

The Seven Pillars - Technology

When you hear the word “technology” what do you think of? Microsoft? Apple? Facebook? Instagram? Basecamp? IBM? Google? You get the idea. I’ve been around for a while now, since before the everyday existence of computers in fact. When I think of technology and go back to basics, I go back to the Oxford dictionary which defines it as “the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry”. This might at first sound biscuit dry and outdated but when you give it a second thought, then it actually makes a lot of sense and makes room for things that have not yet been thought about let alone invented.

So, in this fast-moving world of technology, how do we harness technology to achieve our business vision? Although this might be a statement of the bleeding obvious, the starting point is to work out what it is that you are trying to achieve and what is the *purpose* of using the technology. Technology needs to serve the business, not drive it. These days, I do put a caveat on this statement. Digital disruption is a business model that is here and growing every day and, in this instance, and only in this instance, technology can shape the business model.

The second important consideration is to decide what is *appropriate* for your business. I was around when businesses went from paper-based accounting to computer-based systems and manual production systems to a thing called MRP and MRP2, Google it if you’re interested. One thing we learn very quickly was that computerising a bad system resulted in a bad system on a computer. I’ve never forgotten that lesson; get the process right before looking at the technology. Remember, the appropriate technology is not the latest and greatest but the most appropriate. Some time ago now, NASA spent a lot of money trying to solve the challenge of recording information in a zero-gravity environment. The solution they came up with was, wait for it, a pencil and paper!

Technology, like every investment in your business, needs to provide a positive return on investment; it must stand up to a test for *value*. Treat technology - hardware, software, applications, licences and any other thing like any other capital purchase. In particular, don’t be enchanted by the dog and pony show put on by the technology vendors.

In summary, it’s important to keep a logical business perspective on the procurement and use of technology in your business. Test any technology being considered for fitness of purpose, appropriateness and value for money. One of the biggest challenges I believe we are faced with in business these days is staying up to date with the technologies that are available. I am constantly amazed at the technologies available to seek, connect and interact with prospects and clients. Fortunately, one of the earlier internet technologies can help with this. Thank you, Mr Google.

By the way, if you’re interested, my earliest brush with technology was with an instrument called a slide rule, a manual mathematical computer Google it and you’ll discover an interesting piece of modern history. I still use a variation of this tool as a pilot in my flight planning calculations.



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