Getting Your Business Ready for IoT

While every Internet of Things (IoT) project is unique, many of the most successful share common characteristics, and approach IoT innovation in a similar way. Here we explore five key elements to IoT success.

Make IoT a strategic priority

Gaining maximum return from IoT requires vision, investment and commitment. In short, it means putting IoT at the heart of your business and building around it. Define your success criteria, create a separate budget and allocate skilled resources with care. But more than this, be ambitious. Organisations that see the greatest ROI are those that choose major process innovation and transformation over incremental gain. If you want to achieve, you need to commit.

Get boardroom backing

Every change programme needs a champion. It's no different for IoT. A strong C-level advocate will bring different parts of the organisation together as one – to drive transformation. But champions are needed elsewhere in the business too. The real value of your IoT project lies in its ability to improve or replace existing processes. That can only happen if people across your organisation are willing and able to identify and work together to deliver new, better ways of working. An established culture of innovation will help, of course. If one doesn't exist however, IoT can also be a catalyst for cultural change here as well.

> " 53% of adopters report significant ROI from IoT in 2017. "
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> **Vodafone IoT Barometer 2017/18**

Be open to technology

Today, few aspects of technology can be considered separately. IoT is no exception. It reaches across the organisation, and generates an incredible amount of data. This offers exciting new levels of insight, which must be managed, aggregated and analysed before it can be acted upon. But it's not just Big Data. Sensors and networks, cloud platforms, applications and more complicate an already complex picture. The best results are achieved when businesses keep an open-mind to the technologies and approaches they choose to embrace.

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Secure IoT from the start

Security is the number one issue at the start of the IoT journey. And typically concerns grow as businesses move through the adoption period – particularly when they have actual devices, networks and servers to worry about. Building in security from the very beginning, understanding the potential risks, and having the policies and products in place when it's time to go live, is therefore crucial. And you shouldn't just focus on preventing unauthorised access to IoT systems and data: it also pays to consider how you'll audit access and data usage in a forensic scenario. Rigorous testing should be routine, of course. And with IoT presenting a range of unique risks, it's never a bad idea to get support from an experienced partner.

Explore ecosystem value

IoT may share many characteristics of conventional change programmes, but it isn't the same. IoT programmes are complex, uniquely interconnected and touch multiple areas of the business. This can be a challenge for conventionally-structured organisations – many of whom lack the particular skills for successful delivery (having never needed them before). Seeking to address this issue Vodafone has, over many years, built a strong IoT ecosystem that brings together knowledge and capabilities from across the connectivity, applications and software worlds. The result is a single partner able to support you throughout your entire IoT journey.

Recommendations for success

With the fundamentals covered, it's time to begin planning your transformation. Here are four recommendations to get you off to a good start.

- Take a hard look at your own readiness for IoT. Do you have the strategy, culture and technology maturity to make it pay dividends? Changing the course of a whole business may be too ambitious — but you can establish a steering committee or centre of excellence to try to influence and coordinate.

- Don't just think about how you can use IoT within your business. Explore how it can transform customer-facing processes. And, from the earliest stages, plan how you will secure these processes too.

- Where possible take advantage of mature horizontal applications of IoT (such as fleet management and inventory management), and work with specialist providers who understand your industry and can ensure your solutions are fully integrated.

- Actively pursue C-level support, and embrace the cultural and process changes as well as the technological. Consider IoT within the context of other major technology transformations, particularly big data. IoT and analytics go hand in hand.

Expert consultancy to get you started

With IoT considered 'critical' to future success, 74% agree that digital transformation is impossible without IoT and 67% of adopters say their IoT projects are mission-critical to their business. Vodafone's IoT Professional Services can support and accelerate your journey – reducing the complexities, helping define your strategy and bringing together the right mix of IoT products, partners and services. Our team of experts will ensure your business takes advantage of best practices and methodologies to ensure maximum ROI.

Learn about the new Vodafone 'Discover IoT' professional services package here.

For more on anything IoT get in touch at iot@vodafone.com

* Vodafone, IoT Barometer, 2017/18

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