

The Anatomy of Rebuilding & Recovery

A CEO LOUNGE INITIATIVE

The Epigenetics of the Digital DNA

Digital Transformation 2.0

In conversation with



Alvin Rodrigues

Field Chief Security Officer, Infoblox - Asia Pacific



Atul Govil

Chief Transformation Officer & Head (SAP & IT), India Glycols



Neeraj Sahgal

Sr. Director - Technology Services, WNS Global Services



Raghunatha Reddy

Executive Vice President & Head - IT, UTI Mutual Fund



Sudip Mazumder

Global Chief Digital & Information Officer, Piramal Glass

The Epigenetics of the Digital DNA



Businesses have been putting in their best digital foot forward, irrespective of their size. While the roots of digital transformation can be traced to the 1950s when computerisation had begun across industries, it is interesting that we have witnessed more digital transformation in the past one year than over the last decade. The adoption of every emerging technology, from cloud, 5G, AI and robotics, to data analytics, stands magnified and accelerated. CEO Lounge invites some of the industry's top brass in tech to demystify digital transformation and help us navigate the maze of cutting-edge emerging technologies all set to change the game.

Words by Divya Sista

The Swiss Army knife that gained popularity after WWII for its versatility, dexterity and usefulness is a tiny marvel of industrial design. With a promise of lasting lifelong, anyone who has used one will fondly recall that it is one tool everyone wants to carry, truly irreplaceable and has aided everything — from trimming nails to opening corkscrews. The beauty of the Swiss knife doesn't end there — the latest version is

loaded with Bluetooth, extensions that can repair computers, and of course, it still cuts through the slack as promised — a reminder that transformation is both a choice and a mandate. When life as we know it moved online — everything from school and shopping, to economies and entertainment was touched by digital disruption in some form. Whether digital transformation has been pushed by the pandemic or has proliferated as a result of digital Darwinism

aided by rapid tech disruptions, it has emerged as a safety net for businesses to survive and thrive. Digital initiatives have helped create smart partnerships, forged strategic business ecosystems and brought unseen value to the game. This digital wave, however, is a cultural shift as much as a tech adapt than a short-term tactic or just digitising existing processes. The idea of digital transformation is quite different from a digital facelift, with the former adding fundamental value through tech while the latter is just about a quick fix to stay in the game.

THE DIGITAL JOURNEY FROM A WANT TO A NEED

Energies and investments are poured into digital initiatives like none other. The path of digital transformation, touted as the winning way is all about reimagining the how, what and where of work that adds value, and leveraging technology in doing so. It has moved away from a fancy good-to-have process to a must-have-or-perish idea.

"There is a dramatic shift over the last two years. We have seen people talk about digital transformation leading to process changes, bringing in efficiency and impacting the bottom line — all simultaneously. The indicators are always the changes in customer demands that shape our transformation as well. For instance, work from home is seen as a form of outsourcing today, making

businesses consider outsourcing processes they were earlier closed about. The underlying layer in everything is supported by technology. It is now a different value chain altogether where we are building ecosystems involving buyers and sellers trying to use digital in some form — a step in the right direction. We are swamped with opportunities to digitise and offer tech solutions — some disruptive, some cosmetic," explains Neeraj Sahgal, Sr Director - Technology Services, WNS Global Services.

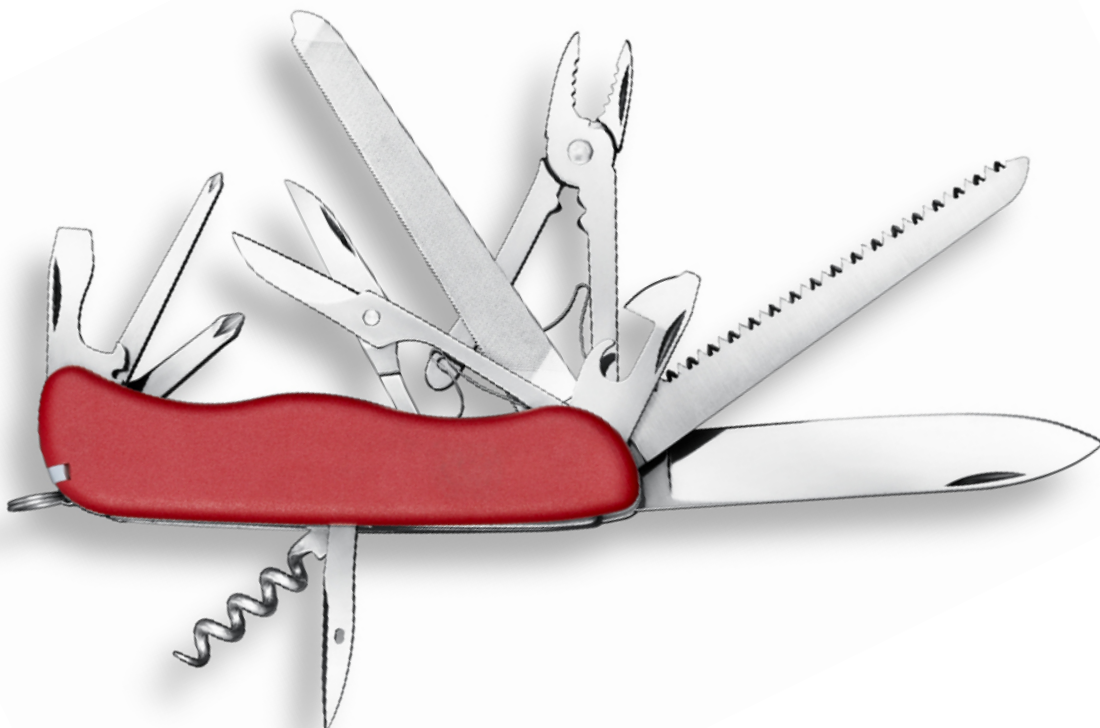
Many elements need to fall in place to kickstart, aid and advance the whole process.

"We are surrounded by a lot of enabling technology today. It is its ubiquitous nature that makes every business seem to be on the same path, albeit at varying speeds. Gone are the days that you need to visit a desktop or node to access a service. With the device-connectivity combination, there is a spike in on-demand services, making us rethink everything in terms of value. It works both ways — businesses have more data both in terms of quality and quantity, and are leveraging the data generated to reach out to other customers and expand their footprint. Conversational technology, with the improvement of computer vision, and the adoption of blockchain to assure security are making everything bigger and better," describes Raghunatha Reddy, Executive Vice President & Head - IT, UTI Mutual Fund.



"The whole idea of on-demand is an infrastructure refresh. It has moved from two months in 2009 to real-time in 2021. Data processing has moved from 1 TB a year to 5 TB a month. This scale coupled with speed and accessibility is what determines success in driving value through digital interventions"

Sudip Mazumder
Global Chief Digital & Information Officer,
Piramal Glass





Tech is not a tick in the box. The idea is to drive one or more business values – profitability, customer centricity, efficiency or all of them together"

Alvin Rodrigues
Field Chief Security Officer,
Infoblox - Asia Pacific

There is a pressing need for companies to step back, assess their standing and evaluate how they create value. This process would enable an organic value-based model that acknowledges the fundamental shifts and the company must find its fit to put down its roots. Across manufacturing, services and solutions, hardware, software, AI+ML (artificial intelligence and machine learning) enabled insights, IoT (internet of things), cloud hosting and so on are all coming together to create ecosystems that offer better scale, lower costs and establish a clear value chain.

"The whole idea of on-demand is an infrastructure refresh. It has moved from two months in 2009 to real-time in 2021. Data processing has moved from 1 TB a year to 5 TB a month. This scale coupled with speed and accessibility is what determines success in driving value through digital interventions," says Sudip Mazumder, Global Chief Digital & Information Officer, Piramal Glass.

ONE SMALL STEP = A GIANT LEAP?

Businesses that embrace digital transformation may view it as a modernisation plan as much as a

strategy to achieve business goals. While any start is a good start, the speed and pace have forced everyone onto the digital highway, where you can no longer afford to procrastinate digital initiatives.

"Tech is not a tick in the box. The idea is to drive one or more business values — profitability, customer centricity, efficiency or all of them together," pitches Alvin Rodrigues, Field Chief Security Officer, Infoblox - Asia Pacific.

A well thought out comprehensive strategy has multiple perks. Apart from having the skin in the game, it also assures operational efficiency, better time-to-market, security and solutions for most business demands.

"There is only one common central theme — value creation. Every measurement lever creating success has to interpret transformation with this idea of value at its centre — EBIDTA, safety or brand image. Consider the concept of collaboration — we talk about Zoom, MS Teams and other platforms — these are the means to an end. The underlying process has changed. What used to be communication and subsequent decisions taken over a physical meeting by a few seniors has turned participatory

— it has emerged as a robust, complete idea where more thoughts and minds come together,” says Atul Govil, Chief Transformation Officer & Head (SAP & IT), India Glycols.

The digital whirlpool can downplay many crucial aspects of the journey, which is precisely why the how and when become as vital as the why of digital adoption. Studies show that 70 per cent of digital initiatives meet a painful end.

“There must be a transformation from within. You may have the best front end but with no core to support it, the whole project will tank. Though the business starts its digitisation with one or two processes, it must focus on continuous evolution and the constant addition of digital initiatives. If one can’t ‘sensorise’ the whole world, we can identify areas that can report critical alerts, create dashboards and throw the spotlight on those dark spots that need illumination to create value,” Govil adds.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD TRANSFORMATION RECIEPE

Every digital technology, buzzword or not, is constantly evolving. Opensource and the internet have increased the

pace of evolution, while offering applications that disrupt the value chain at multiple levels, revving the urgency to adopt digital across the organisational setup. A digital DNA will ensure the business not just reaps benefits from tech but can stay both relevant and resilient.

“If you are looking for a framework or guidelines structure towards digital transformation, it is not quite there yet. There is nothing like an ISO standard or industry established framework that can guide you in digital transformation,” says Rodrigues.

Navigating this digital maze can be a tough job, especially for a legacy business that has the additional weight of enterprise change management. This is where many organisations falter, adjust their focus through a digital lens and move on — add an offering, tweak a process, and move on.

“Unlike ERP implementation or intranet, digital transformation is not a project. It is a journey. Sure, you can define milestones. But you can’t say I have achieved digital transformation because we have built this application, or adopted this method,” informs Govil.



“There is a dramatic shift over the last two years. We have seen people talk about digital transformation leading to process changes, bringing in efficiency and impacting the bottom line — all simultaneously. The indicators are always the changes in customer demands that shape our transformation as well”

Neeraj Sahgal

Sr. Director - Technology Services,
WNS Global Services





You'll perish if you don't catch up. Threats are looming from incumbents who are early adopters and startups. The success of digital transformation lies in how well this friction is managed while running transformation simultaneously"

Raghunatha Reddy

Executive Vice President & Head - IT,
UTI Mutual Fund

THE CULTURAL LOCK OF A DIGITAL EMBRACE

The convergence of multiple digital technologies, the business transformation that subscribes relevance, and the coming together of tech-talent forms a melting pot whose flavour can only be balanced with a cultural shift. This will determine how the organisation embraces digital transformation, reacts to the changes in operations and absorb the shocks that digital disruptions create.

"In a legacy system, we have digital native, digital illiterates and other strata across the spectrum. It is difficult to convince everyone to embrace digital ways. Threats are looming from incumbents who are early adopters and startups — you'll perish if you don't catch up. The success of digital transformation lies in how well this friction is managed while running transformation simultaneously," remarks Reddy.

The entire transformation is a simmer of business demands and emerging tech blended with cultural change. Organisations must take note that any change is difficult. But a shift towards the digital mindset is the most difficult transformation — which when

achieved amplifies the whole process to an entirely different level.

"It is about harmonising the company's vision with its processes. For instance, companies and employees fear automation. The narrative to communicate and create a nudge must pivot towards automation empowering the employee to perform higher activities. Communication and coaching employees about digital transformation are important. It is not to take away jobs but enable experienced people to move towards works of higher value, and help the company, should be the message delivered across the ecosystem," says Rodrigues.

The speed of tech progress even makes it fickle, where technologies and tools rise and fall with the same vigour, posing questions surrounding sustainability. Digitally-savvy industries like marketing and media and telecommunications, too, struggle to keep up. Throw in cultural opposition to the mix and this is where the maze seems more unnavigable.

"Digital dexterity is a beautiful term that guides organisations on how employees need to be trained to adopt and adapt along the digital

transformation journey. Taking employees along to achieve business value is key," says Sahgal.

It is easy to misplace value in the process of digital transformation; especially when the business is grappling with questions of skill density, fresh capital infusion, and security and privacy regulations while leveraging capabilities, forging partnerships and staying relevant in the foreseeable future.

"Digitisation may add immediate value most of the time. But to appreciate its contributions, we must give it time. The cultural value it adds, monitoring the progress of the transformation dimension is an inside-first approach — only then can we drive better value outside the company. Embracing tech for the better is a movement from you servicing 'me' to 'us', helping the customer. The whole communication has changed and has grown more integral and collaborative," explains Rodrigues.

Inclusivity, partnerships and running towards a common business goal taking everyone along do not suggest a compromise on privacy and security. Confidential computing and zero-

trust networks promise the delivery of seamless services, anytime anywhere while not compromising on security. Culturally, this is more about the idea of responsibility democratised at scale.

"Every employee at every level must be sensitised and understand responsibility, privacy, sustainability and cyber laws. Concepts like GDPR and data sustainability have to be made culturally important. This way, we also build immutable trust and a knowledge base within the company. Knowledge should flow both ways — from bottom to top and top to bottom," asserts Mazumder.

Software, computerisation, digital and 'smart' have all been around for decades, but to fundamentally conceptualise the permanent or long-lasting effects seen across verticals that have forced shifts, it is right to credit a business process transformation than simply a digital transformation. For transformations to truly show impact, businesses must be agile in the transformation process as well — operating at a brisk pace, having plan Bs, and exhibiting resilience. Technology is a fantastic tool and can support business goals only when approached the right way.



There is only one common central theme — value creation. Every measurement lever creating success has to interpret transformation with this idea of value at its centre — EBIDTA, safety or brand image"

Atul Govil

Chief Transformation Officer & Head (SAP & IT), India Glycols

TAKEAWAYS



1. Digital transformation should have tech innovations aligned with business goals as its key mantra.
2. It must create new business models and opportunities, and leverage tech that adds value.
3. The transformation brings in a fundamental change across the whole organisation.
4. It is a continuous process involving a strategy, tactical partnerships and cultural shifts.

Presented by



Associate Partner:



Support Partner:



Founder & Publisher : **Deepak Yadav**



Editor : **Hari Govind Nair**



hari@ceolounge.net

Deputy Editor : **Amit Ranjan Rai**

Feature Writer : **Shivanshu Nirupam**

Senior Designer : **Santosh Nirala**

Our Other Initiatives

collective



Manifest



springboard

