



Building better, more resilient businesses

Your business growth guide

Your business matters

Often described as the engine room of our economy and the heart of our community, small to medium businesses and family enterprises are vital for Australia.

Small to medium businesses (SMEs) account for 67% of the economy¹ and employ 7 million people – that’s 67% of all employment in Australia.²)

Whether you employ two people or 100, your business matters.

Across all industries, business owners and leaders face challenges.

Some of the most common challenges for small to medium businesses include:

- Competition
- Cash flow and financial management
- Effective systems, processes and use of technology
- Understanding the customer
- Building and maintaining culture
- Hiring, training and retaining the right people

While many businesses successfully tackle these challenges and achieve steady growth, sadly many small to medium businesses don’t survive beyond three to five years.



We’re here to help

Employable Me is a new and free recruitment tool to connect employers with thousands of ready-to-work job seekers.

It brings a network of employers looking for a faster and easier way to find the right people, together with a large and diverse pool of job seekers looking to succeed in an inclusive workplace.

¹ Statistics from the 2020 Small Business Counts report from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and ATO

² asbfeo.gov.au

All thriving businesses have one thing in common - a focus on people

While the customer is important, having the right people on your team is critical. Research has shown a direct link between business performance, resilience and innovation - and diversity in teams.³

That's why we've created Australia's new recruitment platform, Employable Me, matching businesses with the right job seekers with ease.

We're helping Australian employers build better businesses

Creating an inclusive business is easier than you think. It's never been simpler to connect with and employ people who face barriers to employment.

This guide is designed to support your business by addressing common challenges to growth, as well as the post-pandemic opportunity facing all organisations. The strategies included also enhance the lives of your employees and the wider community.

A time of change and disruption

The economic and social impact of COVID-19 on Australian businesses and individuals is still unfolding. Almost everything about how we live, work and play has changed.

Few businesses have remained unaffected by the global pandemic. Business owners have spent the last couple of years scrambling to adapt. The 'new normal' is here to stay, and it's still evolving. While there's no definitive end to the pandemic, now is a time of change for business owners.



³bcg.com

An opportunity to build better business

Now is the time for businesses to refocus, refresh and plan for the future. Create growth strategies to build resilience and get you ready for future growth opportunities.

Some important questions to consider include:

- How has your business met challenges brought on by the pandemic?
- Does your team need to be more resilient and better equipped to manage the physical and psychological impacts?
- How your business will weather further disruptions that may come?

Let's get your business ready for the next normal

This is what leading consulting firm McKinsey is calling the post-pandemic era of business. No one knows exactly what the next normal will look like, but these experts suggest how business leaders and owners think and act now will have a big impact on future success.

A mindset of learning and discovery

Being open and adapting to change is key. Beyond that, there are some practical things you can do to ensure your business continues to thrive and grow beyond the pandemic.





Tackling the key challenges and barriers to growth

Competition

All businesses have competitors. Even if you've clearly differentiated your offering, competition is a key business challenge which often increases over time. If you have innovative products or services, your competitors will likely try to replicate your innovation.

Customer experience is your competitive advantage

Putting the customer at the centre of your business is a smart business strategy. Marketing strategists and business growth experts agree - customer experience is everything. If you can differentiate your business through customer experience, you'll be head and shoulders above the competition.

Customer experience can be defined as the impression your customers have of your business [brand] as a whole. It includes all aspects of the buyer's journey. The main touch points are *people* and *products*.

Inclusion improves customer experience

An inclusive business - one which employs people with a mix of different ages, genders, values, backgrounds, preferences and abilities - is better equipped to serve, empathise with and respond to its customers.

In times of uncertainty or high customer demands and expectations, a more inclusive team will be better equipped to respond and serve.

Cash flow and financial management

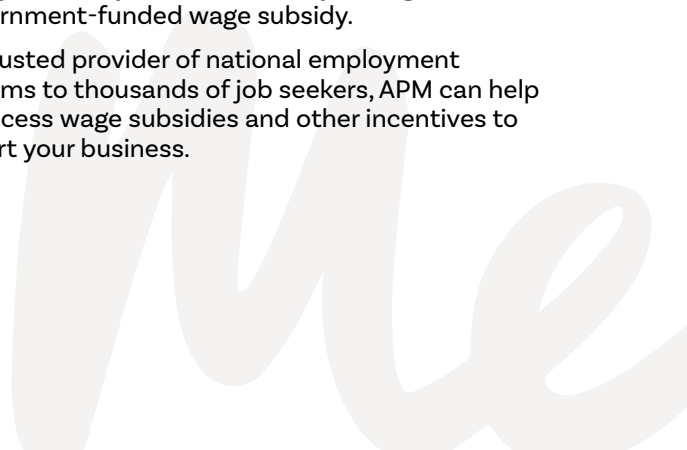
No matter what you're selling, who your customers are and where you're located, to grow your business, you'll need a healthy cash flow and strong financial management. This can be particularly tough during growth or through economic uncertainty.

Having funds to spend on staff, equipment, technology, marketing or all of the above is critical to business growth. For many businesses, staff costs are the largest expense - and as you grow, your staff costs will too.

Financial support is available to help your business hire new staff

When you hire an eligible job seeker through Employable Me, your business may be eligible for a government-funded wage subsidy.

As a trusted provider of national employment programs to thousands of job seekers, APM can help you access wage subsidies and other incentives to support your business.





Business growth depends on effective systems and leveraging technology

A recent CoreData research report identified digital capability as one of the key capability gaps likely to impede business recovery post COVID-19.

This impacts businesses in vastly different ways. From the importance and role of digital marketing, to ecommerce capabilities and offering online shopping, to online and phone customer service replacing face to face.

For office-based teams who are now working remotely (or in a hybrid remote/office environment), creating good digital skills and culture within teams and businesses is key.

Good digital culture is not necessarily something that develops organically. Unaddressed, digital skill and knowledge gaps can impact your growth plans.

Leveraging technology in your team

How digitally savvy is your team? Does your business provide access to the best possible technology and training resources? CoreData's [Analysis of COVID-19 Pulse Check](#) shows that a strong digital culture does not happen on its own.

Whatever tools and platforms you use, ensure your team receives the training they need to keep their digital capability up to date. This may include:

- Effective use of digital communication tools including video conferencing
- Regular reviews of available digital communication channels and tools
- Leveraging contactless technology in the workplace to improve distancing and COVID-safe practices

Gaps in digital capability could derail your business growth plans.

Future proof your business

Many bricks and mortar businesses have faced challenges adapting to digital and online services since the pandemic, but it's not a trend that will simply disappear.

Support your customers by:

- Ensuring your products and services are still relevant
- Building your ecommerce capability
- Automating services where possible and appropriate
- Integrate technology into the workplace
- Leveraging technology in your hiring processes



Introducing Employable **Me**

A new type of recruitment platform

Employable Me is a new and free recruitment tool to connect employers with thousands of ready-to-work job seekers.

It brings a network of employers looking for a faster and easier way to find the right people, together with a large and diverse pool of job seekers looking to join and succeed in an inclusive workplace.

When you register with Employable Me, you get to showcase your business to thousands of ready-to-work job seekers.

With a completed profile you can post vacancies immediately, and our team will help job seekers search and apply to join your team through the platform.

We'll also match your role to the most suitable candidates so you get the best people for the job.

Innovation and creativity

Chances are when you started your business, you set out to create something different, perhaps provide a service or solution that stood out from the pack.

While innovation and creativity is key to growing a sustainable business, keeping that initial burst of innovation flowing over the long term can be challenging.

Inclusion fosters innovation and creativity

A business that embraces inclusion and has a diverse mix of people in the team is proven to produce new ways of thinking and doing, which fuels growth.

A recent study showed inclusive workplaces saw an 83% improvement in their ability to innovate.⁴

Necessity is the mother of invention (Plato)

This proverb may be more than 350 years old, but its relevance is loud and clear in today's business world. For many businesses, change has been critical to survival since the start of the pandemic.

Even if your business hasn't needed to pivot to survive, driving innovation through inclusion will fuel future growth.

Building and maintaining culture

Whether you're a hospitality, retail, healthcare or construction business, with a team of 5 or 100, onsite or in an office, the culture of your business is important.

Culture can be defined as the shared values, attitudes and behaviours that members of a workplace team share. Culture can change over time - and is often said to be 'built' as a business grows.

Approximately 7 million people are employed by a small to medium business in Australia.⁵ Many of us find enormous value and satisfaction from working for a small business.

Often a big part of this value comes from the culture of the business. Employees of small businesses report a feeling of pride and connection to the purpose and values of their employer, which is something you need to maintain as your business grows.

Positive workplace culture

Inclusion in teams has been shown to improve employee happiness, morale, productivity, job satisfaction and teamwork. More inclusive workplaces also experience large improvements in team collaboration.

⁴Deloitte, 2013
⁵OECD



Understanding the customer

Customer engagement is another key capability gap likely to impede business recovery and growth post pandemic. Customer engagement starts with good understanding of your customer.

40% of businesses believe a lack of understanding of changed customer needs will negatively impact their recovery post COVID-19.⁶

In Australia, 1 in 5 people has a recognised disability. That means 20% of your customers are living with a disability.⁷

An inclusive business - one which employs people with a mix of different ages, genders, values, backgrounds, preferences and abilities - is better equipped to understand and engage with its customers.

Hiring a job seeker with a disability can not only benefit your business and customers, it can be life changing for the individual and their family.

The positive impact of hiring an inclusive workforce can be felt throughout our community.

Hiring, training and retaining the right people

All thriving businesses have one thing in common - a focus on people.

While the customer is important, having the right people on your team is critical. Research has shown a direct link between business performance, resilience and innovation - and inclusive teams.⁸

There has never been a more important time to make sure you have the right people in your business. However, finding top talent is harder than ever.

⁶ bcg.com
⁷ ABS, 2016
⁸ bcg.com

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Labour and skill shortages

Australian employers recently reported staffing issues are as significant as cash flow issues.

More than 50% of Australian employers say they're facing staffing challenges.

One third of businesses are facing critical skill and knowledge gaps.

Four in five lack the capacity to undertake recovery activities.⁹

Workforce planning is the greatest challenge facing employers and our economy. This includes the immediate issue of finding the right employees to hire when you need them.

Now is the time for different thinking. Fuel your business growth with a people-first approach.

An inclusive recruitment strategy will open up a wider pool of talent to consider and bring many business benefits.

You can now find people looking for work, and the right fit for your business, through Employable Me.

Did you know?

People with disability make reliable, committed employees.

Research shows they have lower levels of absenteeism and fewer accidents. 83% of people with disability do not need time off because of their condition.¹⁰

More than 90% of Australian employers reported significant benefits from hiring people with disability.¹¹

The top 5 benefits are:

Culture: Positive impact on workplace culture

Attitude: Improved workplace atmosphere and mood¹²

Morale: Improved team morale

Creativity: Increased variety of perspectives improved creativity

Resilience: Increased ability to cope and adapt in the face of challenges

Engage, train and retain your employees

An inclusive workforce has been shown to improve employee engagement, happiness and retention. A workplace that embraces and celebrates inclusion is a more attractive proposition for potential employees from diverse backgrounds. Inclusive workplaces experience better productivity and significant improvements in team collaboration.

A recent CoreData research report identified staff development as one of the key capability gaps likely to impede business recovery post COVID-19.¹³

What can businesses do?

- Map key tasks needed for any future crisis or uncertainty
- Ensure employees are regularly upskilled
- Encourage job-shadowing and cross-training to enable reallocation of work



⁹ coredata.com.au
¹⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019
¹¹ apm.net.au/ddi-index
^{12 & 13} apm.net.au/ddi-index

Employable Me

**Building better business.
Enabling better lives.**

- 1 Grow your business with the right people with no recruitment costs**
- 2 Simple steps to build an inclusive workforce**
- 3 Connect with other leading inclusive organisations**

Employable Me goes one step beyond talking about inclusion in workplaces - it offers the functionality to search for and match job-ready, candidates to your business.

Whether you need to hire staff now or want to make a commitment to inclusion over time, Employable Me can help.

It's never been easier to connect with and employ people facing barriers to employment.

More than recruitment

When you join Employable Me, you get more than a recruitment platform.

You're unlocking the benefits of more than 25 years' experience supporting Australian businesses, employees and people with barriers to employment.

We want to share our valuable and extensive experience in employment, workplace health, disability and job seeker support with businesses like yours who share our vision for greater inclusion.

To make that vision a reality, we are always here to help.

At APM, our dedicated team can help you with all aspects of building a more inclusive workforce.

- Recruitment
- Wage subsidy applications
- Helping someone return to work after injury
- Supporting employees
- Post placement support
- Support to modify your workplace

We're here to help

APM is one of the world's leading human services organisations delivering services and programs to enable better lives across 10 countries.

As Australia's largest provider of Disability Employment Services, APM can assist and support you in all aspects of employment and help navigate some of the more complex aspects of employing people with disability.

In the last 12 months, we supported more than 60,000 job seekers and worked with businesses across a wide range of industry sectors including hospitality, retail, healthcare, construction, manufacturing and transportation.

Recognising the importance and positive impact of inclusive workplaces, APM has established Employable Me, a free recruitment platform connecting you to thousands of job ready candidates.

It's easy to get started

All you need to do to get started is register with Employable Me. By being an early member, you can:

- 1 Share vacancies on the new Employable Me recruitment platform to find ready-to-work candidates quickly**
- 2 Be one of the first members in a growing network of Australian companies which share a vision for inclusive businesses**
- 3 Be recognised as an Inclusion Partner with brand recognition on the Employable Me platforms**



Join Employable *Me* today

Employable Me is powered by APM - the trusted provider of job seeker programs for more than 120,000 Australians who overcame barriers to employment to find meaningful work in the past two years.

APM have been enabling better lives for more than 25 years and is Australia's largest provider of Disability Employment Services.

Chat to our team

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