



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: HOW TO GET READY FOR ONE MAJOR CHANGE



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Digital transformation is a term that's been bandied around a lot lately, and has left more than a few people wondering just how much they really know about this concept. There's plenty of noise to cut through, but the signal that lies beneath the noise has great potential to improve business beyond most any expectation. Knowing what digital transformation is, what it can do, and how to accomplish it are the first steps toward taking advantage of this major sea change in business.

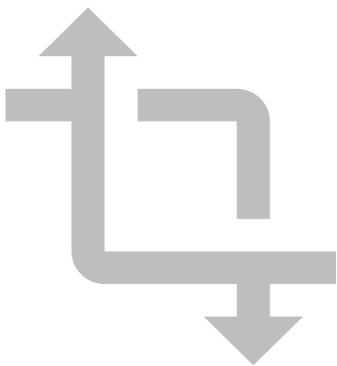
WHAT IS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION?

Digital transformation is, simply enough, exactly what the name suggests. It's a transformation of business operations from current standards to digital operations. If that sounds unduly vague, that's by design; since the execution of a digital transformation looks different for each company that exercises it, by nature the definition can only be so concrete.

It's not just a change in operations, however, as it also requires changes to cultural elements. The business changes its operations and how its employees approach these operations. It often requires businesses to challenge operational norms and accept the inevitable failures that come about as part of change. It's about taking what is effectively not broke and deciding to fix it in a bid to get something better. Whether better is more effective, more efficient, or more accessible doesn't matter.

WHAT DOES DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION MEAN FOR MY BUSINESS?

The answer to that question must immediately be





prefaced by another: how big is your business?

Regardless of the answer, there will be impact in some fashion. However, just what form that impact takes will change based on the size of the business. When you identify your own business, you can better understand what digital transformation means.

Small businesses

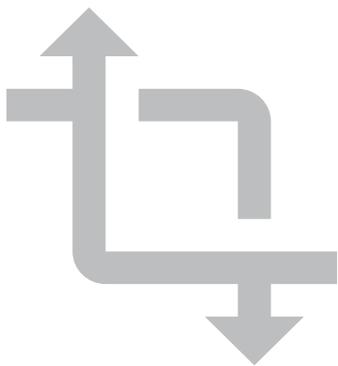
Small businesses will be able to put digital transformation to work in several ways, ranging from a shift in marketing away from local newspapers toward social media to using mobile systems as a way to improve customer loyalty, employee engagement, and more. Many fundamental systems will fall under the digital transformation.

Medium-sized businesses

Since medium-sized businesses are often lumped in with small businesses (hence the phrase “SMB”), they share many similar aspects. Thus, most medium-sized businesses will use digital transformation similarly to small businesses. However, medium-sized businesses will also have unique factors at work. Since most medium-sized businesses are small enterprises, or enterprises in the making, these businesses will use digital transformation tools as a means to improve processes that make them better ready to become enterprises.

Enterprises / large businesses

Large businesses have unique concerns as compared to their smaller counterparts. While they have similar concerns in attracting and keeping customers and employees alike, they also will use digital transformation tools to address their weaknesses. A lack of agility plagues many large businesses, but





digital transformation tools will provide for faster internal communication and potentially even faster decision making. An agile business with an enterprise's resources is a formidable competitor.

HOW DO I READY MY BUSINESS FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION?

With so much potentially at stake in digital transformation, it's important to note what goes into a successful transformation effort. The specifics will vary by company, particularly in terms of size, but there are some factors that are fairly universal and worth bearing in mind.

Focus on adaptability

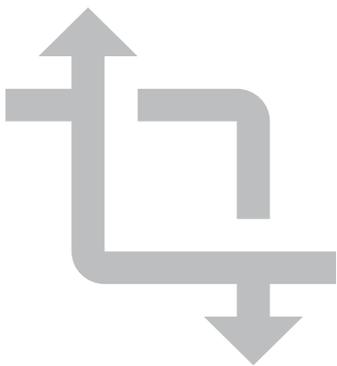
Today's cloud computing systems have come a long way from those of yesterday, and tomorrow's cloud computing systems could be even more different. Being ready to adapt to change as it occurs helps ensure that today's investment will still have validity tomorrow and down the line.

Don't forget the user experience

A room no one can enter is the most secure of all, but what good is it? When building the digital transformation tools of tomorrow, make sure these are tools that are sufficiently easy to use so that users will want to put them to work. When digital transformation impacts the customer, make sure the tools add to a quality user experience.

Build around innovation

Digital transformation is a major sea change for many businesses, requiring the removal or adaptation of old processes in favor of brand new ones. Take advantage





of this renovation or complete teardown of processes to put your company in a better position to succeed later. Set up processes to improve speeds on new technology evaluation and implementation. Embrace the remote workforce to access the broadest talent pool and get the best people for any open job. “This is how we always did it” worked great in the past, but with digital transformation, our focus must be on the future.

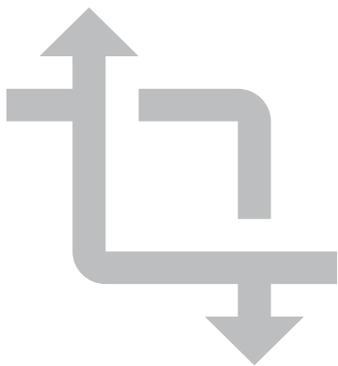
Don't forget the data

Digital transformation puts companies in an excellent position to better use data. Remember to build out your data collection processes by using Internet of Things (IoT) technology like GPS trackers or temperature and other specialized sensors to give you up-to-the-moment information. Use these tools in storefronts to track foot traffic and connect to the shopper's mobile device to offer new deals right in the store. Build the proper infrastructure to gather data from all over to prevent data silo effects, but also be ready to protect it against unauthorized access.

HOW DO I AVOID FALLING BEHIND IN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION?

The most important thing of all to note in digital transformation is that this is what your company needs to get ahead and stay ahead. Yet asking how you won't fall behind in digital transformation is still a good question; this is a major change, and no one wants to put a lot of time and resources into a major change that's not going to produce desirable results.

The good news, however, is that you've already got a framework for setting up the best kind of digital



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transformation right here. Will your digital transformation go without problems? No, there will almost certainly be something that goes wrong or delays something important. That's the nature of any system built and managed by human beings. Will your digital transformation take care of all your needs forever? No, there will almost certainly be something you overlooked or could have added in after the fact. Accept these points from the outset, and be ready to adapt accordingly.

Adaptability. User experience. Innovation. Keeping these points in mind when you launch your digital transformation will help ensure that you get the most out of this groundbreaking measure, and that you're not left behind by the crush of other companies launching their own digital transformation efforts.

