

The Shift From Digital Transformation to Digital Survival

As part of our TechCity Connect series, we look at how the experiences of the past weeks have moved the Digital Transformation debate to the top of the agenda. It's no longer a matter of adopting 'digital' and refreshing selected existing channels. So, what next for Digital Transformation?

How digital became a matter of survival for business

For years, leaders have talked up the need for Digital Transformation. Many of them have been happy to describe it as vital to their firm's (and even their industry's) survival. It's doubtful they could've predicted the scale of how correct these words would prove to be.

The digitalisation process was already well in progress, with consumer expectation fuelling tougher competition and new operating models. For instance, we were already seeing the wholesale automation of manufacturing as machines took over tasks previously done by workers. This was a shift forcing businesses to reassess their entire approach – and that was before a global crisis began.

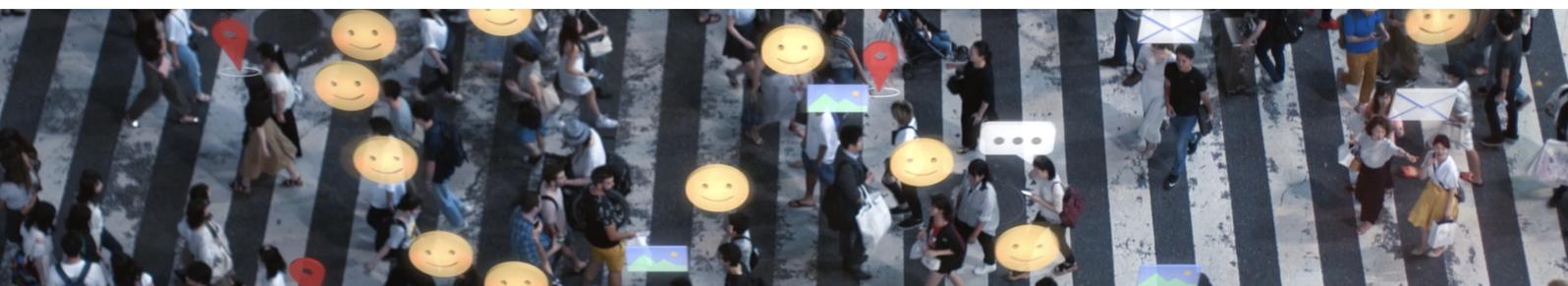
Now, we're in the middle of a seismic change. Faced with the current situation, firms across every industry have had no choice but to accelerate their transformation plans.

Strategies set to take five to ten years to realise now need to be delivered in more like five months. In next to no time, we've moved from Digital Transformation to Digital Survival – a full-blown embrace of digitalisation as the social and economic situation drives everyone to reassess their way of life.

So, how can firms do more than guarantee their survival? And what impact will today's crisis have on tomorrow's workplace cultures and practices?

A fundamental shift in how firms see themselves

It's easy to underestimate the impact that widespread digitalisation will have on firms and industries. Many view it as a tech-enabled extension of how they currently operate. However, we're more likely to see businesses build out from a digital starting point as they go through a fundamental shift in who they are, what they deliver and how they do that.



For example, look at ecommerce among the high-street consumer brands. Before, you'd view them as physical stores with an online channel, but is that how they'll operate in future? As they're only able to serve customers online while the world is in lockdown, will they go back to 'business as usual'? Or, will they abandon bricks-and-mortar premises for pop-up shops and shared facilities that enable click and collect services?

It's the same in banking. Consumers have moved away from visiting branches, and banks have adapted with online services. However, the next step is to view the entire business differently – not as a collection of physical locations, but as a platform for financial services.

This will completely change the way banks interact with customers, employees and investors. For example, think of the opportunity created by the ability to deliver data-driven, algorithmic personalisation to customers in the same way that companies like YouTube and Amazon do. It's just one positive outcome of digitalisation that firms were already targeting, and now there are fewer barriers to adoption within organisations and a greater incentive to act quickly.

Where next for firms on their journey to Digital Survival?

Imagine starting a banking firm today. Would you build it around a network of branches, or would your starting point be different?

It's likely you'd follow a model that's closer to disruptive challenger banks, looking to create a living digital network for your customers to access. This shows how there's simply no alternative to Digital Transformation – and why this has become Digital Survival.

The challenge for existing firms is that the shift to Digital Survival necessitates a rethink of every area of their business. For instance, how are they looking after their teams, meeting customer expectations, and managing brand image? And how are they managing regulatory compliance? It's why transformation projects were planned for implementation over years, not the months organisations now have to react.

Also, what happens next? When the dust settles and people leave their homes freely, what will the world look like? How will firms adapt to such a rapid change in how we interact with them?

The impact of the current situation will extend beyond the confines of lockdown and ask questions of every business for years to come. So, what does your firm's Digital Survival look like?

Discover more

Explore this topic further and discover how your firm can build a strong strategy for the journey to Digital Survival.

Join us for Digital Transformation – What Next?
6th May at 16:00 – 16:45 BST



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