Keeping SMEs’ digitalisation on track amid pandemic

Professor Atreyi Kankanahalli and Ms Lai Yi from the National University of Singapore’s School of Computing explain how SMEs can harness both government grants and technology to digitalise their business and build essential digital capabilities to stay ahead in a challenging world.

Challenges in IT use

According to a survey across a variety of sectors conducted by S$Tech on SMEs’ digitalisation during the Circuit Breaker period, the majority of surveyed SMEs faced challenges in IT use. Some SMEs reported that there were no feasible IT solutions or services for business needs that could be introduced. There were challenges in accessing the internet, as some SMEs were unable to find reliable IT solutions or services for their needs. Additionally, some SMEs were unable to find reliable IT solutions or services for their needs.

The survey found that the major challenges faced by SMEs were related to the lack of IT solutions or services for business needs. Some SMEs reported that they were unable to access the internet, while others reported that they were unable to find reliable IT solutions or services for their needs.

In terms of the kinds of IT solutions being used during the crisis, the most common solutions were cloud-based solutions, such as Salesforce, and social media messaging platforms like WhatsApp.

Most surveyed SMEs have adopted conferencing software (eg Skype and Zoom) and social media messaging (eg WhatsApp) to communicate with colleagues and customers.

Cloud storage solutions and office applications are also being widely used to facilitate collaborative document management.

Other organisations have also stepped up to help SMEs by providing technology solutions for different functions. Several providers are offering conferencing tools for free. A number of vendors are providing ERP and CRM software, as well as HR management software. Businesses are also trying to help SMEs sell online. For example, some are offering a discounted package for online store website implementation, and others are providing SMEs with e-commerce solutions covering three models: business-to-consumer (B2C), business-to-business-to-consumer (B2B2C), and online-to-offline (O2O).

In Phase 2, as SMEs face to face business activities have resumed, visitor management is being addressed through technology solutions. A special module of Multi-MODS has also been introduced to help SMEs build stronger digital capabilities, which is still ongoing. Furthermore, Multi-MODS and Enterprise Singapore (ESG) have launched a Digital Grow program with grants support to help businesses to overseas in identifying online platforms.

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