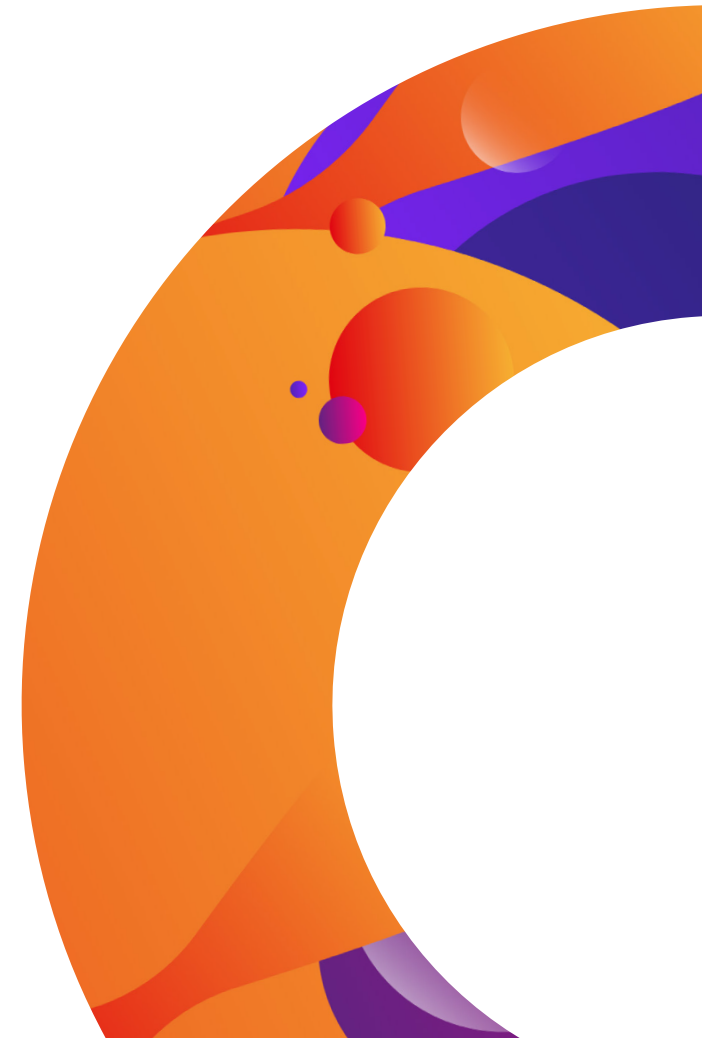




15 SMALL BUSINESS TRENDS

And Challenges to Confront in 2022



The ever-changing challenges and opportunities of small business often arrive hand-in-hand. The predictions for 2022's small business trends have arrived, and with them, a new set of opportunities to tackle.

Here are the 15 trends in small business that you need to watch for in 2022, and our tips for overcoming the challenges ahead:

1. THE “RETURN TO THE OFFICE” DATES WILL COME... AND GO

This time last year, businesses were announcing their plans to return to the office. The proposed “return to the office” dates came and went in 2021. This year will likely be the same.

The COVID-19 pandemic will remain a deadly reality. What’s more, the McKinsey Global Institute estimates that **more than 20 percent** of the global workforce could work the majority of its time away from the office and be just as effective, if not even more so.

However, employers and employees are often at odds in their vision of the future. According to the Boston Consulting Group, **89%** of employees want to work remotely, at least part-time. Another study shows that **83%** of CEOs want employees to return in person.

Rather than fighting hybrid and remote work models, companies will need to adapt to this new reality in

2022. According to a **survey by Intermedia**, 57% of small to medium-sized business owners said they would continue to offer remote work options in the long term.

There are tools to help them achieve (and surpass) the level of communication, productivity, and collaboration they experienced in the office.

Explore Ninety’s comprehensive [collection of tools](#) and discover how Ninety can help you work from anywhere.



2. THE NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY TOOLS WILL CONTINUE TO INCREASE

As more companies adopt a hybrid or remote model, business owners and leaders will no longer be able to see their employees sitting at their desks all day. But there is still a desire to see what employees are working on. One of small business owners' biggest challenges is lack of visibility.

More than ever, employers want to know what their employees are working on, track deadlines and hold everyone accountable to agreed-upon timelines. There are tools to mitigate this fear. **Solutions like Ninety allow full transparency across the organization, so nobody is in the dark.** In Ninety, you can easily assign and track tasks, set goals, measure progress and gain insight into what everyone is doing.



3. COMMUNICATION WILL MAKE (OR BREAK) SMALL TO MID-SIZED BUSINESSES

In 2021, many companies struggled to adapt to the **unique communication styles** required by hybrid and remote work. As a result, they realized that good communication was necessary for happy and supported employees, correctly-completed assignments and invaluable collaboration.

The companies that fail to foster and practice good communication will suffer higher turnover rates, employee burnout, missed deadlines, lagging performance **and more**. **Software like Ninety helps teach and encourage better communication,** regardless of your preferred communication tools like Slack or Zoom.



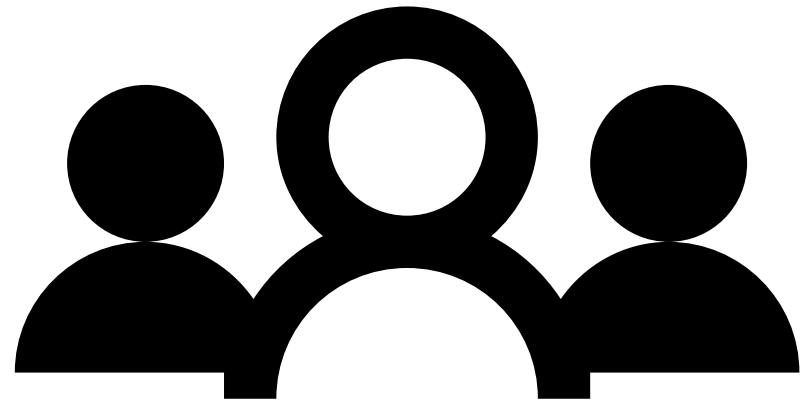
4. BUSINESS OWNERS WILL GET COMPETITIVE FOR THE RIGHT TALENT

2021 marked the year of The Great Resignation. Now, experienced and talented professionals aren't just looking for a job – they're looking for the right job.

Many companies see inefficiencies in traditional hiring models, and **42%** of small businesses can't fill their job openings. Savvy business owners know that they can get anyone to fill an empty role at their company, but if they want the top talent, they're going to have to work for it.

Business owners are prepared to offer higher pay, more paid leave and stronger benefits. They're also already oversaturating job listing sites on their mission to fill empty roles, so you'll need to be ready to cut through the noise with a competitive offer and strong marketing efforts.

Getting clear on who you're looking for, what's important for a cultural fit and the responsibilities that need to be addressed will decrease onboarding time. Having an established **Roles and Responsibilities matrix** will help speed up and smooth out this process.



5. ENTREPRENEURSHIP WILL CONTINUE TO RISE

People got innovative in response to the pandemic and consumers' new and urgent needs. According to the United States Census Bureau, more than **1.5 million** new-business applications were filed in the third quarter of 2020 alone. Compared to the same period in 2019, that figure doubled.

Because many of those businesses provide services that became particularly valuable in the pandemic, they'll likely look to expand in 2022. Small business owners who join forces with idea-hungry innovators can get an edge on competitors who will stick to their tried-and-true (and potentially outdated) products.



6. THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION WILL FULLY ARRIVE

For small business owners, this means an opportunity to take advantage of the newly available in-depth information about customers. In 2022, you'll be able to learn even more about your customers' preferences and habits.

However, a [global survey from Salesforce Research](#) also found that 57% of customers are uncomfortable with how companies use their information. Of those polled, 62% are more afraid of their data leaks now than they were in 2018. So if you plan on utilizing new data to learn more about your customers, you'll need to establish strong digital security protocols.



7. COMPANY SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES WILL BECOME WIDESPREAD

In one survey, **92%** of CEOs said their businesses had increased focus on mental health after the pandemic. That's because, as **a report** from the American Psychological Association shows, American workers are **emotionally struggling**.

According to the report, 79% of employees say they have experienced at least some work-related stress in the last month. Roughly 6 in 10 workers say they have experienced negative impacts of work-related stress in the last month. Among those who typically feel tense or stressed out during the workday, 71% intend to seek employment outside their company in the next year.

“Taking care of our employees is just the right thing to do,” says Andrew Mueller, CEO of MaineHealth, the largest health system in northern New England. “We owe it to them to be there for them – especially

in these challenging moments – given all the times they have been there to support our patients and communities. At the same time, there's a good business case for doing so.”

Even smaller companies are working to provide **more mental health support services** and benefits for their employees. The majority of businesses will likely follow suit in 2022.



8. BUSINESSES THAT CAN'T CONDUCT E-COMMERCE WILL LAG BEHIND COMPETITORS

One of the top challenges for small businesses in 2022 will be meeting their customer's expectations for e-commerce. A [McKinsey survey](#) published in October 2020 found that companies are three times likelier than before COVID-19 to conduct at least 80% of their customer interactions online. According to the same survey, the first half of 2020 alone saw an increase in e-commerce equivalent to that [of the previous ten years](#).

Experts weren't sure what consumers would do once pandemic protocols loosened in 2021, but e-commerce popularity [continued to rise](#). In 2022, these numbers are expected to climb further. By 2024, experts estimate that online shopping will be responsible for nearly 22% of all retail purchases globally.

Small and medium businesses will need to adapt, particularly in the mobile space. Mobile e-commerce sales are expected to reach [\\$432 billion](#) in 2022. Listing products online, offering shipping and creating a great online user experience will drive revenue and increase visibility for smaller, local businesses.



9. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY WILL BECOME A MAJOR FOCUS

Consumers, investors and the general populace are growing increasingly concerned about the environmental sustainability of all businesses. Larger corporations may have more resources and incentives to commit to a greener approach, but smaller companies will also need to make concerted efforts, or customers will leave.

Globally, nearly eight in 10 consumers surveyed say they value sustainability, according to a recent study by IBM and the National Retail Federation. Over 70% of those surveyed said they would pay, on average, **35% more for eco-friendly brands.**

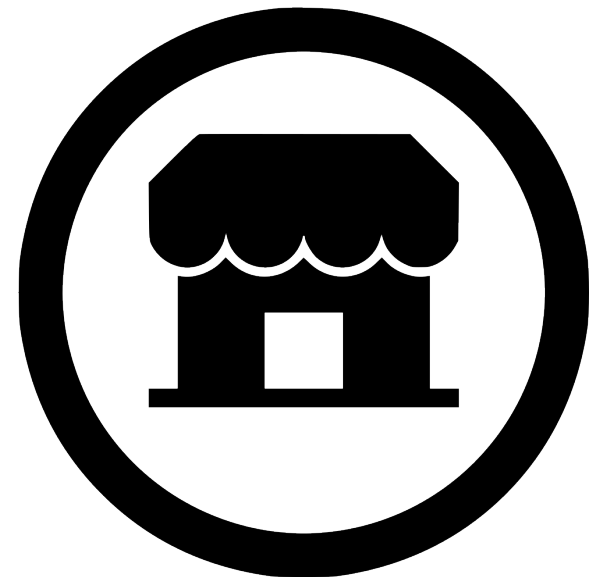
Committing to working with **banks** that invest in environmentally neutral ventures, volunteering with (and donating to) charities, using power from green energy sources and creating products that don't negatively impact the environment are all steps that you can take to improve your brand's reputation in 2022. Sustainability efforts will likely be one of the continuing trends in small business beyond 2022.



10. PEOPLE WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK OUT AND SUPPORT SMALLER BUSINESSES

Customers deliberately sought out and supported small businesses in response to the pandemic, **especially in their local communities**. According to a **Mastercard study**, 49% of consumers made this switch specifically to help their communities bounce back.

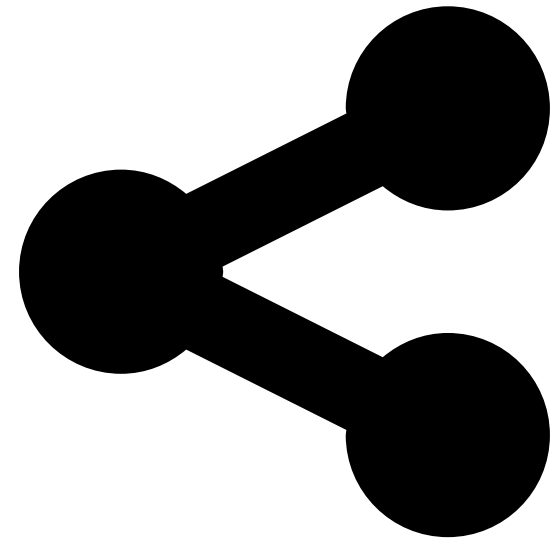
To retain these new customers, small and mid-sized businesses will need to continue their local marketing efforts and prove that they can provide a better experience than competitors. They'll also need to scale up their internal organizational efforts. **2022 is the year when more small and mid-sized companies will implement business operating software, like **Ninety**, to help them get aligned.**



11. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING WILL NO LONGER BE OPTIONAL

One-fifth of all ad dollars spent in 2021 went toward social media. Much of that was spent on social media video marketing. In 2021, ad spending for all video marketing came in at \$81.9 billion for the year, increasing 12% from 2020.

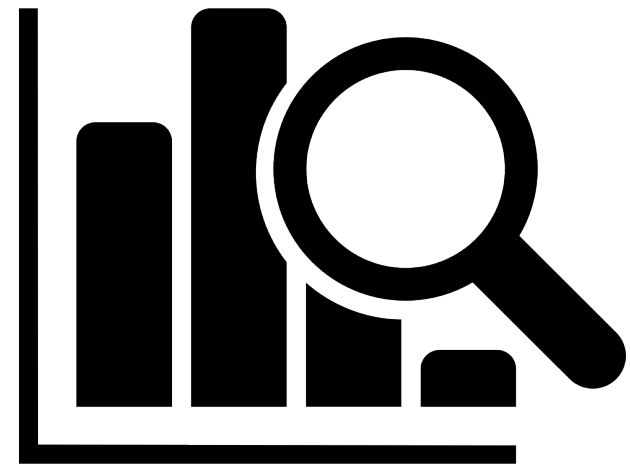
Investing in **social media monitoring** (and hiring a real social media manager instead of your 20-year-old nephew) will be a worthwhile expenditure for most small and mid-sized businesses in 2022. **Tracking tools like Ninety's Scorecard** make it simple to monitor the social media efforts that are working for your business (and the posts that aren't) so you can make better-informed decisions.



12. DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING WILL BECOME EASIER

A BARC research report revealed that businesses that used big data saw a profit increase of 8% and a cost reduction of 10%. Big data is available for just about every industry, but it means nothing if you're not tracking and taking advantage of it.

When small and mid-sized business owners have all the pertinent information at their fingertips and that data is openly shared across the organization, everyone can unite around data-informed decisions that will propel the company forward. **Tools like the Scorecard within Ninety allow you to visually track measurables, input relevant data and use that information to guide your choices.**

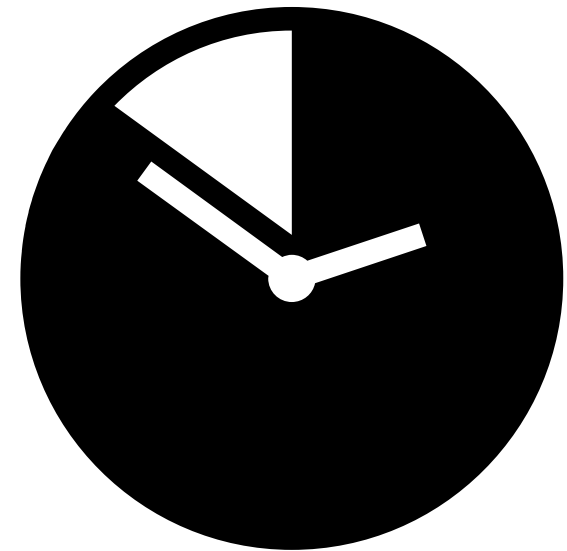


13. BUSINESSES WILL ADAPT TO ACCOMMODATE SHORTER ATTENTION SPANS

Meetings that could have been emails, rambling video calls and long-winded marketing copy are out. Clear, concise communication will reign supreme in 2022, especially now that so much of our communication is conveyed through a screen. And yet, poor communication will remain one of the biggest challenges for small businesses.

Tighter and more focused in-house meetings, pared-down and precise advertising efforts and bite-sized information presented in a way that's digestible will convey everything you need – in less time.

Meeting tools like Ninety help you prioritize focused meetings, clear communication and at-a-glance information-sharing with less effort.



14. DEMAND FOR ALTERNATIVE PAYMENT AND DELIVERY METHODS WILL INCREASE

Small business owners don't always have the in-house capabilities to set up and support a wider range of payment and delivery options. However, consumer convenience will remain one of the trends in small business to watch in 2022.

According to recent data from Juniper Research, global spending via "buy now pay later" services will reach **\$995 billion** by 2026, almost quadrupling the current figure. Mobile payment options, contactless payment and interest-free installment options will all be in high demand, as consumers look for more control over cash flow.

Of the retailers that have implemented contactless payments, 94% expect more and more people to use that option over the next 18 months. If it can't be done in-house, consider contracting out the tech support services that can potentially benefit your customers and offering curbside pickup or delivery.

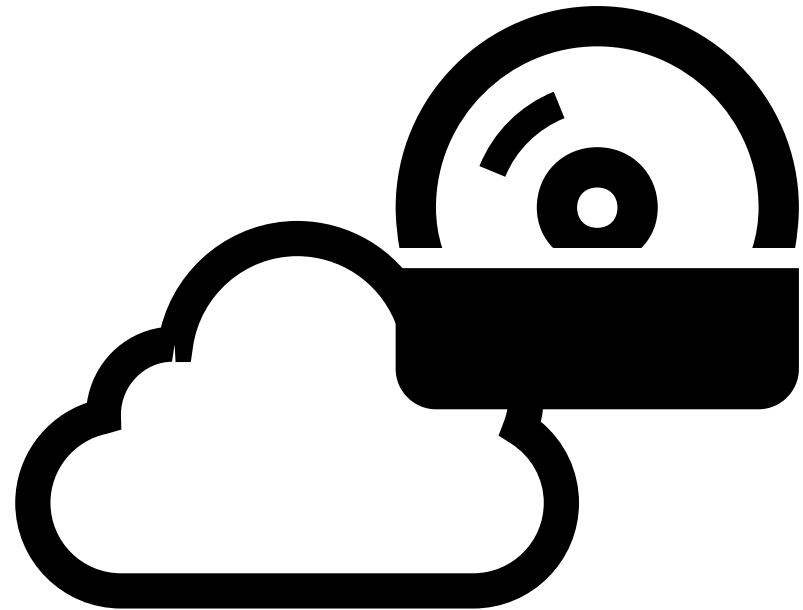


15. SMALL BUSINESSES WILL PAVE THE WAY IN TECH AND SOFTWARE ADOPTION

Too often, business owners shy away from the latest technology and software trends in small business. They mistakenly think that these solutions are designed for larger companies and that a smaller organization can't benefit in the same way. Sometimes, they're right. But only if the tech solutions aren't designed for smaller organizations.

There are leading software solutions specifically designed for small to mid-sized businesses. **Ninety, for one, was created as an all-in-one tool to help small and medium companies get serious, organized and on track.**

"If you're a small business and some new tech comes out, you can implement it immediately," according to Joe Apfelbaum, founder and CEO of Ajax Union. "A big company has to test and test, and by the time they test and set everything up, they don't want to change it again because they've invested so much."





**Regardless of what 2022 holds,
a whole-company solution like Ninety
is guaranteed to revolutionize the way
you do business in the coming year.
[Sign up to try Ninety free for 30 days,](#)
and get full access to its range of solutions
for small to mid-sized businesses.**