



The Fluid Digital 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 supplierstalking 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.

What is the Fluid 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 and this whitepaper are 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.



For more information, read our whitepaper:

What does "good IT" look like in SME businesses?

[Download the whitepaper](#)

How to use the Fluid Maturity Framework

The framework gives you a simple way to benchmark your company's current level of digital and IT maturity, and agree a target maturity you should be aspiring to achieve.

The target levels will depend on the business's appetite for risk, growth plan, and drive to outpace competitors.

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

By assessing your business against the IT Maturity Framework and setting your own target maturity, you'll quickly get an understanding of your biggest gaps and have a sound basis for discussion about where to prioritise technology investments.

Eight Maturity Pillars

The Framework covers four areas of opportunity for business growth and four areas of risk for business protection.

Opportunities

Risks

- 1** Digital and IT strategy, change delivery and governance
- 2** Business system capability and scalability
- 3** Digital transformation enablement
- 4** Business Intelligence, data and integration
- 5** Cyber Security and GDPR
- 6** IT infrastructure, resilience and disaster recovery
- 7** IT supplier capability and vendor management
- 8** Software development, IT policies, IT operations & IT support

1 Digital and IT strategy, change delivery & governance

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

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	
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	
Procurement and supplier management		Lots of off system processing and manual workarounds	System functionality difficult to change	Systems are flexible	Systems can be scaled dynamically and in real time to meet changes in demand, e.g. user numbers or data processing volumes	
Logistics		System(s) tend to be physically hosted and / or cannot be easily scaled	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		
Finance						
Customer service and support						
HR & workforce						
Equipment and facilities management						
IT						

3 Digital transformation enablement

	Maturity Level					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	
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	
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	
Logistics			Paper processing minimised	Use of Excel / Office minimised	No paper processing	
Finance				Paper processing largely eliminated		
Customer service and support						
HR & workforce						
Equipment and facilities management						
IT						

4 Business intelligence (BI), data, integration

	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	
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	
Procurement and supplier management	Data insights limited to factual basic reporting of what happened, and is usually out of date and very limited in scope and depth	Significant effort for manual data 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	
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	
Finance		Data quality and coverage poor	Data quality and coverage OK	Limited use of machine learning and advanced analytical tools		
Customer service and support		Increasing amount of analysis of datasets	Limited integration of datasets / significant use of Excel for analysis			
HR & workforce						
Equipment and facilities management						
IT						

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 IT infrastructure, resilience & disaster recovery

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

7 IT supplier capability and vendor management

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

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

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

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.

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.

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

fluiditconsulting.co.uk/book

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