flexible!

The various books on the right suggest all sorts of ways of creating and delivering a strategy.

I tend to use Shannon Byrne Susko's 3HAG Way the most. It provides a good framework for discussion and planning, and for holding teams to account for delivering on their promises.

When I work with clients I give them some options, and we often end up improvising a bespoke way of managing our way through it, drawing good bits from different ideas.



Reading Matter

If you'd like to know more about how to get through this process effectively, I recommend the following:

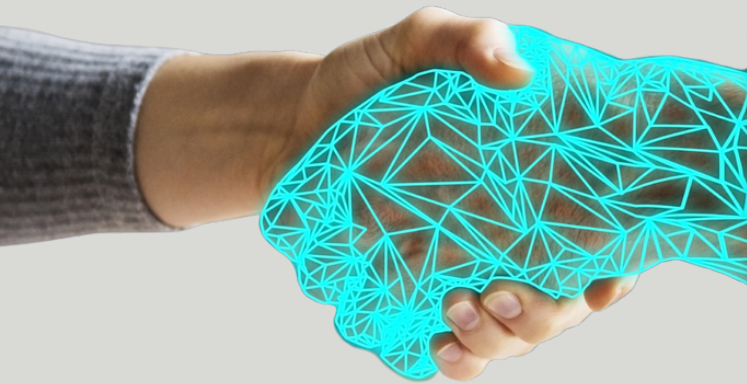
- Scaling Up by Verne Harnish
- 3HAG Way by Shannon Byrne Susko
- Why Digital Transformations Fail by Tony Saldanha
- Rebel Ideas by Matthew Syed
- The Machine that Changed the World by James P Womack et al
- Start with Why by Simon Sinek

Business books go in and out of fashion, never take everything in it literally but it's good to get new perspectives!



TECHNOLOGY

Technology is
more than
just the stuff with
microprocessors in.



But for the purposes of this guide let's focus on that section.

Again, I'd like to ask you some questions...

You will need the assistance of your team, as they use technologies that you never touch – operational systems, billing systems, HR tools, etc - that you may well receive reports from but you don't use day-to-day.

Crucially, you don't know the various ways in which your team circumnavigate:

- the problems
- the functions that don't match the business need
- the reports that don't anywhere near meet what you requested
- the data hiccups that force them to exit a system and come back to it with the right answer

Ask yourself these questions:

Grab a pen and paper and jot the answers down!

1. What have you got?

Get your team to inventory every piece of hardware and software they use to do their jobs. Everything. And remember that 'use to do their jobs' is not the same as 'owned by the company'.

You will probably see a few things like:

- You have more hardware than you thought
- You have software programs that cost you money and no one quite knows what they are for
- You are dependent on the goodwill of your team who use their personal tech to get stuff done and don't charge you for it
- Your security isn't what it could be

That's normal.

In the words of the great Douglas Adams:

DON'T PANIC!

Knowing what you have is the first step.

2. Why have you got it?

In your inventory, for each piece of tech, put a reason for having it. If you can't think of a reason for it, let me introduce you to Netflix's Chaos Monkey...

Netflix have a lot of servers. The Chaos Monkey is a piece of software that randomly turns things off. If no one complains, it leaves it off. If someone complains, they turn it back on.

Using this method, they have removed 65,000 unused servers from their estate! It's not likely that you have 65,000 redundant servers to remove, but if you can't find a reason for a bit of technology, you can turn it off.

Now you have an inventory of what tech you have and why you have it. If you really want to go for it, a data map would be great.

One process at a time, put each technology name on a sticky note and stick them on a whiteboard, the bigger the better.

Then draw lines between them indicating data flowing from one system to another.



3. What business functions does your technology support?

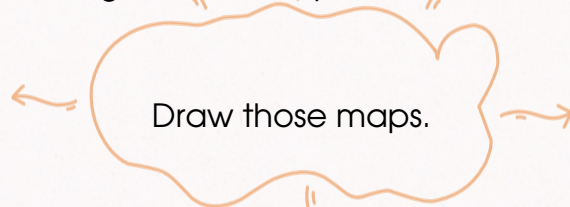
Every business has a set of functions that it delivers - map them out and put them on sticky notes. (Use a different colour note so it's clear what's tech and what's business functions.)

All the common business support functions - sales, marketing, HR, finance - will each have a more or less predictable subset of functions under them.

But your business has a purpose. So it will also have functions that are unique to your sector, and you'll even have functions that are unique to you.

Now have another look at those business processes.

For example, your sales process will flow across business functions as much as across technologies - from marketing to sales to operations to finance.



When that's all done you should be able to see quite clearly which technologies are supporting which business functions and which business processes.

4. What business functions are underserved by technology?

You may find that there are some business functions that lack much beyond Microsoft Office or Google Suite.

Now you can see it and make some informed decisions. If you have functions that are very technology light, ask them how they manage to get things done efficiently.

On the flip side, you may find some functions that have got tools galore. Do they really need all that? How much is it costing you?

5. What business functions do you want to keep technology away from?

There will be parts of your business that you don't want technology getting into.

Technology can't take your customers out for lunch, or impart good customer service skills or persuade people to become your customer.

Beware of automating everything!

Sometimes the human touch is what's needed. And sometimes, particularly in complex problem solving, a human brain is just better than a machine.



6. How much do you want to spend on technology?

There are various guides you can read that will tell you what a company 'should' spend on technology.

10% of revenue seems to be about the average unless you're a very tech heavy, or tech light, business.

It really boils down to your preference.
How much do you actually want to spend on IT?

I think it's important that you know what you're willing to spend.

Knowing your budget helps you get the best possible fit quickly, without wasting your time on systems that either you can't afford or can't achieve what you want.



7. What is your ROI expectation? How quickly does an investment have to pay for itself?

Return on Investment is a minefield.

- How do you track it?
- How do you know when you've achieved it?
- What methods can you use to define it?

In a market that changes as fast as ours, is it even meaningful these days?

Sometimes ROI isn't helpful as a decision-making tool. Sometimes you just must go with what feels right. But other times there is a clear relationship between investment and return.

So, when you're making these decisions, be aware of what you're basing them on. If you expect a cash return on the investment

- How large?
- How long should it take for the investment to pay for itself?
- What is realistic?
- And how will you measure it?

You need a consultant who can help you to determine your own strategy for this, agreed on by both finance and the business operations.



Case Study

Cutting-edge Vertical Farming

The challenge

This progressive agriculture client had a big problem:

A lack of in-house IT skills but a high dependency on IT for their processes.

As you can imagine, this was creating issues and a real need for someone to take the bull by the horns!



The solution

Someone to take charge of their IT and map out the best way forward for their business needs and goals.

So far, we have worked across several areas to make them more productive:

- Selecting a product (go to page 36 to find out how we approach this!) with implementation currently underway
- Negotiations with vendors, and liaising with three different leading tech suppliers to work together on a large-scale project
- Recognising that an in-house IT manager is a necessity and helping them to recruit the right person
- Doing the do – our Professional Services team have been busy making sure all the technology can work properly through Wi-Fi and cabling projects

The benefits

To be able to move forward with growing the business and prepare for the future, with continued support from us as their needs evolve.



ENVIRONMENT



Let's start with a reminder of what we mean by 'environment' here.

We mean the literal environment, both natural and built, but we also mean the people, the culture, the daily experience of being you. That's a lot to consider, and it's a lot to change.

Consultants love talking about culture change and for good reason. Culture changes all the time, but as the saying goes

“the more it changes the more it stays the same”

A business's culture is set from the top, but it is shaped from the bottom up. If you have a proactive leader who wants to drive change, they will find it very frustrating if they encounter an organisation that resists it.

On the other hand, a business filled with people who want to adapt, and change will find it very frustrating if those at the top resist the changes. In this situation talent is driven away by the apparent inertia of the organisation.

In either case, the business loses out in the long run.

The trick is to listen to people's concerns, adapt the leadership change appetite to work with rather than against the business, and to make everyone including, and perhaps especially, those most resistant to change feel part of the process.

Ask yourself these questions:

Grab a pen and paper and jot the answers down!

1. Who are your change advocates? Why are they advocating change?

Some people just like change. These people need to be directed and managed so that their natural inclination to drive change creates an outcome you actually want.

However, there will be others who drive change reactively. That behaviour is positive, so long as you agree with them about the need for change. If not, they are troublemakers.

Again, good management is needed to harness their energies for the good of the business.

If you agree with them, great – set them a project to improve things; if you don't, resist the urge to just dismiss them.

Listen to their concerns, explain why you disagree but be willing to let them change something else when they find something you can agree on.

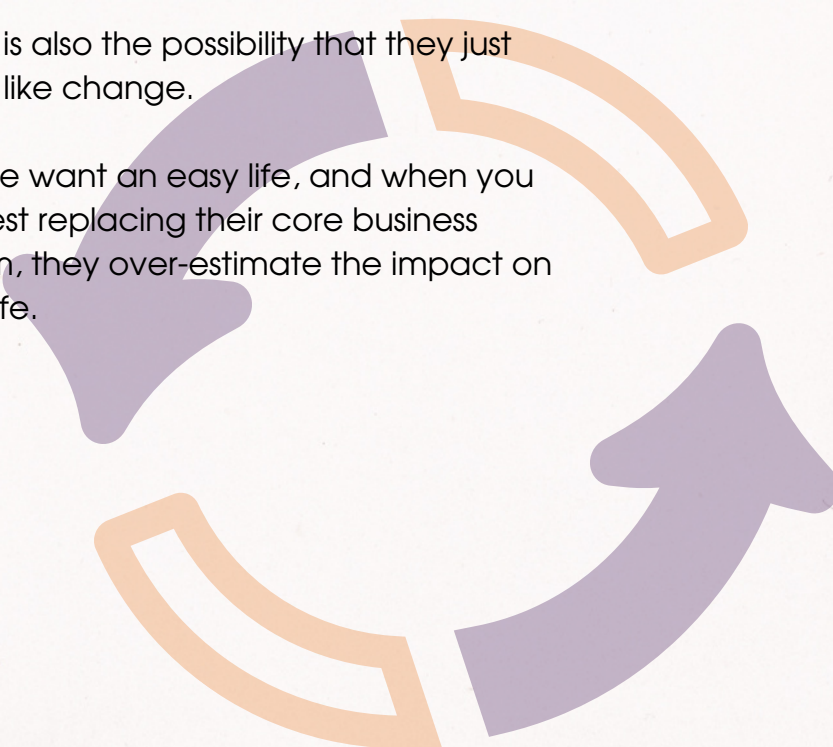
Otherwise, these people risk becoming moral crusaders, convinced they are right and that you are a fool for not listening.

2. Who are your resisters? Why are they resisting?

There is one very good reason to listen to people resisting change: they might be right.

There is also the possibility that they just don't like change.

People want an easy life, and when you suggest replacing their core business system, they over-estimate the impact on their life.



3. What is your business culture?

Do you really know?

What should it be?

Business culture is very nebulous, and it is not necessarily consistent across all business units.

Some companies with open warfare between departments, but it can be subtler than that too.

It might be simply that some departments are more consistently positive, while others are more pessimistic.

The same is true with change appetite.

- What's your business culture?
- What do you want your culture to be?
- What's the gap and how do you close it?

Every business has its own culture, mapped over a few common axes on the next page.



Sales vs Service

We don't hear the term 'sales-led' so much these days.

Being excessively sales-led can be toxic, creating a culture where sales are rewarded for taking risks while operations are left to clean up, and even take the blame.

Not being sufficiently sales-led risks an ossifying business, ever more dependent on ever fewer customers.

Trust vs Convenience

McDonald's... Where do they lie on the trust vs convenience axis?

You may assume that they place convenience higher, after all, they are the kings of "fast food". But they place more emphasis on trust than on convenience...

Their brand is built on customers trusting that they will get exactly what they ask for every time and be willing to occasionally wait longer than expected to get it.

Quality vs Time

There is the idea of the tolerance triangle – quality, time, and cost. Roughly, you can work with two of these, but it will negatively affect the third.

- You can do it quickly and right, but it will be expensive
- You can do it quickly and cheap, but it will be wrong
- You can do it right and cheap, but it will take forever

Every business has a different emphasis.

Sales-led businesses tend to want quick and cheap and sort out issues later.

Quality focussed businesses tend to take longer in delivery to hit the price point.

There are, of course, organisations that push all three measures out the other way...

A brand new Aston Martin will be expensive, and it will be amazing, AND it will take a long time. Their customers are able and willing to wait and to pay the price, because the amazing is worth it. Not many businesses have that to rely on.





Our final point on culture

Let's talk about interpersonal relationships within your business.

Are you friends who work together, or colleagues?
Do you say, "we're more like a family than a business"?

Not everyone likes that sort of culture, and some people are actively discouraged by the thought of work being that close-knit. (After all, we don't all get on with our families!) But the opposite, a soulless office where no one talks, is depressing.

The more important factor is how your business handles conflict.

- Do you allow people to express their views without fear of censure?
- Do you encourage people to resolve conflict at the lowest level?
- Do you have a mechanism to enable whistle-blowers?

There is no right or wrong (except regarding whistle-blowers, you should definitely have that!), but it's important to understand all these things when proposing any kind of significant change in your business.

PROCESS





I always enjoy meeting customers who tell me they don't have any processes because they're not "that kind of business".

If you are the kind of business that buys anything, employs anyone, sells anything, or has any tax liabilities, you're the kind of business that has processes.

That's basically every business.

A lot of people think process management is only for manufacturing, and that productivity is not something they need to think about.

But it's not just productivity. It's also accuracy, simplicity, convenience, transparency, speed of service, reportability, clarity of ownership... you get the idea.

I visit my customers with a big roll of brown paper and some pens and ask them to draw out the process that's concerning them as it is right now. It's often not long before they start thinking about how it could be better!

My role in all this is to ask challenging questions like:

- "Why do you that?"
- "What value does this add?"
- "Who moved the donuts?"

At the end of a session, we have a detailed map of how the process works currently, and a map of how it should work.

Ask yourself these questions:

Grab a pen and paper and jot the answers down!

1. Do you know your processes?

If you don't know what your processes are it's going to be very difficult to improve them.

Start with a functional map and work towards the processes. A functional map describes what your business does.

You'll see that it doesn't describe how those things are done, it simply lists things like customer support, projects, billing, etc.

Once you have a functional map, dig deeper into each function, and identify the how - the processes that make the function happen.

You will quickly realise, if you haven't already, that you have processes that run across multiple functions.

2. Do you know what good looks like in the execution of these processes?

That might seem like an odd question.

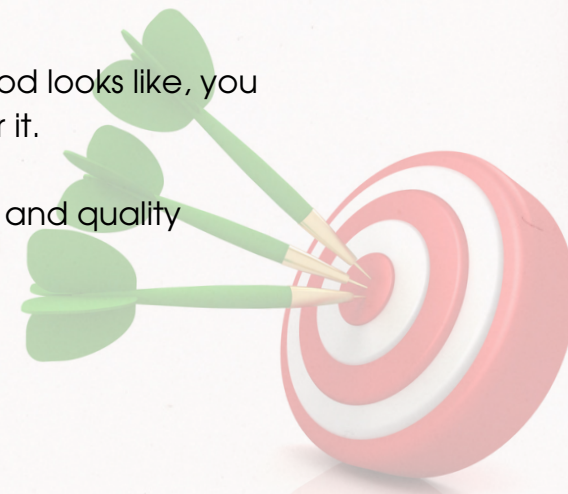
A good process is one that does what it's supposed to do, right? Yes, but there are other ways of measuring process.

- Execution time – how long does it take?
- Accuracy – how often do you have to do it again?
- Cost – how much does it cost per iteration of the process?

3. Do you have targets for successful execution?

Once you know what good looks like, you can start to set targets for it.

You know your cost, time and quality markers – get measuring.



Case Study

Manufacturer in the Construction Industry

The challenge

This business receives a high volume of subcontractor invoices and were using a lengthy manual process, physically printing them out and then requiring wet-ink signatures.

This of course meant the whole task was very slow and the problem was two-fold – it was bad for business and the P&L and it wasn't great for the sub-contractors either as they were getting paid late.

On top of that there was a dependence on project managers coming back to the office and no way of knowing what invoices were awaiting approval.

The solution

A new process using Microsoft Power Automate and SharePoint.

Now the process is simple and seamless in just a few steps!:

1. An email arrives at an 'Invoices' mailbox
2. Power Automate gets the attachment and saves it in SharePoint
3. The Microsoft AI reads the invoice and populates column values and that works out who should approve said invoice
4. Teams Approvals notifies the approver on their phone
5. The Approver can approve immediately

The benefits

They're pretty clear, but I will regale you with them anyway!

- There is a record of all invoices pending approval, meaning better P&L management
- No need for the Project Manager to come back to the office just to sign invoices
- Invoices are approved quicker
- Subcontractors paid faster
- Less paper used – much better for the environment as well as the purse strings!
- Less manual administration – so the team can spend their time more effectively

Efficient vs Effective

Some people trip up on this distinction.

➔ A process can be efficient but not effective.

➔ It can be effective but not efficient.

➔ It can be both.

➔ It can be neither.

Efficiency means delivering the process with the least consumption of resources.

Think of engine efficiency, which we measure in miles per gallon. Or lightbulbs, where efficiency is measured by how much of the energy is converted to light rather than being lost as heat.

The metric here is not “did we do the miles?” or “is the room lit?”, but how much input resource (fuel, electricity) is used to do so.

Effectiveness is the measure of whether it does what it should.

Now the question here is “did we do the miles?” or “is the room lit?”.

There are some additional metrics on the process in both cases - “fast enough” and “brightly enough” – which are also measures of effectiveness.

Using those examples:

Efficient but not effective

- “We didn’t use much fuel, but to be fair we only got half way”
- “The electricity usage is really low! I can’t see anything, of course...”

Effective but not efficient (much more common!)

- “We got there really fast, but it cost a fortune in fuel”
- “The room is lit, but you have to wait for the bulb to cool down to replace it, and we’re paying for the electricity to heat it up!”


Neither efficient nor effective

- “We set fire to the car”
- “The room is dark. Also the light bulb caught fire. Just near the car now I think of it”

Efficient and effective

- “We have an electric car. We got there on time, and used about £3 of electricity”
- “We use LEDs, so 99% of the energy becomes light. You can touch them while they’re on if you like”





**SELECTING
YOUR
TECHNOLOGY**

I'm going to commit consultant heresy now...

Selecting a product is as much about how you feel as it is about any scientific metrics.

(Don't tell anyone I said that.)

The world is full of 'frameworks' for decision making, rules for successful transformation, and so on.

People who deliver successful transformations will tell you what they did, and it acquires an aura of magic. But we should acknowledge that it's possible some transformations were successful through chance, or through really great decision making at the start, or just pure luck.

We should also acknowledge that some transformations fail and guess what – they don't get talked about nearly as much as they should.

Investing in an application is fundamentally an exercise in trust.

Choose an application to run your business, or part of it, and you will be with it for a long haul, potentially decades.

That means you need to have faith in the product, and you also need to have faith in the people who make it or, for the larger platforms, the partner you work with.

Buying an application is more like buying a house than buying a computer.

And when you're buying a house, the biggest single question is a very simple one:

Does it feel right to you?





Framework

I know, I was just rather rude about frameworks. Nonetheless, some structure to help with due diligence is a good idea.

Start by working out your five or six major requirements for any technology.

These could be functional requirements that describe what you want it to do, or non-functional ones such as availability in specific locations (or on the cloud and available everywhere), security, relationship with the vendor, integration with specific existing technologies, the ability to deploy in stages, etc. etc.

Although it's not essential, it can help to think about weighting the requirements. For example, you may think that 'accurate accounts' is critical, whereas an ability to 'notify people of their next shift through a mobile app' is nice to have.

Some companies rate 1-10, others using bands like Critical, Important, Preferred, Low. If you're using bands, you need to assign a weight to each band of course.

Typically, I use:

Band	Weight
Low	1
Preferred	1.5
Important	3
Critical	5

Assess each of the candidate products against your requirements and score them.

Most people use 1-5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent, keeping 0 back for those products that simply don't meet the requirement at all.

Multiplying the scores you give by the weight will ensure you don't accidentally buy a product that is great at low value stuff but misses the big things. The table below shows an example of how this could work:

	Requirement 1		Requirement 2		Requirement 3		Requirement 4		Requirement 5		Requirement 6		Requirement 7		Total Score
	Important	Weighted	Critical	Weighted	Preferred	Weighted	Critical	Weighted	Low	Weighted	Preferred	Weighted	Critical	Weighted	
Supplier 1	2	6	5	25	2	3	4	20	3	3	1	1.5	2	10	68.5
Supplier 2	5	15	2	10	5	7.5	5	25	3	3	4	6	3	15	81.5
Supplier 3	1	3	3	15	2	3	5	25	5	5	3	4.5	1	5	60.5
Supplier 4	3	9	2	10	4	6	2	10	5	5	3	4.5	4	20	64.5
Supplier 5	4	12	3	15	4	6	5	25	2	2	3	4.5	5	25	89.5

Compare the products you are looking at with this criteria



- Find a set of candidate products that might meet your need and assess them against each of these criteria. Score them 1-5 (or 1-10 if you want more granularity) in each group.
- For each vendor take the average score across the groups, or the sum, or the product – whichever you feel comfortable with.
- Create a scatter chart where the Y-Axis is the forecast cost of ownership, and the X-Axis is the score.
- The chart will usually show quite quickly the two or three candidates that sit in the zone you're comfortable with. Typically, that's 'reasonable cost, good score', but you will have your own balance to strike.
- If you're not experienced at doing this, get a consultant. They will come with their own practices, but don't be afraid to shove this workbook under their nose.

And of course, you can always hire us!

Before we finish, a quick note on consulting...

The world is full of consultants, all telling you that they have cracked some secret of business that justifies the (sometimes eye-watering) costs. They haven't.

Consulting is like parenting, in that once you start doing it you discover that everyone else was just making it up as they were going along.

Sure, there are books out there that talk about how to be a great consultant but most of them are about how to structure and market a consulting business, not really about how to be a useful consultant for your customers.

Boiled down, a consultant is an experienced manager who can bring something to your business that you might otherwise struggle with.

But whatever consultant you engage, remember that it's your business. Consultants should not make decisions; they should facilitate you in making better decisions.

The decision is still yours.





Got a vision? Not sure how to get from A to B in the simplest, least painful, and most cost-effective way?

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Whether that's through expert advice, or managing the journey from beginning to end, you can partner with a Select consultant to guide you through your transformative journey.

Looking for your next step? Get in touch!



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hello@select-technology.co.uk



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Paddock Wood, Kent, TN12 6UF



Follow us

Now it's your turn...

Print off pages 43-49 so you can write down your answers to the questions in each pillar of the STEP framework.

If you've read the workbook already, go back to each chapter as the context underneath each question will help you accurately answer them.

You can use your answers to present back to your team, collaborate with them and implement any priority action points that will make an impact straight away.

Good luck!



STRATEGY

1. What is your business now?

2. What do you want your business to be?

3. What's the gap between these two? How can you close

4. What is your purpose?

5. What are you doing to deliver your strategy?



TECHNOLOGY

1. What have you got?

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2. Why have you got?

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TECHNOLOGY

3. What business functions does your technology support?

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4. What business functions are underserved by technology?

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5. What business functions do you want to keep technology away from?

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6. How much do you want to spend on technology?

7. What is your ROI expectation? How quickly does an investment have to pay for itself?



ENVIRONMENT

1. Who are your change advocates?

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Why are they advocating change?

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2. Who are your resisters?

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Why are they resisting?

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3. What is your business culture?

What should your business culture be?



PROCESS

1. **Do you know your processes?** Draw your functional map here



PROCESS

2. Do you know what good looks like in the execution of these processes?

Yes

No

Execution time - how long does it take?

Accuracy - how often do you have to do it again?

Cost - how much does it cost per iteration of the process?

3. Do you have targets for successful execution?

