

Trends that will shape your small business in 2022

 By [Matthew Campbell](#)

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Coming out the other side of a global crisis and all that South Africa has thrown their way, small businesses and one-person enterprises have been through a lot this past year. They have had to adapt, transform, and embrace solutions to help them keep up with the ever-changing landscape.



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A big part of that change is thanks to technological trends among consumers and businesses. The world has moved online and entire industries are blossoming on the Internet through innovations and digital solutions that not only cater to the needs of the business but also prioritise Customer Experience (CX).

What are these tech trends, and how are they ideal for your small business?

The absolute essential: An internet connection and robust online strategy

South Africa is home to a lot of internet users. As of January 2021, there were 38.19 million users, translating to an increase of 1.7 million people (+4.5%) from 2020. 2021 also saw double-digit gains (+14%) in the number of social media

users.

Having a strategy that incorporates internet solutions is paramount to any business, not only as a means to reach new and existing clients but to establish your brand on popular platforms. With the help of a service provider that understands your needs and offers top-quality connected solutions, businesses can get connected and stay optimised, offering well-designed customer portals that best showcase your products or services in a digital space. A solid Internet connection is the first step in reaching the client, followed by the facilities to host them.

Working remotely where possible

Remote working is here to stay. What many assumed was a stop-gap solution in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic could potentially become the norm as more businesses adopt remote working solutions for their employees.

The trend is also visible in the recruitment process. With platforms such as LinkedIn now featuring job filters to identify remote positions, job hunters can find employment opportunities that fully meet their needs. Gallup found that job flexibility increases employee engagement with off-site workers offering the greatest gains in business outcomes.

However, this trend is not applicable for every sector, with McKinsey research showing that finance and insurance, management, and scientific and technical services have the most potential for remote work. But where there is opportunity, especially in the occupations that allow for it, business owners stand to benefit from a solution that can be cost-effective and made possible through innovations in digital communication and administration. It's a cliché to mention the likes of Microsoft Teams and Zoom, but they are just the tip of the iceberg of the remote working revolution.

Smart solutions for customer communication and payments

With the shift online comes intelligent ways to conduct business through digital devices. We see this with technology such as chatbots, where customers can interact with a company, select and order products and services, and complete the entire customer journey by simply chatting on WhatsApp or through message-based prompts.

On the business end, by 2022 it is estimated that 70% of white-collar workers will interact with conversational platforms like chatbots daily. And the technology is only becoming easier to implement while still being a cost-effective solution.

South Africa is also a hotbed for new ways of making payments. According to the Mastercard New Payments Index, 95% of local consumers are considering methods such as biometrics, digital currencies, and QR codes, in addition to other contactless methods (a trend kickstarted and sustained by COVID-19). Additionally, 86% of South Africans have access to more payment methods than they did in 2020, and a bulk majority of shoppers (75%) indicated they were more loyal to retailers who offer multiple options to pay.

By offering new and smart payment and communication solutions, your business can capitalise on consumer preferences and reach them in multiple ways.

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