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IDC-Cisco 2020 Asia Pacific SME Digital Maturity Study

Businesses and society are unmistakably undergoing a technology-driven transformation, making the competition for enterprises, including small and medium businesses (SMEs), tighter and fiercer than ever.

To better understand the challenges and opportunities faced by the SMEs, Cisco commissioned IDC to uncover the state of SMEs' digital transformation journey. The study shows that the majority (84%) of SMEs are struggling to execute their digitalization goals, with most are still reactive to market changes and have hardly made any efforts to digitally transform.

The study classifies SMEs across four stages of digital maturity, starting with the earliest stage of Digital Indifferent to the most advanced group of Digital Natives.

SMB Digital Maturity Index	STAGE 1 DIGITAL INDIFFERENT	STAGE 2 DIGITAL OBSERVER	STAGE 3 DIGITAL CHALLENGER	STAGE 4 DIGITAL NATIVE
Strategy and Organization	• Company is reactive and focused on efficiencies. No digital efforts exist or starting.	• Digital efforts in progress but tactical. Starting to create a digital plan.	• Company focused on becoming agile. A digital strategy exists, but focused on short-term.	• Holistic strategy to digitally innovate exists. Proactively seeking to transform the market, expand operations and drive CX.
Processes and Governance	• Majority of processes are manual.	• Many processes still not automated. Focused on addressing inefficiencies.	• All core processes are automated and productivity rates improving.	• Full process automation done; agile approach. Significant strides made in process transformation.
Technology	• Tactical investments. No cloud and spreadsheet centric.	• Some cloud resources being used. Very limited use of analytics. Focused on the use of reporting tools	• There is a tech roadmap for digitalization. Company is using hybrid cloud approaches.	• Cloud-first and committed to using digital tech. Broad adoption of analytics.
People and Skills	• Lack of digital skills.	Making tactical investments to acquire • digital skills. Risk-averse leadership.	• Strategic Investments in talent are being made, particularly digital skills.	• The right digital skills exist. Talent is a top priority and a competitive differentiator. Agile and adaptable culture.

Digital Transformation Challenges for SMEs

The IDC-Cisco study cited the shortage of digital skills and talents as the top challenge for Asia Pacific SMEs, followed by lack of technology, and budget commitment to enable digital transformation.

	STAGE 1 DIGITAL INDIFFERENT	STAGE 2 DIGITAL OBSERVER	STAGE 3 DIGITAL CHALLENGER	STAGE 4 DIGITAL NATIVE
1	Shortage of digital skills and talent within my company			
2	Lack of necessary technologies to enable digital transformation		Lack of insight into operational and customer data	
3	Lack of digital mindset/cultural challenges in the organization	Lack of budget/commitment from management	Lack of necessary technologies to enable digital transformation	
4	Lack of insight into operational and customer data	Lack of digital mindset/cultural challenges in the organization	Lack of budget/commitment from management	Lack of a proper digital transformation roadmap
5	Lack of budget/commitment from management	Lack of insight into operational and customer data	Cultural resistance to change	

Key challenges for SMEs

Shortage of digital skills and talent

It hinders SMEs ability to effectively use digital technologies and practices in increasing efficiency to reduce costs, improving agility for innovation, and extending outreach to expand business.

Lack of necessary digital technology

A lack of digital tools such as automation, data analytics, and cloud computing can impede efficiency and limit scalability for achieving growth in the digital economy.

Lack of commitment from leadership

Leadership commitment is crucial for a successful digital transformation in SMEs. Inadequate resource allocation, lack of priority, and failure to embrace cultural changes can result in slow growth and reduced competitiveness.

Be a Digital Challenger

86% of SMEs based on the IDC-Cisco report strongly agree that "technology is changing the industry". Technology plays an important role but is no longer the competitive differentiator it once was. The way businesses work, the skills needed to support businesses, and its future are rapidly evolving.

As the importance of technology has accentuated, SMEs are forced to recognize that digitalizing is no longer an option but a necessity, and that accelerating their digitalization is key to becoming resilient and ensuring their future growth.

Instead, the key to business agility lies in a strategy that puts people first, enabled by technology—to amplify workers everywhere. The focus for SMEs now should be for bridging digital skills gap to nurture future-ready workforce for rapid growth in the new digital economy.

These changes are driven by technology, innovations, and shifting business models that demand new skillsets from the labour market, resulting in high skills mismatch and workforce turnover that calls for continuous skilling, reskilling, and upskilling needed of the workforce for businesses.

*"To move forward on digital transformation, **firms must evaluate their current capabilities, then plot a path forward accordingly.***

Furthermore, firms must move soon to keep up with the fast pace of digital change … Firms must adapt or be swept aside."

The research also cites that SMEs that are successfully transforming to be Digital Challengers generate multiple times more sales and workforce productivity, 50% higher sales and productivity growth, while Digital Natives are able to grow their revenue twice as fast as SMEs in the early stages of digital maturity.
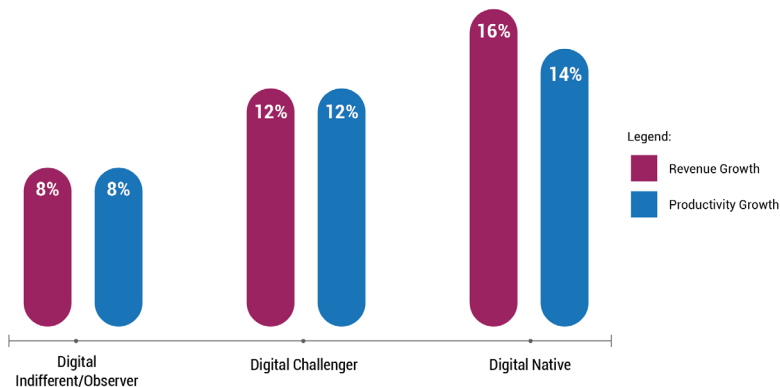
Source : IDC-Cisco 2020 Asia Pacific SMB Digital Maturity Study

However, digital transformation is not a trivial pursuit – it's an ongoing process. Achieving holistic digital transformation goals requires SMEs to get ready and grow before leaping ahead the digital economy. It may require SMEs to make significant changes, from setting the right strategy, to making the necessary technology and people investments.

Digitalization Roadmap

STAGE 4

Smart Business

Data-driven decision making with actionable insights for real-time responsiveness to capture opportunities with mitigated risk for competitive and sustainable growth.

📊 **Data Analytics**   🧠 **Artificial Intelligence**

STAGE 3

Omni-Commerce

Omni-channel sales and marketing with scalable digital outreach and depth for VIRTUALly unlimited online-to-offline growth.

🛍️ **Digital Sales**   📢 **Omni-Marketing**

STAGE 2

Connected Workplace

Tech-enabled operations with integrated enterprise applications implementation to deliver straight-through processing for seamless customer experience.

🖥️ **Enterprise Applications**   ⚙️ **Robotic Process Automation**

STAGE 1

Agile Workforce

Adaptive, collaborative, and hybrid workforce with multi-disciplinary agility for continuous learning and innovation to create value rather than just add value.

👥 **Digital Leadership**   ⚙️ **Agile Management**

4 Steps to Become a Digital Challenger in 90 Days

Digital transformation provides industries with unparalleled opportunities for value creation and unprecedented disruptions. The emerging technologies of today will be powering the customer experiences of tomorrow and accelerating the urgency for agility, adaptability, and transformation.

To remain competitive, SME leaders must completely rethink how to prepare their workforces, from anticipating the skills their organizations would need, to how they will help people learn and apply new skills throughout their careers. Here are the 4 steps to future-ready your workforce with CLaaS@Work for self-service digital transformation to become a Digital Challenger in 90 days.

1 Digital Skills Discovery Workshop in 3 hours

This 3-hour interactive training and consulting workshop aims to support SME leadership **discover new digital skills and tools needed for implementing rapid and holistic digital transformation**.

SMEs attending this workshop will receive personalized digital transformation advisory proposal which includes an analysis report of their current digital maturity level, digital skilling needs, and customized work-integrated training plan investments for upskilling their workforce.

2 Digital Transformation Leadership Bootcamp in 42 hours

According to IDC-Cisco's digital maturity report, SMEs face significant challenges in digitalization due to a lack of digital mindset, culture, commitment, and budget. It is imperative that SME managements gain digital leadership skills to have hands-on involvement in managing the digital transformation efforts.

Therefore, to support SMEs kick start their digitalization journey, we offer Digital Transformation Leadership CLaaS for SME management to:

GAIN digital fluency skills

LEARN digital transformation insights

ESTABLISH digital transformation roadmap

ALIGN training to deliver digitalization outcome

FORMULATE hybrid workforce incubation plan

3   Work-Integrated Digital Skilling in 90 Days

We deliver learning in the flow of work for workplace skills utilization with industry experts mentoring to deliver a tangible digital transformation outcome at a minimum cost.

CLaaS@Work is designed to nurture future-ready enterprises for the new digital economy with workforce digital upskilling for digital technologies and practices implementation to support agile workforce incubation, tech-enabled operations, omni-commerce delivery, and smart business development.

70% On-the-Job Experience for **ABILITY**

20% Industry Experts Mentoring for **SKILLS**

10% Instructor-Led Flipped CLaaS for **KNOWLEDGE**

4   Digital Workforce Incubation for Hybrid Workplace

In the future digital economy, hybrid workplaces will be the norm, leading to a level of virtualization and globalization in the workforce that has never been seen before.

SMEs must reconsider their workforce's workplace, redefining what it means to be a worker and acknowledging that sourcing talent in innovative ways is crucial for maintaining competitive agility.

We deliver end-to-end workforce incubation support including just-in-time talents recruitment, on-boarding training and remote talents hosting for building an on-demand hybrid workforce with diversity and scalability.

Sourcing → Onboarding → Training → Hosting

Agile Workforce CLaaS®

As advanced technologies become more prevalent in the workplace, the demand for workers with finely tuned competencies, such as agility, innovation, and strong social and emotional skills, will also rise – skills that machines are still a long way from mastering.

The Agile Workforce CLaaS® provides an optimal balance of technology skills and in-demand competencies to cultivate an agile, collaborative, and innovative workforce capable of working in an environment where 'Fail-Fast, Fail-Safe' is prioritized over perfection for responsiveness.

Digital Fluency Skills	Gain 21st century competencies and foundational technology skills to effectively communicate, collaborate, problem-solve, and navigate in the digital economy.
Digital Transformation Leadership	Acquire digital transformation insights to formulate digitalization roadmap and workforce upskilling plan for holistic digital transformation implementation.
Agile Management	Adopt agile management practices for an iterative and flexible approach to manage business and projects that emphasizes collaboration, adaptability, and continuous improvement
Digital Collaboration	Leverage digital tools for building a collaborative digital workplace with unified communication, content sharing, project delivery, tasks management, and team collaboration.

Connected Workplace CLaaS®

The emerging technologies of today will be powering the customer experiences of tomorrow. A lot of those technologies would need to be seamlessly integrated for building a connected workplace, which will support real-time straight through processing for seamless customer journey.

With the emergence of end-user technologies companies can now build their connected workplace without the need to outsource lengthy application development and costly integrations.

Robotic Process Automation (RPA)	Automate repetitive and rule-based tasks to streamline business processes for operations efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance customer experience.
Low Code Applications Development	Use visual development tools with pre-build template for significantly faster and lower costs applications development or integrations by end-users.
Enterprise Applications Implementation	Implement enterprise apps including marketing automation, CRM, and ERP to deliver tech-enabled straight through operations.

Omni-Commerce CLaaS®

The future of remote work will require a lot of changes, including investing in digital infrastructure and upskilling employees in technology. Therefore, it is crucial that we are ready to cater to global customers, given that work is in our laptops and in our pockets.

Businesses are leveraging on digital technology and omni-marketing campaigns to design, market, sell, distribute, and service their customers via online-to-offline engagement for scalable market outreach with depth for borderless omni-channel commerce delivery.

Digital Sales Transformation	Develop digital sales campaigns including solution canvas design, digital contents mapping, digital sales and marketing journey, digital sales tools, and sales prospecting techniques and analytics.
Omni-Channel Marketing	Implement omni-marketing campaigns including omni-channel marketing journey, full-funnel digital contents mapping, and marketing technology and analytics implementation.

Smart Business CLaaS®

Advances in digital technologies can now help us extend our ability to think and create. In the future, intelligent workplaces will require employees to have a strong digital foundation and understanding of the technology landscape.

For a data-driven smart business, everyone at every level will have greater access to quality data and actionable insights enabled by powerful artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data analytical tools.

Business Analytics	Use business intelligence tools for data collection, data analysis, data visualization, and data reporting to deliver actionable results for greater business insights.
Data Science	Learn python programming, big data technology, and machine learning to process and analyze large amounts of data for a more finely informed insights and accurate decisions.
Artificial Intelligence	Learn to use ChatGPT for knowledge management tools to support learning and development, workplace collaboration, and communication for both employees and customers.

Digitalization Case Study in eduCLaaS

The future of work is changing with the digital revolution. Businesses are being challenged to reinvent processes, develop new products and markets, and invent new business models.

In keeping with our culture of "Learn, Innovate, and Grow," we initiated our digitalization plan in 2018 to develop digital capabilities and drive growth in the digital economy.

Our digitalization plan seeks to provide solutions to the following questions:

How to foster a team with agility to advance innovation?

How to develop a collaborative team for the borderless hybrid workplace?

How to create a connected workplace to deliver seamless customer experience?

How to work smarter using data to drive every aspect of our business?

How to use AI for cultivating super-smart and productive teams?

At eduCLaaS, our aim is to build a borderless digital workplace by fostering a future-ready workforce and create an integrated world-class work experience for our people and customers.

We envision a workforce empowered that is empowered with digital technologies and best practices to create a future-ready digital workplace that fosters wokplace collaboration, agile innovations, tech-enabled operations, omni-channel commerce, and data-driven business.

Agile Workforce for Advancing Innovations

As advanced technologies become more prevalent in the workplace, the demand for workers with finely tuned competencies such as agility, innovation, and strong social and emotional skills will also rise for working in an ambiguous environment where 'Fail-Fast, Fail-Safe' is prioritized over perfection for responsiveness.

Creative and innovative thinking is expected from every person in every role at eduCLaaS, regardless of whether they are giving a sales presentation, doing financial analysis, or deploying new technology. We deliver Agile Innovation CLaaS® to equip our leadership and teams with the skills to create value and drive innovation.

Collaborative Workplace for Hybrid Workforce

We aim to empower our people before they even begin their workday, and continue to empower them throughout the day, in a frictionless, fully featured, and inclusive workplace where everyone, regardless of their location, can join and be represented.

At eduCLaaS, we have adopted Microsoft modern workplace technologies to create a collaborative workplace without physical boundaries. We have replaced isolated one-to-one engagements with transparent group conversations, information sharing, and work coordination to dramatically increase the level of engagement and productivity among our people and customers.

Connected Workplace for Seamless Customer Experience

The emerging technologies of today will power the customer experiences of tomorrow.

At eduCLaaS, we bring together the best enterprise applications for front-office customer engagement, middle-office operations support, and back-office business management. To build a connected workplace capable of delivering a seamless customer experience, we integrate these enterprise applications with Microsoft's robotic process automation and low-code application development tools. This allows us to deliver real-time, end-to-end straight-through transaction processing support with multiple touchpoints along the outside-in customer journey.

Omni-Channel Workplace for Borderless Business

According to a Gartner report, 80% of B2B sales interactions between suppliers and customers would take place through digital channel by 2025. Moreover, Harvard Business Review observed that 73% of consumers prefer shopping through multiple channels.

At eduCLaaS, we implement integrated omni-channel campaigns using market technology and data analytics to deliver a digitally driven full-funnel sales journey for real-time sales and marketing management.

Intelligent Workplace for Data Driven Smart Business

Advances in digital technologies can now help us extend our ability to think and create. Machines have become a lot smarter, able to learn from our behaviors, and adapt to our preferences in a more personalized way. Data democratization will empower more employees to make strategic decisions enabled by powerful AI, machine learning, and analytical tools.

At eduCLaaS, we envision a data-driven workplace with business intelligence for all. By using Microsoft's Power BI, we can go from data to insights and action. We have also implemented ChatGPT, a knowledge chatbot, to cultivate an intelligent workplace and deliver smarter and more productive digital conversations with internal and external stakeholders across our business.

Outcome

Our digitalization efforts have enhanced agility, improved productivity, created efficiency, enabled innovation, delivered accessibility, and eliminated friction. It also fosters engagement and collaboration while playing parts in accommodating, facilitating, delighting, and inspiring.

The digitalization investment which just started before the pandemic has TRIPLED our growth during the pandemic with the following results:

**3x Revenue with
6x Profitability Growth**

**Diverse B2C, B2B, and B2B2C
Business Innovation**

**Pan-Asia Solutions Validation
across 12 Countries**

**Hybrid Workforce (300 pax)
to Glocalize Business**

EDUCLaaS
digital skilling

Bridging Digital Divide and Rising Inequality

Reimagining Education as a Global Common Good

We aim to bridge the missing connection between education and the workplace by fostering a tripartite partnership across public, private, and non-profit sectors, to recontextualize education as a global common good for lifelong applied learning delivery, to develop future-ready talents and enterprises in the glocalized digital economy.