

## Strategic Pivot Options (For Small Business Owners)

As a business owner, sometimes the market changes, customers evolve, or your business just needs a fresh path forward. That's where strategic pivots come in. A pivot is simply a deliberate change in the way you run your business to stay competitive, meet demand, or grow smarter.

There are four main types of pivots you can consider:



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### INTRODUCTION

In business, standing still is rarely an option. Markets evolve, customer expectations change, competitors innovate, and technologies reshape the playing field faster than ever. For small business owners, this reality can feel both exciting and unsettling. What once worked reliably may suddenly lose traction, leaving you at a crossroads: do you keep pushing forward with the same approach, or do you adapt? The most successful leaders recognize these moments as opportunities—not setbacks—and make deliberate choices to pivot.

A strategic pivot is not about throwing out everything you've built. Instead, it's about refining your direction, adjusting your strategy, and aligning your business with where the opportunities truly are. Whether that means introducing new products, shifting your business model, rethinking operations, or leveraging technology in smarter ways, a pivot is about moving your organization toward resilience and growth rather than letting external forces dictate your future.

This guide was created with that mindset in mind. It outlines four main types of pivots every small business owner should understand:



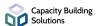
- Product & Service Pivots Adjusting what you offer and how you deliver it to meet evolving customer needs.
- Business Model Pivots Rethinking how you generate revenue, from subscription models to licensing and beyond.
- Operational Pivots Changing the way your business runs day-to-day, including supply chain, partnerships, and staffing decisions.
- ► Technology Pivots Leveraging digital tools, automation, and new platforms to streamline operations and improve customer experiences.

Each section includes practical steps, real-world examples, and strategies to minimize risk. You'll also find an assessment tool to evaluate your readiness, weigh market demand, and consider risk versus return before committing to a pivot. A bonus side-by-side comparison framework lets you evaluate multiple pivot options at once, helping you identify the strategies that align best with your current strengths and future goals.

The purpose of this document is not only to give you options but to give you clarity. Pivots should not be made impulsively—they should be intentional, tested, and aligned with your vision. By working through this guide, you'll sharpen your ability to see the bigger picture, recognize where you need to move, and take proactive steps to position your business ahead of the curve.

Remember, momentum in business is rarely maintained by playing it safe. Growth belongs to the leaders who are willing to ask hard questions, confront uncomfortable realities, and make bold adjustments. Use this guide as both a roadmap and a catalyst to help you identify the pivot strategies that will keep your business thriving in an everchanging environment.





### **Product & Service Pivots**

This is about changing what you offer and how you offer it to better meet customer needs.

### 1. Reach Nearby Markets with What You Already Have

(Also called: Adjacent Market Expansion)

### What it means:

Look for new customer groups that are closely related to your current audience. You might only need small tweaks to reach them.

### Example:

If you sell cleaning products to homeowners, consider selling to local janitorial companies too.

### How to get started:

- Talk to your customers—ask what else they need that you don't offer yet.
- · List your current skills or products and ask, "Who else might benefit from this?"
- Create a simple version of your offering to test the waters in that new group.
- Track results separately to see if the new idea is worth investing in further.

- Limiting investment to 5–10% of your operating budget.
- Setting a 90-day test window with clear goals.
- Having a plan to quickly shut it down if it doesn't work.

Reflection:			



### 2. Make It Digital

(Also called: Digital Transformation)

### What it means:

Take things you usually do in person or by hand, and move them online or into apps.

### **Example:**

Instead of booking by phone, let customers schedule through your website. Or create a video course instead of in-person training.

### How to get started:

- · Look at your full customer journey and ask, "What can be done online?"
- · Start by fixing what causes the most customer frustration.
- Offer digital options alongside your current way of doing things until people get used to it.
- Train your team on new tools so they feel confident and capable.

- Keeping both the old and new systems running during the switch.
- Preparing your customers to use digital tools with how-to guides.
- Having backup plans in case the tech goes down.

Reflection:



### 3. Offer Tiered Options (Budget and Premium)

(Also called: Product Line Expansion)

### What it means:

Create high-end and low-cost versions of your offerings so you can serve different budgets.

### Example:

A home service company could offer a basic, mid-level, and premium cleaning package.

### How to get started:

- Segment your customers based on price sensitivity—some want value, others want luxury.
- List out features that are essential vs. nice-to-have.
- Brand each version clearly so customers know what they're paying for.
- Build upgrade paths—encourage lower-tier customers to try a higher-tier option next time.

- Watching to make sure the lower-priced version doesn't steal sales from your main one.
- Protecting the premium brand's image by keeping it distinct and high-quality.

Reflection:			



### 4. Package or Unpackage Your Services

(Also called: Bundling and Unbundling)

### What it means:

Sell related services together as a value pack—or offer them separately for customers who want more flexibility.

### **Example:**

A web design company could sell a full bundle (site, SEO, hosting) or let clients choose just one piece.

### How to get started:

- Look at what services are commonly bought together.
- Create "Good/Better/Best" package levels.
- · Offer a monthly subscription for bundled services.
- Make it easy for customers to understand the savings or value they get.

- Making sure pricing still leaves you with a healthy profit.
- Being flexible so customers can switch or customize.
- Assigning someone to track how bundles are performing.





### **Business Model Pivots**

This is about changing how you make money—not just what you sell.

### 1. Switch to Subscriptions

(Also called: Subscription Model)

### What it means:

Instead of selling once, get customers to sign up for ongoing service.

### Example:

A landscaping business might offer a monthly lawn-care subscription instead of one-off appointments.

### How to get started:

- · Look for services people need again and again.
- Make pricing simple and worthwhile for both you and the customer.
- Set up auto-pay and auto-renew tools.
- Offer perks for staying subscribed—like priority service or loyalty bonuses.

- Offering both one-time and subscription options at first.
- Watching for signs people are unhappy and might cancel.
- Encouraging long-term signups with small discounts.

Reflection:		



### 2. Build a Marketplace or Platform

(Also called: Platform Model)

### What it means:

Instead of being the only seller, become a space where others sell too—and you earn a piece of each transaction.

### **Example:**

You could allow vendors to sell on your website or promote their services to your customer base.

### How to get started:

- Identify others who complement what you do—maybe they serve the same customers in a different way.
- Create a way for them to join and showcase their offerings.
- · Charge fees or offer premium placement options.

- Starting with a hybrid approach—you sell your stuff while letting others join.
- · Setting rules and standards to maintain quality.
- Having a plan if things go south (like disputes or poor experiences).

Reflection:			



### 3. Take Control of the Supply Chain

(Also called: Vertical Integration)	
What it means:	
Do more in-house instead of relying on outside vendors.	
Example:	
If you run a café, you might start roasting your own beans instead of buying them.	
How to get started:	
<ul> <li>List out what you buy or outsource—and see if you could do any of it better or cheaper yourself.</li> <li>Take one step at a time to avoid overwhelming your team.</li> <li>Set up performance measures to track whether it's paying off.</li> </ul>	
Minimize risk by:	
<ul> <li>Keeping good relationships with current vendors in case you need to switch back.</li> <li>Testing before going all-in.</li> <li>Clarifying who is responsible for what in the new setup.</li> </ul>	
Reflection:	



### **◆ 4. Let Others Use or Sell Your Product**

(Also called: Licensing and White-Labeling)	
What it means:	
Let other companies put their label on your product or pay to use your idea.	
Example:	
A software company might license its platform to consultants who brand it as their own.	
How to get started:	
<ul> <li>Identify which of your services, tools, or systems others would find valuable.</li> <li>Create simple, standard contracts with different pricing levels.</li> <li>Offer training and support to your partners.</li> </ul>	
Minimize risk by:	
<ul> <li>Protecting your intellectual property (IP).</li> <li>Separating your brand clearly from the licensed version.</li> <li>Including milestone checkpoints to review success or failure.</li> </ul>	
Reflection:	



### **Operational Pivots**

This is about improving how your business runs day to day.

### 1. Reconsider What You Do In-House

(Also called: Outsourcing or Insourcing Reversal)

### What it means:

Either bring outsourced work back inside—or outsource things you currently do yourself.

### How to get started:

- Compare total costs, not just wages—include time, stress, quality, etc.
- Decide which jobs are mission-critical and which can be delegated.
- Set up a clear hand-off plan if you're changing who does the work.

- Keeping both old and new options running during the switch.
- Having backups for busy seasons or staff changes.
- Writing out clear expectations with anyone you hire or contract.

Reflection:			



### 2. Open, Move, or Close Locations

(Also called: Geographic Adjustment)

### What it means:

Open in new areas that show promise—or close/move out of areas that aren't delivering.

### How to get started:

- Look at performance by location and see where you're thriving or struggling.
- Try pop-ups or mobile services to test a new area.
- Create plans for both expansion and closure, with clear goals and timing.

- Keeping it flexible—don't commit to a lease too fast.
- Planning customer communication carefully to retain loyalty.

Reflection:	



### 3. Form Alliances with Other Businesses

(Also called: Strategic Partnerships)

### What it means:

Team up with others to grow your reach, share resources, or create new offerings.

### Example:

A photographer and a florist could offer joint wedding packages.

### How to get started:

- Define what you each bring to the table.
- Write simple agreements—who does what, how you split money, how you measure success.
- Assign someone to manage the relationship and keep it healthy.

- Setting expectations early and protecting your customer list and brand.
- Testing the relationship with small projects first.

Reflection:	



### 4. Make Your Supply Chain More Resilient

(Also called: Supply Chain Reconfiguration)

### What it means:

Make your supply chain stronger and less dependent on any one supplier or location.

### How to get started:

- · List every supplier and find your weak spots.
- Add backup suppliers, local options, or build up inventory where needed.
- · Use tools to track orders and deliveries more clearly.

- · Keeping extra supplies while you switch things up.
- Making sure all partners are informed about changes.

Reflection:		



### **Technology Pivots**

This is about using modern tools to work smarter and serve customers better.

### 1. Use AI to Automate

(Also called: Al Implementation)

### What it means:

Let smart software handle repeat tasks, freeing up your team for higher-value work.

### Example:

Automate appointment booking, invoice follow-up, or customer questions.

### How to get started:

- Audit your daily tasks—what's repetitive or rule-based?
- Start with one or two tools and train your team to use them.
- Always have a manual fallback plan in case the tech fails.

Reflection:			
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### 2. Make Money from Data (Also called: Data Monetization) What it means: Use the information you collect to create value—for you or others. **Example:** Turn customer usage patterns into insights, reports, or services. How to get started: • List what data you already have (sales, behavior, feedback). • Make sure it's stored safely and legally. • Package insights or tools others might pay for. Reflection:



### 3. Modernize Your Software Stack

(Also called: Technology Stack Modernization)

### What it means:

Replace old systems with faster, flexible, cloud-based tools.

### Example:

Switch from a clunky accounting program to a cloud app you can access from anywhere.

### How to get started:

- Assess what systems are outdated.
- Prioritize changes that improve customer experience or reduce cost.
- Train your team and test thoroughly before launching.

Reflection:			



### 4. Improve Online Customer Experience

(Also called: Digital CX Enhancement)

### What it means:

Make it easier, faster, and more enjoyable for people to do business with you online.

### Example:

- Walk through your website or app as if you're a new customer.
- Fix the biggest pain points first.
- Add personalized touches, like tailored recommendations.
- · Set up live chat, FAQs, and self-service options.

### **Final Tips for Making Any Pivot Work**

- 1. Start small and test before fully committing.
- 2. Align changes with what you're already good at.
- 3. Track results with clear success measures.
- 4. Communicate clearly with your team and customers.
- 5. Be flexible—not every pivot will work, and that's okay.
- 6. Document what you need: staff, time, tools, money.

Reflection:			



Pivot Selection for Consideration



### **Strategic Pivot Assessment Tool**

Before you dive into a new direction, it helps to pause and ask: Is this the right move for my business? Use the following tool to evaluate each pivot option and focus on those that offer the best mix of opportunity and readiness.

For each pivot option you're considering, score yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 for each question (1 = low, 5 = high). Then tally your total score.

### Readiness & Fit Checklist

How well does this pivot fit your current business model and resources?

Question	1	2	3	4	5
Do we already have the skills, tools, or products to support this pivot?					
Will this pivot build on our existing strengths and reputation?					
Is the pivot easy to test without making a huge investment?					
Can our team realistically implement this within the next 6–12 months?					
Will this pivot simplify operations—or make them more complicated?					
Subtotal (Readiness):					





### **⊘** Market Opportunity & Customer Need

How much demand and value does this pivot create in the marketplace?

Question	1	2	3	4	5
Are our customers asking for this—or are competitors already doing it?					
Would this pivot solve a real pain point for our audience?					
Could this pivot open up a new market or expand our reach?					
Is there a clear way to price and deliver value with this pivot?					
Will this help us stand out more in a crowded market?					
Subtotal (Market):					

### Risk & Return

What are the financial implications—and how risky is this move?

Question	1	2	3	4	5
Can we afford to test this without hurting our current business?					
Do we have a clear way to track results and measure success?					
Have we thought through "what if it doesn't work"?					
Is there a high chance this pivot will increase revenue or profits?					
Can we easily adjust or exit if the pivot underperforms?					
Subtotal (Risk & Return):					

Total	Score:		



### **⊘** Final Scoring Guide

Total Score Range	Recommendation
61-75	✓ Strong fit — Go ahead and prioritize this pivot.
46-60	⚠ Promising — Worth testing. Start with a small pilot or phased rollout.
31-45	? Moderate risk — Proceed with caution. Re-evaluate resources or scope.
15-30	○ Not a great fit — Too risky or low payoff right now. Consider shelving.

### **Bonus: Compare Pivots Side-by-Side**

Use this tool to evaluate 2-3 pivot strategies and see which ranks highest based on:

- ▶ Internal capability
- Customer demand
- Risk vs. reward

You don't need to pick just one—but you should pick the ones with the best mix of readiness and return.





