Perspectives on 2020 and Beyond

Tips Every Small and Midsize Business Should Consider to Thrive in This New Decade
A Decade of Deepening Transformation Brings a Decade of New Opportunity

If any lessons were learned over the last decade, one of them is certainly that size doesn’t matter. From the fast rise of garage startups to the toppling of some of the world’s biggest legacy brands, businesses that achieve market leadership are skewing smaller, agile, and experience focused.

For the last century, industries have been dominated by large enterprises – shaping not only national and global economies but also how billions of people live. Every consumer knew what these businesses were and where they could purchase their products and services. And each competitor, no matter the size, was well aware that their limited resources likely held them back.

But look around – are these market leaders still here? Most likely not.

For small and midsize businesses, 2020 represents the dawn of a golden age. For perhaps the first time in history, they no longer need to be a big company to bring to life a big vision. More important, even a five-person startup can access exactly the same insights, deliver exactly the same experiences, and, certainly, enjoy the exact same percentage of revenue growth.

So what’s next for your growing business?

We asked some of our favorite small and midsize business thought leaders about their expectations and hopes for this new decade. Find out how you can turn whatever 2020 brings into clear-cut opportunities for sustainable business growth.

Aaron Krause received national attention when he appeared on the ABC show “Shark Tank” with his invention Scrub Daddy. Since then, millions of Aaron’s “smiling sponges” are selling in well-known retailers – and he’s looking forward to further growth with his latest SAP® software implementation.

Aaron Krause
President and CEO, Scrub Daddy

Nearly every single person in the world uses a sponge, but the people we need to engage are the ones who buy it. This is the case for any growing commodity-based business. You have to capture, process, and digest real-time feedback from consumers to learn who they are, what they love about your company and products, and how they expect you to operate. Thanks to social media, such information is no longer a mystery for companies like us.
Director General, Altim

Adriana Sola helps business management teams position their companies for high levels of effectiveness by applying best practices across their processes while supporting the latest market trends with a platform of SAP technology.

We are facing a perfect storm of vertiginous changes in society, technology, and business that are redefining what people expect your company’s products and services to offer. It will take large doses of leadership to get on the next wave and surf it – benefiting from the adrenaline to face new challenges, reorganize processes, change products and services, and keep an eye on customers’ deepest wishes and interaction preferences. Business leaders will have to use all their skills – both hard and soft – to manage the strategy, address these changes, and confront the execution of it.

CIO, Aliansce Sonae

Five years ago, Fábio Moraes joined Aliansce Sonae Shopping Centers after holding leadership positions in companies such as Concremat, Casa & Video, Unimed, and Souza Cruz. He holds degrees in systems analysis and strategic retailing, as well as an MBA in project management.

We are entering an era where we are trying to attract five to six generations of distinct consumers. Businesses that get ahead by identifying the behavior of each of these generations are more likely to better capture the consumer. Today’s leaders must change their mind-set, especially when it comes to operations. They must navigate through the entire business chain – from the beginning to the back office – to better address consumer demand.
Which do people prefer, chatting with robots or communicating with humans? In the fast-paced world of automation and digitalization, the human touch will be more and more appreciated. It doesn’t matter if we are communicating with individuals or companies; at the end of the day, decisions are made by humans. The best customer experience is the one that offers a simple, personalized message. So, if you want to win the race, seek the optimal mix of technology and a human approach.

Gene Marks
Author, Columnist, and Small Business Owner of The Marks Group

Gene Marks is a columnist for The Hill, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Forbes, Inc. Magazine, Entrepreneur Magazine, and Fox Business. Gene has written five books on business management, including The Manufacturer’s Book of Lists, and frequently appears on Fox News, MSNBC, and CNBC.

Five technologies – in particular, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, optical character recognition, robotics, and voice – are coming to your business. They will bring ethical and privacy issues, but smart business leaders will invest in these technologies today to help meet their goals tomorrow. Doing so is not just about doing what’s right for the business. It’s what’s right for your employees, customers, and community.

Grzegorz Grupinski
Marketing and Sales Support Manager, SNP

Grzegorz Grupinski is a marketing and sales support manager at SNP, one of the largest SAP partners in Poland. Based on his 20-year experience in the IT industry, he is constantly seeking the best ways to help companies and people communicate with each other.

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Holly Hyder served as the project lead for Geographe Enterprises’ implementation of SAP S/4HANA Cloud across all business functions in 2018 – one of the first of its kind in the Asia Pacific Japan region. This decade will require organizations of all sizes to quantify their impact on the world, both positive and negative, to meet their business customers’ regulatory compliance requirements and the rising tide of consumers’ ethical standards. Cash, culture, and technology competency will be critical enablers – particularly for leaders of small or midsize businesses and their teams – when creating and delivering solutions their customers require.

In a volatile business environment, companies must shape, anticipate, and adapt to change to survive, let alone thrive. This ability is agility. The inability to anticipate and respond to change impairs functional and enterprise performance, jeopardizing competitiveness and the future of the company. When analyzing the impact of economic uncertainty, in conjunction with the risk of digital disruption to business strategies, there is a strong need for companies to improve agility.
Chief Partner Officer, SAP

Karl Fahrbach’s responsibilities include evolving partner commercial models to intensify partner innovation, platform adoption, and the sale of cloud solutions with partners across all customer segments and markets.

Julio Tomé
Founder and Customer Service Manager, Inxap

Julio Tomé is the founder of Inxap, an SAP Gold Partner delivering enterprise technology solutions and architectures to businesses across Chile.

“Adapt or die” captures the challenge faced by midsize retail businesses not in the future but today. Like it or not, consumers have already changed. They buy online, read reviews on social networks, and follow influencers – but they still demand a superlative physical shopping experience. Only an omnichannel strategy, based on intelligent technology platforms and services interconnected in the cloud, enables growing companies to reach millions of buyers with personalized experiences.

Over the next few years, small and midsize businesses will have tremendous opportunity to grow. The only limit is what you set for yourself. If you focus on making customers happy, success is yours for the taking. Your business strategies should consistently center on creating value and positive experiences for them – while continuously striving for high satisfaction with a ‘customer for life’ mind-set.
The Internet has given mom-and-pop shops the ability to instantly become multinational. And advances in data processing, mobile applications, and artificial intelligence render ordering and delivery processes virtually transparent. The same revolution also created an explosion of data, challenging consumers and businesses to recognize quality and truth. When taking advantage of these opportunities, businesses must hold steadfast to the identity and quality that differentiate them from the competition.

Kerwin Malabanan
Managing Director, Fasttrack Solutions

Kerwin Malabanan is the managing director and co-founder of Fasttrack Solutions, an SAP platinum partner based in the Philippines. An accountant by profession with an entrepreneurial spirit, he grew Fasttrack, within 15 years, to become one of the most successful SAP partners in Southeast Asia.

Lucy Thorpe
Head of Content and Social Media, In Cloud Solutions

Lucy Thorpe is head of content creation and social media at SAP partner In Cloud Solutions. Now an experienced digital marketer, she started out as a journalist and newscaster for BBC Radio.

Each generation is more impatient than the last, and the youngest among us want everything now, easy to use, and ready to go. They won’t wait for a cab or a doctor appointment, so why would they wait for a report to download? The tech industry needs to respond to these sentiments with fast, intuitive user experiences. Luckily, artificial intelligence and machine learning are already being embedded into our technology to predict our needs and help us win back time. I suggest we use that time to do more of what we do best – be human, make connections, and be of use.
In the next decade, everyone can produce content and every business will seek to get attention. The barriers to entry for everything are very low. The winners are those who have an insane focus on providing the best experience for their customers. Companies that embrace standing out and being different – the rule breakers and testers – will be the ones that last long. They use technology to gain insights into customers and personalize en masse. And they know how to leverage a smile and handshake as much as possible to engage with customers and ensure they feel special.

Ramon Ray
Founder and Producer, Smart Hustle Media

Ramon Ray is a global speaker, event host, and influencer for small and midsize businesses. He has started four companies and sold two of them – all while authoring several books, including The Celebrity CEO: How Entrepreneurs Can Thrive by Building Community and a Strong Personal Brand.

We must shape the future together. Nowadays, interactions between humans and technology allow us to listen to people, interpret their needs, and transform insights into emotional experiences. Data and information surround our private and work lives. We must be ready to catch our clients with a strong sense of purpose and create a shared trust with them through innovative solutions and high business expertise every time and everywhere.

Roberto Gemma
CEO, Altea UP

Robert Gemma has a successful career in leading information and communications technology projects. He has elevated Altea UP to be one of Italy’s top SAP partners, focusing on ERP, customer and people engagement, and analytics and design for an end-to-end Intelligent Enterprise road map.
Effective leaders in small and midsize businesses worldwide will harness a range of technology to support digital transformation goals. According to our research, companies that are transforming faster and more efficiently are, on average, two times more likely to enjoy double-digit revenue growth and four times less likely to lose revenue in the current economy.*

Shari Lava
Research Director, Small Medium Business Research Program, IDC

Shari Lava is the research director of IDC’s Small Medium Business (SMB) Research Program within the digital transformation space. Her core research covers the identification and support of the unique, evolving needs of the very small, small, and midsize business technology buyer.


Moving into 2020, the customer experience will be more than great technology. It will be about integrating the practices of experience management as a business discipline into the fabric of your culture. You’ll use customer and employee feedback to do more than just sell more products or make better Web sites. You’ll use feedback to identify business, operational, and employee attrition risks. You’ll put multidisciplinary teams together to deliver the experiences your customers expect, measure business performance, and ensure technology platforms are in sync.

Stephanie Thum
Founding Principal, Practical CX

Stephanie Thum is a certified customer experience professional (CCXP) who has advised public and private sector organizations worldwide on experience management strategies, tactics, and plans. Most recently, she was the chief adviser of federal customer experience at Qualtrics, now owned by SAP.
Subhomoy Sengupta leads global sales for solutions that help small and midsize businesses compete better, win bigger, and grow faster. He has held various roles at SAP, such as head of SME sales operations in India and chief of staff for the Global Customer Operations board area.

Small companies used to take decades to become viable, highly competitive large enterprises. Not anymore. Growing businesses that make digital transformation a priority open themselves to business-model innovation and changes in the way work gets done. While these opportunities can accelerate growth, hiring and retaining the right people and understanding the reasons why certain outcomes happen will determine long-term, sustainable success.

Steve Strauss is an attorney, popular speaker, and best-selling author of 17 books, including The Small Business Bible. You can learn more about Steve at MrAllBiz.com and connect with him on Twitter at @SteveStrauss and Facebook at TheSelfEmployed.

Millennials do business very differently: they adopt new technology more easily than Boomers and want the freedom to work remotely. To compete effectively with this growing segment of the workforce, small and midsize companies need to provide millennials with the tools and freedom to work the way they want. Companies will need digital tools to allow their talent to connect and work virtually and offer more flexible options for all employees – part-timers, full-timers, short-term contractors, and so on.

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Steve Strauss
Best-Selling Author and Speaker

Steve Strauss leads a discussion on how small businesses can attract and retain the right talent. He shares insights on digital transformation and how it can drive growth and innovation.
Innovation Evangelist, SAP

Timo Elliott is an innovation evangelist for SAP and a passionate advocate of innovation, digital business, analytics, and artificial intelligence.

While it’s true that enterprise businesses have more access to resources, notably the latest technologies and teams of people, this reality is no longer a guarantee that they will have the winning hand every time. Innovations such as predictive analytics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence have allowed companies as small as five employees access to the same computing power as their larger competitors – only to take action faster and better.

Tracy Zhou
CEO, AcloudEAR

I believe that 2020 will be the genesis of a boom for new technologies. Small and midsize companies need to build up their knowledge base to think outside of the box and evolve their business to respond to customers and the marketplace faster while selling more and serving better. And they need to do all with higher customer satisfaction. Running a business is no longer about competing on pricing and product; it’s about having the intelligence to go far beyond our customers’ wildest expectations.
Get Ready for 2020 and Beyond

How will your business change over the next 10 years?

While no one can predict the unpredictable, the intensifying reality of economic and consumer volatility is screaming for businesses to change. Luckily, growing businesses like yours can take the necessary steps to seize every opportunity, address every risk, and deliver clear value to every customer.

Kick-start a brand-new decade with the right insights:

**IDC infographic:** “The Roaring 2020s: Key Trends Shaping Small and Medium Businesses (SMBs) in the Next Decade”

**Webinar with IDC guest speaker, analyst Shari Lavo — Winning in the 2020s: Six Trends Every Midsize Company Needs to Know**

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To find out how small and midsize business solutions from SAP can help you address anything that comes your way, contact your SAP partner or visit us online.