

Digital Champions — what do I need to know?

Small businesses are the lifeblood of our community and the engine room of our economy — and with digital technology they can be even stronger.

Around 99 per cent of all businesses are small, and they employ around 5.7 million people. They contribute \$393 billion annually to the economy and employ around half of the Australian private sector workforce.

Deloitte's Access Economics Connected Small Businesses 2017 report found that when small businesses are digitally engaged, they are 50 per cent more likely to be growing revenue, eight times more likely to be creating jobs, seven times more likely to be exporting, and 14 times more likely to be innovating new products and services.

Small business owners are time poor and often need encouragement and education to embrace technology and reap the benefits; too often the software sits on the shelf untouched.

With support and inspiration to engage with digital technology, small businesses can unlock their potential and become more effective, competitive and ultimately, more profitable.

Sounds great – how will we do that?

The Small Business Digital Champions Project is an Australian Government initiative intended to inspire and equip Australian small businesses to thrive in the digital economy.

Starting in early 2019, we will provide 100 small businesses with a digital makeover valued at up to \$20,000. 15 of these small business owners will be selected to become Digital Champions, taking their digital journey in the public spotlight, and receiving mentorship from successful Australian entrepreneurs. These sector-specific case studies will provide inspiration and practical insights to small business owners around the country on how to 'go digital'.

We will also fund 15 industry associations to provide sector-specific advice to small businesses that want to go on this digital journey.

So who is helping the Australian Government achieve this?

Our partners on this digital journey are:

- the small businesses that are up for the challenge of going digital and telling their story — 15 of the 100 businesses will have their journey showcased in online, interactive case studies that will provide the small business community with real-life insights into the business benefits of adopting digital technology
- the mentors who will provide extra assistance to the 15 Digital Champions
- the private sector partners who will contribute their cutting-edge digital equipment, services and training to fuel the digital makeovers, and

- the 15 industry associations, which will establish trusted digital advisers to help their members go digital.

Digital Mentors, to be announced in January 2019, will be notable individuals who have leveraged technology to build business success. They will share their experience with the Digital Champions and the small business community of Australia.

When does this initiative get going?

We will start the digital makeovers in mid-February 2019 and start telling the stories from March.

Small businesses can register their interest in the project now at digitalchampions.jobs.gov.au. Applications will open in January.

How do I get involved?

Small businesses:

- Eligibility is open to Australian owned and operated businesses with less than 20 full time (or equivalent) employees, including sole traders. Small businesses that have not received any Government funding (State or Commonwealth) for the same or similar digital supports are invited to apply. To be able to participate, a small business will have to:
 - demonstrate compliance with all taxation laws and industrial relations laws, and
 - have an identifiable digital need.
- If a small business owner is successful in their application, they must be willing to have details of their business available publically and be willing to be promoted online through a range of digital channels.
- These small business owners will also need to agree to a regular schedule of engagements, such as interviews, coaching sessions with mentors and digital training over a 12-month period.

Industry associations:

- Industry associations can register an interest in getting involved at digitalchampions.jobs.gov.au.

Mentors:

- If you would like to offer your services as a mentor, let us know at digitalchampions.jobs.gov.au.

Private sector partners:

- If you would like to contribute digital equipment or services, let us know at digitalchampions.jobs.gov.au.

For more information on the Small Business Digital Champions project, visit digitalchampions.jobs.gov.au or email digitalchampions@jobs.gov.au