

# Unraveling the Digital Transformation Web

How do providers maximize their time, resources and efforts?

By Katie Curtis / *Great Plains Communications*

In today's world, digital technologies make up a rapidly growing part of the landscape. Organizations look toward digital transformation (DT) to stay competitive and meet the ever-changing needs of customers. But unraveling the interwoven components of a DT web can be challenging.

From my perspective as a chief information officer, a successful DT requires careful planning to maximize time, resources and effort. The reality is that many components can slow or stop progress when building a robust digital ecosystem. A strategic plan is vital instead of simply asking someone like me for help.

For example, to avoid wasting time and resources, focus on what will create the most short-term *and* long-term value. At Great Plains Communications, we are accelerating fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) initiatives as we transform a large part of our sales and marketing technology and processes. A quick win for us was leveraging a new go-to-market automation tool that enabled self-scheduling for our customers and door-to-door reps.

## BUILDING A TRANSFORMATION NETWORK

I want to share some lessons I've learned and tips from my experience planning DT strategies to ensure success.

**Develop a comprehensive strategy.** Understand your organization's overall goals and top priorities and the status of its systems, processes and people. How will technology, people and processes fit in with that strategy? What areas require digitalization? Prioritize those initiatives and then establish a detailed roadmap for implementation.

**A successful digital transformation strategy begins at the top with a supportive executive team.**

**Assess.** Make sure you understand the areas that need improvement. What are potential bottlenecks? Where are the current manual processes that hinder progress? What are the opportunities for innovation? Understanding that existing landscape can help you and any partners you bring in optimize the resource allocations and then serve as a guide to address those specific pain points and challenges.

**Establish governance.** To stay on time and budget, create a digital governance framework to establish a timeline, a budget, milestones, roles, decision-making authority and accountability. Ensure you can hold your internal teams and vendors accountable for the same key performance indicators (KPIs) that drive success. Managing a timeline is critical. Are you changing the entire architecture? That's a multiyear timeline. Are you tweaking an application? What's realistic for you, your team, your skill set or the partner(s) you bring in? Govern the scope and needs of your unique transformation project once fully outlined.

**Foster a digital culture.** DT is more than technology; it's also the people and processes within an organization. Build a workforce that embraces technology and is willing to adapt to change. This is critical. Cultural differences can be complex, so constant communication is required. Hold workshops and training sessions to highlight the benefits of the DT project.

**Leverage data and analytics.** Invest in robust data analytic software and systems to gain insights to make informed, data-led decisions for maximum efficiency. Analyze customer data, market trends and any operational metrics to identify areas of improvement and ways to streamline processes. Data that can point out risk and drive risk management is a massive part of a successful DT.

**Embrace agile methodologies.** Traditional project management approaches can be time-consuming and rigid, hindering progress and timelines. Agile methods help break projects into smaller manageable paths, which can be prioritized based on value. It's easy to catch up with the long-term vision. Remember that realizing meaningful incremental value throughout the project is critical. Getting those wins along the way helps maintain team trust and further validates the need for DT.

**Bring in strategic partners.** Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the internal DT team. Then subsidize with the

right partners to optimize resources and streamline the process. Remember, you don't have to do it all yourself – most companies don't. Leveraging the strengths of outside help and vendor partners makes the DT journey more efficient and more likely to be successful.

**Monitor and evolve.** DT is an ongoing process that requires continuous monitoring and evolution. Establish KPIs to track progress. Regular assessment will help identify areas of improvement, refine strategy and reallocate resources as needed. By adopting a culture of continuous improvement, you can maximize your time and efforts by ensuring the DT journey stays aligned with the evolving needs of the organization, employees and customers.

#### STARTING AT THE TOP

A successful DT initiative starts at the top. All employees must

accept and champion it, beginning with the executive team. Effective communication with regular updates is critical to driving this acceptance. There must be well-thought-out short- and long-term strategies to achieve clear goals and maximize time, resources and efforts.

As a CIO, I've come to recognize that sometimes changes that need to be made in the short term may not be part of the long-term architectural strategy. However, the momentum gained

by delivering incremental value and demonstrating progress helps contribute to a project's overall success.

A sustainable, prosperous DT web depends on all components and team members working together toward a common goal. Don't forget to celebrate the milestones along the way as you unweave the web – it's no small feat but worth it in the long run. 🌱



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