



Be the Business + Meta

Supporting small business leaders
to rebuild and recover

August 2022





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Introduction

Be the Business is on a mission to boost productivity among the UK's booming small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector. SMEs account for 99.9% of the UK's business ecosystem, so improving productivity in these organisations has huge implications for the country's economy as a whole.

Helping to drive Be the Business' productivity mission is the knowledge and support of the world's highest performing businesses, including Meta.

Having first collaborated in 2020 as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Be the Business has now strengthened its ties with Meta to deliver a range of productivity-enhancing support to SMEs throughout the UK.

By working together, Be the Business and Meta have engaged over **650,000 business leaders** with transformational business resources, provided five expert mentors for Be the Business' flagship mentoring programme and delivered an effective digital adoption campaign – key to business growth – to over 17 million business leaders. Similarly, Meta have benefited from Be the Business' frontline knowledge of SMEs, which has provided insights and opportunities to engage with this ecosystem.



Driving productivity among UK SMEs

Be the Business is an independent, not-for-profit organisation, with a single goal: to transform UK productivity through great business leadership within SMEs.

Be the Business' goal is crucial for the UK's economy. The UK lags behind comparable nations in terms of the productivity of SMEs. But, by improving the performance of small business leaders, the UK's overall position improves, and everyone benefits.

Since Be the Business was established in 2017, over 13,000 small business leaders from firms across different sectors and regions have participated in Be the Business programme activity. This engagement includes one-on-one mentoring, the advisory group Boards offer, in-person events and a raft of digital content and activities.





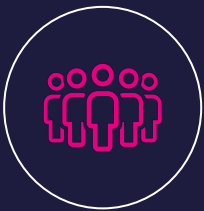
Be the Business highlights

Since its establishment, over 13,000 small business leaders from firms across different sectors and regions have participated in a Be the Business programme activity.



£395 million

Estimated productivity uplift for these businesses and the UK economy since 2017¹.



1,929 individuals

from small businesses across the UK **turned to Be the Business for support** in 2021/2022 alone.



£49 million

Estimated productivity uplift over 2021/2022 for these businesses.

¹ The productivity uplift figures are calculated using our robust evaluation, firm level data, and evidence from the impact of similar programmes. Our approach accounts for both deadweight and displacement and was designed in collaboration with BEIS analysts.



Our collective impact

As a not-for-profit organisation, Be the Business relies on the support of larger businesses to achieve its mission. Since 2020, Meta has played a critical role in helping Be the Business to fulfil its mission in support of greater SME productivity.



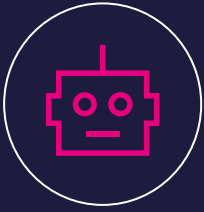
Since 2020, Meta has delivered over **£900,000 of funding and in-kind** support to Be the Business to help them in their productivity mission.



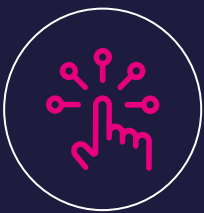
Together, Be the Business and Meta have engaged over **650,000 business leaders** with productivity-enhancing resources including articles, guides and checklists.



Thanks to Meta's collaboration, Be the Business is now able to engage with **business leaders in need of face-to-face support**, the result of a series of national events in every UK region.



Accessing the right support at the right time is vital for SMEs looking to improve their productivity. As such, Be the Business and Meta developed a **Facebook Support Bot**, which helped business leaders access support **tailored to their specific situation**.



In 2021, Be the Business created a **tech adoption campaign** to encourage business leaders to think about their digital future. **Using donated Facebook ad credits, Be the Business was able to direct SMEs to relevant resources** on the Be the Business website.



Supporting ethnic minority-led businesses remains a key focus for Be the Business. In 2022, Be the Business and Meta hosted **a roundtable discussion**, with stakeholders from across government and business, to examine what specific support could help minority-led SMEs and entrepreneurs become more productive, as well as the best ways to engage this audience.



Steve Hatch, META

A desire to help business leaders respond to the immediate pressures of Covid-19 brought Be the Business and Meta together in 2020. Thanks to this fantastic collaboration, we've supported over 650,000 business leaders in the past two years: from a messenger bot directing people to the most relevant support; a campaign encouraging leaders to embrace productivity boosting tech; to interactive content that helps leaders understand their management style, all designed to make them become more capable, confident and resilient.

Transforming the success of British businesses requires the entire business community to work together. This focus on building a network of leaders who share what makes them successful is what makes Meta such a natural partner for Be the Business.



Anthony Impey MBE, CEO Be the Business

Be the Business' partnership with Meta has connected small business leaders to vital resources at a crucial time for the UK's SME community. At the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, our partnership with Meta meant that we could engage small business leaders with our free Rebuild Hub. Since then, we've continued to work closely with Meta on our Mentoring programme and on policy engagement.

As we look to the future, Meta's contributions will continue to help us reach more small business leaders in need of support and expertise and will aid the UK's productivity movement.



A collaborative partnership

What began as a partnership to help business leaders rebuild in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has developed into something far greater.

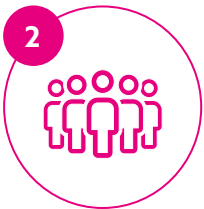
Throughout the pandemic, Be the Business and Meta collaborated to drive small business leaders towards the resources they would find most useful, and this effort has continued. This crucial collaboration has led to 650,000 SMEs accessing support – and it has also helped shape the strategic development of Be the Business for the coming years.

In particular, Be the Business and Meta have worked together to:



Collaborating to tackle critical SME policy

Meta has also supported Be the Business' work to raise the profile of SME productivity, partnering on several roundtables with MPs and government ministers. For example, Meta is a core member of Be the Business' Technology Productivity Taskforce, a group whose primary focus is to drive the agenda on digital adoption. Meta has also supported Be the Business' policy engagement, partnering on several MP roundtables.



Support a mass audience of business leaders to rebuild from Covid-19

By partnering with Meta, and with the support of Facebook ad credits, Be the Business can reach and, more importantly, understand millions of UK Facebook and Instagram users. This was particularly important in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic as Be the Business worked to serve SMEs with practical and useful resources to help them navigate the challenging times.



Drive digital adoption

[Be the Business research](#) shows that the successful adoption of digital technology is a key driver of productivity. Extensive research has proven that, for small business to become more productive, the leaders behind them must effectively implement and utilise digital tools. As a social technology company and one of the most innovative tech businesses in the world, Meta is opportunely positioned to support such adoption amongst SMEs.



Partnership achievements



Collaborating to tackle critical SME policy

Working together, Meta and Be the Business are providing guidance on SME policy leadership and engagement.

Policy leadership and engagement

In 2020, Be the Business launched the **Technology Productivity Taskforce** with the aim of providing guidance on the collective actions required by the industry to bring about mass technology adoption among small business leaders in the UK. Meta was a founding member of the Taskforce, which also comprises some of the UK's technology leaders.

Pairing in-depth understanding of small- and medium-sized business needs with a recognition that suppliers do not serve that market effectively, the Taskforce aims to put productivity-boosting technology into the hands of every business leader within the next three years.



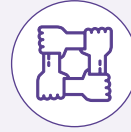
The Technology Productivity Taskforce

- The Taskforce aims to bring together senior leaders from some of the UK's leading technology companies to address issues facing the sector and challenges facing SMEs as they seek to adopt new technologies. The Taskforce considers issues both on the "demand side", supporting SMEs with the adoption of new systems, and also the "supply side", considering how the industry can improve its offer to SME customers. Meta has been central to driving the agenda of the group and supporting the publication of impactful research.
- The Taskforce launched the UK's Technology Moment – a seminal paper on the key changes needed to bring about mass adoption of digital technology among UK SMEs (link to UK's Tech Moment), which played a defining role in the development of the UK Government's Help to Grow: Digital programme.
- Be the Business organised political attendance and engagement during the Technology Productivity Taskforce's meetings, including Chris Philp MP (former Minister for Tech and the Digital Economy) and Julie Elliott MP (Chair of the APPG for Digital Skills).
- The Taskforce oversaw the development and testing of the "Adoption Lab" model to support SMEs, which has now undergone multiple rounds of testing.
- The Taskforce gathered supplier feedback to help inform the Government's roll-out of its Help to Grow: Digital programme.



MP roundtables

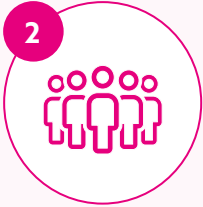
- In December 2020, Be the Business and Meta hosted a virtual discussion, bringing together MPs, SMEs and key stakeholders to learn about the importance of SMEs in leading post-pandemic recovery. The discussion was co-hosted by Darren Jones MP, chair of the BEIS Select Committee. The roundtable provided the opportunity for both organisations to promote their message and present new research on SMEs relationship with technology and social media during the pandemic.
- Four MPs attended, including Darren Jones MP (Chair, BEIS Select Committee), Stephen Metcalfe MP (Former Chair of the Science and Technology Committee), Chi Onwurah MP (Shadow BEIS & DCMS Minister) and James Daly MP. There were also representatives from Onward, FSB and TechUK. Following the roundtable, Be the Business and Meta coordinated letters to parliamentarians to outline free support for their SME constituents that would help improve their productivity.
- In July 2021, Be the Business contributed to two virtual parliamentary roundtables (Good Ideas Deserve to Be Found and PICTFOR: Platform for Growth: Boosting Productivity Through Tech), both organised by Meta. During the discussions, Be the Business provided an overview of SME sentiment and outlined how the partnership with Meta helped support businesses through the coronavirus pandemic.



Diversity and Inclusion

- In April 2022, Meta supported the launch of [Be the Business' latest research report](#), focused on ethnic minority-led SMEs. The report investigates how the business support landscape, policy changes and programmatic interventions can support business leaders from an ethnic minority background. Be the Business and Meta hosted a roundtable with former Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets, Paul Scully MP, and representatives from small businesses to discuss the report's recommendations. Since then, there has been continuous engagement with government officials on the findings of the report and how we can support BEIS in their work supporting minority-led businesses.





Support a mass audience of business leaders to rebuild from Covid-19

In the wake of Covid-19, Be the Business and Meta worked together to arm SME leaders with the resources and networks necessary to help them navigate the challenging times.



Facebook Boost with Be the Business events provided direct support to businesses in every region of the UK

- The Facebook Boost event series began in July 2020 with a national launch to generate momentum in the regional event series. The launch included speeches by Steve Hatch, VP for Northern Europe at Facebook, and Sir Charlie Mayfield, Be the Business Chair. Broadcasters Steph McGovern and June Sarpong interviewed business leaders about their response to Covid-19.
- This was followed by 11 regional virtual events covering the whole of the UK. These events brought together digital training sessions, local business stories and keynote addresses from local influencers and politicians, including Nadhim Zahawi MP, Andrea Leadsom MP, Saqib Bhatti MP and Andy Street. In total, 700 SME leaders attended.



Steph McGovern



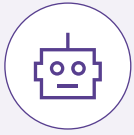
June Sarpong



A new Facebook Group for UK small business owners

- This is a space where UK business leaders can join to ask questions, get help and network with fellow business leaders.
- A number of Facebook Live Events have been held within the group. Businesses have also become increasingly comfortable looking for recommendations and sharing personal stories. Our community continues to grow.





A new Facebook Support Bot providing tailored support to businesses with immediate responses to common questions

- The Support Bot allowed small business leaders to ask questions via Be the Business' Facebook page and website.
- The Bot provided tailored practical content to SME owners, according to how they answered three questions. Topics were based on Be the Business' training for SMEs.
- Content topics included how to access government resources, finances and forecasting, supply chains, business models and innovation, technology adoption, and how to foster workforce wellbeing and leadership.
- The information was updated with fresh material as the national and local situation changed, so users were always directed to relevant and timely guidance. The April 2021 update included additional support to help businesses navigating the UK's exit from the EU.



Digital and benchmarking tools

- The majority (92%) of SME leaders say measuring productivity is important, but only half (52%) measure it, and many have never reviewed practice to identify areas of improvement. Meta ad credit support helped Be the Business share digital benchmarking tools with a wider audience on Facebook and Instagram to assist leaders in understanding their business performance and how they can improve.
- As a result of this support, **3,300 business leaders** benchmarked their performance or downloaded a free support guide.





Drive digital adoption

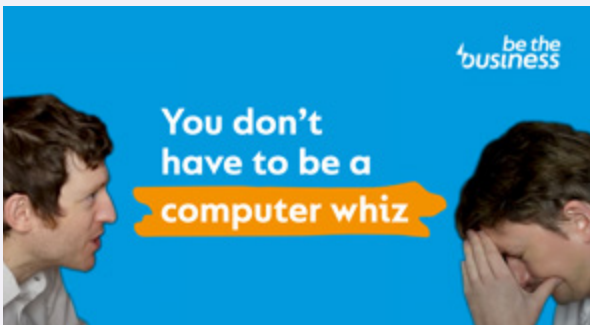
In a key area of synergy, Be the Business and Meta have collaborated to support SMEs with successful digital adoption to aid the productivity movement.



Tech Adoption Campaign

To garner mass awareness of how digital adoption can aid productivity in SMEs, Be the Business and Meta worked together to deliver the **Tech Adoption Campaign**. The Tech Adoption Campaign was designed to tackle the barriers that many small business owners face when trying to get technology into their organisations, but in a lighthearted way.

A series of five short films touched on different challenges business leaders face when adopting digital technology – from choosing the right software to engaging employees. The films were **viewed over 17 million times**, generating **over 25,000 visits** to our campaign site packed with resources to support digital adoption.



Mentoring

Our flagship programme, **Be the Business Mentoring**, has been carefully pairing business leaders with experienced and committed senior executives from the UK's most successful companies since 2018. This government-backed programme is available in two formats: the 12-week programme is designed for business leaders who need immediate support; whereas the 12-month programme is for business leaders seeking long-term development. This allows us to support a wider range of business leaders, regardless of needs.

As part of the commitment to the Be the Business' productivity movement, Meta has provided mentors for both the 12-month and 12-week mentoring programme. As with other mentors on the programme, mentors from Meta act as a sounding board, providing one-to-one, impartial advice to small business leaders. All Meta mentors have now completed their initial mentoring relationships and are currently awaiting their next match. Between them, they have supported:

- 4x 12-month relationships
- 3x 12-week relationships



Be the Business Mentoring by the numbers

Our Mentoring programme carefully matches business leaders with experienced and committed senior executives from the UK's most successful companies, including Meta. The scheme has resulted in **a tangible increase in leadership and management skills:**

4 in 5 (80%)

say mentoring helped improve knowledge and skills

4 in 5 (80%)

say mentoring helped them improve their soft skills

3/4 (75%)

say mentoring increased their confidence in implementing leadership and management practices

Over half (54%)

say mentoring encouraged them to adopt new leadership and management practices

And results in **a clear and positive impact for business leaders:**

Over half (51%)

report that the programme improved productivity

2/3 (67%)

expect productivity gains over the next two years

1/3 (30%)

employed more people

1/3 (30%)

increased turnover

1 in 5 (20%)

achieved cost reductions

16%

reduced their overheads

Only 6%

believe the benefits would have happened without participating in Be the Business Mentoring

1/3 (30%)

indicated their customers have indirectly benefitted as a result of their involvement



Mentoring case study: SuperFast IT



Katherine Garratt
Content manager,
Superfast IT



Roshan Paramanathan
Client partner,
Meta

Gaining new impetus

With a history of organic growth, Superfast IT hired Katherine Garratt to boost its success with a digital marketing strategy. She developed her skills and turned to a Be the Business mentor from Meta to help her apply her theoretical knowledge to the real business situation. Her confidence – and company turnover – have grown significantly.

Katherine Garratt joined Superfast IT, which provides outsourced IT services to small- and medium-sized businesses, in late 2020, with a remit to help it build its digital marketing strategy. Based in Stourbridge, the company was established in 2002 and employs 12 staff.

While successful, the business had grown organically through word-of-mouth referrals, and the owner wanted to accelerate growth with a new marketing strategy. Katherine had strong marketing experience but recognised a knowledge gap due to fast-moving digital marketing trends, so the owner encouraged her to do some courses to plug her skills gap.

“I felt I needed some help in applying my theoretical understanding of digital marketing to a real business,” she said, adding that, for the first time in her career, she is working on her own rather than in a marketing department – where there is ready-made support.

A rapid intervention

Katherine did some research to find out what sort of help might be available and came across the Be the Business mentoring scheme. Impressed by the calibre of both the mentoring companies and the individual mentors, she signed up for the 12-week programme, which is designed to support mentees with an external perspective and timely advice on their immediate challenges.

“My ultimate goal is to bring in more leads, so I was interested to find out about the best tools and techniques to achieve that, and the best way to apply them,” said Katherine.

She was matched up with the ideal person for the job – Roshan Paramanathan, who leads the Facebook and Instagram strategy for Meta (formerly Facebook) clients in the retail sector.

“I’d already started using tools like Google Ads, but Roshan was able to show me how best to analyse the data and create reports that I could feed back to the business to demonstrate how successful the ads were, for example,” said Katherine.



“Mostly, it was a case of me going away to do the work, and checking back with him on it, but he also gave me very valuable nuggets of information that would have taken me years to acquire on my own. For instance, I would say, ‘I’m having trouble with this particular tool, the data I’m getting seems unreliable’ – thinking I was doing something wrong – and he’d say, ‘yes, it’s always been like that, this is how you get round it’. So that gave me lots of confidence.”

Asking the right questions

Roshan added: “Mentoring is about teaching people how to ask the right questions, rather than giving them answers.” Yet he admits that, for all his 17 years in the digital marketing industry, he learned from the mentoring relationship too.

“I used every opportunity I had to share my experience and knowledge, but sometimes Katherine would ask me about something I am less familiar with, so I had to brush up my own knowledge to help her,” he said.

He added that her eagerness to learn made Katherine an ideal mentee: “She wears many hats, and when she identifies gaps in her knowledge or skills, she looks to plug them immediately – credit to her. She dictated the pace throughout.”

He observes that her analytical skills have improved during the course of the mentoring. He explained: “In my career, I’ve always tried to look at things at a very granular level, and I have tried to impart the importance of that to her. At the beginning, she didn’t know enough to be able to query things, but she has become much more willing to challenge now and knows the right questions to ask.”

Katherine agreed: “I plan to outsource some marketing channels, but I now know enough to be able to confidently and comprehensively select and brief an agency, then analyse the data when it comes back.”

Quick results

Although the mentoring finished only recently, Superfast IT is already benefiting from its new digital marketing strategy, said Katherine: “Over the past six months, we have made huge strides as a business, and, within the next year, we expect to see even more growth. Our investment in marketing is paying off, in the form of new clients with strong lifetime value. The number of new clients has increased by 14% as a result of our owner’s investment in our digital marketing programme.”

“Most importantly, we are helping more businesses be successful through better use of technology, while creating opportunities for career progression and personal development inside our team. This is at the heart of Superfast IT’s core purpose.”

She is part of a peer group of marketing managers in IT companies and is inspired by the progress others have made with SEO (search engine optimisation) since they embarked on it several years ago. “They are generating an enormous number of leads, so I can see what’s possible,” she went on. “Roshan has given me impetus towards achieving that.”





What makes it work

What does Katherine think are the keys to a successful mentoring relationship?

“One thing is regular weekly contact – which is something Roshan insisted on,” she explained. “We got on very well right from the start – and I felt great even after the first session. You get a buzz if it’s working. But you have to make time for each other, and you must follow up on what you discuss with concrete actions. And you both need a growth and development mentality.”

Roshan admits that, while he derives satisfaction from helping individuals and businesses succeed, he is also motivated by the opportunity to hone his own skills.

“For example, I’ve learned to communicate better,” he said. “We use a lot of jargon in this industry and having to explain some of the tools and techniques to someone else forces you to stand back from that and think hard about how to distil complex ideas and concepts into a format that is easily understood.”

Katherine added she was ‘amazed’ at the amount of time Roshan gave her. “I am so grateful to him, and he is such a nice guy,” she said. “He’s inspired me to help others too. For example, we’ve just welcomed some college work-experience students into the business, and I’m helping to give them the kind of guidance that I wish I’d had when I was younger.”

The pair are both inspired to continue their respective relationships with Be the Business. Katherine, for example, would be interested to migrate onto the 12-month mentoring programme – but only after she has consolidated what she has already learned. And Roshan “would love to do more.”

He concluded: “The Be the Business mentoring programme is not only very good, but also incredibly important. It’s about sharing knowledge across lots of different organisations in a structured way, allowing mentors, mentees and their respective businesses to all benefit. It’s win win win.”

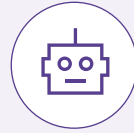




Partnership achievement summary



The Technology Productivity Taskforce



A new Facebook Support Bot



MP roundtables



Digital and benchmarking tools



Diversity and Inclusion



Tech Adoption Campaign



Facebook Boost with Be the Business events



Mentoring



A new Facebook Group for UK small business owners

Thank you, Meta, for your support.
Together, we're working to improve
the productivity of UK SMEs.



Be the Business – Charitable objectives (charity number: 1173660):

The promotion of industry and commerce in the UK for the public benefit by promoting the productivity of business in order that the UK economy as a whole will benefit through improved business sustainability, employment security, job satisfaction and standards of living.

Source: The Charity Commission

