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Accelerating SMB growth with AI

Executive summary

See how small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) are approaching innovative IT

Based on the 2025 IDC Worldwide SMB Market Profile Update, this paper highlights how small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) have renewed focus on **strategic technology investment**, especially in **AI-powered solutions.**

The shifting economic and budget priorities of SMBs	**How AI is gaining traction—from automation to GenAI**	**Why Dell and Microsoft are well-positioned** to help SMBs modernize, securely and efficiently

Whether you're re-evaluating your IT stack or looking for practical ways to integrate AI, this paper outlines **where SMBs are headed—and how to stay ahead.**

The opportunity is clear

SMBs that act now can future-proof their operations with smarter, AI-ready tools.

From finding new customers to managing cash flow, SMBs face a unique set of challenges. Success often comes down to **making smart technology investments**—without overstepping financial guardrails.

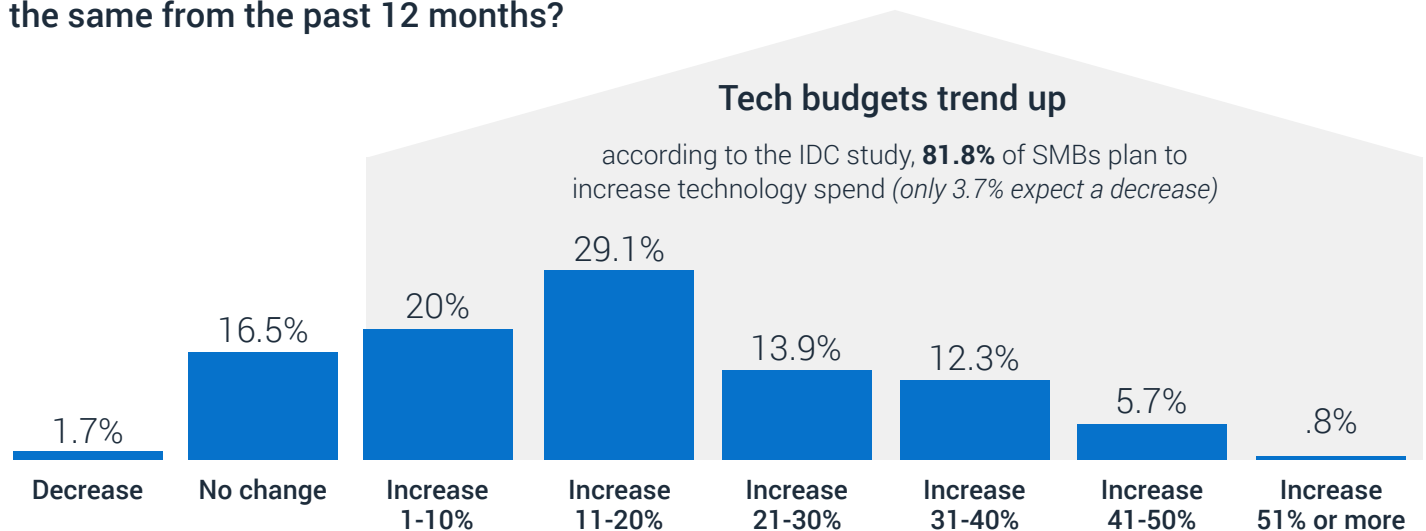**A growing number of SMBs are prioritizing technology upgrades**

AI and AI PCs are increasingly viewed as tools to enhance:

- Operational efficiency
- Productivity
- Business growth

SMBs are spending smarter

Will your company's spending on technology increase, decrease, or remain the same from the past 12 months?

Tech budgets trend up

according to the IDC study, **81.8%** of SMBs plan to increase technology spend *(only 3.7% expect a decrease)*

Decrease	No change	Increase 1-10%	Increase 11-20%	Increase 21-30%	Increase 31-40%	Increase 41-50%	Increase 51% or more
1.7%	16.5%	20%	29.1%	13.9%	12.3%	5.7%	.8%

What's driving the shift?

Confidence in new technologies, especially AI and automation

More accessible solutions, such as Dell AI PC with Microsoft Copilot Solutions

A desire to gain operational efficiencies without added complexity

From survival to strategic growth

While cost reduction remains a priority, SMBs are shifting their focus toward long-term growth—and doing so with cautious optimism.

Top business priorities for 2025

33.6%
Grow revenue

29.5%
Attract new customers

28.2%
Increase profits

27.2%
Improve efficiency

20.0%
Reduce costs/ spend management

There are still challenges

Even as SMBs move forward with tech investments, cybersecurity remains their #1 concern.

Key takeaway

SMBs must strike a careful balance—adopting advanced tools like AI while staying within tight financial guardrails and keeping data secure.

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Embracing the AI opportunity

AI moves from afterthought to asset

SMBs are giving AI a serious second look—and for good reason.

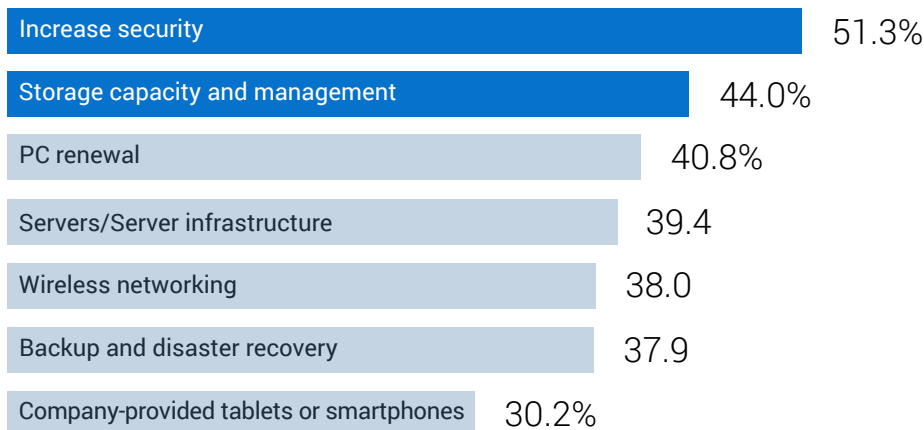In 2024 ~ 25% of SMBs ranked AI as their **lowest tech priority**

In 2025, AI has leapfrogged up the list

Why the Shift?
- Proven ROI
- Efficiency gains
- Time savings

2024

2025

Security & storage lead the way

As SMBs refine their tech strategies, these two infrastructure priorities are taking center stage. These priorities reflect a broader ambition: **Build readiness for AI and data-intensive workloads.**

Increase security	51.3%
Storage capacity and management	44.0%
PC renewal	40.8%
Servers/Server infrastructure	39.4
Wireless networking	38.0
Backup and disaster recovery	37.9
Company-provided tablets or smartphones	30.2%

Why It Matters
According to IDC, these focus areas signal that SMBs are:

- Growing more confident in AI and automation

- Preparing to harness data more effectively

- Shifting from basic IT upgrades to future-facing solutions

Dell Pro AI PCs with Windows 11 Pro are the world's most secure and manageable AI PCs[1]

- Support for monitoring solutions

- Platform integrity validation for supply chain assurance

- PC and component integrity validation via off-site measurements, e.g. BIOS verification and Intel® Management Engine firmware verification

- Dedicated security chip that keeps user credentials hidden from malware

- Early-alert feature that scans for behavior-based threats before they can do damage

- BIOS setting management integrations for Intune

- BIOS access management security

- Intel vPro® remote management

- PC management using cellular data enhancements for Intune

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GenAI gains ground

GenAI's flexibility makes it especially well-suited for lean, multitasking SMB teams.

Medium businesses lead the way in 2025.

GenAI has emerged as a **top technology priority** for medium-sized businesses They're leveraging GenAI to:

Generate content (e.g., copywriting)

Accelerate development (e.g., coding tasks)

Ideate and take action across departments

51.0%
of medium businesses rank GenAI as a top technology priority for the next 12 months

39.8%
of small businesses rank GenAI as a top technology priority for the next 12 months

Small businesses show interest, too.

While adoption is still ramping up, small businesses are:

Exploring AI tools

Prioritizing process automation as a first step

Why GenAI fits SMBs so well

GenAI is proving to be a natural fit for lean, fast-moving SMB operations—which helps explain its rising adoption.

Automation and GenAI

SMBs have shifted their AI focus from internal tech management to GenAI, making it their **#1 use case** in 2025.

Reducing repetitive, manual tasks

Freeing up time for strategic work

Improving speed and consistency in day-to-day operations

Smart SMBs are choosing tools that are ready to work—right out of the box.
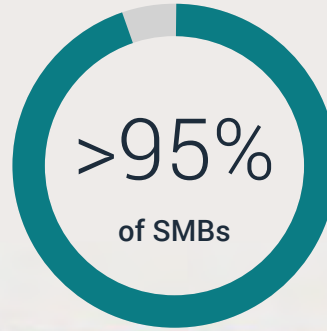
AI-as-a-Service gains traction

More SMBs are turning to pretrained, off-the-shelf AI solutions—especially when they're:

- Easy to deploy
- Designed specifically for SMB needs
- Offered through trusted platforms like Dell AI PC with Windows 11 Pro

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The AI momentum keeps building

The AI revolution is far from slowing down

>95% of SMBs

say they plan to continue using AI over the next 12 months

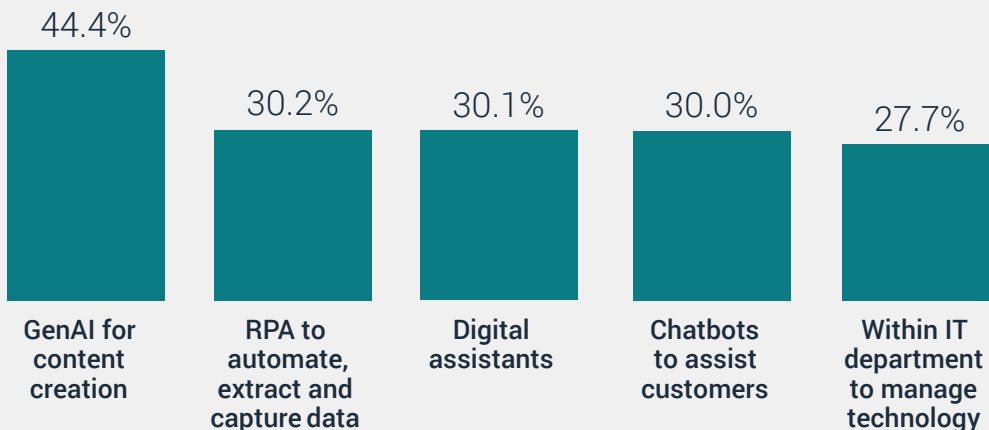| Tools are becoming more affordable	Solutions are easier to customize	AI can now be tailored to the specific needs of SMBs

Key use cases on the rise

For SMBs, AI isn't just a tool—it's becoming an integrated teammate.

Plan to add in the next 12 months - Which of the following best describes how you are leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI)/Automation?

(Select all that apply) Displaying top 5 answers out of 10 options.

44.4%	30.2%	30.1%	30.0%	27.7%
GenAI for content creation	RPA to automate, extract and capture data	Digital assistants	Chatbots to assist customers	Within IT department to manage technology

Beyond automation, SMBs are prioritizing:

Digital assistants

Chatbots for customer interaction

Operational efficiency tools that autonomously handle tasks like customer inquiries

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AI is a game-changer —and help is here

The IDC study makes it clear: AI has transformative potential for SMBs

Dell and Microsoft are ready to meet this moment with purpose-built solutions that support growth, efficiency, and flexibility.

Dell Pro AI PCs with Windows 11 Pro feature the exceptionally long battery life and fast performance that SMBs need to stay productive and keep their business running smoothly wherever their day takes them.

Whether it's dashing between off-site client meetings, working on the store floor, or attending conferences, long battery life isn't just a convenience; it's a catalyst for productivity. Dell Pro AI PCs provide the mobility and reliability that modern business operations require.

The difference of Dell Pro 14 Premium with Intel® Core™ Ultra 200V series processors

Up to 21.2 hours of battery life for anywhere work[2], which is up to 51% longer battery life than previous generation[3]

Dell Pro 14 Premium has **up to 11% faster** system responsiveness and performance in everyday computing tasks[4]

Up to 76% higher graphics performance for improved image processing and video conferencing[5]

3.5x faster gen-on-gen AI compute on the edge[6]

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Leading the AI movement with a simplified portfolio of Dell AI PCs

Dell recently launched a streamlined portfolio of AI PCs featuring:

Built-in AI performance enhancement with a dedicated AI engine

Ability to run AI tasks directly on-the-device

Extended battery life

Sleek, lightweight designs for on-the-go productivity

From laptops to workstations to desktops, these devices help SMBs:

- Boost productivity
- Safeguard sensitive data and operations with built-in security
- Optimize energy use to reduce costs
- Maximize budget impact with technology that delivers long-term value

Powered by Windows 11 Pro

With the Windows 11 Pro refresh, users can enjoy a suite of tools to help them work faster and more securely.

- Boost productivity through improved collaboration, immersive digital experiences, and intuitive content creation.
- Reduce the attack surface and improve long-term cyber resilience with on-device AI processing.

- Extend battery life with more energy-efficient PCs without compromising AI-level performance.
- Equip your team with AI PCs to expedite decisions, automate repetitive tasks, and drive measurable successes beyond your investment.

Speed workflows with Windows 11 Pro

50%
faster workflows on average[7]

62%
reported drop in security incidents[8]

42%
faster completion of demanding workloads[9]

25%
faster deployment reported[10]

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A future-ready partnership, built for SMBs

Wherever you are in your tech journey, Dell and Microsoft offer a proven path forward—with solutions designed to help you work smarter, stay secure, and scale efficiently.

Because in 2025, innovation isn't just for big businesses—it's for smart ones.

By investing in AI-powered tools today, SMBs can:

- Boost productivity
- Strengthen security
- Reduce costs

Learn more about Dell Pro AI PCs with Windows 11 Pro →

This paper is based on the International Data Corporation (IDC) recently released their 2025 Worldwide SMB Market Profile Update. Please click here to read the full study.

1 Most Secure and Manageable CLM-012797 Most secure, most manageable commercial AI PCs. Most secure is based on Dell internal analysis, October 2024. Applicable to PCs on Intel processors. Not all features available with all PCs. Additional purchase required for some features. Validated by Principled Technologies. A comparison of security features, April 2024. Most-manageable commercial PCs when comparing the systems management capabilities of Dell Update Processes, Dell Manageability Solution capabilities and integrations with 3rd Party Management Solutions, with competitor update processes, systems management solution capabilities and integrations with 3rd party management solutions. 3rd Party Management Solution - Microsoft Intune, is a separate purchase. Based on Dell internal analysis, January 2025.

2 The Dell Pro 14 Premium has up to 21 hours and 10 minutes of battery life with Intel U5-236V, 16GB RAM, 256GB PCIe SSD, FHD Non-Touch 400nits Display, Windows 11, and 60 Whr battery. Based on testing using the Mobile Mark 2025 battery life benchmark test in December 2024. For more information about this benchmark test, visit www.bapco.com. Actual battery life may be significantly less than the test results and varies depending on product configuration and use, software, usage, operating conditions, power management settings and other factors. Maximum battery life will decrease with time.

3 Dell Pro 14 Premium and Latitude 7450 tested. Battery life results were compared for like-to-like configs (i.e., same or similar memory, storage, display, etc.) except for CPU and Battery (3Whr gen over gen increase in capacity). Based on testing using the Mobile Mark 2025 battery life benchmark test in December 2024. For more information about this benchmark test, visit www.bapco.com. Actual battery life may be significantly less than the test results and varies depending on product configuration and use, software, usage, operating conditions, power management settings and other factors. Maximum battery life will decrease with time.

4 Dell Pro 14 Premium tested with Intel U7-266V, ARC Graphics, 16GB RAM, 256GB PCIe SSD, FHD+ Non-Touch 400nits Display, Windows 11 and 60 Whr battery. Latitude 7450 Ultralight tested with Intel U7-165U, UMA Graphics, 16GB RAM, 256GB PCIe SSD, FHD+ Non-Touch 400 nits Display, Windows 11 and 57 Whr battery. Based on testing using Cinebench R23 benchmark test in December 2024.

5 Dell Pro 14 Premium tested with Intel U7-266V, ARC Graphics, 16GB RAM, 256GB PCIe SSD, FHD+ Non-Touch 400nits Display, Windows 11 and 60 Whr battery. Latitude 7450 Ultralight tested with Intel U7-165U, UMA Graphics, 16GB RAM, 256GB PCIe SSD, FHD+ Non-Touch 400 nits Display, Windows 11 and 57 Whr battery. Based on testing using 3DMakr Night Raid Overall benchmark test in December 2024.

6 Dell Pro 14 Premium tested with Intel U7-266V, ARC Graphics, 16GB RAM, 256GB PCIe SSD, FHD+ Non-Touch 400nits Display, Windows 11 and 60 Whr battery. Latitude 7450 Ultralight tested with Intel U7-165U, UMA Graphics, 16GB RAM, 256GB PCIe SSD, FHD+ Non-Touch 400 nits Display, Windows 11 and 57 Whr battery. Based on testing using Proxyon AI Computer Vision - OpenVINO benchmark test in December 2024. Actual score is 3.46x

7 Compared to Windows 10 devices. Improve your day-to-day experience with Windows 11 Pro laptops, Principled Technologies, February 2023.

8 Windows 11 Survey Report. Techaisle, September 2024. Windows 11 results are in comparison with Windows 10 devices.

9 Compared to Windows 10 devices. Improve your day-to-day experience with Windows 11 Pro laptops, Principled Technologies, February 2023.

10 Commissioned study delivered by Forrester Consulting, "The Total Economic Impact of Windows 11 Pro Devices," December 20 22. Note, quantified benefits reflect results over three years combined into a single composite organization that generates $1 billion in annual revenue, has 2,000 employees, refreshes hardware on a four-year cycle, and migrates the entirety of its workforce to Windows 11 devices.

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