



**Future Workplace**

# AI and automation: A guide for SMEs

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# Your future workplace is here

**AI and automation are here to stay, delivering real benefits to your business that can be adopted now.**

This is a technology that is evolving fast and for SMEs it can be difficult to know where to start and what solutions might work best for you.

This guide provides you with the information you'll need for taking that first step, highlighting the questions you should be asking.

We know how busy you are but getting started with AI and automation, building your knowledge and seizing the opportunities will stand your business in good stead. Together we can help you use the latest technology to put your business in a stronger position to achieve your future goals.



# AI and Automation: Opportunities for business growth



## Inefficient Processes

**The business and technology landscape is changing rapidly with the capabilities of AI and automation providing exciting opportunities to improve the way you manage your business.**

**These are some of the challenges businesses face today where AI and automation could transform productivity and deliver efficiencies for the bottom line.**



## Customer Experience

Improving the customer experience is a challenge, particularly in providing timely and accurate information and reducing the time and effort required for customers to interact with the business.



## Talent Attraction and Retention

Today's workforce, especially younger generations, expect modern and efficient digital tools. In a competitive market, it's a key factor in attracting and keeping the right people.



## Data Management Issues

Businesses often struggle with managing and analysing data effectively. This includes issues with data collection, storage, and the ability to generate meaningful insights.



## Scalability and Flexibility

Businesses need to scale their operations efficiently and adapt to changing market conditions. Hiring new staff isn't always possible.



## Speeding up decisions

Analysing data and trends manually takes time. That can lead to insights that are already out of date.

## CASE STUDY

# Manufacturing

## The challenge

This national manufacturing client faced significant challenges in managing their Service Level Agreement (SLA) reporting for a major client. The process was highly manual, involving data collection from multiple sources. This was time-consuming and prone to errors.

## The solution

The client partnered with us to automate their SLA reporting process. Initial consultation allowed us to understand the existing process and identify areas where improvements could be made. We then developed a new automated approach that streamlined data collection and report generation.

## The result

- **Time Savings:** The client no longer needed to spend three to four days each month compiling the report. Instead, the report was automatically generated and delivered to their inbox on the first day of the month.
- **Increased Efficiency:** Automating the reporting process reduced the potential for errors and ensured timely delivery of accurate reports.



# 10 reasons to integrate AI and automation

1.

## Enhanced Efficiency

AI and automation can streamline business processes, reducing the time and effort required for repetitive tasks. This allows employees to focus on higher-value activities, increasing overall productivity.



2.

## Cost Reduction

By automating routine tasks, businesses can reduce labour costs and minimise human error. This leads to more accurate and efficient operations, ultimately saving you money.

3.

## Improved Data Management

AI can help in better data collection and analysis, providing businesses with valuable insights. This can lead to more informed decision-making and strategic planning.





## 4.

### **Innovation and Adaptability**

AI can drive innovation by enabling new business models and services. It also helps businesses adapt to changing market conditions more quickly and effectively.

## 5.

### **Scalability**

AI and automation allow businesses to scale their operations more easily. Automated systems can handle increased workloads without the need for proportional increases in staff.

## 6.

### **Competitive Advantage**

Early adoption of AI and automation can provide a competitive edge. Businesses that leverage these technologies can offer better services and products, attracting more customers and staying ahead of competitors.

## 7.

### **Enhanced Customer Experience**

Automation can improve customer interactions by providing faster and more accurate responses. This leads to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty. Studies have shown it's **faster too, by as much as 25%**, for tasks completed using Microsoft's Power Platform.



## 8.

### Powering future growth

Integrating AI and automation into business processes can lead to significant growth opportunities by enhancing efficiency, reducing costs, improving data management, and standing out from business rivals.



## 9.

### Savings and increased revenue

Studies have shown the transformation AI can bring. According to Microsoft, use of its Copilot for 365 in SMEs can result in **increases in net revenue of up to 6%** and up to a 20% reduction in operating costs across sectors.

## 10.

### Getting things done

The same study revealed up to a **20% reduction in time to market** for new products. That faster turnaround potentially means more time for more business.





## What products do we recommend?

**Copilot for 365, Microsoft Power Platform and Dynamics 365 are a comprehensive suite of tools designed to streamline business operations and drive efficiency.**

These products offer robust features such as business analytics, app development, and automation capabilities that integrate seamlessly with other Microsoft services.

All of these products offer several advantages over traditional spreadsheets and manual processes. They provide real-time data analytics, facilitate better decision-making, enhance collaboration across departments, and improve data accuracy and security.

-  Power Apps
-  Power Automate
-  Power BI
-  Power Pages
-  Dataverse

These tools also help in automating routine tasks, freeing up valuable time for employees to focus on strategic activities and minimising the risk of human error.



## Microsoft Copilot

Microsoft Copilot is an AI-powered chatbot that helps users to be more productive and creative. It works with Microsoft apps like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and Teams.

It is better for business than other AIs on the market thanks to its enhanced security and governance with the capability to generate and summarise content and support other tasks including brainstorming and meeting transcription.



## Microsoft Power Platform

A cloud-based platform that helps businesses to streamline processes, automate tasks and analyse tools.

These are some of the features that users can access:

- **Power BI:** A powerful analytics tool that provides insights through interactive dashboards and reports.
- **Power Apps:** Capability for rapid development of custom applications tailored to specific business needs without requiring extensive coding knowledge.
- **Power Automate:** Automation of workflows between applications and services to synchronise files, get notifications, and collect data.
- **Power Virtual Agents:** Creation of chatbots to engage with customers and employees, providing instant responses and support.



## Microsoft Dynamics 365

Microsoft Dynamics 365 is a cloud-based suite of intelligent business applications that helps businesses to manage customer relationships, sales and marketing, finance, HR operations, and talent.

It is easy to use and configure. It also integrates with other Microsoft products allowing users to complete a range of tasks from managing sales leads and tracking customer interactions to automating marketing campaigns.

## CASE STUDY

# Fruit Importer

## The challenge

We were approached to help this client make the quality management process with its growers more efficient and accurate.

## The solution

We supported the company in developing a tablet application using the Microsoft Power Platform to streamline the quality reporting process and improve data analysis and management.

## The result

By adopting a tablet application and automating their quality reporting process, the client will significantly improve their operational efficiency, data management, and communication with growers.

- Automating the quality reporting process reduced the potential for errors and saved time previously spent on manual data entry and emails.
- Centralising quality data in this way has led to better informed decisions, and higher customer satisfaction.
- Real-time data access and prompt reporting has improved communication with growers, leading to faster decision-making and better customer relationships.



# Getting started with AI and automation

Get started on bringing the benefits of AI and automation to your business by doing the following five things:

## 1 Identify Areas for Improvement

Begin by conducting a thorough assessment of your business operations. Identify areas where AI and automation could have the most impact. This could include repetitive tasks, like data analysis, customer service and supply chain management.

## 2 Set Clear Objectives

Define the specific goals you want to achieve. That could be improving efficiency, enhancing customer experience, or reducing costs. Having clear objectives will guide your integration strategy.

## 3 Implement Robust Data Management Practices

AI and automation rely heavily on data. Ensure that your business has robust data management practices in place. This includes data collection, storage, processing, and analysis.

## 4 Prioritise Data Security

With the increased use of data, security is paramount. Implement strong data security measures to protect sensitive information and comply with any regulatory controls.

## 5 Communicate the Vision and Benefits

Clearly communicate the vision and benefits of AI and automation integration to your employees. Help them understand how these technologies will impact their roles and benefit the overall business.

Consider focusing on processes where you:



Rely on multiple spreadsheets.



Find team members each have their own approach.



Have tasks that only one team member can complete.



Have to start from scratch every time.

**CASE STUDY**

# Vertical farming client

## The challenge

We were approached by a growing business working in one of the most exciting areas of horticulture today. They required expert guidance on bringing their IT support up to date.

The company had a high dependence on IT for many of their processes but were being held back by a lack of in-house IT skills.

They needed someone to take charge of their IT and map out the best way forward to meet their business needs and ambitions for the future.

## The solution

We worked alongside the client team to identify areas where improvements could be made that would increase productivity and efficiency.

That included selecting and implementing the right ERP system for the business, advising on collaboration for a large-scale project and supporting the appointment of the company's first in-house IT manager.

We also ensured all technology in place across the business worked properly through Wi-Fi and cabling projects supported by our Professional Services team.

## The result

This client was able to move forward with growing its business and prepare for the future with continued support from us as their needs evolve.

Like the crops they grow, this client recognised the value of building strong roots and the importance of IT support and technology to its long-term success.

By establishing core systems, setting up the team and putting the right resource in place, this early-stage business can now scale their technology in line with their ambitions for future growth.

Thanks to our support this business, working at the cutting edge of food production, now has the processes and expertise in place to move forward with confidence.

# How Select Technology can help

**Future Workplace is a consultancy service from Select Technology that helps small and medium sized businesses to solve business challenges using the latest technologies.**

We can build and deploy new tools and applications to help your teams deliver more through streamlined processes, easy to use apps and AI-powered automation. The solutions we typically use to support this are Copilot for Microsoft 365, Dynamics 365 and Power Platform. We can also offer training to your team members to ensure they are confident and competent with new processes and platforms.

Future Workplace from Select Technology will help you to see through the hype and turn this exciting technology revolution to your advantage. We're already delivering results for SME clients across Kent and the South East – and we want to deliver the same for your business.

- Skills:** Integrating AI and automation requires specialised skills and knowledge. We can work with you to get your team up to speed.
- Tools:** We will help you choose the right AI and automation tools that can scale and adapt to suit the needs of your business.
- Security:** We'll help you ensure that your business data is secure and will advise on the measures you should take to protect your IT systems.
- Readiness:** We'll help you get the processes, procedures and systems ready for AI and automation rollout, working with you to get things exactly right.
- Team:** We'll help inspire and educate your team, overcome any resistance to change, working with you to win support for change.
- Training:** We'll train your team on the tools you deploy so they can make the most of what's available in supporting their role.

# Get in touch

**Select Technology delivers IT support and consultancy for growing businesses. We've been helping our clients to achieve their ambitions for over 30 years.**

As an award-winning Managed Service Provider, we deliver a world class service with a personal touch to SMEs across Kent and the South East.

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01892 830111

**EMAIL US**

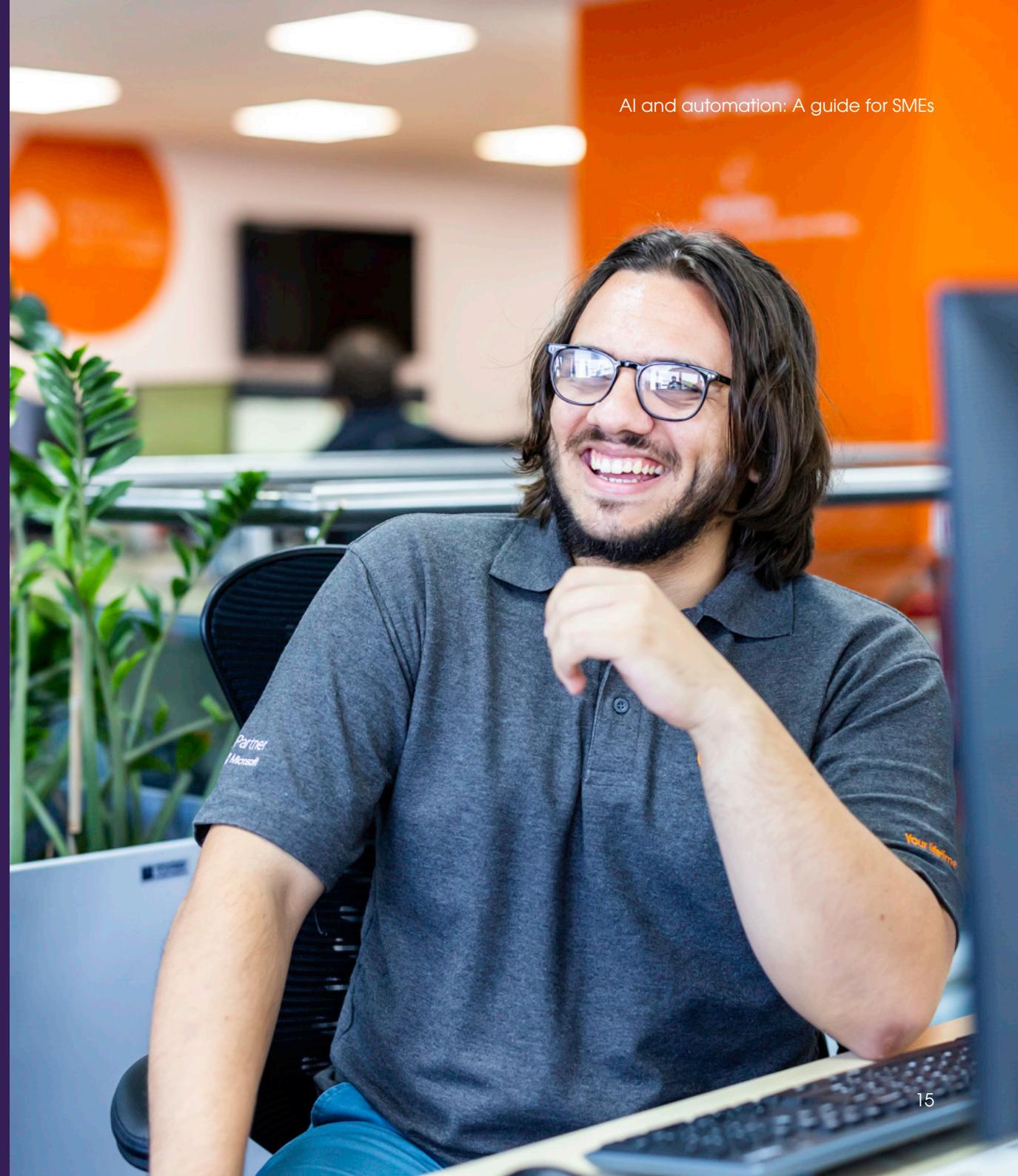
hello@select-technology.co.uk

**VISIT US**

4 Cannon Park, Transfesa Road,  
Paddock Wood, Kent, TN12 6UF

**SOCIAL**

[in](#) [Twitter](#) [f](#) [YouTube](#)





CALL US

01892 830 111

[hello@select-technology.co.uk](mailto:hello@select-technology.co.uk)

4 Cannon Park, Transfesa Road,  
Paddock Wood, Kent, TN12 6UF

[www.select-technology.co.uk](http://www.select-technology.co.uk)