

SME Survey

SME businesses use pandemic to pivot

SME Survey Series Report 3
June 2022

CT907236855

About the study

Corporate Traveller commissioned an independent survey of 202 Australian SME owners to gauge how businesses pivoted and used the past two years of restrictions and economic downturn to their advantage. The survey asked respondents to specify the changes they made to help them begin their business recovery.

Survey respondents were made up of SME owners across micro (1-10 employees), small (11-50 employees) and medium (51-200 employees) businesses across all states.



CT907236855

What proportion of Australian SMEs used the pandemic to their advantage?

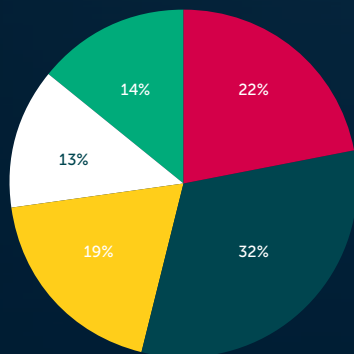
Corporate Traveller found that 81% of Australian SMEs used the pandemic to their advantage by pivoting and optimising their operations to do business better.

Specifically, 45% of business owners offered more flexibility to employees, including remote working, while 31% transitioned all or part of the business online. Nearly a third (27%) implemented more stringent OHS and infection control measures to

attract or retain employees, while 20% introduced new technologies, and 19% streamlined operations to allow the business to achieve more with fewer employees.

One fifth (19%) of respondents revealed they were an essential service during the pandemic and therefore were doing well. One fifth (19%) also admitted they did not make changes during the pandemic.

How has your business used the pandemic to your advantage – for instance to pivot, to optimise your operations, so you can return to business better than how you operated pre-covid?



- We transitioned some or all of the business online – this helped retain or attract sales
- We offered employees flexibility, remote-working or more choice in their work arrangements – this retained and/or attracted talent to our business
- We implemented more stringent OHS and infection controls in the workplace – which helped retain and/or attract employees
- We streamlined or optimised our operations –allowing us to do more with fewer people
- We introduced new technologies that made our operations more efficient with fewer people on site

CT907236855

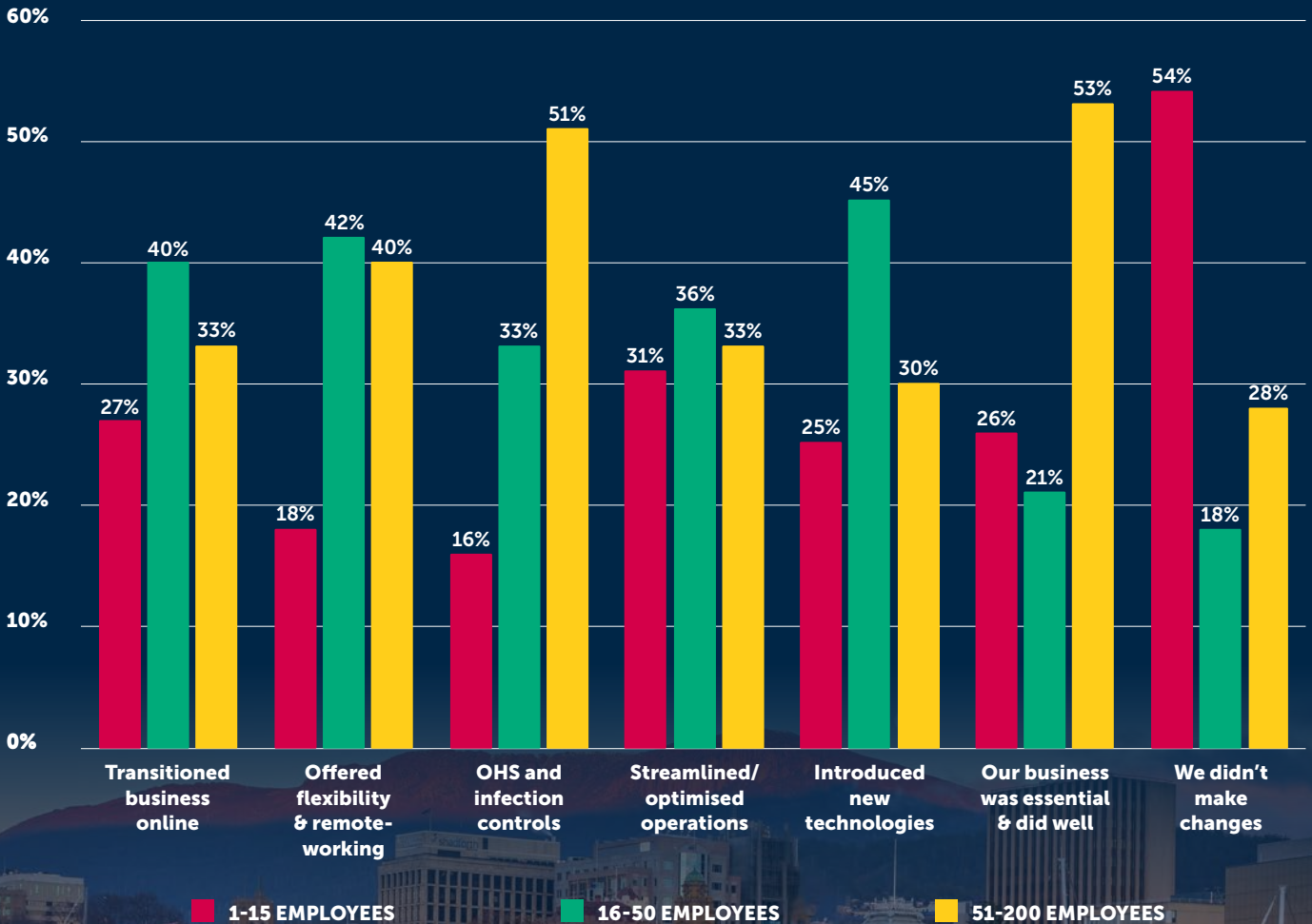
SME Survey

Medium-sized businesses were more likely to implement changes to use the pandemic to their advantage (chosen by 82% of respondents), followed by small businesses (70%). In contrast, 46% of micro-businesses optimised their operations during the past two years.

Half (51%) of medium-sized businesses implemented more stringent OHS and infection controls, whilst only 33% of small businesses and 16% of micro-businesses did the same. Forty-one (41%) of small and medium-sized businesses also offered employees flexibility to retain and attract talent, compared with 18% of micro-businesses.

Around one third of all business sizes – 31% of micro-businesses, 36% of small businesses and 33% of medium-sized businesses – streamlined their operations, allowing them to do more with fewer employees.

It seems larger businesses had less of a need to pivot to adapt to environmental and market changes. A larger proportion of medium-sized businesses were considered an essential service and therefore did well over the past two years: 53% of medium-sized businesses were essential, compared with 24% of small and micro-businesses.



SME Survey

More NSW businesses (38%) introduced a business optimisation tactic, including introducing new technologies for efficiency. This compares with 23% of Victorian business respondents, 13% of West Australian respondents and just 10% of Queenslanders and South Australians.

A similar proportion of NSW and Victorian business also transitioned their business online, at 35% and 33% respectively. In contrast, 13% of

Queenslanders, 8% of South Australians and 5% of Western Australians used the same business tactic.

NSW respondents came out on top again in implementing stringent OHS and infection control (36%), followed by Victorians (24%), Queenslanders (18%), South Australians (11%) and WA businesses (7%).

How has your business used the pandemic to your advantage – for instance to pivot, to optimize your operations, so you can return to business better than how you operated pre-covid?

Response	By State (%)				
	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA
We transitioned some or all of the business online – this helped retain or attract sales	35	33	13	8	5
We offered employees flexibility, remote-working or more choice in their work arrangements – this retained and/or attracted talent to our business	36	23	22	7	8
We implemented more stringent OHS and infection controls in the workplace – which helped retain and/or attract employees	36	24	18	11	7
We streamlined or optimised our operations – allowing us to do more with fewer people	36	23	21	8	8
We introduced new technologies that made our operations more efficient with fewer people on site	38	23	10	10	13
We are an 'essential service' or supply essential product, and as a result our business did well in the pandemic	29	21	24	8	13
My business has not used the pandemic to its advantage.	31	10	15	10	26



CT907236855