

# **A Conceptual Framework for Successful Implementation of an Organizational Digital Transformation**

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## **Abstract**

Digital transformation technologies can enhance work processes and redesign the employees' tasks but could have a huge impact on the employee work deliverables and ultimately the goals and objectives of the organization. The rapid growth in cloud-based applications, real-time customer interactions and feedback, and data analytics reports are forcing organizations to redefine the business processes, organizational structures, and human resource utilization to gain a competitive advantage by incorporating and implementing the new digital technologies (Korn, 2018). Although any organization that would like to succeed in implementing a digital transformation strategy needs to focus on multiple disciplines and principles within the organization. Equally, an organization could potentially achieve its goals by re-engineering business processes and by looking at technologies that underpin and drive organizational advancements in their market segment but could be negatively impacted by the lack of skilled employees (Almgren and Skobelev, 2020). However, these depend on two elements, namely the choice of digital technology and financial capabilities with the ability to use it for value creation. This paper provides some insight into a potential conceptual framework to ensure an organization succeeds by focusing on the critical importance of highly skilled and competent human resources. The article reviews and defines the potential relationship and influence between the leadership styles and the utilization of the human capital within the organization, with the notion that an organization must then understand and select the correct digital transformation technology for their industry and ensure alignment with the organizational goals and objectives. Additionally, it advocates an approach to defining and measuring the return on investment through cost analysis processes and to ensure the implementation of the correct digital strategy roadmap. Recent research findings indicate that the estimated failure ratio is between 66% to 84%. (Correani, and De Massis, et al, 2020). The inconsistency between the strategy formulation and implementation process is the main issue for failure which has a huge financial impact on the organization's revenue, work deliverables, and products and services. As a result, future management processes must ensure that the elements are managed and adjusted to address any future economic and market challenges, trends, and new opportunities. Subsequently, such an approach creates the foundation and building blocks for success, and future growth for an organization, which could be achieved and ensured through a conceptual framework for the successful implementation of an organizational digital transformation that ensures all the elements of an organization are redesigned and changed through the digital transformation project. (Brown and Harvey, 2006).

## **Keywords**

Digital Transformation, Technologies, Organizational Design, Human Resources, Organizational Effectiveness

## **1. Introduction**

The implementation and adaption of digital transformation could provide an organization with a solution to manage the future challenges and human resources skills shortages and could provide the organization with new innovative product offerings or services. (Brantley and Coleman, 2001). Organizations looking for new and innovative products and services are investing in new technologies associated with digital advances and transformation strategies. Before digital transformation projects are adopted, the organizations must ensure that they seek guidance from industry experts. The biggest risk is in the capitalization of the financial investment and ensuring organizational revenue goals are achieved. Organizations fail to capitalize on the transformation projects due to not correctly identifying the indirect link between the organization's digital transformation strategy selected and the actual implementation of the selected

strategy. Digital technologies radically introduced a huge number of new devices, applications, and data management systems into the industries and ultimately transformed organizational business architecture, processes, and work deliverables. An organization must learn and adapt to utilize this advancement to create value and secure its future. The growth of digital technologies and the increasing popularity and reliability of high-speed Internet services have forever changed the operations and business models of organizations. These technologies have enabled organizations to expand and stretch the boundaries in which an organization traditionally functioned, the day-to-day processes, and the organizational structures, and increased the need for highly skilled employees to manage, drive and support digital transformation projects. (Korn, 2018). Employees are the cornerstone for creating a competitive advantage and should no longer be viewed as cost items on the organizational balance sheet (Oosthuizen and Kara, 2008). Oosthuizen and Kara (2008) also indicated that there are a variety of strategies that an organization can adopt to establish their competitive advantage and stated that any organizations which still practice outdated managerial disciplines are not seeing the true value and potential power of their employees in establishing their competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness. (Mas'lankowski, 2021)

Therefore, an organization that implements and adopts a digital transformation project must ultimately re-create its business strategy aligned to the new technologies. The digital transformation strategy must be supported and managed by utilizing organizational design principles, culture, communication, structures, and management processes. As a result, future management processes must ensure that the elements are managed and adjusted to address any future economic and market challenges, trends, and new opportunities. Whilst these new technologies can re-enhance work and re-qualify the employees, the reverse impact could be distorting and divesting of the employees' tasks in their professional practices and abilities to maneuver and relate with their day-to-day activities. Digital transformation strategies also involve challenges and the need for a potential conceptual framework will ensure an organization succeeds in linking its strategy and implementation of its transformation projects. It is of critical importance for organizations to employ highly skilled and competent human resources to manage the digital transformation process. With the notion that an organization must then understand and select the correct digital transformation technology for their industry and ensure alignment with the organizational goals and objectives. Thereafter, to define and measure the return on investment through cost analysis processes, to ensure the implementation of the correct digital strategy roadmap. As a result, future management processes must ensure that the elements are managed and adjusted to address any future economic and market challenges, trends, and new opportunities. The potential framework illustrates how all these elements within the organizations can contribute to ensuring the successful implementation of the selected digital transformation by utilizing the correct technologies, employee skills and organizational structures, culture, management style, and effective communication initiatives. (Hargie, 2016). In this article, we will review two of the major elements to ensure the successful implementation of a digital transformation project, leadership, and human capital. The article will review the relationship between leadership styles and the digital transformation, define the value of an organization's human capital in relation to the digital transformation project and lastly, provide recommendations to creating a framework to implement the transformation project.

## **2. Recent Studies**

### **2.1 Digital Transformation**

Any organization strives to improve their efficiency and effectiveness to produce innovative products and services, grow the market segment boundaries and ultimately, to increase their financial results and revenue. An organization could achieve these goals through the implementation and adoption of new digital information technology. (Korn, 2018).

The importance of utilizing and selecting the correct set of digital transformation tools will streamline the operational processes by automation of manual tasks and through the integration of data and information which can be utilized to improve the current business processes. Business innovational changes in their internal process can be defined as business model transformation which focuses on the actual goals and focuses on organization transformation, cultural elements, and information cloud transformation fundamentally. The digital transformation is a process that incorporates and encapsulates the utilization of computer-based technologies into the generation of innovative and new product processes and organizational strategies. The actual digital transformation project contains many different elements and involves a total redesign and reinvention of the organization which includes, the supply chain, employee workflows, and employee upskilling. The digital transformation journey will produce new and innovative products. Through the utilization of the new technologies, the customers can interact with the organization through their feedback on multiple real-time platforms and cloud-based applications.

## **2.2 Leadership and Digital Transformation**

One of the most critical components of any organization is the management team and style of leadership utilized. The success of any projects, including digital transformation projects in any organization will require the management team to drive and support the project. Old and outdated processes must be challenged to ensure that alignment with the new requirement initiated and required by the digital transformation initiative. (Veldsman and Johnson, 2016). The selection of the correct leadership style between the transactional and transformation is critical to drive and support the transformation and redesigned business processes. The transactional leadership style prefers to restrict their employees' daily activities and tasks. The transactional leader will reward and motivate employees to remain the same and do not encourage to change business processes. The adoption and utilization of transformational leadership style focuses on encouragement of the new business processes, technologies and define new day-to-day tasks to support the digital transformation projects. The transformational leader will drive empowerment, upskilling and motivate employees to excel beyond their own abilities. Transformational leadership demands that managers trust their employees and encourages managers to allow their employees to participate more and take ownership of their tasks. Employees should be upskilled to obtain the required extensive knowledge and capabilities to support the digital transformation for the organization.

The employee's role and responsibilities must be redesigned to create new business processes that ensure full accountability and responsibility for their new work deliverables (Velury, 2005). The organization should also adapt and develop managers that will be able to implement a transformational leadership style. Managers must be empowered and be given the authority to change business processes and to define new work deliverables for the organization.

The new technologies challenge the ingrained manager's beliefs and attitudes about control and task execution. Managers must entrust future organizational effectiveness and successes into the control of their employees. The introduction of these new technologies is impacting heavily on traditional leaders due to the rapid pace of change in the employees' daily tasks. New and innovative processes, real-time feedback and a huge educational journey is indicating that transformational leadership is critical to managing and supporting the employees during the transformation journey. The success of the organization leadership style is thus a critical driving factor to ensure motivated and skilled employees. There are four potential leadership styles that an organization can implement to address the different situations:

- Directive leadership – During the digital transformation initiative, the leader must define and design the strategy, business processes and work deliverables to guide the employees to achieve the daily tasks and goals.
- Supportive leadership – The leader would be friendly and approachable and show a genuine human concern for subordinates.
- Participative leadership – During the implementation of the transformation initiative, the leader would ask for and then use and incorporate the suggestions received from sub-ordinates but would still make the decisions. General decisions are communicated. The leader will incorporate any ideas and contributions received from the employees to define the new business processes and work deliverables to support the transformation initiative.
- Achievement-oriented leadership – The leader would set challenging goals for the subordinates and show confidence in them to attain these goals and perform well.

The selection and implementation of the correct leadership style will ensure that the organization can achieve its goals and improve effectiveness through its employees to ensure the successful implementation of the digital transformation project. (Meraku, 2017). The leaders ensure that the transformation tasks are aligned and integrated with all interdependent systems and new business processes. If the organization is to focus on quality and performance excellence, it will need leaders who will enforce, understand, and manage the levels. The organization could institutionalize a strategic training program to create their future leaders to manage and support the digital transformation initiative. The objective would be to improve the effectiveness of the organization's leaders, teach them about quality and performance excellence, and how this could improve customer services and overall competitiveness through the successful implementation of the digital transformation initiative. For the organization to be more competitive, they will need to ensure that their communication is effective and efficient. (Brynjolfsson,

1993). The organization can achieve organizational effectiveness by selecting the correct leadership style. Transformational leaders will provide a role model for employee to strive to become and excel beyond the capabilities. The transformational leaders believe in the empowerment and delegation of control and responsibilities to the employees. Figure 1 illustrates a difference between the traditional and transformational leadership style that the organization must compare and adopt. The traditional leadership styles create a top-down control system that the manager will utilize to control and direct the employees. In comparison, the transformational leadership style creates trust between the manager and the employees. The transformational leader empowers the employees through coaching, upskilling, and mentoring to ensure the employees are capable to support and implement the digital transformational initiatives. (Jogulu and Wood, 2007). The transformational leader creates a culture in which employees are motivated and supportive to implement the transformation project.

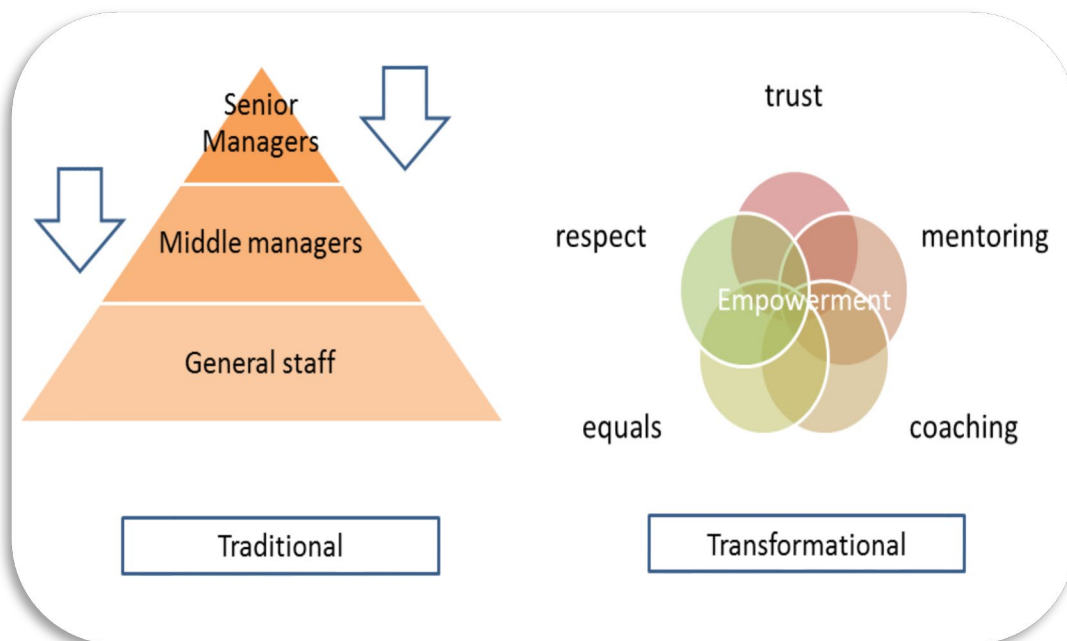


Figure 1. Traditional leadership style versus Transformational leadership style (Source: Author's compilation)

The selection and implementation of the correct leadership style will ensure that the organization can achieve its goals and improve its effectiveness through its employees and implementation of the selected technologies to support the transformation project. The leaders ensure that the digital transformation roadmap is aligned and integrated with all interdependent systems and re-engineered business processes. If the organization is to focus on quality and performance excellence, it will need leaders who will enforce, understand, and manage the levels. The organization could institutionalize a strategic training program to create its future leaders. The objective would be to improve the effectiveness of the managers to support the new technologies being implemented through the adoption of the digital transformation project. This will ultimately improve the organization's leaders' abilities, teach them about organizational quality and performance excellence, and how this could improve customer services and overall competitiveness. For the organization to be more competitive, it will need to ensure that the way the digital transformation project is implemented is effective and efficient to drive the goals and objectives of the organization.

The implementation of effective and efficient leaders will provide the organization with the ability to achieve organizational effectiveness. Leadership is fundamental to any organization, as it sets the future goals and direction and facilitates effective communication within the organization to ensure the successful implementation of the digital transformational journey. (Hargie, 2016). Subsequently, such an approach creates the foundation and building blocks for success, and future growth for an organization, which could be achieved and ensured through a conceptual framework for the successful implementation of an organizational digital transformation that ensures all the elements of an organization are redesigned and changed through the digital transformation project by the new technologies.

### **2.3 Human Capital and Digital Transformation**

The human resource must be aligned with the digital transformation project goals and objectives. If the employees are not aligned and motivated, the digital transformation journey will not be implemented successfully and ultimately fail. The transformation project must be supported by ensuring employees are skilled and drive the organization to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. (Moadab, 2014). An organization can ensure the employee's support and drive the project through the implementation of a balanced scorecard. The scorecard must ensure that the organization becomes a learning organization and creates a culture that supports the transformation project and strategy. A culture in which the employees are valued and believe in the digital transformation initiative will ensure the future of the organization. A learning organization will create skilled individuals and drive performance. (Samudhram, Shanmugam and Low, 2009). The culture must be reinforced through the balanced scorecard. Employees will be rewarded by the elements defined in the scorecard. The scorecard will provide the employees with clarity as to their day-to-day tasks and drive the implementation of the digital transformation project. The organization's strategy will provide effectiveness, efficiency, and increased revenue return by implementing the digital transformation project, utilizing the new technologies, and ensuring employees are educated in the new technologies. The digital transformation project aims to ensure that the organizations improve overall performance, time to market, and produce new innovative products. The implementation and utilization of the balanced scorecard will ultimately focus on the improvement of the employee's well-being defined through the personal life balance of the employees and link the individual elements of their work and personal life.

Human capital is an integral part of any organization and the development thereof within the organization is the major challenge for any management team. (Bernoff and Schadler, 2010). Human capital is a fundamental building block for achieving a competitive advantage. There are some unique models for acquiring, maintaining, and sustaining human capital to ensure the digital transformation project is successfully implemented. The Human Capital Development Chain Model explains the human capital development process. The framework defines the steps and elements which begins with the recruitment of employees and ends with the implementation of a retention strategy to ensure skilled resources are retained to successfully implement the digital transformation project. The activity of searching for suitable human capital has become, a crisis to find high-tech individuals to drive and implement the digital transformation project. The effective recruitment process is to hire the right individual and then provide a few retention strategies which could be utilized to keep the organization's top talent and sustain organizational effectiveness.

- Talent hunting Tactics with the knowledge and skills to drive the digital transformation project include:
  - How to attract top talent  
The hiring of a superstar is the starting point for attracting other top performers. Do not set any limits when you have selected whom to hire. If need be, don't let money stand in your way because one superstar could be utilized to motivate and grow other employees.
  - Campus recruiting  
Utilize charismatic individuals to recruit the students. These individuals must focus on what the organization could provide the students. Factors such as life balance and "come learn from us" are important.
  - Your web Site  
The concept of what is in it for me (WIIFM) needs to be strongly reflected within the website. Make it clear that your organization focuses on providing future growth for the individual and is not just interested in selling a job.

Attracting the right talent is critical and an organization must ensure that there is a communication alignment between the internal departments, external recruiters, and organizational communication channels to ensure that a uniform image is communicated to potential talent about the value and importance of digital transformation projects. The organization must focus on two main elements regarding their human resource management practices.

- Choosing the right individuals to support and implement the digital transformation
  - What not to do when recruiting technical talent
  - It is important to focus on the following points to ensure that the organization does not hire an employee that will impact the digital transformation strategies by following these set of rules:
    - Do not hire technical talent without a clear vision and defined role purpose
    - Ensure that the reason for hiring is not because they work for your competitors

- Ensure that when the interview is conducted by technical employees
  - Do not hire an individual who was simply referred by head-hunters or
  - Base your decision solely on their perceived reputation
- Keeping the top employees to support the digital transformation project
- Creative compensation strategies  
Create an equity offer to share the profit and ensure that you pay for performance.
  - Seriously cool culture  
A cool culture is aligned with the employee's needs, personalities, and lifestyle
  - World's' best retention Tool  
The best strategy is one built upon the concept of supporting the employees to grow and develop.  
What can the organization do to assist the individual to grow and develop as an individual?

An organization can improve effectiveness through the selection of the correct individuals and then applying a creative compensation strategy, correct culture, or a retention tool to ensure that the organization's top talent remains loyal. The correct recruitment process will thus ensure that the organization hires the right people, and people with the best technical skills, and thus will also ensure that these individuals contribute to improving the effectiveness.

The next step is to employ these individuals and then finally ensure they remain with the organization. The organization must focus on elements such as rewards and recognition strategies. The relationship between human capital and organizational effectiveness is crucial for any organization. The key motivational factor for any retention strategy has as its main objective the retention of individuals to enhance or sustain organizational effectiveness. The question which needs to be answered is "can you put a price on human capital? Can we define the value of human capital?" (Memon, Ahmed and Lal Rohra, 2009).

Intriguingly, some of the fundamental elements which drive organizational effectiveness are also potential elements in the formalization of a retention strategy: elements such as work/life balance, recognition, workplace environment, and career development. Focusing on the creation of a retention strategy could indirectly contribute to the improvement of organizational effectiveness and provide the organization with long-term benefits. Human resources are the critical factor to ensure the successful implementation of the digital transformation project.

An organizational scorecard encapsulates similar elements as the personal scorecard but is defined in alignment with the organizational unit teams and the performance and upskilling of the individual employees. Organizational management must encapsulate all the elements of the change processes to define the learning organization personal improvement of the employee's job and the worthiness of the organization's talent management system. Management must develop an employee system to focus on the personal growth of the individual and link improvement training to upskill the employees to implement, utilize and support the digital transformation project through the processes of a learning organization. The organization can develop and upskill their employees continuously through the implementation and adoption of a learning culture which will directly support their digital transformation journey.

Employee upskilling and educational initiatives must be reviewed as an investment and an opportunity to utilize the full potential power and capabilities of the employees. The employees must be empowered with the necessary skills and competencies to make the correct decisions and choices in their daily tasks.

### **3. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The multi-faceted dimensions of a digital transformation project are clear. New technologies require skilled employees, directive leadership, and learning culture. The organization must be willing to educate the employees and implement the correct leadership style to drive the transformation project implementation. The success of the selected technologies to implement the transformation project will need to incorporate multiple components within the origination. The organizational goals and objectives must be defined to encapsulate the human elements which must be aligned to support and drive the transformation project. The employees must have the needed capabilities and skills to utilize and support the selected technologies during the digital transformation project. It is through the relationship between the human resources, selected transformation technologies and redesigned business process will ensure the success.

An organization must identify the motivational factor and goals it would like to achieve to enable the adoption and implementation of a digital transformation journey. The benefits that can be obtained through the transformational journey will ensure management and employees support the initiative. Transformational leadership will drive and ensure the implementation of the new technologies and business processes. Organizational design fundamentals will provide a learning culture which will drive and support the digital transformation technologies and allow the organizations management to obtain a sense of autonomy, empowerment, and a personal sense of self-determination to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization. The organization must institutionalize and imbed the results and benefits of the digital transformation through the organizational redesign of their culture into a learning culture. The redesigned culture must then be supported through positive reinforcement and informative communication. The organizations employees must be motivated by the utilization of a supportive reward and recognition framework, which will ensure the retention of the skilled employees.

To ensure the success of the organization's digital transformation, the project management will need to ensure effective communication through the organization structures, ensure that the cost of capital is optimally invested and allocated to the project, and define the expected versus actual returns of the organizational investment through the implementation of the digital transformation project. These are some of the elements that need to be identified, managed, and institutionalized to support the digital journey that an organization has chosen,

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## **Biography / Biographies**

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