

Tech startup Netstripes has found that only 22 per cent of Australian businesses are digitally engaged and using technology to grow their business. The findings were released in a new report, State of the Nation – 2016, Small Business Digital Engagement in Australia, which looks at how Australian small businesses are performing in the digital economy. South Australia scored the highest national average of digital engagement (37%), followed by TAS (29%), ACT (29%), WA (24%), NSW (22%), QLD (21%), VIC (16%) and NT (11%). The research sample covered 1,000 small businesses around Australia categorized by state and industry (medical, legal, professional services, trades, and hospitality). The report defined 17 parameters* for full digital engagement, in which two analytical modules were used, namely Digital Index (overall digital presence and engagement) and Web Index (whether the website was functional and competitive). Shockingly only 45% of businesses were found to have mobile optimised websites, despite Australia being sixth in the world when it comes to smart phone ownership with a penetration rate of 64.6%. This means that 55% of businesses are performing poorly when people search Google for their services and products. In addition, only 62% of small businesses had clear service offerings on their homepage, which means that 38% of the businesses still confuse their website visitors on what services they offer. Australia is fifth in the world for social media penetration, yet the report found that only 18% of small businesses are engaging with their customers on social media. Only 28% of businesses are using SEO efficiently, which means that over 70% are not easily found online when potential customers look for the services they offer on search engines. Dinesh De Silva, the CEO and founder of NetStripes encourages small businesses to use technology to grow their business. "Small businesses that make full use of the Internet grow their businesses by over 20% each year, which is quite significant. Additionally, more than 50% of all searches are now done via smartphones and increasing, so if a business doesn't have a website that is mobile friendly they are losing half of their potential customers", says De Silva. "The digital world opens up huge opportunities for small businesses, which holds the potential for generating billions of dollars in economic growth and reducing unemployment in the country." Netstripes CEO Dinesh De Silva *Parameters for full digital engagement: DIGITAL INDEX: 1) Functioning Website, 2) Mobile-Optimized Website, Active Social Media Engagement: 3) Facebook, 4) LinkedIn, 5) Blogs, 6) Email, Marketing/Newsletters, 7) Regular and consistent updates (15 per month on average), 8) Search Engine Optimization (SEO) for 1st page ranking on Google. WEB INDEX: 1) Mobile-Optimized Website, 2) Functioning Homepage (not busy, user-friendly & simple to operate), 3) Homepage Caption that conveys brand essence, 4) Design Quality (strong, integrated visuals, well-written content, consistent use of logo & branding elements...etc.), 5) Trust Signals (awards, accreditations...etc.), 6) Website Speed (fast & easy to load), 7) Clear List of Service Offerings, 8) About Us with photos, 9. Testimonials. Access the full report here Ends. For further information, hi-res images and interviews please contact: Amy Dowd | Rhetoric Communications|0420 979 187| amy@rhetoriccommunications.com Netstripes Netstripes is an innovative Aussie tech start up that specializes in helping small businesses successfully use the internet to consistently win more customers. Its passion is to help small business owners increase their annual earnings. Each of Netstripes' founders are key experts in the industry with over 15 years' experience, in building and rebuilding businesses from tech startups to large businesses in Australia and around the world. <http://www.netstripes.com> Dinesh De Silva, CEO Netstripes A strategist & technologist at heart, Dinesh has been providing strategic direction and visionary leadership to listed and privately held businesses in Australia and the Asia Pacific region for over 15 years. Dinesh has recognised expertise in the structuring and positioning of organisations and of structuring industries for growth in collaboration with government. Dinesh is a regular speaker at business forums on innovation and digital engagement; two issues he is passionate about in helping business leaders reimagine their future to affect change.

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