

Monthly Newswire

Welcome to our monthly newswire. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and find it useful.

January 2022

Key Business Trends for 2022

The world is changing fast and businesses are having to adapt accordingly.

Businesses across the world have been grappling with rapid transformation because of changes to working practices, shifts in buyer behaviour and ongoing economic uncertainty.

The way we work is evolving

In the last 18 months, the shift to agile or flexible working has been accelerated by the pandemic. In 2022 the way we work will continue to evolve. Gig workers, remote workers and a move away from the traditional model of employment look set to be themes that will continue to evolve into 2022 and beyond.

Sustainability

All businesses must seek to reduce their environmental impact. Some businesses are trying to reduce the amount of waste that they produce, while others are setting lofty objectives to decarbonize their supply chains. Any business that ignores sustainability and the green agenda is unlikely to do well in the new age of conscious consumption.

Communication using apps

The pandemic has shifted commerce online and away from bricks and mortar / in-person meetings. In addition to telephone calls or emails, customers now expect businesses to be able to communicate using popular apps such as WhatsApp, Teams, Zoom or Skype. This trend is likely to continue post pandemic.

Virtual events

Meetings have moved online for many businesses and so have events. Whether it's launching a new product or service on a livestream video or hosting a webinar, virtual events are here to stay. Physical, in-person conferences and events may return after the pandemic, but virtual events eliminate the need to travel so are time efficient and less costly to attend or to run.

Social media marketing

When was the last time you looked at an advert on television or a billboard outside? Now that we spend more of our time online and connecting through social media, businesses have responded by focusing their marketing budgets on online campaigns. Social media marketing is not just for large, global businesses - small and medium sized businesses can use social media campaigns to create targeted, local campaigns with data-driven analytics which help to zone in on specific types of clients and prospects. Buyer behaviours have shifted - people now buy more online than ever before, so it makes sense that businesses are shifting their marketing focus to the online platforms that people are now using.

Accepting Crypto Payments

With the growing popularity of crypto currencies, some businesses have started to accept crypto payments.

In simple terms, cryptocurrency is a form of digital money. It can be used for online transactions and is designed to be secure. The most common crypto currencies are Bitcoin and Ethereum, but there are many more available.

Crypto currencies are very secure. They use computer code that is almost un-crackable, which means that making transactions using crypto currency is attractive to customers (particularly when buying online).

Crypto currency merchant accounts are available in the UK and overseas. From a business's perspective, accepting crypto currencies for payments is appealing, in that transactions cannot be faked or reversed. This provides an element of security for both the customer and the merchant.

A growing number of small and medium-sized businesses are already accepting cryptocurrency. If you want to start accepting crypto payments you will need a digital wallet, which allows you to accept, store and sell cryptocurrencies. These crypto wallets come with a private key which is your access code for your digital wallet.

If you already sell your products or services online on platforms such as Etsy or Shopify, these platforms often partner with payment processors like Coinbase and Bitpay, which allow users to accept payments in crypto currencies such as Bitcoin. Businesses can also sign up directly on payment processors such as Coinbase.

Accepting crypto payments is not without its risks. The value of crypto currencies fluctuates a lot and significant swings in value from one day to the next are not uncommon. Any business that is accepting crypto payments needs to track its value on the day it was received and the day it was sold. Crypto payments are still in the early stages of being adopted by the wider business community. As such, it's important to understand the challenges and risks inherent in accepting it as a form of payment.

Windows 11

New design, same old Windows, and that's a good thing.

Windows is the world's most popular operating system for desktop and laptop computers. For decades, businesses around the world have relied on Windows to run their IT systems and processes. So, when Microsoft launches a new version of Windows, the whole world sits up and takes notice. Welcome then, to Windows 11.

So what's new? Windows 11 offers a sleek, modern and more consistent design. Despite its new look, Windows 11 remains functionally similar to Windows 10. This is a good thing as it means that users who upgrade to the new version over the next few months or years will find that it feels familiar.

Windows 11 launched in October and the upgrade is coming to both recent and new PCs. It will be offered as a free upgrade to Windows 10 users on a rolling basis, based on validated hardware configurations. The rollout will be complete by mid-2022.

System requirements for running Windows 11 are a 1 Ghz minimum processor, 4GB RAM and 64 GB storage. A 64-bit processor is required. Most PC's from the last three or four years should be fine to run Windows 11.

One of the key new features in Windows 11 is the widget panel which shows tiles for news, weather, financial market updates and so forth. Third party developers can offer content through Windows 11 widgets and we will likely see these become available over the coming months.

Windows 11 has been designed with Microsoft Teams video conferencing in mind. With the increasing importance of virtual meetings, having Teams chat and Teams video conferencing in the taskbar as a default, is quite a helpful feature.

In summary, Windows 11 is easy to use and more streamlined. It offers some useful tools and the roadmap for future development suggests that it will continue to improve over time.

Making Training Stick

How can businesses train their teams of people more effectively?

Businesses that invest in training their team enjoy greater employee retention and the right training can also have a positive effect on your profit margins.

To build a high performing organisation, you need to plan for sustained learning. Providing the training is one thing, but what happens once your employees leave the training room?

In order for your training to be effective it needs to combine formal training, ongoing coaching and peer learning. Learning a new skill is one thing but in order to master it, your employees need to apply it day in and day out.



The foundation for acquiring new skills is formal training and it works best if it is fun, practical and interactive.

The formal training needs to be supported by coaching. When managers focus on coaching their people, they help them to use their new skills in new and different ways as part of their day to day roles. Coaching leads to positive reinforcement of the right behaviours and clear guidance on how to improve. This can have a positive impact on employee engagement and enthusiasm.

As a team begins to apply what they have learned they need to share experiences and share positive feedback with their peers. It's the job of managers to ensure that these opportunities to gather and share stories actually happen. Regular team meetings create opportunities to share feedback on training sessions. Asking different team members to take turns leading these meetings ensures that they are invested in the process. Encouraging the team to identify themes and priorities helps to reinforce key lessons.

In the current environment, digital platforms such as Zoom or Teams can make it easier for people to connect and share their learning and experiences. Making training stick requires a multi-faceted approach.

For best results, combine formal training, ongoing coaching and peer learning / feedback. All of these can add up to sustainable improvement following a training programme.