

Digital Leadership

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

The process of business transformation in today’s evolving digital environment calls on firms to operate at two different speeds. Firms must continue to operate at the traditional speed to meet their established business market needs, while they must use a faster speed to explore new opportunities. Customer services enabled by advanced digitization opportunities, referred to here as “digital services” or Apps, require agility both in the way they are designed by IT leaders and the way they are delivered to the market by business leaders. This agility is indeed an organizational capability, and it requires co-leadership of both IT and business executives. This is called “digital leadership.”

Agility for IT is not new, as companies modularized systems for easy maintenance and adaption in the 80s, modularized and integrated business processes across firms (ERPs) in the 90s, and built rule-based, service-oriented architectures for extended value chains (CRM, SCM, etc.) to support decisions in the last decade. Today, customers are demanding services using evolving technologies, and firms need agility in the way systems are designed and delivered quickly to meet evolving customer needs. To be competitive, firms need to extend their internal system, process, and decision agility to business model agility – the way both IS and business architectures, using internal and external resources, can support new business models quickly to address evolving customer expectations.

Shown below is a 10-step methodology that is customer-centric and agility-focused (see the Figure 1) and was used to teach a required course for MBA students, an elective course for MS students, and even UG business students. Instead of teaching traditional MIS concepts or case studies, this approach allows students to weave some of the MIS concepts into an innovative idea of their own. Innovations and sustained improvements post implementation (steps 1 and 10) are translated to customer service encounters for logical design of the digital service that is highly modular (steps 2 through 5 – referred to as system architecture), and then to strategy and management for delivery (steps 6-9 - referred to as business architecture). Several App concepts students have developed over the last three years in this course will be used to illustrate the concept and seek feedback from the listeners.

Business and IT Leadership: Customer Centric, Service Driven and Agility Focused

