

Superfast Business Wales



Business Guide

Revisiting the Business case for ICT

If you are, or are considering, embarking on the journey to Superfast Broadband, it may be the ideal time to review and plan your use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

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Revisiting the Business Case for ICT

If you are, or are considering, embarking on the journey to Superfast Broadband, it may be the ideal time to review and plan your use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). For many businesses ICT is something that is initially employed as a response to a need and not necessarily something that is planned as part of the overall business planning. Even for those who have an ICT plan, Superfast Broadband represents such a major shift in the potential for using ICT to take the business to a new level that they will need to consider revisiting and upgrading their ICT planning.

Superfast Broadband increases the possibilities for both information access and processing and for enhanced communications. It has the potential to link your teams and your internal business systems with:

- Other business systems including suppliers, customers, partners, regulators and HMRC
- People and businesses across the world Improved telecommunications options such as Voice over IP (VOIP), teleconferencing and virtual meetings
- Other service providers such as the growing provision of cloud services, outsourced data storage and processing
- Your existing and new markets through E-Commerce

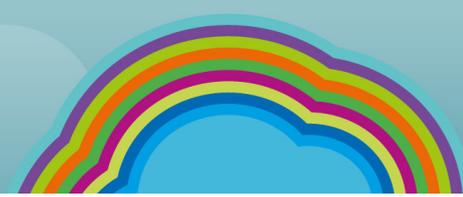
Innovative use of the global communications access that Superfast Broadband gives can open up whole new markets and offerings for your business.

Understand

What Does The Technology Do?

ICT is making huge steps forward in terms of its ability to enable you to do your current activities and processes better, quicker and more efficiently. Modern systems make use of the increasing variety of devices available to ensure that you can automate processes and make your people more productive, with the right information available at the right time. You can also significantly reduce your costs of processing by upgrading existing hardware and software, and moving processes into the cloud where you can pay for what you use and reduce your capital investment. What once required a huge mainframe computer can now be done, on the move, using a mobile device connected to the cloud.

The additional speed and breadth that Superfast Broadband can supply, means that you can consider developing new areas of business. Packaged solutions exist for many potential business models and, where they don't, modern approaches to software development, such as Agile, make it possible to



develop and try out new concepts quickly and at low cost before committing resources to creating a production strength version.

Many businesses are now making use of the accessibility that mobile applications offer. These 'apps' which are developed for smartphones, tablets and other mobile-enabled devices such as vehicle trackers, CCTV cameras and security devices, mean that you can make your services accessible regardless of location and be 'always on'.

With planning and good advice, ICT can move from being a cost to the business, to being a benefit and an income generator.

Adopt

Getting Started

Unplanned ICT usage can sometimes hold a business back. An effective ICT business case and plan will support and extend the overall business plan. Properly applied, ICT is an enabler, making it possible to grow your business more quickly and effectively. So it is essential to develop a plan in a logical and comprehensive way.

Using your business plan as a guide, analyse your existing business processes and understand how ICT is being used within them. Identify any blockages or pinch points where system improvements could enable the business to work better.

Search for suitable solutions using a variety of approaches:

- Draw on the experience of your team
- Check out the trade press for solutions
- Consider getting professional advice (such as a digital business adviser)
- Model other businesses and how they use ICT effectively. Use your network to find suitable applications

Look for the quick wins where benefits are clear and can be quickly achieved. In the past this may have been through basic applications such as accounting systems. As more businesses have these systems in place, then solutions like Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and sales management systems may be a good place to begin.

Keep it simple. These days there is less need to have something written for you and much less need to buy in hardware and data storage. Consider package solutions, many of which will be located in the cloud. With the reliability and speed of your internet connection through Superfast Broadband, it is less necessary to own and manage computing power. Currently most requirements can be addressed using a package and most data can be stored and processed by third party providers of cloud services.



Ensure the systems will work together to improve the business and don't conflict with each other. To do this, it is important to map out the potential areas to be addressed. Whilst you may not implement all of the areas at once, it is important to understand the flow and how information will move from one place to another.

Investment in planning and implementing systems will be wasted or reduced if you don't include plans to train your staff to use the systems. Allow time for this to happen before you go live. Training can be something that takes place in a training room, but more commonly in systems areas the training will be computer-based and will also make use of Superfast Broadband in its delivery.

Planning the implementation of new systems is critical. Knowing where the initial data will be found and how it will be created are important processes. If you have a large data transfer need, consider using an agency to handle data transfer or input for you. An essential element of the planning will be the expected benefit case. It is important to monitor the implementation and the achievement of the benefits. Where possible design the capture of performance data as part of the system and set aside time for reviews immediately post-implementation and then at regular stages thereafter. Put in place a mechanism to action the outcomes from these reviews and keep the improvements happening continuously.

Exploit

What Business Benefits Can I Expect?

Business benefits come from a number of areas:

- More efficient processes reduce costs and ensure that you can satisfy customer needs in a more timely way
- People are released from time-consuming repetitive tasks and can be deployed in other, more productive, roles
- Access to better, more timely information means better decision making.
- The ability to address markets across the globe allows you extend your reach into new markets and to be able to address specific local needs. You can become 'remotely local' for the markets you serve
- Increased sales come through better visibility, wider reach, effective access to
- your systems and from the development of a range of e-business solutions – including e-commerce, more collaborative working and better client communications



Top Tips

Get buy-in and involvement from the top team

Unless the top team is seen to be involved, your chances of buy-in at lower levels and, hence, success is greatly diminished.

Allow enough time for quality analysis of the current position

Rushing into solutions before you understand the issues can be costly.

The needs of the business are paramount

Satisfy those needs simply and effectively. Don't use technology where it is not needed.

Spread your net widely whilst seeking solutions

Going outside the business for reviews and recommendations of approaches can extend both time and knowledge, and enable you to make the right decisions for your business.

Use external consultants wisely

Ensure that you manage their time and scope, and that you listen to and consider their recommendations.

Understand the likely impact of new systems

And ensure you have prepared for that impact.

Test, test and test again

The time to find problems is before you go live. Make sure you test potential exceptions. Time spent in good test design is seldom wasted.

Ensure you have trained people effectively

The time to find misunderstandings is before you go live.

Involve the people who will have to operate the systems

Make sure you understand the cultural and people impacts properly.

Set up a simple and effective measurement process

Your Key Performance Indicators should warn of underlying issues.

Other Relevant Guides

SFBW Guide Cloud Computing

<http://business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/cloud-computing>

SFBW Guide Change Management

<http://business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/change-management>

SFBW Guide Project Management

<http://business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/project-management>



NEXT STEPS

1. Register to attend a fully-funded Business Development Workshop.
www.business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/events
2. Make an appointment to see a Business Advisor who will help you create a personal action plan to grow your business.
www.business.wales.gov.uk/contact-us

For further information on ICT take a look at:

See how other businesses in Wales have exploited Superfast Broadband
www.business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/superfast-success-stories

Find out how much your business could save with our
www.business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/savings-calculator

Other business guides that may interest you include:
www.business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/superfast-business-guides

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