4 Ways Project Managers Can Embrace Digital Transformation
Written by Charles Seybold

Today more than ever, digital tools, innovations, and workflows play a vital role in an organization's work methods.

Although new technology pathways can help prevent employee burnout, decrease the frequency of human error, and inform your decisions with data-driven results, the journey to full digital integrations is often not an easy one. As the need for proper implementation has become more apparent, digital transformation (DX), or the process of transferring your out-of-date work processes to digitally proficient ones, has gained more buy-in from businesses of all kinds.

When changing the entire organizational approach to any system, it can be overwhelming to decide what first step to take. This is partly because organizations rarely ever define their desired outcomes before embarking on digital migrations. Some of the top drivers for DX efforts are growth opportunities in new markets, shifting customer behaviours, an increase in competition, and changes in industry standards and compliance; focusing on more than one of these objectives will prove too large of a scale to properly execute DX.

That's where a spotlight on digital transformation specifically for project management comes into play. Despite its challenges, DX provides a number of benefits for project teams who implement it correctly. The right combination of technologies can help your team deliver projects on time, avoid pitfalls or navigate unforeseeable obstacles as they present themselves, along with plenty of other valuable benefits. From the initial stages of research to the finalized execution, we've outlined a step-by-step plan for implementing your digitally driven project methodology.

1. Identify Your Project Pain Points
If your organization struggles to complete projects on time, on budget, and within scope, you're in good company — only 2.5 percent of businesses complete all of their projects successfully, and only 64 percent of projects accomplish the goals they set out to achieve. When it comes to project management, businesses have plenty of room to grow and optimize their project efforts.

Consider your own project mapping: what specific areas show the weakest performance? Are there certain sections that cause the most delays? Are some segments more inclined to errors and inconsistencies than others? These are the components of your project plan that will most benefit from digital transformation.
The first step in any thorough project DX is identifying the project pain points — or areas of your project execution that are most likely to cause backslides in your deliverables. Narrowing your focus to a few steps in your workflow is the best way to set a feasible scope for digital transformation and create clear goals that outline precise outcomes for your efforts. Each goal should correspond with a pain point you want to ameliorate, and its success should be gauged by how much these inefficiencies are improved.

Once you've defined both your pain points and your goals, you're ready to begin the process of migrating to digital.

2. Future-Proof With Research
Your digital transformation's success hinges on its ability to remain relevant beyond the present moment. With new advancements and trends making their way onto the market with each passing day, building a digital foundation that can support and acclimate to a rapidly shifting tech market is critical for longevity and continued value. Before you make your first purchase, dedicate some time to research with the concept of future-proofing in mind. A future-proofed digital transformation means that despite any changes to digital strategies in the upcoming months or years, your business will be able to leverage your existing technology stacks to minimize the reverberations of these changes.
To find the most future-proof solutions available, you should ask the following questions during your research:

Will this tool easily scale to meet the demands of my growing business?
How widely dispersible is this tool?
Can this tool be updated at a company-wide level without difficulty?
Does this tool offer integration capabilities with the other technology our project team uses?
With these questions in mind, you can begin looking for specific types of tools and solutions that help address your project pain points. Some specific tech sectors to consider researching include:

→ For reducing human error, explore opportunities with artificial intelligence. Defined as a technology that helps software systems learn workflows and respond similarly to humans, AI has been rolled out to project teams to help them automate a number of project tasks, such as sending reminder emails to team members, predicting upcoming roadblocks based on previous data, and replacing human labor completely in repetitive tasks.

→ For fostering team collaboration, investigate how the right project management software can optimize each contributor's execution of deliverables, and coordinate communication among team members. For deliverables, breaking a strategy down into digestible quadrants helps team members determine priorities and create a sense of ownership with assigned tasks. Communicating on these tasks and deliverables within the project management software itself (as opposed to via email, messaging, etc.) gives everyone a central "source of truth" for current status.

→ For developing more comprehensive insights, look into data management software integrations and how they can further inform your project efforts. Because it is intended to house both your organization's data and aggregate historical information, project managers can use DMS platforms to make more informed decisions on the direction of both their digital transformation strategies and the greater project management discipline.

3. Update From Analog
Another challenge many project teams quickly face in their digital transformation efforts is the process of taking their updated systems and transitioning them to digital alternatives. Years' worth of physical documentation, legacy computer systems, and technology that doesn't integrate across every department all stand in the way of you and proper DX.
Despite the amount of time and resources it will take, updating your manual workflows will prove immensely beneficial in the long run. By some estimates, locating a single lost paper document will cost a business $122 on average. Add that to your other paper-based expenses – including printers, ink, filing storage, and the cost of paper itself – and the migration to digital doesn't seem so outlandish.

Similar to the process of identifying pain points, updating your analog systems begins with the tools you need specifically for your project plan. For projects that require signatures to move from step to step, opting for an electronic signature system can speed up the approval process, as the intended parties can instantly access the documentation that requires authentication. And teams that struggle to track down their pending paper invoices can migrate to a project management solution to better track both billable and non-billable expenses.

4. Communicate Company-Wide
Few project teams fully grasp the impact that digital transformation can have on a human level. Depending on which study you are looking at, structural changes to your business can take anywhere from 66 to 254 days to fully acclimate. Digital transformation may yield higher productivity levels and engagement from your workforce eventually, but this new technology may also come with a learning curve that can be challenging for some of your colleagues to overcome. The best antidote to an extended adjustment to changes caused by DX is proactive communication between your project teams and the rest of the organization. This requires open paths of dialogue before, during, and after a DX change has been implemented. Your team members have a right to know why you are making the change, how this new technology will affect their day-to-day work, and how you anticipate your digital transformation will enhance your existing methods for getting work done.

Communication does not have to stop there, however. For particularly complex migrations, consider hosting overview presentations, open to the entire company, that explore some of your new tech investment's most interesting features, its user interface, as well as its integration capabilities with other software. Great communication also requires listening – actively seeking feedback from the people most affected by your project DX initiatives, both positive and negative. Gathering a sense of your organization's perception around this new technology is vital to continue improving the project digitization process and discovering new opportunities to test the digital transformation waters.

Find these words or phrases in the article. Then match them with their definitions (drag and drop)

		a persistent or recurring problem
a. buy-in		
b. compliance		the fact of agreeing with and accepting something that someone suggests
c. spotlight		to change to suit different conditions of life

d. to come into play		focus of attention
e. pitfall		to calculate an amount, especially by using a measuring device
f. unforeseeable		the fact of obeying a particular law or rule, or of acting according to an agreement
g. to outline		to divide something into smaller, simpler parts
h. pain point		to improve the quality, amount, or strength of something
i. set out to do sth		to make a new product, service, or system available for the first time
j. backslide		to try to stop or prevent something or someone
k. workflow		to use something that you already have in order to achieve something new or better
l. feasible		a likely mistake or problem in a situation
m. to ameliorate		the fact of returning to old, often bad, habits, or to a worse condition
n. to gauge		to help produce or influence a result
o. to hinge on sth		of an event that cannot be known about or guessed before it happens
p. to acclimate to		used to describe time spent working that you can charge money for

q. leverage		strange and unusual and difficult to accept or like
r. reverberations		anything that stops progress
s. to roll out		the way that a particular type of work is organized, or the order of the stages in a particular work process
t. roadblock		to give the main facts about something
u. digestible		able to be made, done, or achieved
v. quadrant		to depend on something or be very influences by it
w. to break sth down into		effects that spread and affect a lot of people
x. to aggregate		to combine into a single group or total
y. to stand in the way		a concept from project management involving four quadrants: Time, Budget, Scope, and Quality
z. outlandish		easy to understand
aa. billable		to make a bad or unpleasant situation better
ab. to enhance		to attempt or intend to do something