

Mike Myatt  
Founder and Chairman



# Digital Transformation Or Digital Free Fall: What Every CEO Must Know

---


Originally Published On The Executive Hub:

Every organization occupies a unique place on the spectrum of digital transformation. Whether they have an accurate perception or understanding of what that means to their business is the bigger concern. Some see digital as little more than a portfolio of projects or initiatives to be implemented, others as a problem to be solved or an opportunity to be exploited, and yes, there are always those who fail to see it at all. The special ones, they see it as a chance to create advantage, to deliver value and to innovate at scale.



Innovation has always been synonymous with business survival and that hasn't changed. What has changed is the pace and scale at which businesses must innovate to remain competitive in a digital world. The speed of technology advances in the market are making the old paradigm of first mover versus fast follower largely irrelevant – every business must now become some version of a first mover.

Many leaders have fallen into the trap of believing digital transformation is like playing a game of technology catch-up. That if they can harness a bit of digital exhaust and turn big data into smart data, that somehow their business will transform itself. Nothing could be further from the truth, and the billions of dollars being spent chasing digital shadows won't change a thing.



Organizations whose business models are a few revolutions back on the digital curve cannot transform from lagger to leader by simply implementing blockchain or machine learning. Digital transformation is really more of a leadership, culture, strategy, and talent issue than a technology issue. Real digital transformation occurs when business models and methods are reimaged by courageous leaders willing to manage opportunity more than risk, focus on next practices more than best practices and who are committed to beating their competition to the future.

For the geeks, nerds and propeller-heads reading this piece looking for a more granular discussion on the topic of digital transformation, I'll point you to a piece recently authored by John Nives, my Chief Digital Officer, who rather brilliantly explains the nuances of digital and why it matters to every business. The one thing I can promise you is that the tool kit that allowed leaders to reach the C-suite won't be the one that keeps them there. Leaders who won't embrace new thinking will simply be replaced by those who will.

Here's the thing – leaders must reframe their perspective by recognizing that digital transformation is far more than a set of buzzwords and technology initiatives – it's a strategic subset of the broader category of business transformation. Therein lies the problem; the impact of time compression, and the need to rapidly infuse an entirely new genre of talent and thinking into businesses that may not presently exist is forcing executives to think and act in ways they're simply not comfortable with.

My advice to business leaders is this – don't just throw money at the symptoms, fix the problem. Don't pin your success to purveyors of the ethereal by signing multi-year contracts with large consultancies guaranteeing to lead you out of the old economy desert into the promise land of digital transformation. Don't outsource the hard rigor of transformation – insource it by getting smarter, faster, and more creative. Recruit new talent, breakdown outdated hierarchies, and get very serious about operationalizing a solid digital strategy.

As I've always said, the plausibility of impossibility only becomes a probability in the absence of leadership. Great leaders will drive real digital transformation while others will simply manage their way into a digital free fall. How will you face this challenge?

Credit: Forbes.com

Image Credit: Getty Images