



# Embracing citizen development

Unlock innovation, encourage  
employee engagement and drive your  
digital transformation agenda

**gobeyond**



**T**he rise of citizen development in recent years has been exponential and is continuing to grow as organisations realise the transformative potential it can unlock within their current workforce and operations.

In this whitepaper, we will unpack citizen development, why it is important now, key considerations for getting implementation right and why business leaders should be seriously considering how it can support the delivery of business strategy and contribute to business success.

## WHAT IS A CITIZEN DEVELOPER?

A citizen developer is an employee who:

**01** Is not part of the technology function or a traditional technologist

**02** Typically works in business operations

**03** Knows their work and can see a better way to do it

Low-Code/No-Code development gives employees the ability to build mobile/web apps and automations without the need to write code, using a visual 'drag and drop' approach. This enables the continuous improvement of customer processes without the need for IT intervention, driving a dramatic increase in the pace of change.

This provides the ability, empowerment and time to use Low-Code/No-Code development platforms to find ways to automate the routine and mundane, allowing employees to focus on more value adding work.

Already today, **60%** of all custom apps are now being built outside of the technology function, of these **30%** are built by employees with either limited or no technical development skills<sup>1</sup>

**What untapped transformation potential do you have within your business areas that you could unlock today?**

# WHY IS CITIZEN DEVELOPMENT IMPORTANT?

Until recently, technology functions within companies retained sole responsibility for new mobile and web applications and the development of automations. Often laborious and time-consuming procedures and standards had to be followed and deep technical or coding skills were required to automate work.

The world has changed though, accelerated by the pandemic. New, rapidly deployable digital solutions are required, and organisations need to be fleet of foot to meet customers' ever-changing demands.

To remain relevant in an increasingly competitive landscape it is critical that organisations respond and embrace citizen development technology solutions that can deliver significant cost and customer experience benefits.

Indeed, reducing the costs of technology development creates opportunities to make smaller changes, previously ignored because there was no obvious ROI. The potential here is huge, and the waste caused by not resolving this untapped pool of improvements is a major contributor to employee frustration.

Additionally, employees are demanding tools that empower them to digitally transform their own work; quickly, effectively, and continuously. The ability to get involved in citizen development is a game-changer for employee engagement and attracting new talent - allowing untapped potential to be unlocked in both people and operations.

While few occupations are fully automatable, 60 percent of all occupations have at least 30 percent technically automatable activities<sup>2</sup>



However, there are not enough skilled developers to address this potential within organisations - according to a recent report by Forrester,<sup>3</sup> the United States alone will have a deficit of over 500,000 software developers by 2024. Hence the advent of citizen development and its increasing popularity.

Gartner predicts that active citizen developers will be at least four times the number of professional developers at large enterprises within the next 18 months and a survey by Dimensional Research<sup>4</sup> reported that **77%** of tech leaders and **71%** of business leaders said their IT teams have a pipeline of new tech solution requests that are not being built due to reasons such as the lack of qualified specialists and costs.

Citizen development can achieve transformational outcomes for businesses and their customers - but this is only possible if supported by a clear, robust and suitable delivery approach.



**It's critical to put a framework in place for ensuring citizen developers have the tools, training and support needed to share ideas, collaborate on automation projects and build lightweight solutions that align with pre-defined quality standards and deliver value on the ground.**



**Jason Cullabine,**  
CTO, Velocity IT

<sup>3</sup> How To Harness Citizen Developers To Expand Your AD&D Capacity, Forrester

<sup>4</sup> How To fix the disconnect between IT and business, Dimensional Research



## ADDING VALUE WITH **CITIZEN DEVELOPMENT**

**T**ogether with providing the answer to the 'Supply vs. Demand' problem in a talent-constrained market, citizen development can enable:

### A kick-start to digital transformation

- Improving legacy customer journeys at minimal cost

### Agility and customer centricity

- Allowing quick changes to processes and customer experience

### Quicker prototyping

- Enabling quicker decisions on change initiatives

### Scaling at pace

- Best placed for spotting automation opportunities

### End-to-end value release

- Multiple, linked cross team/cross department solutions strengthening the entire journey

### Significant improvements to employee engagement

- Encouraging ownership, innovation and new career possibilities

### Re-invigorating IT and change management

- Allowing the team to operate in a more strategic and efficient manner

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In my experience, citizen development works best when there is clear communication between automation specialists, IT and business unit representatives to ensure all automation projects are aligned with broader strategic goals and all stakeholders' expectations.

- **Jason Cullabine,**  
CTO, Velocity IT

## Avoiding the pitfalls of **CITIZEN DEVELOPMENT**

It is important to draw the distinction between the citizen development of now and previous iterations. The key difference today is Low-Code/No-Code software has provided the guiderails and controls - mitigating the scenario of ungoverned and inconsistent solutions. Today's environments are controlled; with InfoSec, performance monitoring and ongoing support as standard.

**A 2018 survey by CIMI Corporation showed that organisations considered 54% of citizen development projects they undertook to be a failure after the first year. Adopters rated another 28% of these projects as having marginal results. Less than 20% of survey respondents said they considered their citizen development projects a clear success.**

Why was this the case and why does it continue to be in many instances? What are the reasons for failure? Typically, it's where citizen developers are:

- Seen as a short cut - a cheap way to increase the number of developers
- Not being given sufficient time and resources to concentrate on the development part of their role
- Lacking a support model and sponsorship to provide help when its needed
- Not introduced as part of the tech strategy of the organisation with a long-term vision
- Introduced in silos with little or no change to the wider ways of working within the organisation

- Not part of a support structure that has the authority to look end-to-end, becoming silo-blinkered and developing sub-optimal local solutions

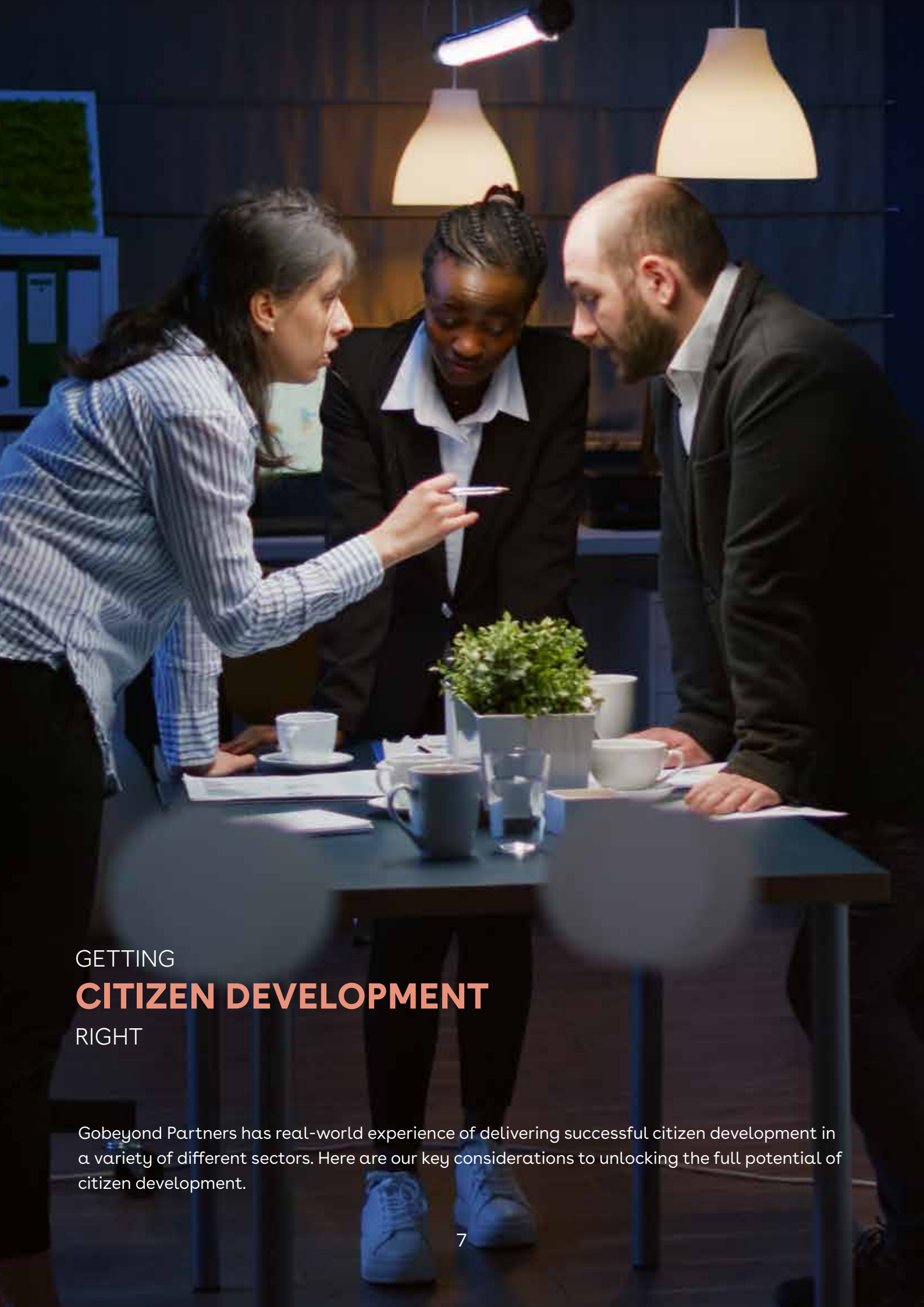
- Not the right fit for a development role

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On the last point, where tools are labelled Low-Code /No-Code, it can mean that there is an underappreciation of the skills required to use them effectively. To be successful, a citizen developer requires a logical, methodical and analytical approach and the ability to think "process".

**From an environmental perspective, there is often a limit put on the success of citizen development from the start due to concerns about it enabling any employee to put poor quality code and solutions live with no control and no visibility leading to an increase in risk.**

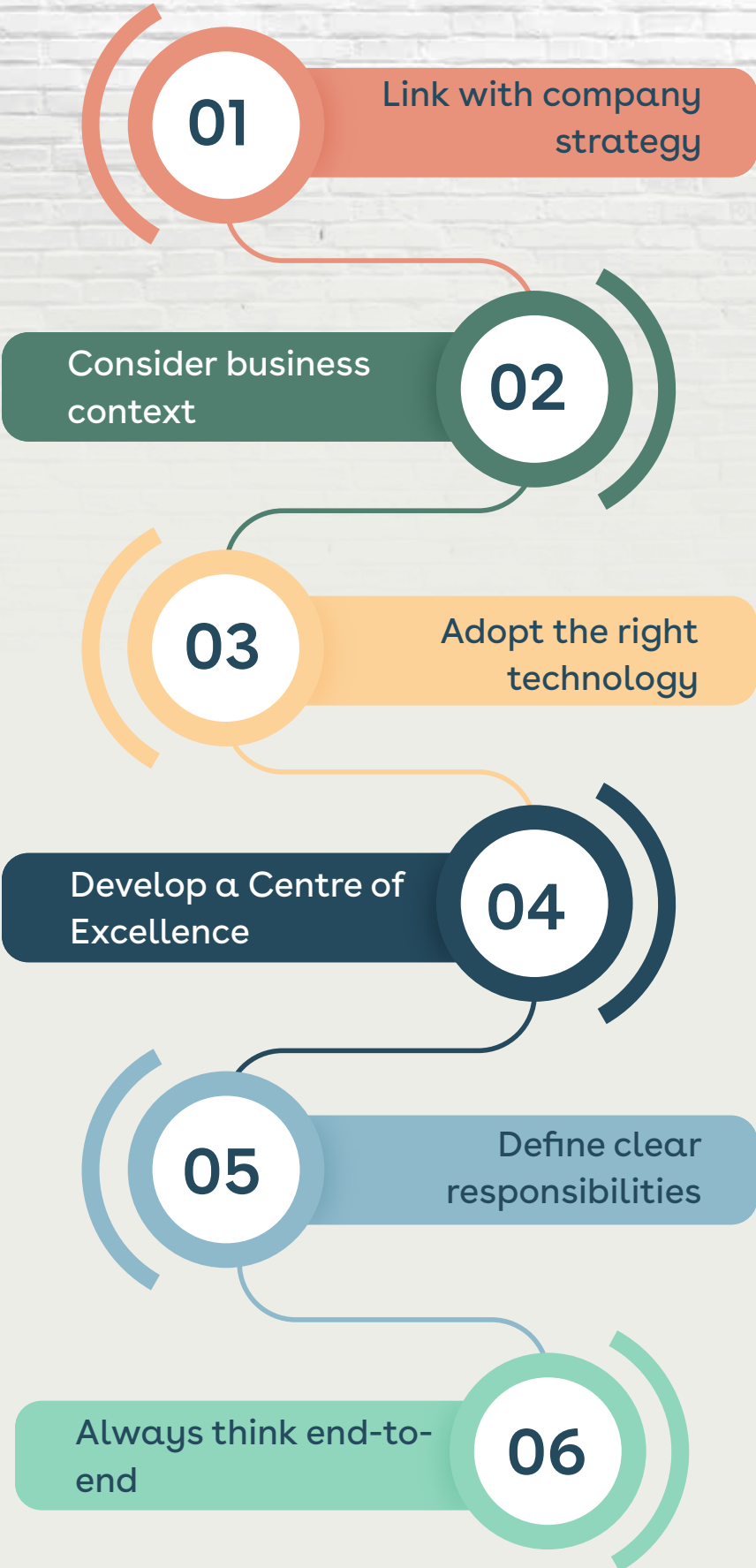
So, what is the key theme here? Ultimately the factor that links them all relates to the quality of implementation and the operating model. Simply adding citizen developer capability by training colleagues without changing elements of the operating model is very unlikely to lead to success.



GETTING  
**CITIZEN DEVELOPMENT**  
RIGHT

Gobeyond Partners has real-world experience of delivering successful citizen development in a variety of different sectors. Here are our key considerations to unlocking the full potential of citizen development.

# Unlock the full potential of citizen development





## 01 Link with company strategy

Does citizen development link in with company strategy and the problems the company is trying to solve? Does it align with key success factors? Is it a suitable fit with how the company wants to do transformation?

## 02 Consider business context

There is no “one size fits all” approach for citizen development. How it should be implemented and maintained depends on a variety of factors:

- Outcomes being sought
- Type of organisation
- Tool(s) being used
- Core capability in place as a starting point
- Level of investment

A partner with credible experience can help navigate through these questions and design an operating model and a roadmap to scale that will work best for a specific company’s circumstances. It is important to select a partner that will look holistically at the problems that need to be solved and deal with the inevitable shades of grey.



### 03 Adopt the right technology

There will be choices to make about which is the right technology to adopt and support needed with crucial areas including developing business cases, support with training and ensuring the people engagement is carefully managed.

### 04 Develop a Centre of Excellence

Where it is identified a Centre of Excellence is the right solution, it is essential to build in way that ensures lasting success; considering training, standards, guidance, the developer community and consistency of delivery.

This will avoid the challenges associated with poorly performing, ungoverned solutions that don't deliver value and create new risks for a company.



**“I agree with the adage that ‘anything that can be automated, should be automated’. Citizen developers play a valuable role in making this happen by sharing automation ideas, getting solutions over the line quickly, and embedding automation into the fabric of the organisation. A Centre of Excellence is an ideal way to get the most value from both people and technology.**

- Jason Cullabine, **CTO, Velocity IT**





## 05 Define clear responsibilities

An important part of the success of any citizen development programme is defining and agreeing roles and responsibilities, and crucially, how the relationship will operate with a central IT department. Who will be responsible for how issues will be owned and managed and an ongoing support mechanism are crucial to ensuring continuity of service for employees and customers. Gobeyond Partners can assist with defining the solution that best fits with the company's needs.

## 06 Always think end-to-end

Avoid blinkered local solutions that may look like improvements but actually impede end-to-end flow and the overall customer experience. There needs to be a customer journey lens on all activities, driven via the Centre of Excellence or through links with wider transformation teams.

“As IT professional developers become even more scarce the demand for citizen developers will grow exponentially. To ensure that citizen development is successful there needs to be closer links between IT and the wider business especially around visibility of what is being built and run on the estate. Many automation tools have re-usability as one of their many benefits and without collaboration across the organisation this benefit will be lost with technical debt building and putting a strain on the infrastructure.



**Lee Edwards,**  
CEO, Smart Automation Services

# THE FUTURE FOR CITIZEN DEVELOPMENT

Low-Code/No-Code software solutions are here to stay. The concept of citizen development is becoming increasingly 'business as usual' and widespread across companies of all shapes, sizes and sectors. Implemented in the right way, it has the power to unlock innovation, drive employee engagement and be a core part of the digital transformation agenda.

Business sponsors are demanding innovation that will keep pace with the rapidly changing needs of their organisation, both for large programmes and in business-as-usual work.

Citizen development within a proven toolset provides the ability to use local knowledge and resource, but within a secure and performant solution, to take control of change and development, whilst adopting a consistency of approach from centrally developed blueprints.

The result is rapid response, easy-to-adopt, accurate solutions for end customers, whilst maintaining supportability and acceptance from the organisation



**Chris Pearce**

Vice President,  
Customer Success, Enate

## About the **AUTHOR**



Gerald Pullen is Gobeyond Partners' Technology Delivery Director, and has over 20 years of experience in financial services, delivering complex change and improvement initiatives. Over the last five years, he has successfully delivered and scaled intelligent automation solutions, resulting in transformational outcomes for employees and customers.

E: [gerald.pullen@gobeyondpartners.com](mailto:gerald.pullen@gobeyondpartners.com)

# About Gobeyond Partners

Gobeyond Partners understand what it takes to deliver great customer experiences. This means we connect design and transformation with the real world, working alongside your people to embed lasting change.

As part of the Webhelp Group, our customer journey view is broader and deeper, so we help you break down organisational silos and deliver a fully connected omnichannel experience.

Every client and engagement counts - and every objective is guaranteed.

**Gobeyond Partners: experience without boundaries.**

Learn more about Gobeyond Partners here - [www.gobeyondpartners.com](http://www.gobeyondpartners.com)

Smart Automation is an Intelligent Automation Consultancy based in the UK with resources across the global. We work with organisations large and small and across a number of sectors from financial services, utilities, retail and manufacturing.

*We provides services from advisory and consultancy to build out internal capabilities to pre-built solutions and finally a complete managed service.*

Learn more about Smart Automation here - [www.sautomation.co.uk/](http://www.sautomation.co.uk/)

Velocity IT is a process automation consultancy rather than a software vendor, we focus on business needs first and leverage the best-in-class technologies to suit our client's goals.

*We take a partnership approach to building progressive technology solutions that deliver the business results that really matter to our clients. Amplifying productivity, cutting costs, freeing more time for critical work, reducing risk and increasing agility are just some of the goals we have worked with global organisations to achieve.*

Learn more about Velocity IT here - [www.velocity-it.com/](http://www.velocity-it.com/)

Enate is an end-to-end platform that allows you full visibility and autonomy over your operations. Get a bird's eye view of workflows, deliver the right work to the right resource, become more efficient and simplify the way you work. Get set up quickly and see results from day one. It's easy to use, intuitive and designed for the hybrid workforce. On average, businesses that use Enate report a 20% increase in operational efficiency.

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