Action Plan – SMALL COMMERCE

Part of Project Result 3 – LRO Programme

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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.

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- 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.

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2   Small Commerce Action Plan

The Small Commerce Action Plan is a core component of the LETZ RETAIL ONLINE Action Plans, aimed specifically at empowering small businesses within the commerce sector to navigate the complex landscape of digital transformation.

This dynamic guide provides a strategic framework and practical tools to help your business transition from traditional to digital commerce, regardless of your current digital competency. With a comprehensive roadmap covering the key stages of Ideation, Preparation, Implementation, and Evaluation & Closing, this action plan provides a step-by-step approach to digital transformation, offering essential resources such as exercises, checklists, reflective questions, and assignments at each stage.

We recognize that embarking on a digital transformation journey can be challenging and daunting, particularly for small commerce businesses with limited resources and expertise in the digital field. That's why we have developed this Small Commerce Action Plan: to simplify the process, provide clarity, and offer support throughout your transformation journey.

Our ultimate goal is to empower you with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to exploit the opportunities presented by digital commerce effectively and efficiently. LETZ RETAIL ONLINE strives to create a thriving ecosystem where small commerce businesses like yours can flourish online, harnessing digital technology to improve operational efficiency, enhance customer experiences, and boost competitiveness in an increasingly digital marketplace.

So, whether you are a small local shop dreaming of reaching a global market, or an established business looking to enhance your digital presence, the Small Commerce Action Plan is here to assist you in achieving your digital aspirations. This journey requires commitment, creativity, and a willingness to embrace change, and we will be with you every step of the way.

Let's harness the power of digital transformation, unlock new opportunities, and take your business to the next level. Welcome to your digital future.

2.1   Ideation

Let's begin with the Ideation phase, similar to a brainstorming session. Here, you're asked to think about the many different aspects related to taking maximum advantage of digital tools and technologies for your business. The first step is to identify the purpose for which you want to "go digital," is it to improve internal processes, is it to improve the relation with suppliers or you want to go online and better reach and serve your customers. How would this look? What potential benefits could there be? And just as important, what challenges might arise.

2.1.1   Exercise I

Before starting the ideation process, it is therefore important to stop and reflect on why you want or need to embark on this journey of becoming more digital. Ask yourself the following questions:

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Ask yourself	Tip
What is the problem I want to solve?	*Think about whether it is related to reaching and retaining clients, or if it is related to an internal process, or even something in your supply chain?*
	Identify the process which is related to this problem.
How did other similar businesses in my sector solved this problem?	*Search for cases or examples online or talk to others in your sector. See what they did to solve the problem.*
Imagine the ideal situation, what would be the desired status, i.e. what would be the result of addressing the problem?	*Create for yourself a picture of what the desired situation is.*

2.1.2   Exercise II

Think about the processes which would be affected by the change, are these internal processes or those related more to the value chain or suppliers or your customers, and what will be the benefits or challenges related to this change. Be aware these benefits or challenges might not have to do anything with the tool or technology but more the change or business processes themselves.

Identify the process or processes which will be affected by the use tool or technology	Define how the process is affected, i.e. what will change in the process or in the way it is implemented.	Benefits	Challenges

2.1.3   Self-Reflective Questions

Now you have a clearer idea on why you want to "go digital," and the impact it will have on your processes, reflect about the following:

1. What are the fears or reservations you might have about the process, or what barriers or challenges you might face with your staff (e.g. level of digital literacy or tech savviness)?

2. How will the change affect the way I do business and my relations with the rest of the value chain and my suppliers, are they ready or open for such a change?

3. What kind of collaboration are you looking for with a small digital company (based upon your analysis), e.g. implementation or adaptation of an existing solution or design a custom-made solution?

2.1.4 Checklist

Checklist Implementation	N/A	Done	Comments
Define the problem you want to solve & imagine the ideal situation.			
Learn from others – search for related cases or experiences and see what is relevant for your business.			
Define the goals and expected outcomes of the "go digital" process.			
Analyze which (business) processes are affected and how.			
Identify the challenges and barriers in the change process.			
Establish clear communication channels within your team			
Identify the skills required for a successful implementation of the digital tool or technology.			
Identify potential digital partners & dialogue to select the one you feel aligns most with your needs and business.			
Initiate a co-creation and co-design process with your digital partners (in particular when developing a custom solution).			
Understand your current IT infrastructure and identify necessary upgrades			
Plan how to keep the business dully operative during the preparation and implementation process.			

When you finish this stage, you've laid out the foundation for going digital, and start with the actual preparation for making this 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

Moving on to the Preparation stage, you are now turning those ideas into a more structured plan. This phase is similar to setting up a project - who will be involved, what resources will be needed, and by when should things be done?

2.2.1   Exercise

Identify tasks needed to facilitate digital transformation.

Task	Responsible Person	Deadline	Expected Outcome/ Result	Status

2.2.2   Self-Reflective Questions

1. How would you keep regular business operations during the digital transformation process?
2. What are the key roles and responsibilities within your team during this process?
3. How could your business overcome any potential challenges in the digital transformation process?
4. How could you use your collaboration with a small digital company to facilitate the process?

2.2.3   Checklist

Checklist Implementation	N/A	Done	Comments
Develop a detailed plan and budget for the digital transformation			
Organize your team members and assign tasks based on skills and competences			
Establish clear communication channels with your digital partner			
Develop strategies for keeping regular business operations during the transformation			
Train your team on new digital tools and processes			
Set key performance indicators (KPIs) for the transformation process			

Conduct risk assessment and devise mitigation strategies

Secure necessary resources and tools for the transformation

Establish a contingency plan in case of major obstacles or setbacks

Regularly update stakeholders on the progress

As you reach the end of this stage, you'll be equipped with all the necessary tools for a remarkable project. You'll have a clear understanding of what needs to be done, and you'll be fully prepared to tackle it head-on.

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

Next up is the Implementation stage, where the real action begins! Think of it as stepping into the arena, ready to display your skills and bring your vision to life. It's akin to embarking on a thrilling adventure, just like executing a well-prepared experiment or undertaking an exciting project. Get ready to roll up your sleeves and make things happen!

2.3.1 Exercise: Monitor progress

As the tasks have been divided and the planning and key milestones have been decided, it is time to monitor the steps you decided on. It is recommended to check and monitor progress on a regular basis, both during progress meetings and for yourself. This will help you in keeping an overview of how the collaboration is going, the status of your own responsibilities, and the status of other crucial steps in the collaboration.

You can use the table below to fill in the tasks that you'd like to check on a regular basis and fill the table regularly to keep up to date with the progress of the collaboration.

Task	Initial Status	Current Status	On Track	Changes made

2.3.2   Self-Reflective Questions

1. Are you on track with the digital transformation timeline?

2. What challenges have you faced, and how did you overcome them?

3. How has the digital transformation affected your customer relationships so far?

4. How well is your team adapting to the changes brought about by digital transformation?

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			
Address challenges promptly and seek solutions			
Maintain regular business operations and customer relationships			
Regularly update the digital transformation plan based on the progress			
Provide ongoing training and support to team members			
Keep stakeholders informed about the progress			
Review KPIs and adjust the plan if necessary			
Ensure the digital transformation stays within budget			
Continually test and improve the new digital systems			

As you reach the culmination of this stage, it's akin to successfully completing a significant assignment. You've put in the hard work, crossed the finish line, and your small commerce business has officially joined the digital realm. Congratulations on becoming a part of the dynamic digital world!

2.3.4   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.

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2.3.5   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:

- [How to Improve Kick-off Meetings to Spark Collaboration | Mainmatter](#)
- [Setting Clear Expectations - YouTube](#)
- [Monitoring and reporting | How do you keep your projects on track? - YouTube](#)

Articles and Examples:

- [How do you align your goals and expectations with your collaborators before starting a project? (linkedin.com)](#)
- [5 Common Collaboration Problems and How To Manage Them | Indeed.com](#)
- [Better Ways to Monitor and Communicate Your Project's Progress| Lucidchart Blog](#)

2.4   Evaluation & Closing

As we approach the Evaluation & Closing phase of the Small Commerce Action Plan, it's time to take a systematic look at the progress made during your digital transformation journey. This phase is an essential part of the process, designed to help you measure the outcomes of your digital efforts, understand the degree of your progress, and recognize potential areas for future improvement.

Evaluation & Closing is not simply the conclusion of your action plan, but rather a pivotal moment that provides significant insights about your business's digital evolution. It allows for a comprehensive assessment of how effectively the plan was executed, the efficacy of your strategies, and the overall impact of your digital transition.

This stage is about much more than acknowledging what worked and what didn't. It's an opportunity to learn from your experiences, to identify strengths to build on, and challenges to address. Moreover, it's a chance to refine your approach as you continue to adapt and thrive in the digital landscape.

To facilitate a thorough and meaningful evaluation, we'll follow a well-structured approach. This methodology ensures that we're able to consider all aspects of your digital journey, analyze the progress made in each area, and identify clear next steps. This methodical process will provide a more comprehensive understanding of your business's digital status and will help inform your future digital strategy.

2.4.1   Exercise: Evaluate Results

As we commence the evaluation process, we'll leverage a systematic approach with the help of an evaluation table. This table will outline various aspects of your digital transformation, each aimed at providing a multi-dimensional view of your journey. Your task is to reflect deeply on each of these aspects and choose the option that most accurately represents the present condition of your small commerce business.

Consider the following guidance in the table below for each category. Select the option that best represents the current status of your business for each evaluation aspect. Leave the "Improvement Areas" column blank for now, as we will address it in the subsequent self-reflective questions.

Evaluation Aspect	Initial Status	Mid-Term Status	Final Status	Improvement Areas
Measure the outcome of your digital transformation journey	Not Started	In Progress	Successfully Completed	
Assess the impact on your company's financials	Negative	Neutral	Positive	
Analyze the feedback from customers and clients	Limited or Negative	Mixed or Neutral	Positive and Satisfactory	
Reflect on the effectiveness of your team's collaboration	Ineffective or Challenging	Moderate or Developing	Cohesive and Productive	
Evaluate the quality of your digital products or services	Inadequate	Acceptable	Excellent	
Identify the impact on your company's growth and competitiveness	Stagnant or Declining	Stable or Incremental	Enhanced and Competitive	

2.4.2   Checklist

Once you've completed the evaluation exercise, the next step is to tackle the checklist. This checklist is a detailed and systematic list intended to ensure that all vital elements of your digital transformation have been properly addressed during your evaluation. It acts as an audit of your efforts, leaving no stone unturned in assessing your transformation. For each checklist item, mark its status as "Completed," "In Progress," or "Not Applicable" (NA), as appropriate. For any tasks that are "In Progress," it is crucial to set realistic deadlines, facilitating an organized and timely completion of these tasks, which further aids in tracking your overall progress.

Evaluation Aspect	NA	Done	To be Done
Review the financial impact of your digital transformation			
Analyze feedback from customers and clients			
Reflect on the overall process and lessons learned			
Identify areas for continuous improvement			
Assess the impact on team dynamics and collaboration			
Evaluate the effectiveness of your digital products or services			
Measure the impact on company growth and competitiveness			
Plan for future enhancements and adaptation			

As we conclude this evaluation process, the thorough review of your checklist stands as a crucial step. Each item within it serves to direct your attention to essential aspects of your digital transformation, sparking valuable insights. This is not a task to be rushed; instead, treat it as a moment for reflection, learning, and strategic planning.

Review your accomplishments and areas for improvement, using these findings to shape your next moves in the digital landscape. Remember, the journey of digital transformation is continuous. The Evaluation & Closing stage isn't the end, but a springboard into the next cycle of your digital evolution. Continue to learn, grow, and transform, and you'll keep thriving in your digital journey.

2.4.3   Self-Reflective Questions

Now, we reach a critical juncture in the evaluation process where we encourage you to embark on a journey of self-reflection. We present you with a set of thought-provoking questions intended to probe deeper into your digital transformation journey. This exercise demands mindful contemplation and candid responses.

The intention behind these questions is twofold. Firstly, they offer a platform for introspection, helping you to understand more about your journey and the choices that shaped it. Secondly, the insights derived from this reflective exercise will play an instrumental role in formulating your future strategies.

Each question warrants careful consideration. Allow yourself the liberty to delve deep into your thoughts and experiences, exploring them without restriction. Do not rush through this process; rather, invest time in understanding the layers of your digital transformation journey.

This introspective exercise is an opportunity to gain experience from your journey. Use it as a catalyst to fuel your future growth and decision-making. As you reflect, remember to focus on both the milestones you've achieved and the challenges you've faced, as both contribute significantly to your ongoing digital journey.

1. Did you achieve the goals you set for your digital transformation journey? If not, what factors hindered your progress?

2. How has the digital transformation impacted your company's operations, productivity, and customer relationships?

3. What aspects of the digital transformation process exceeded your expectations? Were there any unexpected challenges?

4. Based on your experience, what would you do differently in future digital transformation initiatives? How can you apply the lessons learned to further improve your business?

In answering these reflective questions, remember to take your time and think deeply. The knowledge you uncover from this introspection will serve as invaluable compass points, directing your future strategies and ensuring your continuous growth within the rapidly evolving digital world.

Upon completing the Evaluation & Closing stage, remember that you're not finishing, but rather transitioning into a new phase that yields a comprehensive understanding of your digital transformation's results. The insights from this stage arm you with the necessary tools to enhance your strategies, optimize your operations, and quickly adapt to the shifting digital landscape.

Remember, this stage doesn't mark the end but instead serves as the launchpad for your ongoing journey in the digital realm. Embrace the lessons, apply the acquired knowledge, and remain adaptable to confidently navigate the ever-changing digital waters.

As you proceed in your digital journey, keep pushing the boundaries for growth, fostering innovation, and maintaining excellence in your operations. This forward-thinking approach will enable you to continue to thrive within the digital landscape.

N.B. while the Evaluation & Closing section may differ for each action plan, the systematic approach outlined in the other sections remains consistent. This approach aims to foster effective collaborations, empower small businesses, and facilitate their transition into the digital sphere.

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 adeptly execute the Evaluation & Closing stage of the Action Plan. This expertise not only benefits your current endeavors but also bolsters the success of future collaborations. Armed with this foundational knowledge, both Small Commerce and Small Digital sectors will be better positioned to collaborate constructively, adapt swiftly to industry changes, and drive their businesses towards exponential growth and success.