

Preparing for the digital transformation tsunami

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It's not your first digital transformation rodeo. Nor is it your last. It may however be your biggest. Never in the history of computing has there been so many monumental changes occurring simultaneously at such a rapid pace.

Unlike the move to the Internet, where everyone placed an “e” in front of their title, everything about this technology era is different. We have more options for purchasing and utilizing the best hardware and software infrastructures (cloud and SaaS). We have access to data and the Internet wherever we are (mobility). We have more data, coming from a wide variety of connected devices (mobile and Internet of Things), in a less structured format. But fortunately we also have new ways of storing, analyzing and driving insight from this data (big data processing, cognitive computing).

The question is how do we harness the power of all of multiple waves of technology evolution that are happening simultaneously? This is where life becomes difficult for IT leaders and CIOs. Below are four tips to help IT survive the digital transformation tsunami.

1. **Find a transformation goal and make it quantifiable.** Your organization needs a rallying goal to transform around. Find one area that a majority of business leaders can agree on within the company and focus your transformation projects around that effort such as increasing margins, improving speed-to-market and customer satisfaction. Every project also needs a way to measure success. Some digital transformation projects are sold as “because it's good for the company”. While that may be true, it's easier to measure progress and success if a project has predefined metrics. These metrics could offer return on investment such as decreasing contact center calls by five percent or have a quantifiable

outcome that isn't tied to revenue or cost savings, such as improve the company's net promoter score by 10 points.

2. **Master your technology area, but learn the entire stack.** While CIOs and CDOs are looking at the entire technology stack, many other business IT leaders are focused on a specific technology stack such as mobile, cloud or analytics. Tech strategy silos won't work in this IT era. Even if an IT leader is focused on one type of technology, they should evaluate how the other technology stacks can support and reinforce their efforts. For example, a cloud computing strategy can support a mobile strategy with app development and testing services and it can also support a big data strategy with Analytics as a Service offerings. Any technology project must also define how security solutions will impact their services.
3. **Be open to help from new strategic partners.** This is a new world with new technology and new service providers. While the existing consulting houses and vendors are all rapidly building practices, specialized start-ups can be just as useful and knowledgeable as the larger firms. Don't be afraid to work with new solutions providers. For example, there are new specialist firms for data analysis and for mobile application development that offer best in class services.
4. **Instead of fail fast, pivot quickly.** Digital transformation requires risk, but it can be minimized with the right plan. Living in Silicon Valley, the concept of pivoting seems to be as common as buying a cup of coffee. Pivoting is often defined as changing your product strategy, business model or target audience to be more successful. While it's easy for a 12-person company to fail fast and change strategy, it isn't always easy for a large firm to do this. Instead of getting to failure, businesses can soften the blow by predefining a set of strategy shifts (pivots) that can be made based on tracking a project's outcome. For example, run a POC for several different vendor's software or services in the cloud to understand each vendor's functions and scalability. If you select a vendor and it turns out to be the wrong choice, you'll already have a short list of potential replacements.

Each company will have a different digital transformation journey. These are just a few steps a company can take toward building a strategy.

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