

BUILDING DIGITAL CAPABILITY FOR NZ SMALL BUSINESSES PROJECT

We engaged with over 170 people over the course of the project, including, business advisers, small to medium business owners and digital experts.

KEY FINDINGS



100%

of small business owners we interviewed, totally agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement **"I'm strongly interested in digital options and how they can benefit my business"**

Small businesses rely on trusted advisers for digital advice

Small businesses rely on face to face conversations with trusted advisers and experts to make business decisions around investments in their technology and skills. These 'trusted intermediaries' include their industry association, business adviser, accountant, or regional bodies (such as tourism organisations or economic development agencies).

Our event based pilot programme was most useful to those with less digital experience, or those already thinking about how to better utilise their events

'Hands on', bespoke advice from a digital expert and recommendations on engagement following an event were highly valued, but resource intensive to administer. Follow-up conversations with small businesses are important but time consuming.

Our programme materials were too generalised for some. Demand exists for more sector-specific content and for reliable, impartial experts to refer small businesses to.

75%

of small business owners we interviewed, totally agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement **"I intend to apply the things I learnt [at the event] to my business"**

Building small business digital capability is not always a priority for industry organisations

Some intermediaries don't see themselves as a 'digital advocate' for small businesses. Those that do sometimes lack the time, resource, expertise and confidence to play that role.

There is limited investment by trusted intermediaries in tracking the impact of event content on small business digital behaviour. Getting independent digital speakers is difficult.

Trusted intermediaries lack awareness about independent digital advisory organisations.

~50%

of the intermediaries and business advisors we interviewed commented that the organisation they work for saw digital development as a priority



Shortage of independent digital experts

There is a need for reliable experts to refer small businesses to, especially those with sector specific expertise.

Some trusted intermediaries struggle to find the right people in New Zealand who can provide good impartial digital advice, speak well at industry events and know enough about a particular sector to provide detailed tech solutions.

Small businesses and trusted intermediaries prefer advice from impartial digital experts. Most technology providers are perceived as biased.

75%

of intermediaries we surveyed, agreed with the statement **"We need stronger regional networks, so we know who to get relevant digital expert advice from and refer our small business clients to"**

Reliable and relevant information on digital can be hard to find

Relevant content is more engaging to small businesses – they want to hear real-life examples of success that other small businesses of their size, and in their industry have had in adopting digital tools and approaches.

Most trusted intermediaries find it difficult to find reliable and relevant information to assess the digital needs of their clients/members, or to convince more sceptical small businesses. To help with this, they are looking for international digital trends and how they apply to the NZ context; data & facts to help them benchmark their clients/members' businesses; and access to professional networks to keep them in touch with digital experts.

54%

of intermediaries we surveyed, agreed with the statement **"finding reliable information about digital or examples how digital is used in examples of the industry that is relevant to our small business clients is very difficult"**

Underutilisation of social media

There is limited use of social media as a channel to 'nudge' digital behaviours in small businesses. It could be better utilised by trusted intermediaries to communicate and share relevant information with their member/clients.

There is also limited use of social media by small businesses with low digital capability, as a way to advertise and grow their business.

42%

of intermediaries we surveyed, agreed with the statement **"We don't really utilise social media to communicate and share information with our small business clients"**

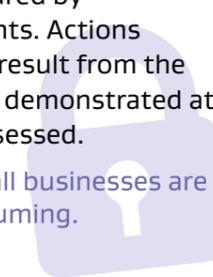
~50%

of events included in the evaluation followed up with a feedback survey or email

The impact of events on digital action is not clear

The success of events in changing small business behaviours is not generally measured by intermediaries running these events. Actions that small businesses take which result from the content and expertise shared and demonstrated at these events are not generally assessed.

Follow up conversations with small businesses are seen as important, but time consuming.



Networking is highly valued

Networking and talking to other people is a key enabler for small businesses to make decisions about their business. Small businesses value the opportunities that events present to network with their peers and experts.

Industry and regional events are preferred ways for small businesses to advance their digital development, though getting people to attend can be difficult.

>80%

of small business owners we interviewed, totally agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement **"I intend to share the things I learnt at the event I attended with others"**

