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Action Plan – BUSINESS HUBS

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1 Introduction

1.1 About the Action Plans

Welcome to the LETZ RETAIL ONLINE Action Plans, designed to empower small businesses in the retail, commerce, hospitality, and cultural/creative sectors, as well as small businesses, start-ups, and entrepreneurs in the digital and ICT sector. Our aim is to provide you with the knowledge, skills, and competences to co-create, co-design, and collaborate on digital transformation initiatives. Through these action plans, we seek to enhance a strategic and systemic approach to collaboration across the small commerce and small digital sectors.

The LETZ RETAIL ONLINE Action Plans have a twofold objective: to assist small businesses in designing, implementing, and collaborating in their digital transformation journey, and to guide business hubs in facilitating co-creation, co-design, and collaboration within the LETZ RETAIL ONLINE sectors. The ultimate goal is to foster a thriving ecosystem where small commerce businesses can effectively go online, using the opportunities presented by digital commerce.

1.2 Approach

To achieve our goals, we adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses both the "soft" and "hard" skills necessary for successful digital transformation. The "soft" skills encompass breaking down cross-sectoral barriers, promoting effective communication, and building multi-disciplinary teams across sectors. On the other hand, the "hard" skills focus on the specific digital transformation requirements of small businesses in retail, commerce, hospitality, and cultural/creative sectors, as well as the role of the digital sector in supporting this transformation.

1.3 Action Plan Objectives

We present three distinct action plans to cater to the unique needs of small businesses in the commerce and digital sector, and business hubs:

1. **Small Commerce Action Plan:** This action plan aims to guide small commerce businesses in their digital transformation journey. It provides a step-by-step approach, with exercises, checklists, self-reflective questions, and assignments for each stage: Ideation, Preparation, Implementation, and Evaluation & Closing.
2. **Small Digital Action Plan:** This action plan is tailored for small digital businesses, empowering them to collaborate effectively with small commerce businesses. It offers similar exercises, checklists, self-reflective questions, and assignments for each stage to foster co-creation and co-design initiatives.
3. **Business Hubs Action Plan:** Specifically designed for business associations, intermediaries, and hubs, this action plan outlines the steps to start and guide the co-creation and collaboration process between small commerce and small digital sectors. It provides self-reflective questions, to-do lists, and complementary guidelines for each stage.





1.4 Expected Outcomes

By engaging with these action plans, small businesses and business hubs can expect the following outcomes:

- Enhanced understanding of the benefits and opportunities of digital transformation.
- Improved capacity to co-create, co-design, and collaborate across sectors.
- Increased knowledge and skills to navigate the digital landscape effectively.
- Strengthened relationships and partnerships between small commerce and small digital sectors.
- Successful implementation of digital transformation initiatives.
- Increased competitiveness in the digital marketplace.

These action plans are tailored for small commerce businesses that have yet to go digital and small digital businesses that are looking to collaborate with the small commerce sector. Throughout the action plans, we will supply clear instructions, practical exercises, and guidance to facilitate your journey towards digital transformation.

Let us embark on this exciting and transformative journey together, unlocking the potential of the digital world for your business.





2 Business Hubs Action Plan

Welcome to the Business Hubs Action Plan, an integral part of the LETZ RETAIL ONLINE Action Plans. This comprehensive plan is designed to guide and support business associations, intermediaries, and hubs in facilitating co-creation, co-design, and collaboration between the small commerce and small digital sectors.

The main objective of this Action Plan is to equip you with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competences to navigate the digital transformation journey alongside small businesses. By adopting a strategic and systematic approach to collaboration, one should aim to foster a thriving ecosystem where small commerce businesses effectively embrace the opportunities presented by digital commerce.

Within the Business Hubs Action Plan, we address both the "soft" and "hard" skills essential for successful digital transformation. The "soft" skills encompass breaking down cross-sectoral barriers, promoting effective communication, and fostering multidisciplinary teams. On the other hand, the "hard" skills focus on the specific digital transformation requirements of small businesses in retail, commerce, hospitality, and cultural/creative sectors, while acknowledging the role of the digital sector in supporting this transformation.

Engaging with this Action Plan, you can expect to enhance your understanding of the benefits and opportunities of digital transformation for the business ecosystem within your reach, improve your capacity to facilitate collaboration across sectors, and gain the knowledge and skills to navigate the digital landscape effectively. By implementing the strategies outlined in this plan, you will strengthen relationships and partnerships between small commerce and small digital sectors, successfully implementing digital transformation initiatives and enhancing competitiveness in the digital marketplace, unlocking the potential of the digital world for your beneficiaries and the for the small commerce sector as a whole.

2.1 Ideation

As we embark on the Ideation phase for your business hub, let's cast your vision beyond the boundaries of traditional business collaboration. This stage forms the nucleus of your organization's strategic direction, serving as a springboard for creativity, innovation, and transformative ideas capable of reshaping the landscape of small commerce businesses.

We encourage you to envisage your business hub as a dynamic, vibrant ecosystem. Picture it as a place where small commerce and small digital businesses can converge, interact, and evolve, thereby fostering a culture of innovation and growth that catalyzes synergy and collaboration.

Throughout this Ideation phase, our focus will be on brainstorming, devising a variety of strategies and initiatives that could serve as the engine for a paradigm shift in the small business sector. The objective is to ideate a strategy in which you initiate, enhance, and support the collaboration and co-creation processes between the two sector and generate a ripple effect – to ignite transformations sparked by your business hub and radiate out to influence the larger commerce and digital ecosystem.

2.1.1 Exercise I

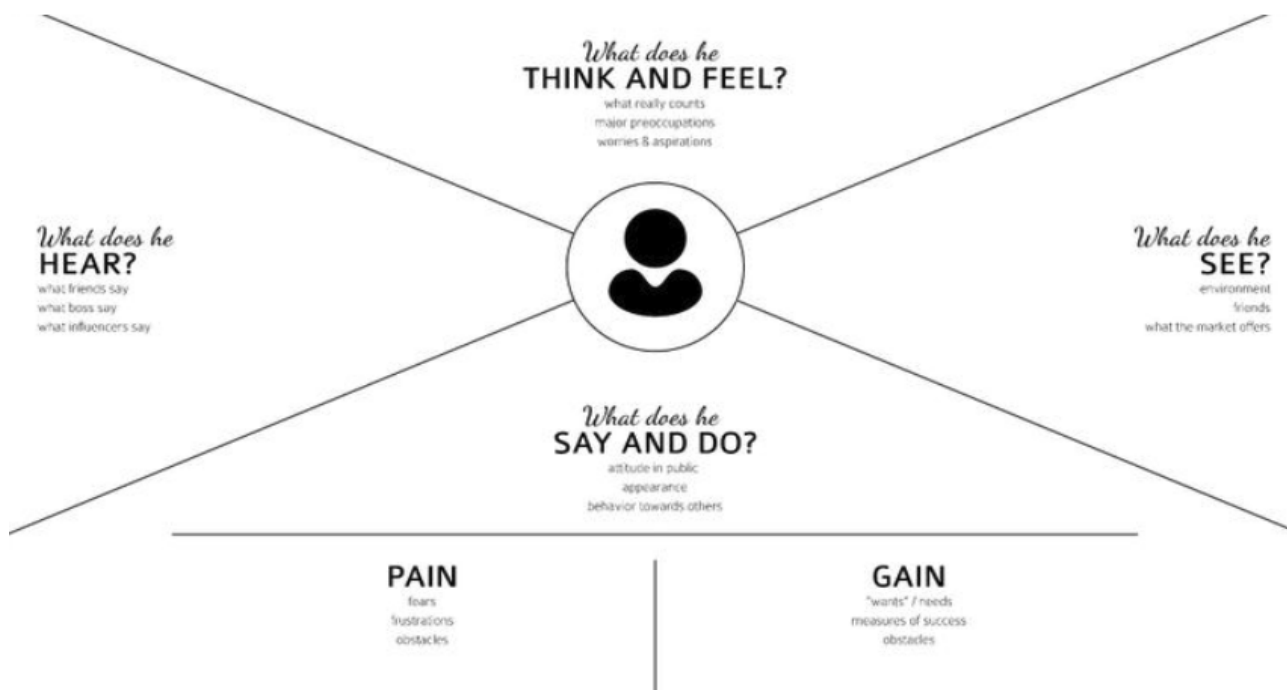
Think about the Small Commerce sector and Small Digital sector you are supporting as a business hub. Read the "Personas" to understand the person behind the businesses and target groups from both sectors.





The use the Empathy Map below to reflect what your typical client or user of each sector, thinks, feels, hears, says, and does. It describes their perceptions and emotions in relation to your offer to support the uptake of digital tools and technologies by Small Commerce through collaboration and co-creation with the Small Digital sector.

Using the personas, you can create the empathy map for each sector and find out how they would feel about the support you are going to provide, and finetune it even better to their needs.



If you want to know more about the use of the Empathy Map

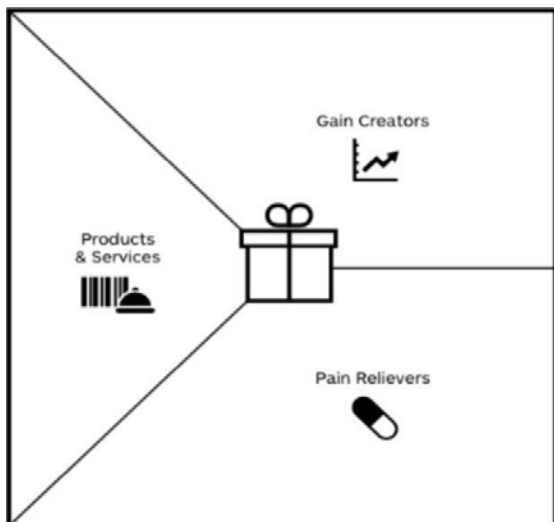
- <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/empathy-mapping/>
- <https://youtu.be/QwF9a56WFWA>
- <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/empathy-map-why-and-how-to-use-it>

2.1.2 Exercise II

Based upon the reflections of Exercise 1, put yourself in their shoes and think about the way you could support the improvement of their business processes. What can you offer them that covers their needs, i.e. that solves their pain points and provides them with an advantage over their competitors (gains).

A good tool to use is the **Value Map**, as it describes the features of a specific value proposition in a more structured and detailed way breaking it down into products and services, gain creators, and pain relievers.





Here is a video on how to use the map: <https://youtu.be/ReM1uqmVfP0>

2.1.3 Self-Reflective Questions

1. How can the hub facilitate effective collaborations between small commerce and small digital businesses?
2. What barriers might hinder these collaborations and how can the hub help overcome them?
3. What resources or services can the hub provide to support these collaborations?
1. How can the hub help small commerce businesses recognize the benefits of using digital tools and technologies, and how can it help the digital business to tap into these opportunities?

2.1.4 Checklist

Checklist Implementation	N/A	Done	Comments
Identify potential small commerce and small digital businesses for collaboration			
Understand the needs and challenges of both sectors			
Develop a preliminary plan to facilitate collaborations			
Assess the resources and tools available at the hub			
Plan communication strategies to connect businesses and foster collaborations			
Develop a value proposition for the businesses			
Identify ways the hub can support businesses throughout the collaboration process			
Organize awareness programs about the benefits of digital transformation			





This reflection will help to identify how and where your business hub can bridge gaps, create synergies, and facilitate seamless interaction among the small digital and small commerce businesses, ultimately transforming the way small commerce businesses operate and contributing to the generation of new or improved products and services for the digital businesses.

These reflections are not just an abstract notion, but a concrete baseline for your future, meticulously crafted through strategic discussions, brainstorming sessions, and thoughtful reflection..

In essence, your hub can become much more than just a business center; it can become a launching pad for small businesses to co-create and collaborate to make the most of the opportunities that digital tools and technologies offer for a specific sector.

When starting to work with the businesses from the Small Commerce and Small Digital sector, the specific action plans designed for them are a helpful tool in your efforts to make the ideated support a reality.

2.1.5 Inspiration for further development

[Using the LETZ RETAIL ONLINE case studies as a starting point, we have “ideated” some possible next steps for 2 of these cases, which can serve as inspiration when reflecting upon the ideation phase.](#)

2.2 Preparation

As you transition to the Preparation stage, it's important to shift your perspective and assume the role of a project manager. This stage marks the transition from ideation to execution, requiring an organized, strategic approach.

Primarily, you'll need to develop a detailed strategic plan. This isn't just about setting out steps to follow; it's about foreseeing potential challenges, identifying opportunities, and establishing a clear, actionable path towards your objective. This plan will serve as a guiding beacon for your team, keeping everyone aligned with the overall vision and mission.

Next, focus on team members and stakeholders. Identify the roles and responsibilities of each team member, making sure their skills and abilities align with the requirements of your plan. Concurrently, recognize and involve your stakeholders, ensuring their needs and expectations are considered throughout the execution process. Maintaining open communication lines with all parties involved will be key to creating a collaborative and transparent work environment.

Setting clear, measurable goals is crucial at this stage. Whether they are short-term milestones or long-term objectives, these goals should align with your vision and should be SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. This approach will help to track progress, maintain motivation, and adjust the course of action when necessary.

Finally, establish a roadmap for implementation. This should be a chronological guide that includes all the tasks, activities, and deliverables required to achieve your goals. Each step on the roadmap should bring you closer to realizing your vision, ensuring that your business hub transforms from an idea into a tangible, functioning entity.





2.2.1 Exercise

Identify tasks needed to facilitate collaboration.

Task	Responsible Person	Deadline	Expected Outcome/ Result	Status

2.2.2 Self-Reflective Questions

1. How will the hub ensure smooth communication and collaboration between the businesses?
2. How will the hub support businesses throughout the collaboration process?
3. What resources or services will be crucial for the success of these collaborations?
4. How can the hub measure the success of these collaborations?

2.2.3 Checklist

Checklist Implementation	N/A	Done	Comments
Develop a detailed action plan for facilitating collaborations			
Assign tasks to the hub's team members based on their skills and competences			
Establish a framework for regular check-ins and progress monitoring			
Develop strategies to manage any conflicts or challenges that arise			
Prepare the necessary resources and services for the businesses			
Plan workshops or training sessions to build necessary skills among businesses			
Appoint a point of contact for each collaboration to ensure smooth communication			
Plan for contingencies in case of major obstacles or setback			





Upon completing the Preparation stage, you will be well-equipped to guide small commerce businesses through their digital transformation. With a strategic plan and a resolute team in place, you'll be ready to meet the unique needs of each business. Your clear goals and thorough understanding of digital tools and strategies will enable you to provide effective, tailored support. Furthermore, having secured necessary resources and established strong relationships with key stakeholders, you are prepared to lead these businesses towards a digitally advanced future.

2.2.4 Inspiration for further development

[Using the LETZ RETAIL ONLINE case studies as a starting point, we have “ideated” some possible next steps for 2 of these cases, which can serve as inspiration when reflecting upon the ideation phase.](#)

2.3 Implementation

The Implementation stage is where you embrace your role as a facilitator and bring your plan into action. You act as a catalyst, providing guidance, fostering collaboration, and monitoring progress along the digital transformation journey.

To begin, engage with small commerce businesses and understand their unique needs, aspirations, and challenges. Simultaneously, establish connections with small digital businesses, identifying their expertise and solutions that can propel digital transformation efforts. By bringing these two groups together, you create a dynamic ecosystem within your hub.

As a facilitator, your role is to provide support and guidance to both parties. Assist small commerce businesses in recognizing how digital solutions can enhance their operations, expand their reach, and unlock growth opportunities. Simultaneously, help small digital businesses tailor their offerings to address the specific needs of small commerce businesses. Emphasize the value of working together on digital transformation projects, driving innovation and mutual growth. Monitor the progress of these projects closely, identifying successes and addressing any challenges that arise along the way.

2.3.1 Exercise: Monitor progress

Since you will be mainly monitoring and guiding the progress of the projects during this stage, it's crucial to follow these projects. Therefore, it might be helpful to use the template below to follow the progress of the collaboration and see where the parties are and whether they are on track. Moreover, chances are things do not exactly work out as you planned, which means that chances are that changes can be made in the collaboration. As a facilitator, these changes are also crucial for you to know, so you can keep a close eye on the progress.

It is recommended to check upon the progress on a regular basis, which also means fill in the below table on a regular basis. This will help you to keep an overview of the collaboration and thus know when extra guidance or support might be necessary.





Task	Initial Status	Current Status	On Track	Changes made

2.3.2 Self-Reflective Questions

1. Are the collaborations progressing as planned?
2. What challenges have arisen, and how were they addressed?
3. How has the hub decided to follow progress? On a stricter regular basis or rather more freely? And how did this work?
4. How have the businesses responded to the support provided by the hub?
5. Are any adjustments needed to the hub's approach or resources?

2.3.3 Checklist

When you check the progress of the collaboration and your responsibilities, it also might be helpful to grab this checklist. The checklist can be used as a guideline to guarantee that no essential aspects of the implementation phase are overlooked. The list provides some crucial steps and elements that need to be addressed in this part of your collaboration.

Carefully review each item on the list and indicate whether the item is completed (“Done”), or whether it is not applicable (“N/A”). Additionally, you can add any necessary comments, for example, that you are planning to hold weekly progress meetings and that those meetings have gone according to plan, or that you missed one or two and why.





Checklist Implementation	N/A	Done	Comments
Hold regular progress meetings to monitor the progress of collaborations			
Address challenges promptly and seek solutions			
Maintain open and regular communication with all involved businesses			
Update the action plan based on the progress and feedback			
Provide ongoing support to the businesses as needed			
Keep stakeholders informed about the progress			
Review KPIs and adjust the plan if necessary			
Ensure all collaborations are within the hub's operational and budgetary constraints			
Foster a positive environment that encourages problem-solving and innovation			

Upon completing this stage, your business hub will have successfully cultivated a thriving ecosystem where small commerce and small digital businesses collaborate. By connecting these entities, your hub becomes the driving force behind digital transformation and innovation. Small commerce businesses embrace digital solutions, while small digital businesses tailor their offerings to meet specific needs. This collaboration sparks synergy, propelling the digital transformation of the entire ecosystem. Through continuous monitoring and adaptation, your hub ensures progress and addresses challenges. The result is a vibrant environment of learning, collaboration, and transformative growth, leaving a lasting impact on the small business landscape.

2.3.4 Inspiration for further development

[To reflect and understand more on the implementation stage, you can use the LETZ RETAIL ONLINE case studies. The case studies show how the implementation stage can work within different collaborations](#)





2.4 Evaluation & Closing

As we enter the Evaluation & Closing stage of the Business Hub Action Plan, the focus shifts to examining your initiatives in facilitating collaboration and driving digital transformation among small commerce and digital businesses. This stage is critical for measuring the effectiveness of your strategies and pinpointing opportunities for enhancement.

The process should be systematic. Start by reviewing your strategic goals and comparing them against the actual outcomes. Have your efforts led to increased collaboration and engagement? Has there been a noticeable shift towards digital transformation within the businesses you've worked with?

Next, assess each initiative individually. Identify what worked well and what didn't and determine the reasons for each. Look at both quantitative metrics (like increase in engagement levels, number of partnerships formed, rate of digital adoption) and qualitative feedback (from team members, stakeholders, and the businesses themselves).

Once you've gathered this information, analyze it to identify trends, insights, and areas for improvement. Are there any common factors that contributed to the success of certain initiatives? Conversely, were there recurring issues that hindered others? Use this information to refine your strategies moving forward.

Lastly, develop an action plan for improvements. Prioritize these based on their potential impact and implement them in your next cycle of operations.

Remember, the Evaluation & Closing stage is not just about ending the current cycle, but about paving the way for continuous improvement and future success in your role as a business organization facilitating digital transformation.

2.4.1 Exercise: Evaluate Results

To commence the evaluation process, we'll utilize a table listing various evaluation aspects. For each aspect, you're asked to reflect and choose an option that accurately portrays the current state of your business hub. Below is guidance for assessing each category:

1. **Initiatives:** Review each initiative you've implemented and assess its success or failure. Did the initiative achieve its stated goals? Were there any unexpected outcomes?
2. **Collaboration:** Examine the level of collaboration your organization has facilitated. Has there been an increase in partnerships or collaborative projects?
3. **Engagement:** Evaluate the level of engagement from stakeholders and businesses. Are they actively participating, providing feedback, and utilizing your resources?
4. **Digital Transformation:** Assess the rate of digital adoption among the businesses you've worked with. Are they implementing digital tools and strategies you've recommended?
5. **Performance Metrics:** Analyze quantitative data like engagement rates, the number of partnerships formed, or other key performance indicators you've identified.
6. **Feedback:** Review qualitative feedback from stakeholders, team members, and businesses themselves. What are they saying about their experience with your organization?
7. **Improvement Areas:** Based on the above, identify areas where your hub could improve. Are there common issues or complaints?





Remember to be objective in your assessments, acknowledging both the successes and areas for improvement. This exercise will provide a comprehensive view of your organization's performance, setting the foundation for targeted improvements in the next cycle of operations.

2.4.2 Checklist

After you've concluded the evaluation exercise, we'll progress to the checklist phase. This comprehensive list serves not just as a tick-box exercise, but as a structured method to ensure you have comprehensively and holistically evaluated your business hub's performance.

Here are the key areas the checklist should cover:

1. **Strategic Goals:** This is the fundamental layer of your evaluation. Check whether each goal has been achieved, partially achieved, or not achieved, and document the reasons for these outcomes.
2. **Initiative Outcomes:** Investigate the tangible and intangible results of each initiative you implemented. Examine these in relation to your strategic goals and record the implications of these outcomes on your business organization's overall performance.
3. **Stakeholder Feedback:** Understand the perceptions, experiences, and suggestions of all stakeholders. This includes team members, partners, and businesses you've served. Has their feedback been gathered, analyzed, and addressed?
4. **Performance Metrics:** Metrics provide measurable evidence of your performance. Review whether you have collected data, analyzed it properly, and extracted meaningful insights from all relevant performance indicators.
5. **Areas for Improvement:** Have you identified and documented areas that need refinement? This could be in terms of processes, strategies, resource allocation, or stakeholder engagement.
6. **Future Action Plan:** Based on your evaluation, you should formulate an action plan for the next cycle. This should include strategies for maintaining strengths, addressing weaknesses, leveraging opportunities, and mitigating threats.

Remember, this checklist is a tool for ensuring a comprehensive evaluation, helping you scrutinize each element of your business hub's operations. The aim is to gain a deep understanding of your performance, identify areas for enhancement, and set the stage for the continual growth and evolution of your organization in the dynamic digital transformation journey.

2.4.3 Self-Reflective Questions

As we conclude the Evaluation & Closing stage, it's time for an insightful self-evaluation. This crucial process provides a roadmap for your business hub's progression, helping you to identify both successes and areas requiring refinement. Reflect on the following questions to illuminate your performance and set the direction for future strategy:





1. **Partnership Facilitation:** Assess the efficacy of your partnership facilitation. Did your actions successfully stimulate the digital transformation of small commerce and small digital businesses? If progress was limited, what constraints surfaced? Unearthing these barriers will empower you to devise stronger, more effective strategies for overcoming such challenges in the future.
2. **Impact on Digital Transformation:** Contemplate your organization's influence on the digital transformation journeys of the businesses you served. Did your support significantly augment their digital capabilities? Has there been a marked rise in their digital proficiency? By gauging your impact, you can fortify your value proposition and clarify your strategic positioning.
3. **Engagement and Collaboration:** Examine your methods for promoting engagement and collaboration. Identify which techniques were particularly successful and which posed challenges. Understanding these variables will offer invaluable insights for refining future strategies and enhancing the collaborative dynamic.
4. **Future Strategies:** Reflect on lessons learned and consider what changes could bolster future initiatives. How could you enhance collaboration and support for small businesses further? Are there innovative tactics you could adopt to amplify your impact? This reflection promotes a culture of continuous improvement and learning, setting the stage for an even more effective support system for businesses navigating digital transitions.

These self-evaluative questions are integral strategic instruments, providing you with a deeper understanding of your organization's performance and guiding your future direction. By thoughtfully engaging with these queries, you position yourself to devise more impactful strategies, ensuring ongoing improvement and heightened support for small commerce and small digital businesses.

By successfully navigating the Evaluation & Closing stage, you arm yourself with a detailed understanding of your organization's effectiveness. Leverage these insights to sharpen your strategies, elevate your services, and continue catalyzing digital transformation within the small business landscape. This stage doesn't symbolize an endpoint but rather a strategic pit stops in your relentless journey towards enabling small businesses to thrive in the digital age.

2.4.4 Inspiration for further development

[Using the LETZ RETAIL ONLINE case studies as a starting point, we have “ideated” some possible next steps for 2 of these cases, which can serve as inspiration when reflecting upon the ideation phase.](#)

2.4.5 Relevant resources

To enhance your understanding of this Action Plan and apply the skills and knowledge acquired, consider exploring the following resources:

Tutorials and How To:

- [Top 5 Project Management Tools for Google Workspace Users](#)
- [How To Build Successful Retail Partnerships: A Step-by-Step Guide](#)
- [Project Management – Monitoring and evaluation](#)





- [Best Practices for Transforming Digital Collaboration](#)
- [How to develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework | with COACH ALEXANDER](#)

Articles and Examples:

- [Creating a Culture of Continuous Improvement](#)
- [A simple and collaborative approach to digital transformation](#)
- [4 successful digital transformation case studies for businesses to learn from](#)
- [Small Business Use of Internet Marketing: Findings from Case Studies](#)

By thoroughly engaging with these resources, you have the opportunity to broaden your knowledge and strengthen your skills, thus enhancing your ability to execute the Evaluation & Closing stage of the Action Plan. This expertise not only benefits your current endeavors but also bolsters the success of future actions destined to make both Small Commerce and Small Digital sectors better positioned to collaborate constructively, adapt swiftly to industry changes, and drive their businesses towards exponential growth and success.

