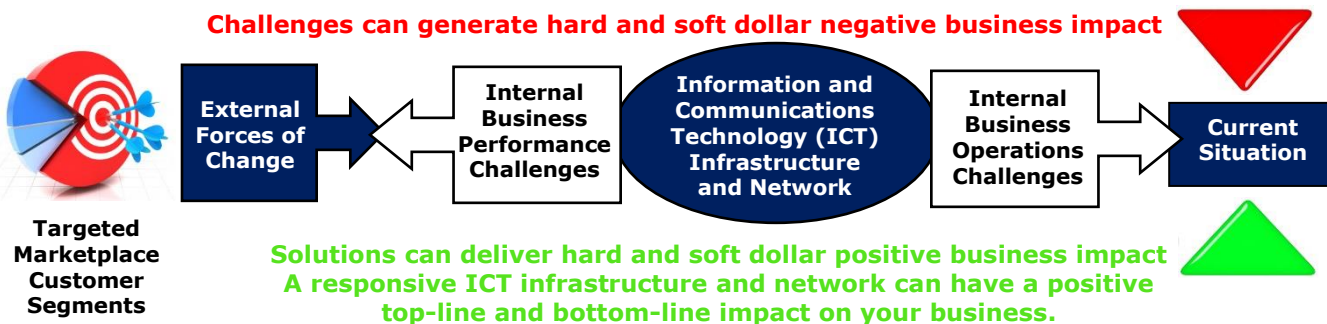


SMB/ICT Alignment Perspective

Small and medium business (SMB) ICT alignment begins with a clear understanding of external forces of change and the internal business challenges that they may be creating that can impact the information and communications flow into, within and out of your business. Once challenges have been identified and the negative financial impact that they are having on the business can be calculated, your ICT infrastructure and network can be aligned with other business solutions to increase business performance and recapture lost revenue to the top-line and profit to the bottom-line of the business. The diagram below clearly illustrates why ICT alignment is a mission critical business strategy and powerful competitive advantage in today's fast-paced and dynamic market landscape.



Your Current Situation - External Forces of Change

Understanding the strategic role that your business voice and data technology can play in your business performance and its alignment to harness external forces of change begins with a clear perspective of those external forces. Let's start by using the scale below to prioritize any of these recognized external forces of change that may be impacting your business communications.

- 1: High potential impact – Anticipate, build contingency plans to prevent and minimize impact
- 2: Medium potential impact – Monitor, manage impact and convert to positive impact
- 3: Low potential impact – Monitor and leverage opportunities created by the forces

- ___ **Society (Consumers):** One of the most significant forces of impact is societal shifts driven by the generation power shift, a lifestyle transition, and growing "consumerism".
- ___ **Economy (Money):** The second category of forces that are impacting businesses deals with global and local economic conditions, financial and investment challenges.
- ___ **Marketplace (Industry):** General business dynamics, marketplace inhibitors and industry trends and competitive environment consistently play a key role in the shaping of business.
- ___ **Events (Environment):** The perceived or real impact of current natural disasters, acts of terror and other man-made crisis situations.
- ___ **Policy (Standards):** Obviously one of the key forces of change deals with policy and the impact of government, regulatory, and standards on the industry and the business.
- ___ **Innovation (Technology):** This last force of change impacting business is technology evolution and the alignment of your information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and network to impact business performance.

Your Current Situation - Internal Business Challenges

In return, these external forces of change can create internal business challenges along with self-inflicted challenges created by the normal operation of the business. Through poor planning, marginal business decisions, outdated policies, unresponsive procedures, cumbersome processes, employee mistakes, obsolete technology and other factors, many businesses create their own challenges which are often compounded by the external forces. Business challenges today fall into one of three basic categories.

- Priority 1:** Problems that must be solved to survive - Roadblocks
- Priority 2:** Needs that should be met to compete – Building blocks
- Priority 3:** Opportunities that can be leveraged to grow – Growth blocks

Business Performance Challenges

In today’s contemporary business all business functions for any type or size of business can be divided into two basic centers – business performance and business operations. The external focused business performance or front-office revenue and service center functions and related challenges have a top-line impact on the business through strategic and tactical marketing, customer acquisition, initial offering sales, revenue, profit and customer lifecycle support and sales. Identify below your top three business performance (top-line impact) challenges.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Business Performance Challenge – Positive Customer Lifecycle Experiences

One of the key business performance challenges in today’s competitive business landscape is to deliver positive customer lifecycle experiences and leverage revenue potential throughout that lifecycle. While yesterday’s consumer may have been brand, offering, company or people loyal, today’s volatile mix of boomer, generation X and Y business buyer and consumer is experience loyal and will typically seek out and do business with the company or offering that provides the most positive experience. Identify any challenges you may be having in the delivery of positive customer lifecycle experiences and maximizing customer lifecycle revenue potential.

- 1. Targeted Suspect** – Has a need for your offering but has not expressed a desire to buy
Strategic marketing: _____
- 2. Interested Prospect** – Has a need for your offering and has expressed a desire to purchase
Tactical marketing: _____
- 3. Qualified Buyer** – Is actively in the process of buying
Initial sales: _____
- 4. Expectant Customer** – Has purchased the desired offering with support expectations
Incremental sales: _____
- 5. Established Client** – Existing client with ongoing service and offering support
Lifecycle sales: _____
Circle of influence sales: _____

Business Operations Challenges – Increase Productivity and Control Costs

The internal focused business operations or back-office cost and expense center functions and related challenges have a bottom-line impact on the business through cost prevention, control, expense management, efficiency, finance, human resources operations, production and performance. Identify below your top three business operations (bottom-line impact) challenges.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Your Current Situation

With stability and maturity no longer viable benchmarks for success, today’s businesses are either in start-up and launch, competing aggressively and growing or by default are in survival and recovery. Shape or be shaped, whatever your current situation may be, a responsive ICT infrastructure and network can help to enhance it and drive business performance. Based on this quick discussion, let’s realistically evaluate our current situation based on today’s benchmarks?

- ___ Actively starting and launching a new for-profit business or non-profit organization
- ___ Wanting to compete aggressively and grow in a successful business or organization
- ___ Need to stabilize and recover a struggling business or organization