

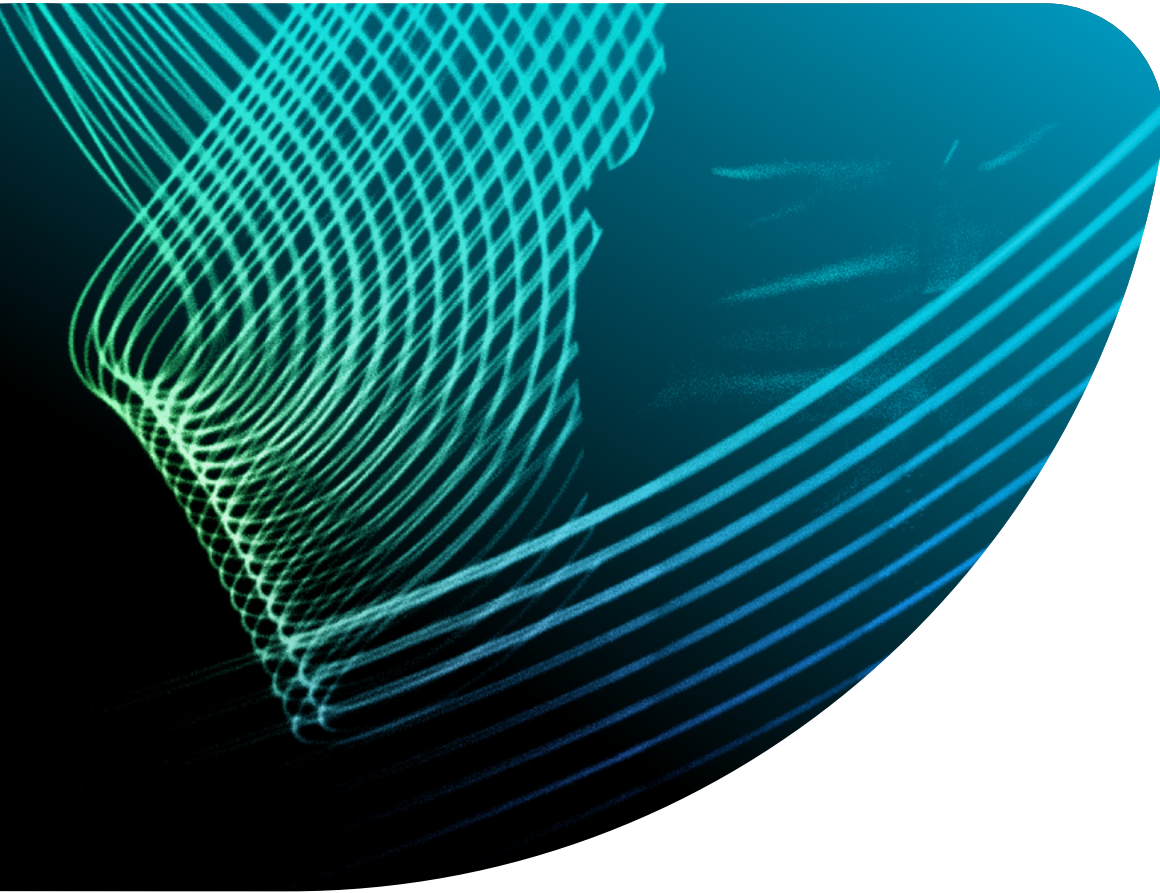
Why **Business Automation** isn't optional for SMEs in 2023

A silhouette of a person's head and shoulders is shown in profile, facing right. The interior of the head is filled with a complex, glowing blue and green wireframe pattern that resembles a brain or a neural network. A thick, bright green curved line starts from the bottom left and arcs around the person's head and neck, ending on the right side. The background is a dark blue gradient with faint, glowing green and blue lines that suggest a digital or technological environment.

As your business expands, one of the most significant challenges you will encounter is the allocation of limited resources. People's time is among the most valuable and costly assets. Where you place your people can make or break that steady growth you're looking for. In a business landscape where competing companies can be launched in the blink of an eye, **businesses in 2023 must always be using their employees' time in the most effective way possible.**

This means that employees should always be doing what they're best at - thinking and overseeing. Any task that requires mindless repetition is ill-fit for humans. We're easily bored and are prone to mistakes when completing the same exact task over and again.





That's where business automation comes in.

It generally doesn't take much thought to identify areas where you can benefit from automating processes that do not require human interaction and, thereby freeing up your employees to take on work that supports creativity and business growth. While it's tempting to put off investing in business automation until you've reached the 'right' stage of growth, business automation can give **any** business an operational boost at **any** stage of business development.

As an additional tool to help you run your business, business automation can be invaluable for supporting your employees to focus on what is important.



Why should SMEs invest in business automation?

SMEs can especially benefit from automation for one simple reason: it can help you run your business far more efficiently.

Small businesses can automate several time-consuming tasks such as report generation, thus freeing up time to pursue leads, sales, process or product improvements, or other aspects of the business that require a human element.

And as we've already seen from the first quarter of 2023, businesses have an ever-growing variety of new challenges to contend with. Between new technologies, evolving data and security laws, and an increasingly fragmented audience, any advantage that businesses can gain is an important one.



What are the challenges to consider when investing in business automation?



1

BUDGETARY RESTRICTIONS

Larger organisations can afford to invest in cutting-edge technology, and that includes business automation. Meanwhile, smaller enterprises can feel like they've been priced out of investing in automation, simply because custom solutions can carry high price tags.

However, the landscape has evolved, and automation tools are now more accessible than ever before. From sophisticated AI solutions like ChatGPT to user-friendly, easily integratable low-code platforms such as Microsoft's Power Platform, smaller enterprises can now also harness the benefits of automation without breaking the bank, enabling them to compete more effectively with their larger counterparts.

2

EMPLOYEE RESISTANCE

It's a commonly-held belief that business automation, and AI, will replace the need for human employees. This is not the goal: business automation isn't there to replace your workers; it's there to make sure that your employees can focus their attention and effort on work that is creative, valuable, and meaningful to the growth of the business, rather than focusing on mundane, day-to-day tasks that, while necessary, leave little room for involvement in the company at large.

However, without the fuller explanation, it is likely that you'll face some resistance when it comes to implementing business automation into your organisation, and that this resistance can heavily factor into the success of implementing business automation.



3

INTEGRATING OR REPLACING EXISTING SYSTEMS

Companies tend to be apprehensive about adopting new technologies, primarily due to concerns that they might need to replace their existing systems or face difficulties in integrating the enhancements with their current infrastructure. However, business automation typically does not necessitate the replacement of your established systems. In fact, there are numerous methods to ensure seamless integration with existing systems, such as web scraping (extracting data by mimicking human interaction), connecting to databases, utilising APIs, or interacting with the user interface.

Embracing business automation can thus enhance existing systems without the need for complete replacement, improving efficiency and overall performance.



What tasks can benefit from business automation?

There are several work processes that can be automated with a significant increase in efficiency overall. Additionally, these processes can occur in several departments throughout the organisation, such as management, HR and Marketing.

In general, any task that is repetitive, high volume and frequent is a good opportunity for business automation. Tasks that involve sensitive information such as auditing and compliance-based work can also benefit from automation, as it reduces the risk of human error and can lead to faster turnaround times for time-consuming reports.

Here are a few more practical examples of business automation at work.



HOW CAN YOU USE BUSINESS AUTOMATION IN:

1

REPORT GENERATION

If you form part of your business's leadership team, you likely know the struggle of receiving regular, accurate reporting from across your organisation. Reports are often tedious to put together, are prone to errors, and are likely not displayed in a simple, easy to understand format.

Business automation can eliminate these pain points. By having the reports designed based on the needs of those reading them, leadership teams spend significantly less time going through useless data until they find what they need. Automation also removes any risk of human error, and frees up those who would normally compile these reports to instead act upon the insights they provide.



2

INVENTORY MANAGEMENT

Working with a big variety of products? You can set up an [automated inventory system](#) that will keep track of products for you, inform you when you are running out, and monitor which products are selling well. Most modern retailers use a form of automated inventory management: it's an excellent tool that can give you the opportunity to make business-critical decisions without the risk of error - and it can save your employees time in the day that could be spent working on actively driving the business goals.

3

KNOW-YOUR-CUSTOMER AND CUSTOMER AUTOMATION

With regulations for institutions such as banking, insurance, and financial services becoming increasingly stringent, automating KYC procedures that don't require a human element is an excellent opportunity to increase your compliance efficiency and reduce the risk of losing new customers, especially if your compliance procedures have multi-step roles that could become irritating for the consumer. KYC and compliance procedures by their nature are heavily dependent on getting the right information at the right time, and by automating the process, you benefit from the security and peace of mind of knowing that there is very little possibility for error in an automated report.



4

IT SERVICE DESK

A sound IT infrastructure and good IT support is critical to the success of any organisation: just take a look at all the technology that has become an important part of the modern working environment, and with more in development and set to become an interesting element to the modern workplace.

As a result, your IT department should run like clockwork, and automating parts of your service desk to run without human interaction can really help streamline your operations. Whether it's a chatbot that will answer your employees' IT questions or talk them through the most common fixes, or an automation that will class and route incoming tickets to support personnel, automating your IT desk ensures no issue gets lost or overlooked. Automation allows your employees to tackle small matters themselves without requiring the presence of an IT support worker.

This is especially useful if your help desk frequently gets overwhelmed with tickets, and could use the help to determine which of them needs the highest priority.



Is automation necessary for business in 2023?

As technologies like AI become increasingly prevalent in the business world, automation is no longer optional for SMEs. It has transformed into an asset that businesses of all sizes can and should capitalise on.

Indeed, numerous businesses already employ automation in various ways, such as scheduling content for social media posts or generating user-friendly reports. However, to keep up with the rapidly evolving business landscape in the era of automation and AI, it's absolutely vital to invest in these technologies at the earliest opportunity, as doing so will be instrumental in navigating such a competitive environment.

