

5 Automation Strategies Every Small Business Should Follow

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Repetitive tasks are everywhere – think report generation, email sorting and system checks – but they are still daunting for most businesses. Unfortunately, even though 90% of businesses recognize the apparent benefits of automation, 70% remain bogged down by the misconception that it is complex and hard to adopt.

At the same time, the C-suite is under pressure to drive results amid protracted inflation, supply chain disruptions, market volatility and recession fears. This pressure pushes them to trim costs and boost efficiency. Throughout it all, the imperative of providing better customer and employee experiences always remains at the top of my mind.

With all these challenges, it's time to cut through the myths and focus on the fact that automation isn't just a nice-to-have – it's a productivity must.

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Beyond the buzzwords of automation

Automation is more than just a trend for companies that have truly embraced it and rely on it to be a strategic asset. Today, 91% of organizations have dedicated teams focused on IT automation. Even small to mid-size businesses view automation as a game changer.

In fact, 88% of SMB owners believe automation allows them to go head-to-head with larger players by empowering these businesses to scale smarter, respond faster and better optimize the limited resources they have while remaining competitive.

The potential of automation goes far beyond routine maintenance tasks. Yes, it can handle system updates, data backup, user provisioning, and so on, as well as filling in for the IT teams in their daily tasks. However, automation also plays a crucial role in areas that cannot afford risks and errors like network security, access management and patch management.

In these cases, real-time monitoring tools can identify any potential risks or unusual activity the moment they arise, giving IT teams a heads-up to act before minor issues escalate. Automating these critical areas could mean tighter security, fewer human errors, and a faster response to evolving threats.

Furthermore, in high-stakes environments, automation becomes a compliance ally, creating audit-ready logs and adapting quickly to regulatory shifts without extra legwork. For executives, the benefits are clear and measurable. They believe that automation could increase their workforce capacity, equivalent to adding 2.4 million extra full-time employees.

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Five things to look for when bringing automation to the table

Automation can transform the way businesses work, but making it count means being smart about where and how it's applied.

Here's what to keep in mind as you get started.

1. Focus on high-impact areas to apply automation. Automation applied to an inefficient operation will only magnify the inefficiency. So, start small by analyzing daily workflows and pinpointing repetitive tasks that take up time. Prioritizing these tasks for automation can yield quick productivity gains. Establish clear success metrics to ensure that the automation performs as intended and delivers meaningful results.

2. Opt for platforms that seamlessly fit your stack. For an automation tool to truly add value, it must fit smoothly within the existing tech stack. Yet, 30% of users report that their automation tools lack full integration with cloud and SaaS technologies, creating expensive gaps. To avoid these catches, prioritize platforms that can integrate easily with core IT tools. Integration Platform as a Service (iPaaS) solutions could be effective here, connecting diverse applications, data sources, and both on-premises and cloud systems into a unified framework for IT automation.

3. Go for scalable platforms that can grow with you. Choose platforms that can scale and evolve with your company, adding advanced features as your needs grow. A modular automation approach, for instance, provides the flexibility to initially automate basic workflows and later integrate advanced analytics or AI-driven decision-making modules. A truly scalable IT automation platform adapts to your growth trajectory while supporting an agile environment that keeps pace with evolving needs

4. Prioritize platforms that have security and compliance built in. With loads of data handled and tasks autonomously executed without human intervention, it's imperative to look for platforms that embed robust security measures, like end-to-end encryption and automated compliance checks. These features safeguard sensitive information, block unauthorized access and keep us aligned with industry regulations such as

GDPR or HIPAA.

5. Seek flexible platforms that adapt to your needs. Choose platforms that allow you to customize configurations unique to your business needs. This flexibility can include setting up detailed audit trails to track system changes or implementing industry-specific workflows such as supply chain logistics or patient record management in healthcare. This flexibility ensures that your automation solution isn't a one-size-fits-all approach but is tailored to align with your organization's structure.

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Unlock automation's full potential

Even with advanced automation tools in place, automating certain tasks may still remain just out of reach. That's where custom scripts come in, providing the last-mile coverage that allows IT admins to design solutions tailored to unique business needs. However, deploying scripts across endpoints comes with its own challenges, especially with validation and timing. Implementing them at the right moment is often the hardest part.

Unified Endpoint Management platforms could simplify this process by assisting IT admins with the generation, validation and scheduling of scripts for timely deployments. And with AI now in the mix, automation has leveled up, creating opportunities limited only by the imagination of those designing the workflows.

Ultimately, making the most out of automation is not just about implementing the right tools. It's more of a piecemeal process, requiring thorough evaluation, refinement, and maintenance. Just as important is training employees who work closely with these tools, empowering them to fully capitalize on the platform's potential. By strategically aligning

automation strategies with their unique needs and size, businesses can position themselves to stay ahead of the game.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/science-technology/automation-doesnt-have-to-be-complex-5-ways-it-helps/482763>