



Irish Business Mindset Report

How Irish SMEs Invest in Tech

Winter // 2017



How long **is a year?**

If a week is a long time in politics, how long is **a year in business?**

It's now a year since we ran the first Irish Business Mindset Survey and published the subsequent report. We recently ran the survey again, with even more participants than last year, and this 2017 report reveals the results.

You'll discover the ways other Irish businesses are embracing new technologies, planning the next phase in their digital transformation and using mobile technology within their businesses. Have business priorities changed since last year? Get inside the minds of your peers and competitors, and see whether you are ahead of the game or behind the curve.

This year's report also includes new findings into the relationship between technology adoption and business success, and the chance to watch Three's own business leaders share their thoughts on the results.

After all, a year may be a long time in business, but it's an aeon in the world of technology.



How long is a year?

Looking ahead, but with hindsight

The role of technology

Set the pace, shift the focus

Where's the cloud going?

What are you looking at?

More talk, less selling?

Conclusion: Change for the better?



A brief **who's who**

This year we bring you not only the thoughts of your business peers, but also of **Three's business technology leaders.**

Of the 400 Irish business people surveyed, more than half run their own business and the second largest group of responders is in 'business management'.

Meanwhile the video commentary is provided by the following business leaders from Three:



Eoin MacManus, Business Director



Karl McDermott, Head of the Business ICT team - 3Connected Solutions



Nicola Mortimer, Head of Business Products, Marketing and Operations



Padraig Sheerin, Head of SME Business

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Looking ahead, but with hindsight

50% surveyed define themselves as 'cautiously optimistic' about the current Irish business climate.

That is no change on last year, however when you include those who are 'quite optimistic', almost three quarters are looking forward to a positive future for business in Ireland.

It seems that in the face of Brexit, Irish businesses are realising that it may bring positive opportunities, to welcome new companies to our shores and to develop new markets and channels. There's also the 'traffic jam' effect, where one car – or business – slowing down causes all the ones behind it to do the same. Conversely, when the one in front speeds up again, or becomes more positive, so do the others – creating positive attitudes and actions which become self-fulfilling.



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The role of technology

A new question for 2017 asked about the relationship of new technology adoption to business success.

More than two-thirds see technology's role as central to their business priorities and growth strategies. Whereas in the past, the technology would have come first, now the business objectives come first, followed by the adoption of the technology which will help to achieve them.



Moving faster

With three sales representatives covering the whole of Ireland, plus a fleet of delivery vans for stores and wholesalers, Pat McDonnell Paints improved their mobility and connectivity technology and in turn greatly improved their efficiency and customer service. They gave iPads to sales reps and smartphones to branch managers, all connected to the Three network. At the same time Three established a VPN to connect the company's sites, enabling web- and video-conferencing. Now billing, transport and stocking are far more efficient and order processing is faster. With real-time information available to them while out on the road, the reps are able to analyse their customers for more effective sales targeting.

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Setting the **pace**

Irish SMEs are not ones to wait and see.



Two-thirds of those surveyed believe they are more proactive than other similar businesses regarding technology investment decisions. That's a slight drop on 2016, but still confirms that technology investment for most Irish businesses is not just a vague aspiration but an important and practical step to take.



Be our guest

Today's hotel guests rate free Wi-Fi as their most important room amenity. With slow connectivity due to its location affecting both guests and staff, Maryborough Hotel and Spa in Douglas was being held back from improving its guest experience and expanding its offering to the corporate market. Three provided a fast wireless connection to the Three network, facilitating a cost effective total communications solution and enabling new marketing opportunities for the hotel.

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Shifting the focus

One response that changed significantly since last year is the areas in which Irish businesses plan to make their technology investments.

In 2016, around a third of businesses surveyed were going to focus on investment in ‘business operations and infrastructure’; this has now increased to half. At the same time, planned investment in ‘marketing and sales programs’ and ‘collaboration’ have both fallen (from 51% to 38% and from second- to third-most selected, respectively).

The overall effect is a more balanced and therefore, ultimately more effective mix of areas for technology investment.



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Where's **the cloud** going?

The use of cloud services is growing strongly in several areas.

Penetration of ‘internet-based voice’ among Irish SMEs has grown from 34% to 40% in the last twelve months, while use of the cloud for ‘virtual meetings’ has risen from 21% to 25%.

Businesses are realising they can lose the legacy costs of PSTN line rental by moving to cloud telephony, and at the same time can meet the demand from employees for greater mobility with virtual meeting capability.

Cloud file storage and sharing remains the most used cloud service, with 66% of those surveyed using it.



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What **are you** looking at?

The 2017 survey reveals that blogs and forums have **more than doubled** as a source for business technology information.

In today's attention economy, there is more content than we have time to consume and more sources of information than there are solutions to research. However, the number who rely on blogs and forums for their information has more than doubled in the past year. Interestingly, the percentage of respondents who rely on advertising to learn about products has halved.

Video as a format has exploded whilst blogs, case studies, white papers and SlideShare have all seen increases - suggesting that Irish SMEs prefer to get their technology information from peers who have 'been there, done that, wrote the blog' rather than from professional marketing campaigns.



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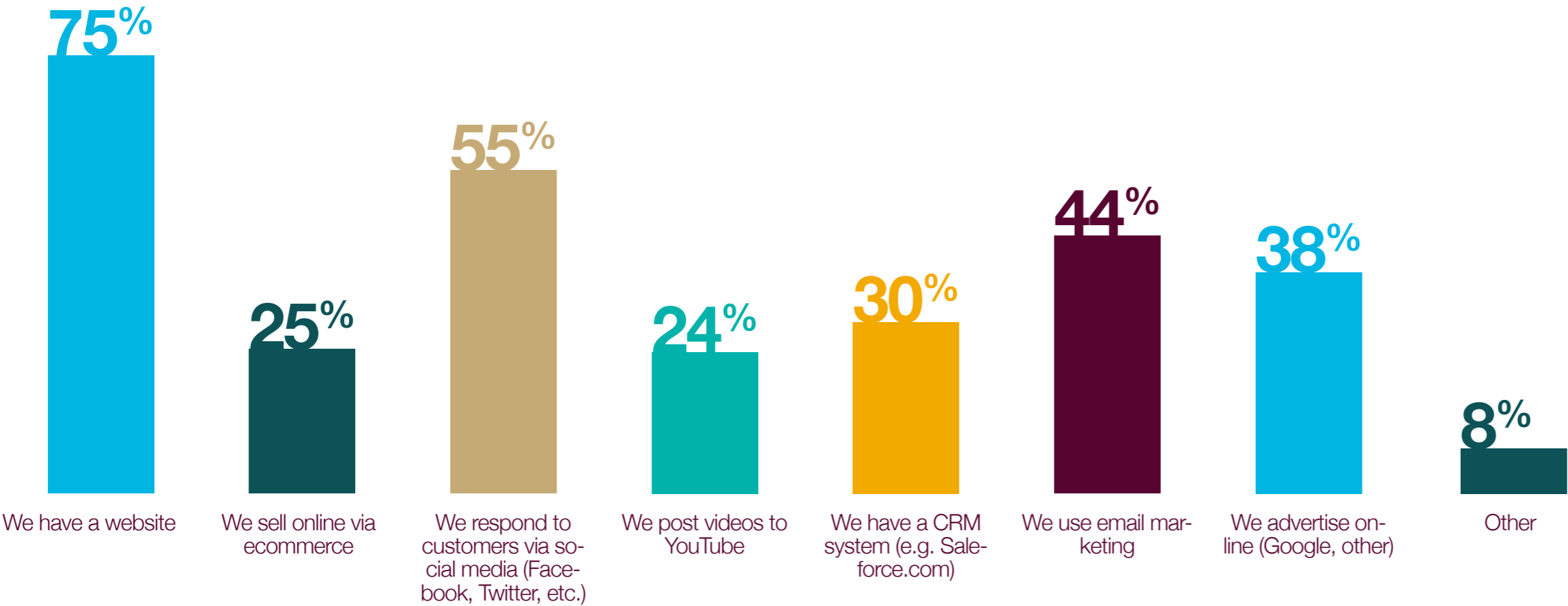
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More talk, less selling?

The level of digitalisation in businesses over the past year has been varied.

More respondents, for example, have been posting videos to YouTube and using a CRM system, but fewer have been using email marketing. There has also been a drop in the number who sell online. This means that the amount selling online at all is still less than a quarter. However, more than half of businesses surveyed do use social media to respond to customers.



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Conclusion: Change for **the better?**

The Brexit referendum result was initially a shock.

However, the evidence shows that Irish businesses have now assimilated it and remain optimistic in spite of it. For example, although the labour market is not growing, it's no longer shrinking. House prices in Ireland have rebounded. The survey has shown that Irish businesses are overwhelmingly positive about the economy, both now and for the future.

In other words, perhaps surprisingly, the overall attitude of business in Ireland has been largely unaffected by the ups and downs of the wider world. Or perhaps it's simply that Irish SMEs understand that what goes up must come down and vice versa.



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Where to from here?

Make sure your business comes out ahead of the curve in next year's report. **Talk to our Business Advice team on 1800 330 303** to discover how Three's expertise, connectivity and support can help your business.

[GET A CALL BACK](#)

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