Digital Transformation being forced by Covid-19?

A Guide for SMEs'

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The World Health & Economic situation has all of a sudden changed the goalposts and forced many Organisations into accelerating its Digital Transformation Strategy. That is of course if you even had a Digital Transformation Strategy!! As Market Leaders, we are getting calls every day now from people from all walks of life, in every type of Industry. One day you are doing your job in HR, Health & Safety, Procurement, Quality or Continuous Improvement etc. and the next day all you are talking about is Digital Transformation. How did we go from talking about it, to all of a sudden requesting warp speed captain!?

Sure some of our larger clients have been implementing "the change" for quite some time now but many have been thrown into the deep end. Maybe you have been talking about, or even fighting for, Digital Transformation for years and have got the usual blockage of cost used as a barrier to implementation. Thankfully we have the experience of working with some of the world's largest companies on their Digital Transformation Strategy, so we are delighted to be able to give you this non nonsense eBook if it helps on your journey

Let's spend a very short period of time explaining the benefits of Digital Transformation before we get into the detail of how to implement a successful Digital Transformation Strategy.

The first point that we would like to make is that Digital Transformation done right, is like a Caterpillar turning into a Butterfly. It truly is like night and day, and completely transformational. Digital Transformation done wrong is like a horror movie. The main benefits of Digital Transformation are:

1 **Efficiency.**
Taking traditional, costly, time consuming and unconnected processes, and putting them on line really do take your Organisation's performance to another level and beyond.

2 **Productivity.**
Simply put, technology allows your Organisation to do more with less, allowing you to have a live picture of how your business is performing. Essentially allowing you to gain competitive advantage by maximising output at the lowest cost

3 **Sustainability.**
Automating processes and departments allows for far greater sustainability. Take training as an example. You can now save significantly on your Carbon Footprint by moving to the cloud. Digital Transformation also allows you to make more informed decisions in a much more timely fashion.

4 **Return on Investment.**
Within a couple of years any Digital Transformation Strategy that you implement should have significant Return On Investment. If you don't have an ROI then we suggest that you need to go back to the drawing board.

5 **Safety.**
Imagine a day when you can encourage reporting and inspections because they are easy to do. No more spreadsheets that are up to date only once a month. Truly putting "Manager" back in to your role, where once it was mainly "Administrator". Well wait no more!! Dulann have the best and most cost effective Safety Management System around.

Before we kick off, let me tell you that this eBook is not designed as a legal reference guide or consultants guide to getting more business from you. It will do exactly what it says on the tin, and that is to give you a quick reference guide on Digital Transformation based on our extensive experience.

1 **Don't let the IT Department Run an IT Project!**

We have lots and lots of clients, friends even, who work in IT so we better apologise in advance. According to a 2017 report from the Project Management Institute (PMI), 14 percent of IT Projects fail. However, that number only represents the total failures. Of the Projects that didn't fail outright, 31 percent didn't meet their goals, 43 percent exceeded their initial budgets, and 49 percent were late. So it is our experience that the success of a Digital Transformation Project, should absolutely be heavily influenced by IT, but it shouldn't be driven by it. There we have said it!! Why we hear you ask? Well its simple… this isn't an "IT Project", it's a "Customer Focused Project"! The driving force behind technology decisions should be the end user, whether that be your External Customers or your Internal Customers. The goal should be to make their lives easier and as a result you will make things easier for the Organisation. A Customer focus is the basis for all Digital Transformation decisions.

2 Secure Buy In

The first challenge, and probably the biggest challenge, that you will face in terms of a successful implementation is 'buy in" at Senior Management Level. "Buy In" is bandied about quite a bit, but if your Organisation hadn't already been working on a Digital Transformation Strategy, then the reality is that Senior Management have probably been forced into it now. This is a problem and you need to resolve it. What's more, don't just take someone's word for it that they have bought in. The reality is that behind the scenes they are still sceptical and are playing along because it's the right thing to say right now. The reality is that if the business wasn't that way inclined before Covid-19, they will still have a very traditional mindset, and as such the communications piece around Digital Transformation is going to be even more important to get right. A successful Digital Transformation implementation starts with Senior Management who lead Employees towards the vision. Every single Executive and Leader must play a role in championing Digital Change.

3 Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.

You will see 'Communication" coming up as a big theme across all our eBooks, because it is. It is quite simply the most difficult topic to get right and unfortunately the one that most Organisations spend far too little time on. Let's not use the old cliché that "change is hard" because we all know it is, but to bring it back to brass tacks, Organisations need to break down internal resistance to change in order to create a cohesive Organisation that moves forward embracing change.

4 Be a Relentless Champion

If you have been appointed as the coordinator to lead the Digital Transformation Strategy, then you need to exercise every Project Management skill that you ever thought you had. In fact you need to exercise some of the skills that you didn't even know you had. Be absolutely focused on the objectives no matter how many people will try and send you down rabbit holes as to why something can't be done. According to the Project Management Institute, six factors must be met for a project to be successful:

- It's delivered on time.
- It's cost doesn't exceed its budget.
- It works as designed.
- People use it.
- The people who funded the project are happy with it.
- It meets the goals that drove the project.

So that's it. If you stick rigidly to those deliverables then you are sorted! Easier said than done but have focus and it can be achieved.

5   Don't Just Ignore the Common Pitfalls

So the good news is that you won't be the first person to implement a Digital Transformation Strategy and you won't be the last. What that means is that you can learn a huge amount from those that have gone before you, so you don't make the same mistakes. We listed some of the pitfalls earlier but don't just know them, go out of your way to proactively ensure that they don't happen to you. You need to rule this with an iron fist.

It's highly unlikely that your project will fail but of those that do fail, the main reason for doing so is that the correct scope wasn't there from the start. If you fail at getting that (Customer Focused) scope right then you will never be able to keep the Stakeholders happy or indeed meet the six criteria for a successful Digital Transformation Project.

6   Training and Development

Digital technologies are fantastic, but in order to achieve all these benefits, be cognisant of the fact that the work processes and structures of Companies also need to change. That isn't just going to happen by itself so as a result, Companies face an increasing demand for continuing education and skills development for their Employees. This is certainly one of the most underestimated elements of any Digital Transformation Strategy.

Along with changes in work practices as a result of Digital Tansformation, job profiles are also likely to change. With a change in job profile will likely come a greater focus not just on achieving new hard skills, but also on some of the more intangible soft skills.

The world is generally experiencing an increased need and an intensive struggle for qualified professionals. More and more Employees are interested in their Personal Development and Career Advancement, and Companies that offer those incentives are more attractive for these people. The last thing you need to see in the middle of a Digital Transformation Strategy is for key people to up and leave.

For the reasons above, when it comes to the Digital Transformation of your learning management, a robust Learning Management System is required. Dulann are the Irish Partners for IMC and together we provide the world's best solution. Are we biased? Of course we are, but it's also the truth! Anyway enough about us, let's stay on topic.

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7 **Be Realistic. Two Out of Three Ain't Bad.**

Every IT project has three constraints: Time, Scope, and Budget. If anyone has told you they have achieved all three then they are most likely telling porkies. Most Digital Transformation Projects involve either a Waterfall Approach or an Agile Approach.

- Using a Waterfall Approach, Time and Scope are fixed, but Budget is flexible. The team delivers all requested functionality by a specified deadline. If that's impossible, teams add budget to increase the amount of work they're able to complete in the allotted time frame.

- Using an Agile Approach, Time and Budget are fixed, but Scope is flexible. Recognising that projects never go exactly according to plan, this system allows the team to shift priorities as needed to make sure finished products satisfy the most pressing business needs.

Of course you need to manage the third constraint tightly but be realistic on using perhaps one of the above two strategies. If you aren't realistic with yourself and the other Stakeholders, you are more than likely in for a tougher ride.

8 **Pick a Team that you can Trust**

Let's be clear here, not everything can be scoped at the early stages, with the result that there will inevitably be a shift in at least one of the project constraints. The challenge will be to manage that shift. When this shift happens people start heading for the hills as they all start to point fingers and cover their posteriors!

It doesn't come down to "he said" or "she said" because again both parties have lost. There will be good days, and there will be bad days, but if both teams have their end Customer firmly in mind, then your Digital Transformation Project will be a roaring success. The key again is Communication, Trust and Integrity. The solution here comes down to people. It doesn't come down to contracts, because if it does, both parties have lost.

9 Pick your Battles

Please don't try and do everything at once. Eat that elephant in bite sized chunks. Resource the projects properly. Don't be that company that goes from no Digital Transformation, to wanting to go completely paperless. It simply does not work. We recommend planning your entire roadmap, complete top level scoping and estimates, identify priorities, put together project specific teams and pick off your battles in a strategic way. We also recommend trying to achieve some quick wins as it keeps the motivation and momentum going on the project. Setting clear goals and meeting all the team as early as possible is a great first step to take.

10 Ask the Tough Questions

Scope creep is pervasive in Project Management and difficult to manage because, as the name suggests, it creeps up on you. One of the biggest mistakes that Project Managers make when dealing with Digital Transformation is to "assume"! Not clarifying what changes are included in scope and which are not because before you know it changes can get way out of hand.

That is where you need to be particularly careful if you have gone with a partner purely on the lowest price Inevitably those type of partners often end up being the most expensive and certainly not the best value for money. Just keep going back to the six factors of success…if the change doesn't help meet those criteria, is it really needed or is it just nice to have.

11 Be Bold

Don't be afraid to adjust course when things go wrong. Despite your best efforts, sometimes things go wrong so be prepared to adjust the sails slightly in order to achieve your objectives. The fear of failure can sometimes lead a Project Manager to take steps that they wouldn't ordinarily have taken. Worse still the fear of failure results in some Project Managers doing nothing at all. Be bold and take decisive action as things are going wrong, certainly please don't procrastinate.

12 Constantly Re-Evaluate

Unexpected risks account for about a third of project failures. This is mainly because of the experience or inexperience of a team that, up till recently, had no experience of Digital Transformation because they were busy doing their day job. To avoid project failure due to unexpected risks, your planning process needs to provide accommodation for the estimates associated with both the known and unknown risks. If you take this approach up front, then you will have a great opportunity to achieve your Business and Project Goals.

The success of your Digital Transformation Project hinges on taking experienced advice from a team that you can trust to deliver in the Customers best interests.

We certainly hope that this eBook has helped you in some way. If you would like us to help you facilitate a smooth implementation of a new Digital Learning System or Safety Management System to deliver positive business results, then talk to us today.
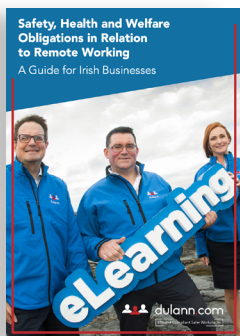
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