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Sood, Rohit

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Build a Digital Culture for Successful Digital Transformation

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September 20, 2018

By Rohit Sood



Off lately, there has been a massive shift in focus from building products in isolation to putting the *'customer'* at the center and designing products & services keeping in mind customer journeys and their preferences. Organizations are becoming more agile and flexible in adopting new business models, efficient business processes, *best-of-breed* technologies and so on, while also ensuring the best quality and a constant improvement in customer experience scores. And one of the ways organizations are adopting these changes is by embracing digital platforms and embarking on what is called a *'digital transformation'* journey.

Digital transformation, if simply put, can mean anything from creating best user interfaces & a consistent omnichannel experience to building & disseminating enterprise information assets, to making use of *Artificial Intelligence (AI)*, *Machine Language (ML)* & advanced analytics to understand and serve customers better, to improve operational efficiencies and whatnot – basically looking holistically at the entire front-middle-back functions & processes across infrastructure & applications and ripping, replacing, building, optimizing them as required to meet digital objectives.

Digital Transformation is important but more significant is to build a Digital Culture

While these digital transformation programs might look best on paper, but a vast majority of them do not tend to take off or eventually fail due to a variety of reasons, with *'non-existent digital culture'* almost always one of them. No doubt having a well-defined strategy, a robust execution plan and putting an 'A' team in place is quintessential to success but more important is to create a digital culture within the organization which promotes people to ditch legacy mindsets and drive new behaviors - simply because industry disruption, better business models, newer customer outreach channels, technology innovation etc. will never stop coming.

As per a report on challenges in meeting digital priorities by McKinsey, 33% were attributed to cultural and behavioral aspects

I have attempted to list down a couple of ways by which organizations are trying to address this *'good problem'* of digital culture. While there can be many other ways and means to achieve this, but in my experience, I have found these to be quite effective:

Digital Culture Audit – organizations start by performing an inside-out and outside-in audit to see where their people stand and what needs to be done to bring the required change in their perceptions and behaviors. The objective is to educate people on the long-term digital goals and eventually build an environment which fosters learning, ideas sharing, openness, and collaboration.

A non-existent digital culture is one of the primary reasons why digital programs fail

Stakeholder Management – mapping, understanding and managing key stakeholders (*be it the CXOs or the project teams on the ground*) is going to be a key enabler, not only to get relevant short-term support but also to remove any barriers down the way. These are the people who will be a part and parcel of the digital journeys and will be entrusted to make the program a success. Keeping them abreast of the initiatives and how would it lead to a better experience will always resonate well and go a long way.

Measurement Framework – while it's not easy to map & measure digital program objectives *vis-à-vis* business objectives and financial outcomes, it's all the more an uphill task to measure the change in culture. One way through which organizations try to address this is by creating parameters which are directly related to change in customer satisfaction scores and periodically measure the outcome of each and every parameter (*be it marketing campaigns, social sentiments, customer surveys etc.*)

Improvement in customer experience scores could be one of the ways to measure the change in Digital Culture

Customer Interactions – Many organizations build products and services which are more aligned to and are focused internally, rather than getting continuous feedback from the customers *via* multiple touch points during the life cycle of building a product or service and incorporating those changes. It can't be emphasized enough that how important is it to

understand your end customers and engage with them appropriately for better connect and desired outcomes. This method has the potential to serve as a catalyst for wider change.

The Culture of Innovation – this is undeniably a must-have and one of the biggest differentiators as organizations need to embrace ‘try fast fail fast’ culture to compete in this fast-paced environment and set themselves apart. The idea should be to instill an entrepreneurial spirit in the organization so that there is a continuous focus on exploring new ideas, experimenting with next-gen technologies, learning from failures, conducting proof of concepts and adapting & adopting the outcomes as required.

There is clearly no ‘*single approach serves all*’ here because the objectives and priorities of every organization on a digital transformation journey are different and everyone addresses the digital culture aspect of it in their own unique way.

Keen to understand if you have had come across this particular challenge and what practices you had put in place to tackle it?

About the Author:

Rohit Sood (**ORCID: 0000-0002-6097-139X**) is a Melbourne-based seasoned IT Sales Director with one of the largest multi-national IT organizations. He is an avid follower of industry trends, especially in the areas of digital, big data and analytics led transformations. He comes with a solid technology background and a strong record growing portfolios across geographies including USA, UK, Europe, Middle East, and APAC regions, bringing value to F500 clients in the B2B space in BFSI, Manufacturing, Retail and Telecom verticals.

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