

# Accelerating SME adoption of digital technologies: The role Benchmarking can play



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Technology can be both an enabler and a differentiator. But many SMEs fail to capitalise on the opportunities available. In this article, Mark Modena introduces our next generation BenchmarkIndex® platform, and its potential to drive up SME productivity through accelerated adoption of digital technologies.

## Technology: Opportunity Creator

There can be little argument that digital technologies have become an integral part of our lives, both in a business and a personal setting. This is hardly news, in fact, it's becoming increasingly difficult to find aspects of our lives that haven't yet been impacted by technology. Consequently, and there are no prizes for pointing this out, technology has become both a critical opportunity and a threat for almost every enterprise, regardless of size, sector or location.



It is therefore not surprising that mastering the effective adoption and use of digital technologies in business is now essential to delivering business success. Inspirational leadership, insightful management, a motivated workforce, new opportunity creation, satisfied customers, productive processes, an innovative culture, fantastic products or services or both (depending on what the business does), and smart financial management all remain critical business aspirations. But effective deployment of technology is a theme that, today, cuts across them all.

**So... what do we mean by digital technologies?** They include tools that may already be familiar – such as cloud based computing, CRMs, e-commerce, web based accounting software, computer aided design – as well as less commonly adopted resources, such as, for example, integrated digital systems, big data analytics, automation, Artificial Intelligence, and virtual/augmented/mixed reality.

Digital technology has the power to enable start-ups to scale faster than ever and for established businesses to transform themselves. And the great news is that increased accessibility means that every business, regardless of size, has the opportunity to harness digital technology.

It's obvious! **What's the problem?**

Despite its increasingly fast evolution and prevalence, many businesses have yet to fully harness the power of technology. This failure will be to the detriment and possibly peril of many, because, as their existing and emerging competitors forge ahead, failing to succeed in this area will lead to many falling by the wayside.



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The case is compelling, so the question is - why don't more organisations put more energy into taking advantage of this revolution? Although each and every business is different, there are several common barriers faced when adopting digital technology. These include:

- **A general lack of awareness of the potential benefits and opportunities:** Some businesses do not adopt digital technologies as they are unaware of the benefits and opportunities that they present.
- **A lack of commitment from leaders and managers:** Technology adoption needs to be driven from the top, but low levels of awareness can result in limited buy-in from leaders as they have not made the strategic linkage between the adoption of technology and their business and its future.
- **A lack of skills and knowledge:** The vast majority of SMEs lack internal capacity and capability to identify, manage and implement digital technology.
- **A lack of trust in solutions/providers:** Some businesses have a level of awareness, yet struggle to understand exactly how digital technology applies to their business and what the implementation of such technology entails.

## Driving change

There is no single way to overcome these barriers, but we firmly believe that benchmarking has a significant role to play. Benchmarking has a long standing, positive reputation for driving improvement in a variety of areas. Globally, Bain & Co<sup>1</sup>, the respected international consultancy, has consistently recognised benchmarking as a top five management tool utilised by businesses across the world. Its reputation is founded on driving positive change in many business areas.

1 Bain & Co – Top Ten Management Tools 2017 [http://www2.bain.com/management\\_tools/BainTopTenTools/2017/default.asp](http://www2.bain.com/management_tools/BainTopTenTools/2017/default.asp)



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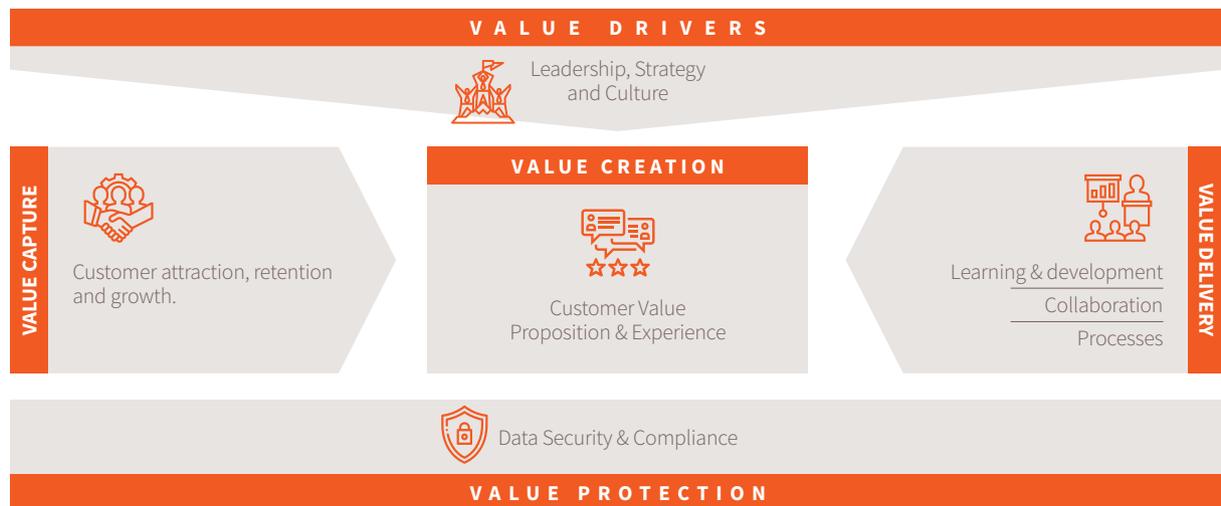
## The BenchmarkIndex® Opportunity

For more than two decades, this powerful methodology has been harnessed within Winning Moves BenchmarkIndex® (BI) service, which has benefitted many thousands of SMEs in more than 40 countries. Our new BI Digital platform will host our next generation benchmarking tool which has been designed to encourage businesses towards technology adoption.

The customisable tool aims to assess the performance and practice maturity of businesses in the adoption of digital technology and will be structured on four levels of digital maturity across five digital proficiency value dimensions as shown in the diagram below.

The process will be facilitated by business advisors, who will collect survey data, create and feedback the resulting benchmark report, assist the business with producing an action plan, point them in the direction of high quality, appropriate technology options, and provide hand holding assistance to get them started.

Winning Moves is delighted to be working with a stellar group of UK-based partners to develop the concept and approach. Aston University will provide academic and intellectual rigour. North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP and Sheffield City Region Growth Hub will identify around 100 businesses to benefit from the support process.





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This will be delivered by their experienced business advisors who will look to ensure that businesses participating gain maximum benefit. This is essential as we are looking for interventions to have a positive and long-lasting effect.

We are excited to be at the forefront of this opportunity and look forward to sharing further updates as they develop. It is also our intention that BI Digital will play an important role in the evolution of our Centre for Digital and Technology Adoption, which is due to be launched in 2020.

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## Get in touch

Winning Moves is a leading consultancy that specialises in helping organisations use evidence based insights to achieve better outcomes. Our unique offer includes: robust research and evaluation, sustainable business support solutions, as well as digitally driven benchmarking and diagnostics. Collectively we seek to **create better tomorrows through data and insight.**

To find out more about the BenchmarkIndex® Opportunity specifically, or about our suite of diagnostic tools more generally, please get in touch with Mark Modena on [marka@winningmoves.com](mailto:marka@winningmoves.com) or +44 7595 821979; he would love to hear from you.

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