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# Six Tips for Leaders on a Digital Transformation Journey

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Every enterprise customer I speak to globally says they are on a digital transformation journey. And the journey truly includes some major transformations. These companies are looking at how they can improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of their business functions, operations, and how they do work—it's about how they get work done within their organization.

From these conversations, I have drawn six key common themes these companies are all thinking about, regardless of the lens; they view these same themes through their specific priorities for transformation.



## Using technology to improve customer experience

The first theme centers around customer experience. The biggest challenge I see companies face is when they are seduced by new technology and software. The bells and whistles of the product may offer a shiny object that entices them at inception (*they think about how much more efficient things can be with the tool*), but they fail to intellectualize their customer experience, journeys, buyer persona, and overall expectations. The natural excitement should only come after prioritizing customer needs.

I think one of the tough lessons that many organizations have learned is the downside of rapidity and the allure of shiny objects. So many organizations dash straight into transformation projects

without doing the less sexy groundwork and figuring out how the technology is enabling them to improve the customer experience. They buy things with the hope that those tools will do the work for them and are too often disappointed when the realization occurs that those new technologies simply don't meet those expectations. The good news—that's changing. Now the corporate mindset of prioritizing customer experience and needs first is marching slowly toward the forefront of this sort of digital transformation.

## Employing digitally aware and digitally open leaders

The second theme is about leadership. Organizations that employ and herald digitally aware and digitally open leaders stand a better chance of being successful. They lead from the front and embrace many of the changes iterated in theme one. Digital transformation is a massive undertaking for most organizations, and leaders need to embrace these processes for them to create efficacy on a sustainable, long-term level across an entire organization. Companies have gotten used to ways of working over years—in some cases decades—and that includes those that have grown accustomed to pivoting and changing quickly. Embracing that change is at times difficult for organizations. The successful ones lead from the top down and bottom up. Meaning, the demand is coming up from the organization—the users and the colleagues within an organization—but it's also being championed top-down. Leaders need to make sure they are visible and visibly committed to the change.

## Investing in the right talent

The third theme focuses on people. Having the right talent is obvious and critically important. Having a people-first philosophy is a major indicator of success. As a leader, prioritizing your colleagues and their experience is critical. It impresses upon them that you are a team and that you care deeply about the active parts of a digital transformation. In turn, your leadership moves everyone forward in this same philosophy, for example: *if the organization is investing in this experience for **me**, it is going to enable **me** to provide a much better experience for our end customers.*

## Adapting new ways of thinking

The fourth theme is all about culture and organizations. In other words, not shying away from rethinking and rearchitecting the way that you collaborate with each other in an organization. It also includes the way you think about supply chains, vendors, and providers—all key stakeholders. There's a massive shortage of skills across a number of industries, particularly technology skill gaps. This capability uplift is critical going forward as well. New ways of working and thinking are necessary so that organizations and individuals can adapt and work within an environment that is all digitized, automated, and using AI where and whenever possible.

## Focusing on innovation

The fifth theme is all about innovation and making sure that innovation isn't driven from just one sole tenet. This may sound obvious, but we see it all the time—especially in heavily siloed organizations. Digital transformation requires that the whole organization think as a team: *How can we innovate? How can we do that end-to-end? How do we make sure that we start at the beginning and finish at the end? How do we make sure the transformations and changes we're making are widely accessible?*

For example, DevOps teams need to proactively reach out to understand the requirements of the marketing team. Marketing teams need to understand how what they do ultimately impacts networking and so on. Innovation doesn't occur in a silo.

Furthermore, organizations need to make sure they are putting data at the heart of any innovation and monetizing that or operationalizing it to add value to customers. Some operations may need to be modified so that analyzing data is a normal part of making and executing quality and impactful decisions.

## Sustainability and ESG

The last key theme, which merits even deeper consideration, is sustainability. It's becoming more mainstream that a major corporate priority and mechanism for change is environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG). The sustainability portion of ESG deserves major prioritization. Sustainability needs to be at the center of digital transformation and adopting new tech or ways to operate. It's all about how we start to drive adoption and how to get the understanding out there of what is possible and why it matters right now. When we're designing new technology, we must think: *How do we design it so it is sustainable end-to-end?* For example, if an organization is introducing new technology—be it hardware or software—the question should be: *If we run the business like this end-to-end, what are the measurable improvements?* This is where the cloud deserves hyper-focus because you don't want to think on a micro level and create lots of little data centers everywhere. Rather, you want to think macro and use big, centralized data centers that are optimized and more efficient wherever possible. When security concerns or other restrictions make that impossible, it's key to use hybrid cloud solutions—ideally shared ones—which are private, to complement public usage. There are lots of things we need to do to replace technology so it consumes less power as well.

From a sustainability perspective, it's all about how we manage end-of-life usage and equipment. It's all about how we recycle it and how we make it easier for people to package it back up and send it back where organizations can strip out the components, and then reuse what's available in new technology and transform that going forward. The best organizations have adopted some of these techniques to improve their sustainability efforts.

## Conclusion

These six powerful themes consistently arise when I speak with BT customers, and they hit all lines of efficiency and effectiveness—they also impact the culture and people within an organization. They impact how leaders lead, how companies innovate, and how they view sustainability. Successful organizations don't do things in isolation; rather, they rearchitect all of these elements together and then they deliver in a specific way and order, which lays the foundation for lasting transformation.