A kiosk can be developed to meet almost any business or leisure function that can be imagined...but not all projects will be successful. If you are trying to find a business application for a kiosk, you are likely to fail. If the environmental conditions affecting your business have led to the requirement for a kiosk, you are more likely to succeed.

Environmental conditions include:

- Customer demographic shifts
- Geographic exposure
- Access to finances
- Human resource elements
- Consumer behavior changes
- Competitive challenges
- Increase in service demands

In our experience, the most successful kiosk projects have evolved where the customer and location owner (Site Operator) has made a deliberate decision to automate transactions within their business. The least successful appear to involve the kiosk or asset owner negotiating for retail placement with the Site Operator. Of course there are always exceptions, as in the case with some distributed internet access kiosk projects that are deployed on a revenue share basis.

"Without the full cooperation of all stakeholders, your project is doomed. An alignment of all business values and metrics is required."

- Jeremy Richardson, General Manager iMetrics Consulting Pty Ltd

Typically, self-service Kiosks are employed to:

- Improve service levels; &/or
- Reduce costs; &/or
- Broaden reach (penetration); &/or
- Assist attract new business & retain customers; &/or
- Entertain

Almost all successful kiosk projects embrace some or all of the above. These are the key business drivers for embarking on a kiosk journey.

The introduction of self-service kiosks dates back to the banks introducing ATM’s in the 80’s. The uptake of these devices has been significant to say the least; however it was a slow start.
Changes in consumer behavior since that date have been phenomenal. A recent report suggests that television is no longer a viable medium for attracting males aged 15-24, with the internet, mobile phone and in-shopping-centre marketing preferred.

Automation within a business could reap benefits today, but what about 24 months from now? Your project has possibly been deployed in the market for 12 months, but environmental changes continue to occur. Will the platform you are using provide the flexibility to cater for changes within the market? Can updates be deployed easily? What consideration was made for the inclusion of additional devices? What will set you apart from your competitors if they copy your project?

Ultimately there has to be real and measurable motivation within a business to embark on any kiosk project.

If critical observation determines that a kiosk project could be right for your business, below is an overview of factors that can influence success, or failure.

**- Key elements for Success -**

The key elements of a successful kiosk project are:

- Service suitability – does the kiosk service the customers needs ✓
- Return on investment [ROI] – can a well defined business case be created (revenue generation, service load balancing, human resource reduction, customer attraction and retention) ✓
- Customer acceptance – will customers embrace an automated experience ✓
- Aesthetics – is the kiosk attractive to look at (enticing) ✓
- Functionality – does the software platform provide for today’s business needs with scalability for future requirements ✓
- Serviceability – can the kiosk be maintained efficiently ✓
- Finance – do we have the financial resources to invest in the project, including ongoing software and hardware maintenance ✓
- Business model alignment – do all parties involved in the project have a probable opportunity for success ✓
- Planning – do all parties understand the system requirements, budgetary constraints & timelines ✓
- Vision – has a well defined “Vision & Scope” been created ✓
- ASSUMPTIONS – have we eliminated our assumptions and replaced them with validated data ✓

You MUST be able to tick each of these elements when objectively studying your project plan; and the last one is as important as the first…if not more so.

Each project MUST start with a “Vision and Scope” that is unanimously supported across the entire organisation. This document will ultimately shape all of the future decisions you make on the project. Without a clear “Vision & Scope” you are unlikely to ever have the project market-ready.

- Success Stories -

Some of the more successful recent kiosk projects (other than ATM’s) that have achieved significant scale include:

- Flight check in kiosks deployed worldwide
- Digital photo printing kiosks (where comfort for the user has also been addressed)
- After-hours hotel check in kiosks
- In-store and in-centre directories
- Job search kiosks
- Internet access kiosks (including stand alone desktop PCs)
- Travel ticketing (Rail, Bus, Ferry)

- The Near Future -

On the horizon we see wider deployment of this medium and within 12-24 months expect to see growth in the following fixed kiosk applications:

- In store product locators
- Food ordering kiosks in restaurants
- Stand alone ticketing / gifting kiosks in convenience locations (Bus, Rail, Phone, Internet, Flowers, Vouchers etc)
- Real Estate – new properties for sale, sales history for region, off the plan sales
- New Car Dealerships – profile range, change colours, add extra’s etc
- Health and well being advice at pharmacies, medical centres & gymnasiums
- Tour and tourism kiosks in hotels and resorts, replacing concierge brochure racks
- Remote or distributed health care

Given the penetration of mobile phones in the Australian marketplace, coupled with the current “Blue-tooth discoverable rate” of 37%, it is important to consider that almost 2 out of 5 people are carrying a potential kiosk in their pocket. Many applications exist for remote content delivery, and this “Virtual Kiosk” will soon overtake the current remote asset model. It is only our imaginations limiting the potential.

For example, as a regular shopper at my local centre I agree to download an application that links me to HOT specials, services and a loyalty program. Whenever I attend the centre I am provided (via Bluetooth) with specials that appeal to me. They know what I am interested in because when I loaded the application onto my phone the registration process profiled me.
Similarly, with every transaction make in the centre I am accumulating credits to redeem at a later stage.

Will our customers want this service? Certainly and here is the reason. As the centre operator I couple a way-finder application into the mix which allows any shopper to easily locate the store they are looking for, or product, based on their current location. Now that is a reason in itself to opt in. As utilisation and acceptance rates grow, the mobile phone is positioning to become the most widely deployed kiosk in the world…and it will run multiple applications.

- Failures -

In the past, many (if not most) kiosk projects failed because in order to create a business case some of the key elements to success were forgotten, if not ignored. For example:

- Tried to broaden the application so widely that the delivery of the PRIME function was compromised
- Balance between risk and reward was weighted to heavily against the risk taker
- Companies continued to vary their vision to a point where a “build it at all costs” mentally arose, yet it never got built
- The serviceability of the unit (usually established through field trials) was compromised for aesthetics and support costs rose well above budget
- The timelines were unreasonable and a poor product was deployed
- Customer uptake was assumed but never researched
- Project was modeled on advertising returns which were unreasonable
- Projects relied on internet connections that were over priced or unreliable

By considering the contents of this document you have already increased your chances of success. A wise man once told me “…measure twice, cut once.”

- Handy Advice -

If you deploy a single kiosk unit for a field trial, keep it staffed (even if from a distance) so you can minimize any potential negative impact. Let’s face it, equipment does not always work as expected and your customers will have valuable input for you if you can listen. Allowing people to use your kiosk and leave without providing feedback on their experience is arrogant and a key ingredient in failure.

It is always important to consider what content will be assessed, where the data will be stored and how it will be shared. If a project relies on high-speed internet access you should factor in the costs associated as they can be considerable in some locations. Furthermore, you should be opting for a business-grade connection where a direct interface between your customer (user) and the internet is required.

Many hardware suppliers have increased their software development capabilities and capacities to offer a “one stop shop” for kiosk projects. This may work on rare occasions, or for smaller “one off” jobs, but for larger projects requiring integration to legacy systems we recommend engaging a professional system architect to review your “Vision & Scope”.

Prices for prime kiosk components (screen, touch panel and PC) continue to fall, and with the cost of generic kiosk “shells” also lowering, the barriers to entry are reducing. Generic software applications are also available for simple projects, such as catalogues, and may suit
many operators. Software, however, is where most projects either succeed or fail. Always consider the needs of the business before you look for a system.

There are an ever increasing number of kiosk providers who claim broad experience in the technology concerned; and whilst this may be very true, your kiosk project is unique to your business and should be considered in such a way.

“Designers too often assume that the printer, bill or coin acceptor, card reader, bar code scanner, etc., can be easily added as an afterthought. Unfortunately, that’s rarely the case...The manufacturers and suppliers of the components in your kiosk are a valuable resource to help you make the best decisions in your design. Involving the suppliers of all the kiosk components early on in the deployment ensures the most cost-effective, timely design effort...and keeps you out of panic mode!”

- Charles B Levinski, HECON/Hengstler

- About Us -

iMetrics Consulting provides you with reassurance that the key elements of your kiosk projects will not be overlooked. Before you invest any resources into kiosk research you should ensure that the work being done is taking your decision through the correct process.

Visit our web site at www.imetrics.com.au or call +61 2 9529 7223 if you wish to discuss the particulars of your project, want to promote a success story or simply provide feedback on this document.

We can assist you with:

- Vision consulting
- Business model alignment – ROI – Success milestones
- Project management
- Component sourcing – including the preparation of RFP’s to hardware/software suppliers
- Software architecture and coding
- Network & legacy systems integration
- Field support services

By working with iMetrics, you gain the benefit of our years of experience in the design AND management of successful kiosk applications.