Disrupt your own business

The traditional telephone took 70 years to reach 50% penetration within households, while the Internet took approximately ten years to reach satisfactory levels worldwide. This is in stark contrast to the rapid evolution and adoption of digitisation we are currently experiencing. Taking the Internet leaps ahead; the concept of digitisation has led to widespread technology innovation, increasing consumer power and competition. Quinton Pienaar, CEO, Agilitude, a Salesforce platinum reseller and customer experience evangelist, says that now is the time to disrupt your own business and embrace digitisation if you want long term success.

"In reality, almost everything will or already is digitised and if businesses don't proactively disrupt their traditional business models, the competition will do it and you are then at risk becoming a commodity," says Pienaar. He says the danger of becoming a commodity is that it could instantly erode the business' competitive edge. Conversely, actively disrupting a business also has implications and it is imperative that the process is done in a well-managed way, using the correct technology.

"Digital transformation can lead to a loss of control of the customer relationship and ironically, more competition. There will also be a need to digitise the supply chain, including suppliers, partners and employees in addition to customers. It will be these digital competences that will gradually determine which businesses will create or lose value," says Pienaar.

He says the challenge with the new world of digitisation is that the technologies know no borders and nor do the customers. They want a unified and consistent experience, which is why digitisation isn't a one-stop journey. It is essential that when using all the channels, the business creates a seamless and consistent relationship with the customer.

"One way that innovative companies are approaching digitisation is to identify the essentials of each channel that their customers value most, and combining them to deliver a more valuable experience overall," says Pienaar.

The challenge is that customers will not wait for you to evolve; their expectations will continue to evolve and push traditional boundaries. This places businesses under increasing pressure to address their

business processes quickly. Pienaar says that it is not simply a revamp of a process, but more a reinvention based on the principles of digitisation and how to accelerate the process of change.

While a large proportion of businesses recognise the productivity benefits and operational efficiencies of better integrating digitised information into their business processes, there are still too many outdated processes and approaches. This is despite the presence of smartphones and a growing interest in cloud computing. "We have found that too many companies are still grappling with the concept of integration and how to digitise a process that has been in place for decades," says Pienaar.

The danger for these traditional businesses is that any 'new-age' business that is launched will instantly have a competitive advantage, as they will effortlessly offer digital products and services from the get-go.

Pienaar says that order to improve efficiencies and be innovative moving forward, a radical overhaul of business processes is required: "Analysts report that customers want intuitive interfaces, around-the-clock availability, real-time fulfillment, personalised treatment, global consistency, and no errors. This is the expectation of the digitised customer. They want a superior user experience, but also want better process, exceptional service and reduced risk."

While the process of reinvention will not be easy or inexpensive, the long-term benefits are worth it according to Pienaar. Once you have the right system in place and the process are established, businesses can cut their costs by exceptional margins based on not only time saving, but improved turn-around times, which hopefully leads to more business.

By simply, reducing paper and manual processes with software, the system will automatically collect data that can be mined to better understand process performance, cost drivers, and causes of risk. Real-time reports and dashboards on digital-process performance will permit managers to address problems before they become critical. Data models can also be adjusted and reconstructed to permit improved decision-making, performance tracking, and customer insights.

"It is also important to reduce the number of steps in the system, decreasing the number of documents required and developing

automated decision making processes. As part of the reinvention the businesses operating models will also need to be remapped. This includes roles and responsibilities, skills and organisational structures," says Pienaar.

Digitisation may bring about a reinvention of traditional business processes, but it will also assist in improving competitiveness, process efficiency and overall success: "It is becoming a case of do or die, digitisation is here to stay and businesses need to decide if they are too?" concludes Pienaar.