

Agility and customer focus key to business success going forward

By  Ryan Jamieson

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Even as the spread of Covid-19, and the resulting economic fallout has disrupted business operations across sectors, predictions made at the start of the year about the need for agility and customer-centricity in order to deliver value now ring truer than ever. For most part, organisations have had to accelerate the plans they already had.



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While restrictions put in place have seen businesses needing to accelerate their digitisation initiatives, they should see these forced changes as a timely opportunity to shed their legacy systems, and embrace the new technologies and processes that will provide them with the capabilities to better identify and take advantage of market opportunities.

For most companies, the first step was to enable remote working, which is easier said than done. While businesses in financial services and other high-tech industries have been better equipped to deal with the crisis as a result of earlier adoption of technology - such as using cloud-based tools to remain productive from any location - this is not the case in many other sectors.



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Finding a partner and better understanding customers

The initial step is in finding a partner that understands the challenges that are inherent in their digital transformation journey, to advise them on how to make the transition quicker, including being innovative where required. An example includes helping a large-scale call centre operator equip their employees for remote working using Raspberry Pi computers - a cost-effective solution that reduced the deployment time to weeks.

This is just the beginning though; going forward a major differentiator for business will be a focus on better understanding customers, anticipating their needs, and being able to meet these requirements. Often, smaller more agile organisations are quicker to adapt and capitalise on changing customer behaviours. Think of how the current health crisis has seen an increased preference for online shopping from multiple sites over going to the physical store.

Even though lockdown levels might be reduced, customer preferences may have changed for good. Will these customers go back to the big brands they used to do business with? Perhaps, but it might take time, as they have now become used to a different level of customer experience. In addition, these businesses will need to do the same too - know more about their customers and, and what to offer them when.



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The same applies even in the business-to-business environment, where smaller, nimble companies have been able to provide a more personalised service to their clients. Powered by technology, organisations are rethinking the way in which they interact with their customers - including tools that enable quick and seamless engagement across multiple platforms.

For companies looking to make this change, it is highly beneficial for them to work with a partner that has in-depth technology and industry expertise, and an extensive track record of successfully guiding other businesses with digital transformation - long before the advent of Covid-19. Digitisation and remote working has been high on the agenda across many sectors, and the pandemic has merely accelerated the timescales initially envisaged.



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At first glance, it may seem like digital transformation is only a boon for certain industries, with those requiring a more physical presence - think of hospitality, construction, manufacturing and more - set to miss out on any benefit. This is far from the truth, as having the right technology and systems in place can help these companies overcome crises by improving their operational performance, and ability to plan for many eventualities.

Beyond this, businesses in these sectors can increasingly turn to the internet of things and automation to help manage risk during the current pandemic, as well as help build resilience against future events of an extraordinary nature. In a country with employment challenges such as South Africa however, organisations must balance automation with employment creation, whether through reskilling or upskilling wherever possible.

A challenge, however, is that a lot of organisations in South Africa lack the skills and resources required to implement and maintain all of this infrastructure. Here, the right partner will be able to take them through the journey of change, with specialists managing the entire digital aspect of their business and allowing decision-makers to focus on what really matters the most - understanding customer needs and delivering on them in time to accelerate business results.

ABOUT RYAN JAMIESON

Ryan Jamieson currently holds the position of Solutions Lead at Altron Karabina. This role is all about the alignment of technology to the company's strategy which involves thought leadership, leading technical leaders, innovation and R&D, as well as product development. His core purpose is to bring great solutions to our customers.
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