



**What does
good digital & IT
look like in
SME Manufacturing
businesses?**



The accidental IT Director's guide

In SME businesses, directors with responsibility for digital and IT often don't have a technical background. They tend to be Finance or Operations Directors, or CEOs looking to understand if their IT systems are reliable and optimal for their business.

They lean forward into the IT role to find suppliers talking in riddles, their teams are frustrated with poor system performance, and fears about cyber security and business continuity start keeping them awake at night.

In larger SMEs where there is an IT department they are often occupied with keeping the lights on – so busy running day to day processes there is little time to think proactively about digital & IT strategy.

So what does 'good digital and IT' look like in SME businesses? The FluidIT Maturity Framework is a 360 degree view. Find out how you can use it to identify opportunities for greater business agility, technology-led innovation, better risk management, and enhanced user and customer experiences.

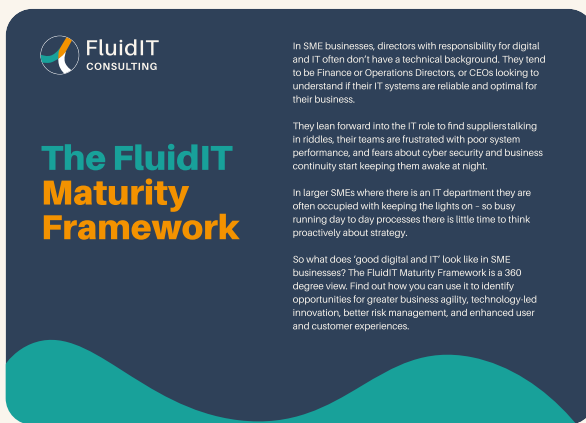


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What is the FluidIT Maturity Framework?

Over the years we've developed a holistic understanding of what good IT and digital capabilities look like in SME businesses.

The FluidIT maturity framework, together with this whitepaper, is a reference guide to everything the non-technical IT director needs to consider when establishing or reviewing an IT function, from developing a proactive digital strategy to IT infrastructure and cyber security.



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your copy

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“ I really appreciated getting a full picture, from an unbiased perspective, of exactly where the business was in terms of platforms, software and hardware, and the associated risks and opportunities.

It allowed me to make decisions about where to invest resource. And we were able to plan and prioritise the deliverables based on the benefits to the business. ”

Tom Ainscough, ZyroFisher Ops and IT Director

Read the case study:

[Checkmate Fire integrates systems, streamlines processes and enables performance reporting with FluidIT](#)

How to use the FluidIT Maturity Framework

The framework gives you a simple way to benchmark your company's current level of digital and IT maturity and identify target performance.

Many SMEs are at levels 1 or 2 in most areas. In today's increasingly digital world, they should aim for at least a level 3, and in most cases a level 4, in each of the eight business areas.

As you climb the maturity ladder your IT capability is better able to respond to new market opportunities, it's more secure and fail-safe, and will allow you to be more efficient and effective in your chosen market. It's often a slow process and needs to be appropriate to your company culture, but the benefits, both top and bottom-line, will pay for the journey.

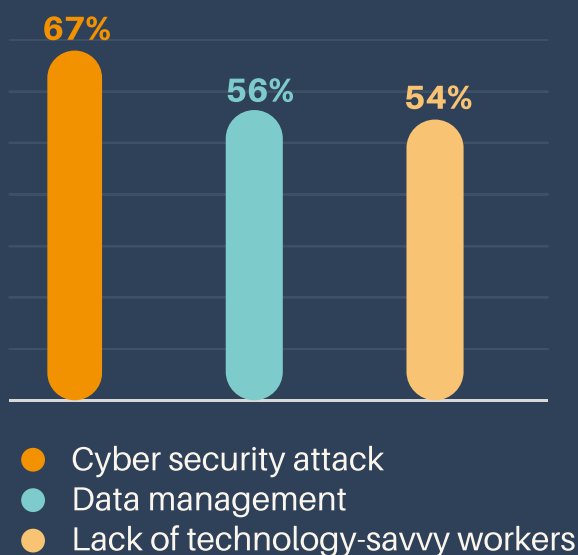
The targets will depend on the business's appetite for risk, growth plan, and drive to outpace competitors. By assessing your business's current operations against the FluidIT Maturity Framework you'll quickly get an understanding of where the gaps are. Use the framework as a guide to set target levels of performance. This will give you a sound basis for discussions about where to prioritise technology investments.

Why now?

In 2020 the top technology priorities for UK SMEs were to mitigate risk, especially the threat of cyber attack, and develop opportunities for business growth with a digital strategy focussed on increasing visibility of internal data and using it for competitive advantage⁽¹⁾

Read the blog:

[**The accidental IT director's guide**](#)



(1) State of Technology at UK SMEs 2020 report

Eight maturity pillars

Technology brings opportunities and risks. 'Good IT and digital' means understanding what it can do to help and protect your business.

There are eight areas to get consider. Get these right and you've nailed it.

Opportunities

- 1** Be ready to change and grow
- 2** The right system or blend of systems
- 3** Digitalise and automate your processes
- 4** Make the best informed decisions

Risks

- 5** Manage Cyber Security and GDPR
- 6** Build your organisational resilience
- 7** Get the best from IT suppliers and vendors
- 8** Have the right skills, resources and policies in place



1 Be ready to change and grow

In a world where business growth is increasingly dependent on digital and IT, there is a **widening divide** between businesses that are technology-enabled and businesses that are not.

Digital leaders are outperforming their competitors in terms of customer trust and experience, employee experience, and operational efficiency⁽²⁾.

In order to change and grow you need a digital and IT strategy that aligns to the business priorities. You'll need capability in the organisation to deliver the change effectively, and track those all important business benefits.

(2) Harvey Nash / KPMG CIO survey



“ There was a lot of enthusiasm in the strategy workshop and people came away with engagement in the process and commitment to implement it. It moved up people's priorities and became a project with a timeline. There was real traction. I wasn't expecting that level of enthusiasm from an IT project. ”

Daniel Whittle, Whitby Seafoods Managing Director

What does this look like in average SMEs?

Responsibility for digital and IT strategy often falls to a director who's too busy doing the day job to think about what's next. There isn't a digital and IT plan for delivery, and there may only be informal agreement of priorities at senior level.

What does good look like?

It's not enough to have a standalone digital and IT strategy and plan. They need to be integrated with the business plan and aligned around business goals, so that technology investments are clearly linked to business benefits.

51% of SMEs

indicated at least one issue relating to planning or initiating their digital transformation, such as defining their requirements, selecting the right products or technologies, or choosing suppliers.

How do you avoid these issues? Read more in the blog: [Solving digital divide between SME businesses](#)

What is your Maturity score?

Refer to the FluidIT Maturity Framework:

Digital and IT strategy, change delivery and governance

[Go to section 1](#)

1 Digital and IT strategy, change delivery & governance						Your Assessment
	1	2	3	4	5	
Digital and IT strategy & plan	No digital and IT plan Prioritisation ad hoc, based on who shouts loudest	Informal understanding of IT strategy, and prioritisation more tactical and reactive than proactive and strategic	Standalone digital and IT strategy and plan Digital and IT investments not clearly linked to business goals and strategy	Digital and IT plan integrated with business plan Digital and IT planning is an optimal blend of strategic and tactical priorities	Integrated digital and IT plan dynamically updated to reflect changing strategic and tactical priorities	
Change delivery capability	Change ad hoc, slow, unpredictable, reversible, poor No dedicated resource, falls to directors to drive	Change slow, steady, sometimes good often poor Senior managers help drive change	Change getting faster and better but high profile failures Part time professional change resources	Change quick and incremental Continuous improvement being adopted Dedicated change delivery resources	Change rapid, agile, almost always good Continuous improvement embedded Dedicated change delivery resources	
Digital, IT and change governance	No change management or IT steering forums IT risks and issues not tracked or managed	Change management and IT governance ad hoc Limited use of business cases and planning	Formal IT steering forum All significant projects have business cases, budgets, plans Risks tracked and managed	Change management forum in place Change and IT forums meet regularly Most projects well governed	Holistic and proactive portfolio management Business cases are living documents Benefits are managed	

2 The right system or blend of systems

It's vital to understand the extent to which existing systems meet business requirements and can be scaled to meet future growth.

If you want to have 'good digital and IT' you need a comprehensive grasp of **where the gaps are between the systems and the business requirements**, and a prioritised plan to bridge those gaps.

Once the key gaps have been identified, businesses are then faced with a choice about how to close them. The best option might be to extend or adapt their current core solutions by buying additional modules or bespoke development. Or the gaps may require looking at implementing new off the shelf solutions that fit the requirement.

Businesses that do this well will have systems that are more closely aligned to their customers' needs and drive operational efficiency.

TRADE SKILLS 4 U

// Our solution supplier was telling us that our problems were only teething issues that could be resolved with a bit more tweaking of the system. We commissioned an independent gap analysis of the solution against our business requirements which identified that the system was fundamentally unsuitable for our business model and requirements.

We are now working with our partners through a robust 'spec and select' exercise to choose a replacement system which will be a much better fit to our requirements. **//**

Christos Panayiotou, Director, Trade Skills 4 U

What does this often look like in average SMEs?

Lots of SMEs are working with functions that are unsupported by any core system and processes that are manual or spread-sheet based. There is lots of repetitive data entry and off-system processing or workarounds.

What does good look like?

As the business begins to mature you start to see adoption of core systems which meet many requirements. The most mature businesses choose flexible systems that can grow and change with the company. You'll see increasing use of Software as a Service (SaaS) solutions which allow for rapid scaling based on demand, or cloud hosting / Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS).

The right system or blend could mean extending core solutions, buying additional modules, or a whole new system.

How do you know which option to pick? Read more in the blog: [Finding the right system or blend of systems](#)

What is your Maturity score?

Refer to the FluidIT Maturity Framework:

Business system capability and scalability

[Go to section 2](#)

2 Business system capability and scalability

	Maturity Level					Your Assessment
	1	2	3	4	5	
Marketing	No systems in use for this business function	Limited adoption of a system	A core system(s) in use which meets many requirements	Core systems are in place for key processes with good coverage of most requirements	Full system coverage of all business processes and business requirements almost entirely met	<input type="checkbox"/>
BD and Sales	Processes are manual and / or spreadsheet based	System functionality limited and many business requirements are not met	Processes still somewhat confined by the systems	System functionality has a good fit to business processes	Business systems can easily be adapted to meet new business needs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procurement and supplier management			System functionality difficult to change	Systems are flexible		<input type="checkbox"/>
Logistics		Lots of off system processing and manual workarounds	Increasing adoption of cloud based software as a service (SaaS), or cloud hosting of core solutions which can be easily scaled, e.g. without up front capital investment in a new server infrastructure	Systems are largely cloud based / SaaS	Systems can be scaled dynamically and in real time to meet changes in demand, e.g. user numbers or data processing volumes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finance		System(s) tend to be physically hosted and / or cannot be easily scaled				<input type="checkbox"/>
Customer service and support						<input type="checkbox"/>
HR & workforce						<input type="checkbox"/>
Equipment and facilities management						<input type="checkbox"/>
IT						<input type="checkbox"/>

3 Digitalise and automate your processes

For SMEs, buying in a new system can be drastic in terms of the impact on people and processes, not to mention the cost.

Edge technologies like Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and low code app development can be used to integrate existing systems and improve process efficiency. These bespoke solutions are lower cost, lower risk and faster to implement than off-the-shelf systems.

For many SME businesses digital transformation is about the right blend of old and new technology but how does this look?



// Working on this project has allowed us to react faster than ever before, with less manual input, ensuring we identify business risks early and act on them quickly, giving our customers the best possible service and embracing digital technology //

Damien Ward, National Technical and Compliance Manager, Checkmate Fire

[Read the case study](#)

What does this often look like in average SMEs?

Lots of SME businesses remain reliant on spreadsheets to manage and execute processes. It's common to see lots of paper forms and manual re-keying of data into systems. There's generally a lack of systems integration and lots of manual interfaces between customers and suppliers.

What does good look like?

SME business who lead on digital transformation start seeing even the most difficult to digitalise business processes being transformed end-to-end with cloud solutions that are accessible by desktop and on the go via a mobile app.

Gartner estimates that low-code will account for 65% of all application development by 2024

What can RPA and low code do for your business? Read more in the blog: [Using edge technologies to get more out of your existing systems](#)

What is your Maturity score?

Refer to the FluidIT Maturity Framework:

Digital transformation enablement

[Go to section 3](#)

3 Digital transformation enablement						Your Assessment
	1	2	3	4	5	
Marketing	Extensive paper based, manual, off system processing	Limited digitalisation e.g. extensive use of Office tools, email, PDFs, Excel etc.	Some processes digitalised and some degree of automatic (e.g. manual bulk data uploads) system integration	Key processes largely digitalised end to end	End-to-end digitalisation of all key processes	<input type="checkbox"/>
BD and Sales	Ad hoc business processes	No system integration with significant rekeying of data between systems	Some process automation	Most systems integrated, 3rd party integration	Systems fully integrated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procurement and supplier management	Lots of administrative staff performing manual, repetitive and non-value adding tasks	Repetitive data entry and off system processing	Most data is digitalised	Good process / decision automation	Extensive process / decision automation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Logistics			Paper processing minimised	Use of Excel / Office minimised	No paper processing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finance				Paper processing largely eliminated		<input type="checkbox"/>
Customer service and support						<input type="checkbox"/>
HR & workforce						<input type="checkbox"/>
Equipment and facilities management						<input type="checkbox"/>
IT						<input type="checkbox"/>

4 Make the best informed decisions

Nearly half of all UK business leaders are still using their gut instincts when it comes to **making business decisions**⁽¹⁾.

They do this because their gut feelings have been right in the past and although the business has tons of data they struggle to turn it into useful actionable insights.

Increasing complexities in making effective and timely business decisions in an unpredictable world have driven more and more SMEs to adopt business intelligence (BI) technologies.

BI technologies drive better decisions by giving increased visibility of business trends and the ability to drill down into operational performance.

CHECKMATE FIRE

// With almost 200 operatives spread across 50 nationwide sites on any given day we were certainly generating plenty of data. Data only becomes power when it can be easily and instantly presented into a format that is consistent and relevant **//**

**David Woffendin , Checkmate Fire
Chief Operating Officer**

[Read the case study](#)

(4)<https://www.forbes.com/sites/salesforce/2014/09/13/sorry-spreadsheet-errors/>

(5)State of Technology at UK SMEs, 2020 research report

What does this often look like in average SMEs?

SME businesses can struggle to extract, merge and process multiple data sets, where too much effort is spent on preparing reports and not enough on analysing them for opportunities and exceptions.

What does good look like?

Staff across the business have access to visual dashboards in real time. Data extraction is automated with KPIs and insights surfaced into reports for live management of business performance.

Users are presented with bespoke information and have the ability to spin up their own 'self service' reports, knowing the data they access is accurate and complete.

In 2020, increasing the use of data and insights was one of the top three technology priorities for SMEs, and data management was one of their biggest concerns.

How do you know what to focus on first? Read more in the blog: [How to make informed decisions](#)

What is your Maturity score?

Refer to the FluidIT Maturity Framework:

Business intelligence (BI), data, integration

[Go to section 4](#)

	Maturity Level					Your Assessment
	1	2	3	4	5	
Marketing	Reliable data and reporting largely absent	Reporting uses mostly built-in reports from the few isolated systems in use	Reasonable reporting and KPI coverage from core systems	Good BI, KPI and reporting coverage and use of BI tools	Full coverage of BI, KPI reporting	<input type="checkbox"/>
BD and Sales	Any business or data insight is a one-off manual exercise to produce	Poor reporting coverage of key business activities	BI and data insights allow more real-time monitoring of business performance and some forecasting	Increasing real-time visibility of performance data, and use of forecasting and predictive analytics	Single source of the truth for all datasets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procurement and supplier management	Data insights limited to factual basis; reporting of what happened, and is usually out of date and very limited in scope and depth	Significant effort for extraction, processing and analysis in Excel	Increasing adoption of BI tools and dashboards but fairly manual data analytics	Most data centralised and standardised, good data coverage and quality	Strong data coverage and analytical capability	<input type="checkbox"/>
Logistics		Little to no regular KPI reporting and tracking	Reports difficult to change; limited self-service reporting	Off system / Excel based analytics is minimised	Extensive use of machine learning and predictive analytics to identify potential outcomes based on complex interactions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finance		Data quality and coverage poor	Increasing amount of analysis of datasets	Data quality and coverage OK	Limited use of machine learning and advanced analytical tools	<input type="checkbox"/>
Customer service and support			Limited integration of datasets; significant use of Excel for analysis			<input type="checkbox"/>
HR & workforce						<input type="checkbox"/>
Equipment and facilities management						<input type="checkbox"/>
IT						<input type="checkbox"/>

5 Manage Cyber Security and GDPR

Increasing cyber security provision is the top technology concern for SME businesses.

This isn't a surprise when 81 per cent of SMEs in the UK reported at least one data breach or cyber-attack in 2020.

Cyber security and GDPR are closely linked, together they provide the foundational assurances that your data is used and protected appropriately.

It's important to keep in mind that cyber risks come from internal breaches as well as attacks on vulnerabilities in your business and in your supply chain. 90 per cent of data security issues were caused by human error in 2019, according to the UK Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).



// The benefits of a robust cyber security strategy and effective management of personal data aren't just financial, they provide regulatory and customer confidence. Many SMEs are third-party suppliers and partners in vast networks belonging to larger organisations and therefore they are under increasing pressure to prove their security and data protection credentials, or risk losing access to lucrative business opportunities. **//**

Rinkoo Pugal, Managing Director, Data Risk Solutions

What does this often look like in average SMEs?

increasing numbers of SMEs now have a cyber security strategy in place, but some are implemented inconsistently with ad-hoc risk assessments and ad-hoc security training. System access is often broad and open with only basic processes in place for starters and leavers.

What does good look like?

SMEs with robust cyber security and a high level of GDPR compliance have accountability at senior level and board-level reporting, and regular awareness training for all staff. Multi-factor Authentication is implemented across all systems and users.

7x rise
in ransomware attacks in 2020, and this is a trend that's likely to continue

How do you avoid data breaches? Read more in the blog: [How do you know if your cyber security is adequate?](#)

What is your Maturity score?

Refer to the FluidIT Maturity Framework:

Cyber security and GDPR

[Go to section 5](#)

5 Cyber security and GDPR

	Maturity Level					Your Assessment
	1	2	3	4	5	
Cyber security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No starters & leavers process No cyber awareness No MFA Systems not regularly patched No disc encryption No risk assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic starters and leavers process System access broad and open Ad hoc patching Ad hoc risk assessments Limited, ad hoc security training Ad hoc risk assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust starters, leavers, and change process Periodic security training MFA in use for key systems Senior cyber accountability Regular patching Data encryption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular system log reviews Regular security training System access tightly aligned to roles MFA across all systems / staff CISO appointed Regular pen tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24/7/365 security operations centre (SOC) CISO reports to board Cyber ingrained in culture Very regular training ISO27001, Cyber Essentials Plus or equivalent certification 	
GDPR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No accountability for data protection No GDPR policy statement Privacy notices out of date 3rd party contracts out of date Processes not defined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Protection Office (DPO) GDPR policy defined Privacy notices updated 3rd party contract template Breach reporting defined DPIA defined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DPO part of day to day management Breach reporting embedded Change control for privacy/ notices 3rd party contract embedded Good data flow coverage DPIA applied to high risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Privacy notice and cookies managed in BAU 3rd party reviews Marketing consent audit trail Regular GDPR training DPIA applied more widely Extensive data flow coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All of level 4 requirements MI in place for daily reporting to stewards and monthly to leadership Reporting on breaches in last 72 hours 	

6 Build your organisational resilience

The right IT infrastructure is one that meets the aspirations of the business growth plan, and provides responsive, reliable, scalable levels of performance no matter what is thrown at it. It allows staff to work securely from anywhere, without impinging on performance and productivity.

The most mature SMEs rely on their IT infrastructure to ensure their businesses are protected from disaster and have the agility to scale and change rapidly to meet evolving demands.

On premises, hybrid and cloud environments all have their uses but In general we would recommend a **cloud-hosted infrastructure** for SMEs. This is because it come with resilience, scalability and security out of the box.



// We often talk about disaster recovery in terms of catastrophic events. However it's more likely that failure of ageing servers and network equipment will cause the unavailability of IT systems. In an SME with a £5M annual turnover, the impact of not having access to their customer data and applications could be £25K per day in lost revenue, not to mention the loss in confidence of their customers and suppliers. **//**

**Andrew Wragg, Business Development Specialist,
Clovertec**

What does this often look like in average SMEs?

Disaster recovery plans are either non-existent or out of date. Back ups may be in place, but not regularly tested. No one knows how long it will take to recover from a disaster or loss.

What does good look like?

Proactive server and IT infrastructure planning plus widespread cloud or Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) adoption allow businesses to operate with minimal performance issues and system downtime and give unlimited scalability.

On-premises, hybrid and cloud environments all have their uses, but in general we would recommend the cloud

Are you cloud ready? Read more in the blog: [Should all of your systems be in the cloud?](#)

What is your Maturity score?

Refer to the FluidIT Maturity Framework:

IT infrastructure, resilience & disaster recovery

[Go to section 6](#)

6 IT infrastructure, resilience & disaster recovery

		Maturity Level					Your Assessment
		1	2	3	4	5	
Infrastructure & resilience	Very frequent issues with internet, and system downtime	Frequent issues with internet, and system downtime	Occasional issues with internet and system downtime	Very infrequent system issues	Almost zero system issues		
	Mostly physical on-site hardware	Primarily physical on-site systems but limited adoption of cloud-based products	Regular proactive monitoring of infrastructure	IT anticipates and prevent issues	Full adoption of cloud solutions		
Disaster recovery	No backup or failover capability	No forward planning for server upgrades - users run in to issues before IT are made aware of them	Increasing use of cloud-based products and infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS)	Widespread adoption of cloud and IaaS, minimised physical servers	Automated monitoring		
	IT reactive and slow to respond to issues	DR focussed on backups only, for a limited number of systems, on an infrequent basis	Some forward capacity planning	Comprehensive monitoring	Changes delivered in minutes / automated		
	Little or no disaster recovery capabilities for core systems	DR focused on backups only, for a limited number of systems, on an infrequent basis	DR planning starting to encompass risks of not being able to access site	DR planning contained within more holistic bcp planning	Holistic BCP planning which is regularly tested and updated		
	No DR plan	Backups are not regularly tested	Most key systems have active backups, on a more frequent basis or are cloud-based	Hot site DR in use	Virtual / hot site backups with immediate failover		
	Data or system loss has happened recently	Restoring systems is slow and labour intensive	DR plans tested	Rapid recovery from a disaster	Key business functions can be largely run from any remote location		
		DR plans obsolete	IT can recover systems within agreed business timeframe	DR tested and updated after any major change			

7 Get the best from IT suppliers and vendors

With the increasing shift to digital cloud-based solutions and widespread adoption of remote-working, SMEs are driving a global increase in demand for **Managed Service Providers (MSPs)**(1).

Managed services are seen as a cost-effective way to keep pace with rapid technological change and maintain a competitive edge.

The best MSPs offer a range of digital and IT skill sets, flexible, scalable service models and proactive maintenance.

SME businesses who choose the right MSP and manage their performance proactively will see a better business efficiency, a greater return on investment and improved staff morale.

// An SME business that needs strategic leadership can leverage the experience of a fractional IT Director to review the company's capabilities against the digital and IT maturity framework to understand the key gaps. A fractional IT Director can identify when your managed service provider is not meeting the needs of the business and can help with the spec and select process of finding a more suitable one for your evolving needs. It's vital to have a managed service provider that meets the demanding digital transformation needs of a rapidly growing **//** business.

Jason Lock, Infrastructure Architect, FluidIT Consulting

What does this often look like in average SMEs?

There is often an 'us and them' mentality instead of a partnership. MSPs may struggle to explain things in a language everyone can understand and have little proactive engagement with the business and its future plans.

What does good look like?

In the most mature SMEs, suppliers understand the client's business strategy and growth plan. They use their knowledge of technology to help innovate their client's business model and disrupt their markets.

They are seen as part of the core team delivering complex projects that drive business growth.

The UK government identified MSPs as essential digital suppliers that pose a disproportionate risk to the security and resilience of businesses

Are you using an MSP or have you considered it? Read more in the blog: [Do you need a Managed Service Provider \(MSP\)?](#)

What is your Maturity score?

Refer to the FluidIT Maturity Framework:

IT supplier capability and vendor management

[Go to section 7](#)

7 IT supplier capability and vendor management						Your Assessment
	1	2	3	4	5	
IT supplier capability	IT suppliers very poor, unresponsive, consistently fail No proactive engagement with the business and its future plans 'Us and them' mentality instead of a partnership approach	IT suppliers poor to adequate, slow and reactive Value for money poor Struggle to understand business requirements or explain things in business terms	IT suppliers adequate to good, reactive and proactive in equal measures Struggle with bigger more complex projects and requirements Good working relationship with the business	IT suppliers good to excellent Mostly deliver on promises Increasingly proactive Pace and quality are good Good partnership and understanding of business goals	IT suppliers consistently excellent, very quick and proactive, demonstrating how tech can help business goals Can deliver even most complex projects Seen as a core part of the team	
IT supplier management	Vendors not proactively managed No SLAs in place No regular performance reviews Contracts not in place or not fit for purpose nor aligned to needs	Vendors not proactively managed SLAs may be in place but not aligned to needs Ad hoc performance management Basic contracts in place but not aligned to needs	Regular but infrequent performance management meetings Regular reporting on SLAs Good contracts aligned to needs Infrequent financial monitoring	Monthly supplier performance reviews and good reports on SLAs Robust contracts with good alignment to needs Periodic contract, financial and risk and security reviews and benchmarking	Monthly supplier performance reviews and excellent reports on SLAs Contracts completely aligned to needs Regular contract, financial and risk and security reviews and benchmarking	

8 Have the right skills, resources and policies in place

The increasing importance of technology to businesses means that SMEs who want to get ahead of the competition require a **modern IT function**, capable of partnering with the business and harnessing cloud technology to drive innovation and achieve transformational growth.

This can be as light touch as fractional IT leadership to oversee an entirely outsourced IT provision, or supplementing their **Managed Service Providers (MSPs)** with a dedicated IT team and on site desktop support.

However, growing numbers of SMEs need an internal capability that goes beyond traditional desktop support.



// We couldn't employ just one person with all those skills and abilities, our payroll bill would go through the roof.

Obviously we could look for all of these people ourselves but it's far better for us if FluidIT does it.



Mark Teasdale, Whitby Seafoods Financial Controller

What does this often look like in average SMEs?

Many SME businesses don't have in-house software development capability, and some expect employees with limited capacity and capability to 'have a go'. IT policies are often not fit for purpose, procedures are often ad-hoc and undocumented and the internal IT operations and support can feel unresponsive, siloed, overwhelmed, and reactive.

What does good look like?

Mature SME businesses build diverse multi-disciplinary teams that can cope with the many demands of their users, or collaborate with trusted partners who offer fractional resources and solution agnostic expertise as required.

81%
of decision-makers report that utilising a trusted partner's skills/expertise is as or more important for success than the technology solution they provided

Are you utilising partners in your IT function? Read more in the blog: [What does a modern IT function look like?](#)

What is your Maturity score?

Refer to the FluidIT Maturity Framework:

IT supplier capability and vendor management

[Go to section 8](#)

8 Software development, IT policies, IT operations & IT support

	1	2	3	4	5	Your Assessment
Software development	No in-house development, or ad hoc and have a go' by inexperienced people with limited capability	Some in house dev but slow and poor quality Day resource part time Lots of defects or outages	Some dedicated resources Limited testing Software release poor Applications meet some business requirements	Dedicated software dev team Good user testing Software release robust Can deliver more complex requirements	Dedicated and cutting edge team Comprehensive user testing Regular releases No code issues	
IT policies and procedures	IT policies and procedures are ad hoc and undocumented	Limited definition of IT policies and procedures Often out of date & rarely refreshed Employee acceptance paper based	Good range of PPs, periodically refreshed One off awareness training Records good	Comprehensive range of PPs Regularly updated Annual training Records comprehensive	Comprehensive range of PPs Regularly updated Regular training Digitally recorded acceptance of policies and training	
IT operations, support and capability (internal)	Ad hoc, best endeavours, part time No ticketing system Very poor, unresponsive, very slow	Some dedicated resource with adequate skills Basic ticketing system No self help 'Us and them' mentality	Dedicated resource with good skills Good ticketing system with self help / service Average, often reactive, bit slow	Good ticketing system with strong prioritisation and root cause Increasingly proactive Collaborative	Leading edge internal IT Comprehensive self help / service Partnering with the business to drive digital innovation	

Key takeaways

- Every company is different. **The Fluid Digital Maturity Framework** is a tool to help you work out your own business priorities.
- Your business needs a digital and IT strategy that is integrated with the business plan and strategy.
- Get a clear picture of how your systems meet business requirements, identify gaps and have a plan to bridge those gaps.
- Automate data extraction and adopt Business Intelligence (BI) tools so you can see business performance in real time.
- Cyber security breaches are a case of when not if. Prepare now to increase customer confidence and save recovery costs.
- Take control in managing IT suppliers and understand your responsibilities.
- You don't need to do it all yourself. Look for a partner who offers a multi-disciplinary team on a part-time or fractional basis.

Unsure how to implement these changes?

Book a discovery call to see
how we can help you deliver digital change

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The FluidIT Maturity Framework



The FluidIT Maturity Framework

In SME businesses, directors with responsibility for digital and IT often don't have a technical background. They tend to be Finance or Operations Directors, or CEOs looking to understand if their IT systems are reliable and optimal for their business.

They lean forward into the IT role to find suppliers talking in riddles, their teams are frustrated with poor system performance, and fears about cyber security and business continuity start keeping them awake at night.

In larger SMEs where there is an IT department they are often occupied with keeping the lights on – so busy running day to day processes there is little time to think proactively about strategy.

So what does 'good digital and IT' look like in SME businesses? The FluidIT Maturity Framework is a 360 degree view. Find out how you can use it to identify opportunities for greater business agility, technology-led innovation, better risk management, and enhanced user and customer experiences.

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- 3 Digital transformation enablement
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About Fluid

We help businesses work out what technology can do for them.

We work with and alongside our clients to get the right results, and on the way we learn and grow together.

We believe in the power of inspired innovation, meaningful change and collective success.



**We work with
people like you**

How we work

We begin by understanding your business goals and your current digital and IT capability.

We focus on business outcomes not technology deliverables.

We work with the strengths in your people, processes and technology investments.

We push for results but at the right pace for our clients.

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SME

IT leadership,
technology advice,
change & project
delivery for small to
medium enterprises

Private Equity

Value creation from
digital
transformation,
throughout the
investment lifecycle

Large Enterprises

Optimising strategic
change and
technology
implementation
programmes



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The application of the principles described will depend upon the explicit circumstances involved and we recommend that you obtain professional advice before acting, or refraining from acting on any of the contents of this publication.

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