

Leapfrogging the Technology Explosion - How SMBs can Leverage Strategic Partnerships

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Abstract

For organizations, SMBs especially, it is difficult to separate business strategy from technology. Companies need to identify, check and then apply next generation technologies to the business roadmap. The white paper "Leapfrogging the technology explosion - How SMBs can leverage strategic partnerships" identifies the need to align business to technology disruptions for seamless connectivity, new modes of engagement, business agility, decreased costs and operational efficiency. It outlines the importance of slicing through the landscape into the heart of the business and from there reach out to technology innovations with the goal of making the business smarter, faster and cheaper.

Introduction

It is apparent that businesses are picking up speed, fuelled by fast and furious technology innovations. With more and more people adopting smart-phones as the smart way to communicate, digitalization has stomped into traditional industries such as banking and manufacturing.

Cloud computing, mobile and unified communications technologies are essential for businesses today, irrespective of their size or scale. Small and Mid-sized Businesses (SMBs) are turning to these innovations to save time, increase productivity and decrease costs. They are looking at the mobile to decrease response time, the cloud to access cost effective technology and applications to be more agile to changing market conditions. This proliferation of applications and devices is providing customers with seamless connectivity, new modes of engagement, business agility, decreased costs and operational efficiency.

Having said that, the extent, scale and power of technology disruption cannot be underestimated. For example, adding dimensions to complexity is the Internet of Things (IoT) which is increasing connectivity and bridging the gap between people and things. This is an offshoot of the growing importance of analytic, cloud computing, and interconnectivity of devices but not anywhere as simple as it sounds. Another example is Software as a Service (or SaaS as it is popularly known) which is causing tremors in the software development arena. This is a way of delivering applications over the Internet and is a preferred solution to buying, installing and maintaining complex software and hardware solutions.

Thus, as technology transforms existing business models, giving rise to new ones, integration becomes core to business success. It is essential to harness the power of emerging technologies while viewing the future through magnifying glasses. It is easy to fall into a trap and adapt a technology solution which everyone is talking about. This kind of a reaction could actually lead to compromised investments and functional silos. It is, therefore, important to slice through the landscape into the heart of the business and from there reach out to technology innovations with the goal of making the business smarter, faster and cheaper.

For organizations, SMBs especially, it is difficult to separate business strategy from technology. However, the fact of the matter is, to remain competitive and increase productivity, there is the need for seamless merging of strategy and IT. Companies need to identify, check and then apply next generation technologies to the business roadmap. This is a tightrope walk as it requires balancing actual present business scenario, with future requirements and then rewriting processes to transform the business. All this has to be achieved without losing sight of costs, complexity, risk and feasibility.

Seven Simple Ways for SMBs to leapfrog the Technology Explosion

The diagram below highlights ten functional areas where enterprise early adapters are applying semantic technologies.

According to a recent Gartner report, “51 percent of CIOs agree that the torrent of digital opportunities threaten both business success and their IT organizations' credibility. In addition, 42 percent of CIOs believe their current IT organization lacks the key skills and capabilities necessary to respond to a complex digital business landscape.” Thus, if IT executives had a crystal ball, they will be able to actually see what they need, and then plan and budget accordingly.

However, more often than not, decision makers have their hands full running their present organizations and they are not sure whether the cost of investment will be the right one and whether it will pay off in the long and short term. **Connecting the IT department to the business is crucial and this is where service providers make an entry.** They will play an important role in this digital disruption, as the world moves towards a mobile and cloud-based world.

➤ **Hybrid Cloud**

Hybrid cloud architectures offer flexibility and many companies are moving their applications to the cloud for execution speed, lower costs, capital preservation and increased service efficiency.

Multi-cloud environments will increasingly be sought by companies as they look to improve business with new online services that foster growth while reducing costs, minimizing risks, and increasing agility. Research confirms that over 60 percent SMBs use cloud-based solutions and that 40 percent have adopted at least one cloud-based service. By making these changes, IT managers expect to save north of 30 percent in the coming years.

For SMBs, who look up to the clouds for a rainbow, what is required is a software services provider that can turn the bubble into a concrete solution. Trigent's on-demand cloud offerings have consistently helped customers experience over sixty percent reduction in CAPEX through structured implementation and consulting.

Trigent's "Cloud Incubation Center" ensures that a core team of well-trained resources are available to start your projects immediately.

There are a number of security risks associated with cloud computing including loss of governance, ambiguity, compliance, data vulnerability, malicious behavior and service unavailability. Trigent understands the importance of security in the cloud environment and ensures that all these concerns are addressed at the outset itself.

➤ **Subscription based Software Model**

Subscription based software models help to bring down competitive pressures and increase efficiency. Instead of investing in large licensing costs and expensive preloads on proprietary hardware, SMBs can benefit from per-user or per transaction model.

It is also the practice today to use open source both for internal purposes and software development. For many developers, Open Source Software (OSS) offers freedom of software. Unfortunately, OSS is not free of costs and those who use it without due diligence attract copyright infringement issues. If a developer enters a license without the organization's knowledge, it can put the entire project on risk. So which licenses are free? Which are not? The fact is licensing issues are complex, growing even more complex every day.

Trigent's on-demand SaaS provides highly scalable solutions with 50% Cost Reduction while allowing enterprises to focus on core business activities rather than IT.

➤ **Consumerization of Enterprises**

The pervasive use of social media and mobile devices will drive the need for infrastructure and services that enable greater user access, control and interaction. Enterprises are capitalizing on the consumerization of IT and proliferation of mobile devices by developing applications aimed at improving employee productivity and customer satisfaction. The mobile device has become the primary mode of communication for people and enterprises, which must invest in mobile-inclusive solutions to maximize customer and employee relationships.

Trigent transforms ideas into rich, scalable and reliable mobile application solution keeping in consideration budgets and timelines. It works to improve existing processes by leveraging the unique aspects of the mobile platform such as touch interface, voice, geo-location, video while working within the limits of small screen. Trigent provides solutions and services for architecture, application design, interface design, usability study, testing and the deployment of mobile applications.

➤ **Social and Business Intelligence**

As digital communication channels are exploding and mobile devices get smarter, consumer expectations are changing drastically. In 2014, organizations began to analyze social data in earnest and in 2015, this trend will continue to grow. Tracking conversations via social will let companies find out when a topic is starting to trend and what their customers are talking about.

Consumers, on the other hand, expect consistent, proactive, personalized service across a growing number of channels, resulting in a positive, pain-free customer experience. Customer experience is overtaking price and product as the key service provider brand differentiator. In data business one-size-fits all customer experience simply will not suffice. Service providers shall transform their service orchestration architectures to enable consistencies and efficiencies that serve individual needs. And this 'social intelligence' will allow companies to be more nimble and responsive to customer needs, desires and issues – and get a leg up on the competition.

SMBs can benefit from business intelligence and data visualization software. By rendering data in easy-to-read graphs and charts, users will be able to understand their data in a way that is natural to them, breaking down the barriers between people and their data. Trigent Business Intelligence Services help organizations collate relevant disparate data into data warehouses and build dashboards for visualization to allow users to analyze, derive useful insights. It provides insights into sales, markets, products, customers, partners, employees and operations for better analysis of costs, revenue, performance and risks. Trigent's end-to-end BI Consulting Services include requirement assessment, gap analysis, planning, technology evaluation and selection, solution design and technical execution/implementation.

➤ **Network Function Virtualization**

Network Function Virtualization (NFV) is no less than a paradigm shift that is transforming service providers' networks from a pre-defined set of physical infrastructure components to a set of modular software building blocks. These building blocks can be created, combined and shuffled at will, creating new network services, turning today's static networks into dynamic, elastic network clouds. The adoption of NFV is enabling service providers to move from multiple proprietary devices to commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) servers, shift from physical network installation and configurations to remote, automated software-based processes, and provide automated elasticity and scaling.

For many companies, offshoring or outsourcing their software service requirements to an external service provider, seems to make sense. But outsourcing or offshoring can come with its set of worries. For example, security becomes a primary concern and SMBs worry about loss of control where an external service provider may or may not be able to defend against possible threats. Risk analysis therefore becomes an additional criteria and one which SMBs have to expend time and energy on.

Network complexity, i.e. configuration and management of changing networks can be an additional challenge. While a business might use one approach the service provider may take another approach regarding vulnerabilities, intrusion detection or perimeter defense.

Trigent's services span Desktop management, Server management, Website management and Network management. Trigent helps IT managers to manage the complexities and challenges of running the business without downtime. By taking care of the routine tasks related with hardware and software infrastructure such as security checks and software updates, Trigent's services are provided remotely from a secure environment. Clients enjoy cost savings and peace of mind knowing the business interruptions are now eliminated and systems are working normally during business and off business hours.

➤ **Secure Outsourcing**

With virtualization, cloud and mobility moving up the value chain, information security is becoming a grave concern. Managing Intellectual Property (IP) and with no clear demarcation of onsite IP, outsourcing seems a risky proposition for SMBs. While many companies assign IP to their legal department, digital media makes network security risky and protecting IP that much more difficult. The risks vary but to a large extent depend on service provider's reputation.

While there seems to be no silver bullet for solving all the security needs of complex enterprise grade applications, they require a well thought out interplay of both security architecture and security techniques. When Trigent develops enterprise grade applications, it follows a "Defense in Depth" principle. In short, the "Defense in Depth" principle prescribes building multiple complementary defense levels across the key layers of an application, such as: UI, Business and Data base.

In addition, Trigent compliments this architecture with a wide range of best practice security techniques including physical security access, firewalls, appropriate network access, SSL certificates, two factor authentication, OpenID, etc. It is important to employ the best security techniques at appropriate levels. When done carefully and thoughtfully it will be extremely difficult to compromise sensitive data either accidentally or on purpose.

➤ **Remote Infrastructure Management (RIM)**

Today's IT managers deal with a variety of IT systems and cloud environments. They manage multiple vendors and need to deal with enterprise compliance, governance and security. They are usually constrained by time and resources to meet the business needs.

Trigent helps them manage the complexities and challenges of running the business without downtime. We take care of the routine tasks related with hardware and software infrastructure such as security

checks and software updates. All services are provided remotely from our secure environment. Clients enjoy cost savings and peace of mind knowing the business interruptions are now eliminated and systems are working normally during business and off business hours.

Summary

For SMBs, attracting and retaining customers, thinking of new products, services, and competencies are more important now than ever before. Technology is aiding this revolution. Harvard Business School professor Clayton M. Christensen describes [disruptive innovation](#) as “a process by which a product or service takes root initially in simple applications at the bottom of a market and then relentlessly moves up market, eventually displacing established competitors.”

Thus, using technology innovations, SMBs can compete with larger players. They can do more with less, instantaneously, remain accessible at all times and achieve all this with limited investment. Collaboration is simple and backup is low cost and low maintenance. Engagement rules are changing and interaction is always on, on any device.

An outsourcing partner who has technological depth, i.e. experience in these new platforms, social media, mobile BI, who has SaaS experience and can create and manage innovations will be the force to help SMBs to transform their business models, de-risk technology, minimize dependence and generate more pricing and revenue options in the market.

References:

<http://www2.deloitte.com/ie/en/pages/consulting/articles/tech-trends.html>

About the Author

Nagendra Rao is the Vice President - Sales and Marketing and leads Trigent Software's global sales and marketing initiatives. Nagendra has 20 years of experience in the ISV, retail, e-commerce and marketing industries. Prior to joining Trigent, Nagendra worked at Hughes Networks, Tata Consultancy Services and Crompton Greaves.

About Trigent Software Inc.

Trigent is a privately held, professional IT services company and a Microsoft Gold Partner with its U.S. headquarters in the greater Boston area and its Indian headquarters in Bangalore. We provide consulting services in various technologies including Microsoft Solutions. Our operating model is to conduct sales, customer relationships and front-end consulting (e.g., business case, requirements, architecture) onsite with our clients and perform the detail design, development, integration, testing and quality assurance offshore at our world class development and support center in Bangalore. We are a SEI CMM Level 4 company and is ISO 9001:2000 TickIT certified organization.

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