



# Business Advice Area

## Making the most of digital technology

Advice in this area aims to help businesses maximise the potential of digital tools and technologies. It may focus on using them for product development and market testing, customer service and marketing, or building online sales.

The advice could be used for addressing the risks of cyber-attacks, or exploring how digital technologies can be used to reduce costs, improve productivity or quality control.

### What are the benefits of taking advice in this area?

Good use of the internet and digital technology can help your business grow, through:

- Instant analysis and feedback to help quick decision making
- Continuous customer contact to build trust
- Automating and improving processes to drive efficiency
- Improved monitoring to increase effectiveness.

Internet and digital technology can help you develop into new areas, deliver new processes and services to customers at higher margins, and learn faster what customers want – helping you stay ahead of the competition.

### What might advice in this area involve?

Vouchers can be used to buy strategic advice about how digital technology can improve productivity and administrative processes, reduce operational overheads and meet business objectives. Expert advice will help you review your IT strategy, assess the capability of your website to attract customers, improve on-line sales and reduce the risk of cyber attacks.

### What sorts of activity could Growth Vouchers be used for?

#### Improving the customer experience

- Assessing and improving your customers' online experience by helping them find your products and services more quickly and suggesting other popular purchases

- Ensuring that your customers' online experience is based on the best practice and standards for your industry
- Meeting your target customers' needs by using media and technology that suits them

### **Analysing your technology usage**

- Analysing current and future technology needs for your business to enable it to enter new markets and launch new products
- Assessing the robustness and compatibility of your current systems and processes to new technology
- Getting advice on using digital technology to transform operations and cut overheads

### **Project planning**

- Planning how you will project manage your digital project to ensure it successfully meets your objectives
- Planning how you could use 'the cloud' to deliver services
- Analysing whether your staff have the right skills to tackle digital challenges

### **Measuring and monitoring**

- Checking that your business model will allow you to grow online
- Defining how to gather, maintain and use customer data to improve sales and gather electronic customer feedback
- Conducting a systems audit to ensure you are using data legally and effectively, and that your systems are secure and data is backed up

### **Automating business processes**

- Helping to put systems in place to track and improve business productivity and increase output with existing resources
- Designing and putting in place processes to manage key outcomes such as customer satisfaction, staff productivity, procurement or human resources
- Developing customer relationship management (CRM) processes and managing key customer accounts

### **Selling on-line/E-commerce**

- Advice on improving online sales and conversions
- Specifying and designing mobile applications
- Designing a digital marketing plan (including web, mobile apps, social media)

### **Distribution and online visibility**

- Recording and managing sales by third parties and capturing sales information
- Improving search engine optimisation (SEO) so that your website is listed more prominently in Google and other search sites.
- Reviewing click-through rates and purchase drop-offs so you can use this information to improve your site and increase sales.

## **What sorts of activities shouldn't Growth Vouchers be used for?**

Growth Vouchers should only be used to subsidise strategic advice, so IT services or products aren't included. Also services like web design, (vendor-specific) advice about software/hardware, and general IT user training are not in scope. Advice must be impartial and based on what the business requires; advisors should not be linked to specific brands.

## **What should I look out for when choosing an advisor in this topic?**

- Are they a chartered IT professional or a full member of a recognised institute which has an independent customer complaints handling process (such as BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT)?
- Do they have three years experience of working in, or advising, small businesses (with references)?
- Do they have professional indemnity insurance?
- Do they have professional qualifications in a relevant discipline?

## **What are typical charges?**

While it's difficult to define exact rates, IT consultant tend to charge upwards of £450 per day, and some experienced business and systems analysts or strategists may charge several thousand pounds a day. However price isn't necessarily an indication of quality so it's important to shop around. Try and get at least three detailed, costed quotations and check background and experience.