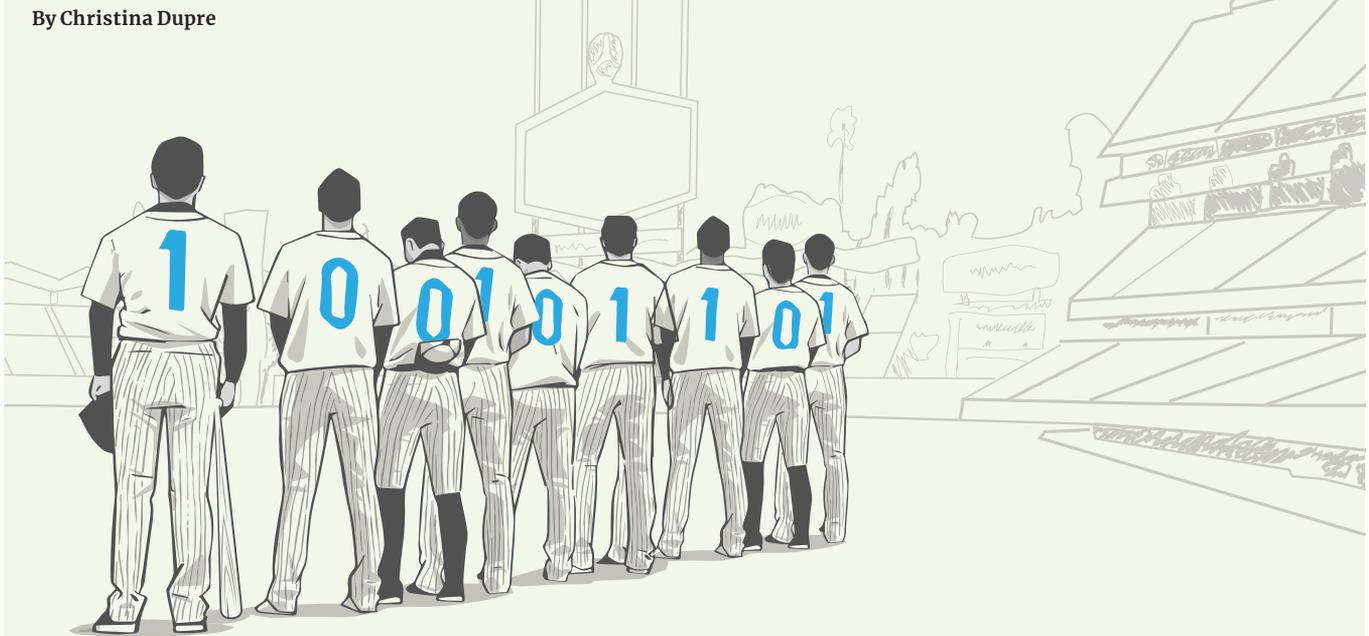


Driving Home Digital Adoption

If you build it, how do you get them to come?

By Christina Dupre



Nine steps to successfully driving digital adoption.

Digital transformation — the adoption of digital technology to transform services or businesses — isn't new. Its origins stretch as far back as the 1940s and the advent of the digital revolution. The COVID-19 pandemic merely brought digital transformation to the forefront, accelerating it by an average of six years and changing how organizations think about the technologies that drive their business. Suddenly confronted with an “adapt or die” moment, most organizations chose to “adapt.” In fact, according to one recent survey, 97 percent of enterprise decision-makers reported accelerating their digital transformations because of the pandemic.¹

But not all “digital transformations” — whether in a pandemic or not — succeed. They fail for many reasons, but most often because leaders focus on the wrong priorities. Rather than understanding how the proposed technology investments fit with or enable their business goals — and how these changes impact people — they instead concentrate on implementing specific technology or tools. Sure, new technologies can drive efficiency, but people are the key to successful digital transformation. People are the drivers of technology and their adoption of your digital tools and assets is key.

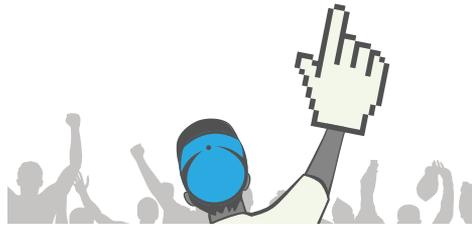
No matter how much money, time, or technology you invest — no matter how cutting-edge the tools and systems

are — if your people don't use them as intended, you will not see expected returns. Contrary to the famous adage from the movie *Field of Dreams* — just because you build it doesn't mean they will come. And a lack of digital adoption can lead to customer dissatisfaction, lower employee morale, higher costs, decreased efficiency and performance, and higher churn.

For organizations that started or accelerated digital transformations during the pandemic, the question then becomes: *How do we successfully continue that transformation long-term, drive digital adoption, and get the expected returns on investment? And more importantly, how do we get our people to buy in, or keep them on board?*

To see a return on investment in technology and continue the digitization momentum sparked by COVID-19, organizations must rethink the way they interact with their customers and employees, and leverage technology to optimize their processes and fully utilize both existing and new digital assets. They need to create a holistic, people-centered, digital-first strategy to drive long-term adoption. They must have a cohesive plan that considers all touchpoints and products, as opposed to looking at each technology or business unit in a silo. To help start developing that plan, we've identified nine key steps.

The beginning of a digital transformation is generally the easiest in terms of morale. Excitement and novelty make generating buy-in for the “cool new thing” easier, but it can be difficult to stay the course once the newness wears off and transformation fatigue hits.



1.

Drive Transformation From the Top

One of the biggest misses that occurs when trying to achieve digital adoption is assuming that it will happen organically and without leaders acting as change champions. In the digital age, the role of organizational leadership has evolved. Today's leaders must not only serve as digital enablers and change agents, but they must also envision, facilitate, and deliver transformational changes for a digital-first future. According to Deloitte's *2020 Global Technology Leadership Study*, technology leaders should embrace “kinetic leadership,” that is, focus not only on short-term issues related to pandemic response and recovery but also on envisioning and executing a long-term strategy for growth and agility.²

The beginning of a digital transformation is generally the easiest in terms of morale. Excitement and novelty make generating buy-in for the “cool new thing” easier, but it can be difficult to stay the course once the newness wears off and transformation fatigue hits. To drive adoption, the messaging and overarching vision must come from the top; in other words, leadership must provide the why. Lacking a common vision can easily derail any momentum that's been gained over the last 18 months.

2.

Foster an Adaptive Culture With a Digital Mindset

With leaders acting as change champions, the strategic vision that they set will drive the company culture. A survey published in 2016 identified culture as the most significant self-reported barrier to digital effectiveness — and it still holds true today.³ Many organizations struggle with the culture shift required to drive digital adoption. As such, the question for leaders to ask is: “How does digitization impact my organization?”

To drive adoption, you need to be thinking about the impact digitization has on your processes and users. Resistance to change is a normal challenge in most organizations, but relying on legacy processes and antiquated thinking will result in porting over old issues into new interactions. There will always be those who believe the old way is the best way, or who feel uncertain about their abilities to learn new technology. At the end of the day, however, the organization is responsible for ensuring that people are on board with the vision. An innovation-led mindset is key and will provide the opportunity to review, revisit, and redesign existing ways of operating.

3.

Define What Constitutes Success

Adoption does not happen overnight. Every company will have innovators and early adopters who are eager to jump in and lead the charge, as well as laggards who will resist and may never fully adopt. It is important to assess your organization's digital maturity at the outset, both to baseline where you are in the process and to help set measurable goals to work toward. You must have a clear understanding of your KPIs to assess how user behavior is changing.

When defining success, remember that digital is an enabler that should tie into your organization's overarching strategy. Many companies struggle to drive digital adoption because they create an independent “digital” strategy separate from their organizational strategy. Maintaining two competing strategies can lead to miscommunication, confusion, and divergence, as well as cause misalignment and loss of value.

The end game is not to install new technology and be digital for the sake of being digital. The end game is to use digital to support top-of-the-house goals such as reduced costs, higher revenues, improved customer satisfaction, and other performance measures.

4.

Take a Bird's-Eye View

To successfully drive digital adoption, it is important to take a holistic approach. You must embrace the entire ecosystem and understand all the touchpoints — both internal and external — that an individual interacts with if you are going to create a positive, cohesive experience for your end-user.

For example, consider a retailer we worked with that was driving an omnichannel strategy for its customers. The company was working to capture enhanced customer insights via an updated customer loyalty system. Digitization was siloed, and the in-store point-of-sale did not support the system upon which the online loyalty program was built. To get credit for in-store purchases, the customer had to manually input the information from their receipt online.

Naturally, this led to a frustrating customer experience — customers didn't want to shop in the store, and if they did, they would often choose to not join the loyalty program. This, in turn, drove down adoption of the loyalty platform. Unfortunately for the retailer, those customers who shopped in-store had a higher lifetime value and the retailer was unable to cross-sell or upsell in a personalized manner due to the fragmented systems. No matter the end-user, a disjointed experience will create a barrier to adoption.

5.

Understand Your Customer

Regardless of the industry, digitization revolves around people and their human experience. Understanding the customer's needs and wants (voice of the customer) is imperative to successfully drive adoption. To be clear, though, customers can be any number of groups — shoppers, patients, other businesses, or even employees. In fact, thinking of employees as internal customers can help remind leaders of the need to consider the employee experience, as well as that of the external customer.

To drive adoption, focus on how your organization can provide value for customers and employees. Translate their needs and wants into actionable next steps to influence behavior change and create a digital product roadmap. Analyze your customer personas and determine the best

channels to communicate with them. You could build the most cutting-edge digital product on the planet, but it will be lost on the wrong audience if they don't want it or lost on the right audience if they simply don't know it exists.

6.

Unlock the Value of Data to Drive Strategic Insights

The beauty of digital is that data is tracked, and there is no shortage of online tools available to help capture user interactions, information, and journeys. Not all data is good data, though, so it's critical to be aware of the data's accuracy, timeliness, and accessibility.

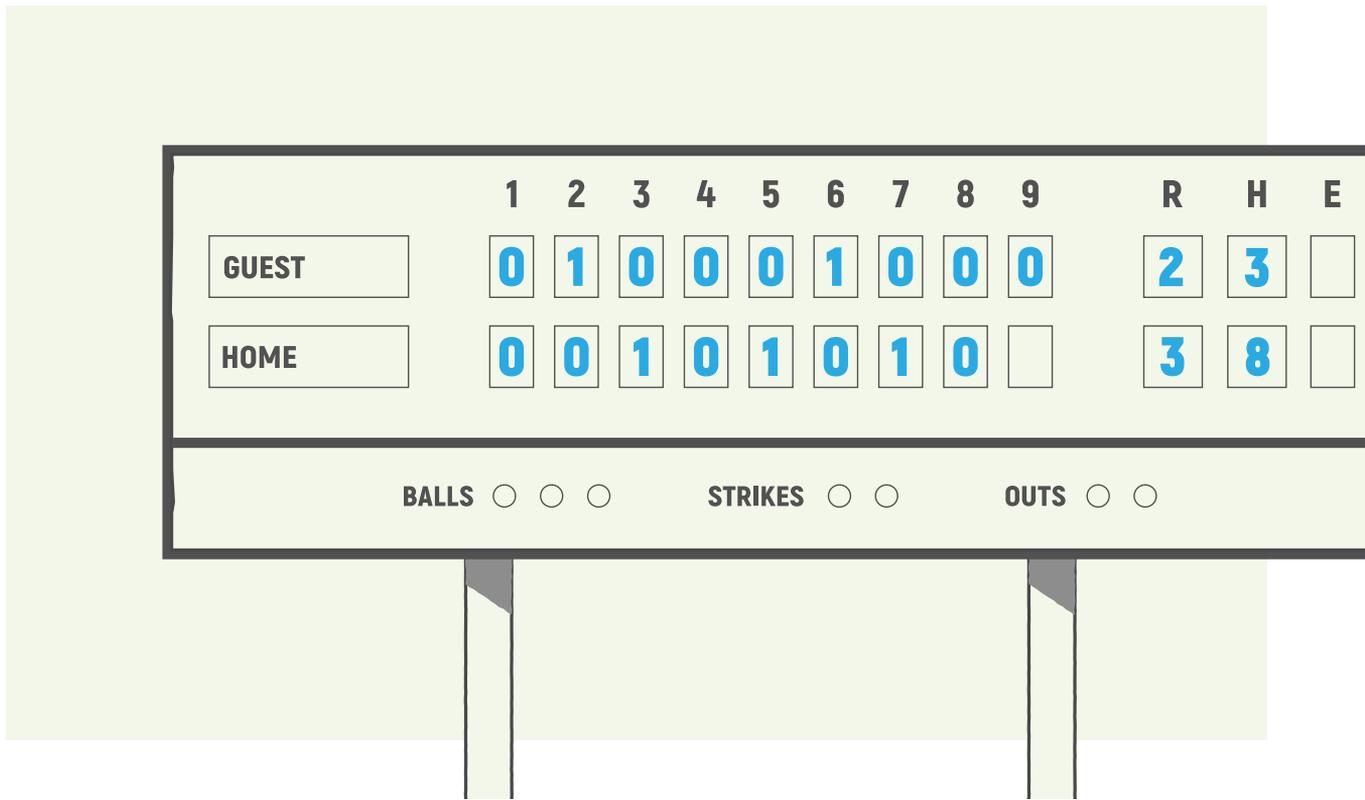
Informed decision-making is key to driving adoption, so how you use and analyze the data is one of the most important parts of the process. Decisions need to be based on evidence and identification of what the end-user needs and wants. Therefore, it is crucial to consistently derive and measure results against key metrics that align with the overall enterprise goals. The insights you garner will empower you to press on when achieving positive results or pivot when the outcome isn't what you were expecting.

7.

Be Nimble and Adapt to the Changing Landscape

Digital adoption efforts are never complete. And if the past 18 months have taught business leaders anything, it's that change happens fast and your organization must be ready. Disruption is bound to occur. Customer preferences change and new technologies emerge. Embracing ambiguity and shifting your processes toward action is the key to transformation management. Conversely, treating digital adoption as a one-and-done task is myopic and endangers the success of your efforts.

Driving digital adoption is an ongoing process and will never succeed if it is viewed as merely a task to be checked off a list. Digital adoption requires change; change is complex and requires constant nurturing. Along with building "it," an organization must consider various other factors, including people, processes, culture, leadership, data, and, of course, technology to enable digital adoption.



Organizational agility requires leaders to act quickly on what they learn from analyzing digital metrics and customer preferences. By applying those new lessons, the organization can continue to improve.

8.

Think in Terms of Continuous Improvement

Tools and technology do not remain static, and neither should you. Adapt your design processes to include rapid prototyping and piloting. Use user acceptance testing and testers prior to launch to create change agents and essentially train the trainer. Embrace failure to help drive innovative breakthroughs. Communicate this approach to employees and customers so that they are aware that your goal is to create the best experience for them. Create feedback mechanisms that feature a wide range of tools, including surveys, qualitative interviews, and focus groups.

People want to be valued and heard. When customers and employees are given this opportunity, they feel more involved with the process — now they have skin in the game. Feed those insights into product strategy so you continue to drive adoption. Keep in mind that a dynamic environment will require continuous training, learning, and development along the way.

9.

Communicate Often and with Intention

Last but not least is communication. Educating customers and employees on how they can leverage technology can be a challenge. To unlock the potential of that technology your external and internal customers need to understand:

- Why is the technology there?
- What is the best way to use it?
- What is in it for me?
- How does this help me reach my end goal?

A modern company is centered around communications and meeting people where they are. Once again, you could implement the best technology, but if you don't communicate to drive awareness and continued engagement, you simply won't drive adoption. 🗣️

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Sources:

- 1 <https://www.twilio.com/covid-19-digital-engagement-report>
- 2 2020 Deloitte Global Technology Leadership Study
- 3 2016 McKinsey Digital survey of 2,135 managers