

# The Role Of Professional Skills In Digital Transformation For Organisational Effectiveness

Mitashree Tripathy

**Abstract:** Digital transformation is about using a technology that is digital and that facilitates people to find solutions to their problems. When one talks about transformation through digital technology, it is understood as some form of innovation and newness in a certain field. Rather than simply sticking to the old traditional methods to find the solutions, the use of digital technology aids to do so. Digital transformation is the incorporation of digital technology in every domain of business. Such incorporation changes the whole essence of business that is from going paperless, to radically modulating the operations and delivery within an organisation. Rapid changes in technology and cut throat competition among world class organisations around the globe have implemented digital transformation through digital technology considering it crucial and urgent in all forms of business. Digital transformation in an organisation helps an organisation to keep pace with what customers demand today or might be their demands in the future. It provides an organisation with a competent atmosphere to work in that leverages the status of both organisation and society as a whole. Business dimensions need to be expanded and employees need to be more responsive, creative, customer-oriented, modernized and efficient. Hence it is essential for the employees at workplaces to develop professional skills to keep pace with the fast evolving nature of the organisation and help achieve its excellence. Digital transformation as a continuous process within the organisations does not simply include digital technology but also requires professionals who know how to use the technology. This paper provides a brief introduction on digital transformation and also provides the professional skills that contribute to digital transformation imperative today at workplaces with a purpose to create potentialities of totally influencing the contingencies and prospective of newer technologies and more rapid and better impact in the future.

**Key words:** Digital technology, digital transformation, professional skills, business, organisations

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation is the reformation of the entire business processes in organisations with the help of digital technologies. With a substantive growth in technology in organisations around the world, making products, developing them, releasing in the markets, improving services has only made competitions bigger and faster. This has introduced a massive transformation in the nature of the work in the organisations and has also brought drastic changes in the quality of the employees involved. Employees find it difficult to act upon the strategies that are expected from them and the challenges they face. At the same time, employees comply the best of rewards that further lead a business to prosper and be more efficient with dexterity and agility. The entire business arena is constantly evolving to be more empirical to concentrate on and identify the key projections with a purpose to stay ahead of the competition thereby being more rigorous in innovation through technology. Venkatraman asserts that "digital technology is critical to every industry and every company. Google, Amazon, Apple and Facebook are not traditional information technology companies. Digital technologies help these companies become powerful global brands which allows them to reach more people around the world more quickly than ever before"(Venkatraman, 2017, p. 2).

Hence, digital transformation is exactly any such renovation in business and thereby in society that applies digital technology for the development of any aspect of business. An obvious fact is employees of these top notch business companies exactly know what to extract from technology and how to demonstrate strategies through technology. The need to drive digital transformation in every business is to integrate a wide domain of digital changes to leverage business through delivery of products capable enough to provide maximum customer satisfaction. Sacolick claims today every business "needs an updated set of practices to compete in a digital environment, deliver winning customer experiences, develop digitally driven products, and leverage data for strategic insights" (Sacolick, 2017, p. 4). Hence, simply having businesses in practice with information technology is not sufficient. Collaborations, capacities, capabilities and estimation of strategic development are highly essential to keep pace with emerging technologies and professional development. Digital technologies like social media, mobile computing, customer analytics, geolocalization emphasis a substantial progression in business culture further leading to "new clock speed, new decision –making methods, new rules that can run counter to the way large traditional companies have managed customer relationships" (Westerman, Bonnet an McAfee, 2014, p. 30).

## 2. THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN BUSINESS WORLD

The impacts of digital transformation in the business world are many and farfetched. Through digital transformation digital marketing offers a lot to business organisations and customers. It is one of the simplest means to approach customers through digital marketing. Through digital marketing, customers can easily be approached and accessed. Technical users remain engrossed with digital world and the number is mounting. The digital media like smart phones, laptops, Ipads etc pave the path of opportunities for business professionals with a purpose to sponsor and uphold their products. Digital technologies

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- Dr. Mitashree Tripathy, Assistant Professor, FCMS, Sri Sri University, India, Cell:+91-9437114432.
  - Email: mitashreetripathy84@gmail.com

facilitate reaching out a large number of customers and get linked with market for retailing products. In the other hand, customers also have a lot to choose from. Through web surfing customers can easily search important information regarding different specifications of different brands all within seconds. The web is wide enough to spread around the world and easy and open to access working 24/7 for customer's satisfaction. Business objectives are driven by digital technology and put forward a drive that transforms dependent on the current IT equipments. Although storage and analysis of huge amount of data can be a challenge, digital technology can still be the right strategy to opt to store however large the amount of data may be. According to a report made by Deloitte "Strategy, not technology, drives digital transformation" (Hellard, 2017). Hence, it's evident that the way that technology is adapted and implemented provides importance to digital transformation. The report further elucidates the significance of scopes and objectives in a digital transformation that claims although technology is the prime factor to run and transform business, certain professional skills are pivotal to run the technology that creates the biggest impact on the organisational success and effectiveness. It also added that in order "to succeed in creating these new digital experiences require a shift in skill sets, and embracing a collaborative culture, where people pool ideas and share expertise. The companies that are most likely to succeed in digital transformation are those with open minds that are happy to take risks" (Hellard, 2017). Business professionals must know how and must adapt and develop the skill sets with a purpose to think forward in business thereby bringing quick wins in business and achieving long term goals in transformation. Uhl and Gollenia note that "organisational competencies and individual skills as critical success factors for business transformation and future businesses" (Uhl and Gollenia, 2016, p. 34). It is essential and mandate to identify new set of professional skills with an aim to make business, big, reformed, smart and dexterous.

### 3. PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Employees are the major elements for digital business transformation who do a number of tasks daily in order to run a business. Employees are in fact the lifeblood of an organisation. Although technology is an important element "but without the human element, one will quickly realize how technology is merely an enabler and not the core purpose of digital transformation" (Newman, 2018). Employees are the most indispensable factors for an effective growth in business organisation and when it requires digital transformation, the role of professional skills to be implemented by the employees matter a lot. Studies suggest it is the role of the leaders of the organisations to focus on the requirements in order to make the organisation digitally active. As it is an obvious fact that digitization requires new ways of collaboration and completely new business environment, the fact that also remains serious and vital is the quality and level of professionalism in employees. Leaders of the organisation must tend to review and challenge the conventional methods, procedures and structural framework to select employees to work with and for them. "The big task for management is therefore to create a culture and leadership style to support autonomy,

empowerment and active engagement. It is not enough merely to invest in innovative technologies to drive digital transformation. The "people first" rule is more valid than ever before, meaning a change in leadership style and organizational structure is required to enable a more motivational and creative environment" (Grunwitz, 2018). Hence the need to digital leadership remains the prime focus for any digital transformation because it is the leader who would choose the best of employees eligible to bring a drastic reformation to business culture. Qualman elucidates that the role of leaders in transforming the world of business for good can be influential not only today but about hundreds of years to come. Qualman insists that in order to see that change the leaders must inculcate effective leadership skills that need to start from today. He says "if you truly want a life that inspires, you need to change your leadership habits to adapt to the new digitally open world" (Qualman, 2012, p. 2). The section below studies digital leadership skills as the foremost skill set and also discusses the other set of professional skills for digital transformation.

#### 3.1 Digital Leadership Skills

The inheritance of leadership is not counted in years rather it can start from the very day itself. Digital leadership is all about implementing and accepting the digital world around and choosing rightly to move ahead passionately. The role of digital leadership is in fact a tough and serious one as it remains involved with the objective to uplift and upgrade the organisation among countless others creating a culture. Digital leadership ensures companies to run with the change or else disappear permanently. Therefore it is a continuous process of learning and comprehending the art of creativity and innovation. Some of the important principles of digital leadership are creativity, accountability and exploration. Creativity is believed to be one of the most important elements for organisational success. In the process of creativity, ideas and practices incorporate not only by one individual or employee rather the whole team itself which can be further improved and sustained to meet multidimensional challenges. Digital leadership also includes accountability i.e., responsibility of one's creativity. Browning notes "in leadership roles, accountability is the acknowledgement and assumption of responsibility for actions, products, decisions, and policies, including administration, governance and implementation within the scope of the role or employment position and encompassing the obligation to report, explain and be answerable for the resulting consequences during the process of digital transformation" (Browning, 2012, pp. 7-8). Although leadership accountability is fundamental but digital leadership must inculcate a culture of leadership accountability that needs to be encouraged and cultivated fore-mostly by the individual and by the team ultimately. Another aspect of digital leadership is to explore of new technology and learn how to utilize it. Digital leadership fosters being a brand online, socially and then known among the online users. Sheninger writes "digital leadership drives leaders to develop their own brand, which happens as they interact in online spaces through the use of social media tools. These interactions define one's thoughts, beliefs and opinions on leadership. They also provide examples of work, ideas, awards and other types of recognition. All these combined to form a brand presence"(Sheninger, 2014, p.

115). Once the brand is formed digital leadership next moves to link, create and employ with online communities and initiate relationships. At last, digital leadership need to engage themselves digitally and proceed further to acquire resources and discover opportunities.

### 3.2 Interpersonal Skills

For managing digital transformation interpersonal skills are the top rated required skills. Business transactions in a digitally transformed culture require manual tasks to be worked on through machines, gadgets. This requires a highly competent workforce who would make this happen. When a large number of people work together they need to co ordinate and cooperate among each other. They also need to combine their existing skills with the existing skills of other employees together in order to find solutions of a number of problems, to decide on important endeavours, to manage complexities. These require a high skills set that embody many other sub skills like these. This embodiment is interpersonal skill set that is a cluster of all other sub skills set necessary to master over. Ustundag and Cevikcan write "as automation and digitalization of work processes increase, workers will be required to take charge of less automatable and more complex tasks, whose completion necessitate solid literacy, numeracy, problem solving and IT skills together with soft skills of autonomy, co ordination and collaboration" (Ustundag and Cevikcan, 2017, p. 128).

### 3.3 Cognitive Skills

In the recent past, a number of studies have attempted to study and delve deep into the connection between performance at work and cognitive skills. The outcomes of these studies prove that cognitive skills are obligatory for effective performance at workplaces. Digital transformation is changing the way employees think, remember, learn and pay attention to. In a nutshell, cognitive skills are quintessential skills to improve knowledge based learning about digital technology and it is a continuous process that keeps on modulating. Employees are thus required to keep learning and paying attention to the knowledge that keeps on changing and groom their cognitive skills. Berg and Kalleberg assert that "high performance work systems lead to jobs that encompass a larger variety of tasks and provide greater individual autonomy over these tasks. As a result workers require greater technical skills, higher levels of cognitive skills and better interpersonal and communications skills" (Berg and Kalleberg, 2012, p. 282). Employees are required to work on their cognitive skills to keep with the changing patterns in business culture. Technology and transformation has become the integral part of business transaction today. Employees who do not improve their skills and abilities are the ones who will lag behind. They must integrate quick learning abilities and work on the correlation between technology, tools and equipments and the impact these have on business. Employees' cognitive skills are dependent on their perception abilities. Hence, a research based on perception analysis may be able to rightly identify the gap between training and perception. It is the interest of the employees to develop learning skills. Digital transformation dictates employees to learn and know. Rickettes and Rickettes claim "the skill of knowing how to learn, or learning to learn, is a must for every worker. The skill of learning to learn is the key to acquire new skills,

honing problem solving ability and meeting the challenges in the workplaces" (Rickettes and Rickettes, 2010, p. 602) especially when a whole new set up is being transformed.

### 3.4 Plan Execution Skills

According to IMD "the success or failure of your digital transformation is directly related to its execution". This suggests that digital transformation is dependent on the plans, procedures, practices and the way these schemes are executed. Execution requires a concrete road map to proceed accordingly. Efforts to do so are highly crucial as a slight diversion from the road map can lead to unavoidable consequences. Hence, a clear, clever and classic ability to execute with plans is mandatory. Business organisations dealing with technology and transformation need to develop a demand driven business plan that broadens the standpoints of the initiator from picking and delivering the final product to the customer, thereby improving and working on responsiveness or feedback. Although the execution plan and the ability to carry it is a difficult task at hand, leaders and managers must not step back from doing so. Hrebiniak believes "while strategic planning or strategy making is difficult and challenging as always it's still obvious that managers feel more than ever that the successful implementation of strategy is more problematic than the formulation of a chosen strategy and even more important for organisational performance" (Hrebiniak, 2013, p. 3). Not being able to execute with plans is a major weakness of the employees which they need to overcome. The process of digital transformation is extremely unpredictable and that is a continuous process because business transformations keep on redefining themselves. Professionals therefore are required "to execute their ideas and quickly move from theory to practice. If a company workflow tends to be on the slow side and cannot keep up with business plans and strategies, it could see companies ultimately pursuing obsolete objectives" (Media, 2016).

### 3.5 Adaptability Skills

Adaptability skills are essential for employees that enable them to adapt any kind of environment. The digital shift in growing business has made the working environment crucial, stressful and profoundly aggressive and keeps on changing. In such an environment employees are needed to be flexible so that they can change according to the environment they come across. Hence, adaptability skills are considered to be the response to environmental situations that keep changing. For example, employees are trained regarding certain program that they need to follow and suddenly, the same program is substituted with a different one which is very fast. At this stage whether, the employees adapt themselves that is change their learning styles as per requirement or keep clinging to the old with no or less interest to learn. Their patterns of behaviour are marked. Employees with high sense of flexibility only are able to survive and the rest disappear in time. Flexible employees are more dynamic and they can easily prioritize their schedules according to the need. Not only this, flexible employees are able to handle sudden crises, respond constructively to threats and opportunities and also if required tend to change their working styles as well. Burke, Pierce and Salas view technological changes to be more

insidious and forceful of every kind of evolution at business organisations. As every work in business organisation begins and ends with technology so also employees must transform themselves accordingly. They write "the speed at which computers and software change require employees to constantly learn new systems, thereby ensuring technological adaptation is a continual part of modern work" (Burke, Pierce and Salas, 2006, p.4). Although adaptive skills are impulsive and unstructured to some and reflect quite naturally, but for many employees adaptive skills are not naturally contemplative. Adaptive skills demand quick action to unpredictable situations. Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky claim "adaptive challenges are hard to define and typically require people to reinterpret and question their own priorities, as well as their habits of thinking and behaviour" (Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky, 2009, p. 44).

## CONCLUSION

Organisations today need to be challenged by other organisations that are already digitally transformed or else the organisations are understood as under privileged and lack approaches and strategies to compete. Today digital transformation is the ultimate drive that merges Information Technology and business dealings. The future of digital transformation through digital technology appears to be smart and big. Smart use of technology is not simply enough for a smart transformation. Professional skill sets are equally important to achieve success in digital transformation. Introduction and contribution of professional skills set need to be properly investigated and analysed evaluating the benefits and the possibilities of changes that can be brought in organisations. Although preparing for a digital future is not an easy task. However, business organisations need to develop and expand the digital capabilities and arrange in a line a culture focussing towards the goals that already exist. Hence, every business organisations must make use of this power and capabilities to uplift new technologies that can pick up the pace with the digital journey boosting organisational culture and supply flawless customer experiences. This paper studied providing a detail study of digital transformation and digital technology. The paper also provided in details the impact of digital transformation in organisation. Further the paper offered the strategies that need to be incorporated in business organisation to ensure a high return of investment.

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