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Digital transformation: 9 emerging roles you need on your team

Blog: The Enterprise Project - Digital Transformation

As IT leaders learn more about what does – and does not work – when it comes to furthering digital transformation, they’re getting a better picture of the ideal makeup of these teams.

Certainly, there are still some must-have roles, like the DT lead, the financial analyst, and the user experience expert. But some additional roles and capabilities are emerging as increasingly valuable to their enterprise digital initiatives.

9 digital transformation roles to prioritize

Just 22 percent of IT and business leaders surveyed for a recent Harvard Business Review Analytic Services report (sponsored by Quick Base) rated their transformation strategies as very effective. The overwhelming majority (92 percent) said that successful digital transformation requires an approach that stresses innovation at the enterprise and business process levels. “All of this tells us that to make digital transformation successful, the expertise needed transcends the CIO and IT roles,” says Deb Gildersleeve, CIO of QuickBase.

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Roles that can add value to digital transformation programs now include:

1. The CXperts

“No digital transformation project can be truly successful without first thinking about the ultimate outcomes for customers.”

“No digital transformation project can be truly successful without first thinking about the ultimate outcomes for customers,” says Miki Sandorfi, senior vice president of product engineering at [Sungard AS](#). “Having seasoned customer experience (CX) talent is imperative.”

The CX leader or team focuses on the customer journey and the most important CX outcomes.

Chief digital officer [Bernie Gracy](#) at driver assistance services company Agero says a VP of customer experience can be a critical addition to the digital transformation team. “They look at all the ways a customer interacts with a company digitally to really elevate the omnichannel experience,” Gracy explains. “They are like the GM of customer experience – measuring it, optimizing it, productizing it, differentiating it – to make a big impact in a constantly evolving ecosystem.”

CIOs need CX talent in their corner to analyze data about the customer experience, constantly A/B test, run focus groups with consumers, and work with front-end engineering, operations, and data science teams. “The VP of customer experience helps stitch together silos throughout an organization to create a singular view of a customer’s digital experience,” says Gracy.

2. The business-process duo

On one hand, “individuals from the business side are increasingly emerging as the problem solvers and implementers [for digital transformation],” says Terry Simpson, technical evangelist at [Nintex](#). On the other, Sandorfi says, “It’s important to have a team who is well-versed in the current business processes (which are often executed in a complex fashion by multiple teams) and have the skill set to rethink and simplify those existing processes for success in the digital world.”

“Organizations need both institutional knowledge and strong, process-oriented problem-solving skill sets.”

When you can bring those two viewpoints together, it’s powerful. “To be successful in achieving digital transformation outcomes – such as reduced processing time or improved customer experiences – we find that organizations need both institutional knowledge and strong, process-oriented problem-solving skill sets,” says Shezhad Amin, director at management and IT consultancy [Pace Harmon](#). Amin advocates pairing up individuals who are very familiar with the business workflow and associated rationale with an expert process-oriented problem-

3. Brand strategists

Marketing plays a critical role not just as a consumer of digital initiatives, but as a group that should be in on the ground floor of any digital transformation effort, says QuickBase's Gildersleeve. "They will be an advocate for initiatives that will meaningfully and positively impact customers. Brand strategists also have a deep understanding of the company's identity and marketing processes across channels, as well as where improvements can be made."

4. Data stewards

Data governance – the organizational framework for optimal data management – is key.

Data quality can make or break the success of digital projects. Thus, data governance – the organizational framework for optimal data management – is key. Digital transformation demands data owners, reviews, and (perhaps most importantly) data stewards. "Data stewards have the power to ensure data is accurate from the beginning and need to be supported within their organizations," says [Melanie Nuce](#), SVP of corporate development at GS1 US, the administrator of the UPC barcode.

Data stewards are responsible for the creation and setup of master data, including defining the content for each data field and attribute, ensuring quality, and helping to develop and enforce policies and standards around that master data. When anyone wants to capture new data about a product or customer or wants to change how data is being used, Nuce says, it should be routed through the data stewards for approval.

5. The cloud security pro

If you don't already have an experienced [cloud security](#) expert on your digital transformation team, says David Levine, vice president of corporate and information security and CSO at [Ricoh USA](#), get one now.

Ideally, cloud security should be part of the core team. At the very least, digital transformation initiatives should include trusted cloud security consultants. "Too many people fail to understand the complexities and governance required to adequately secure and maintain or even utilize a cloud-based solution," Levine says. "All too frequently, people either assume their hosting provider has it covered or that it's really no different than managing what you had in your data center. However, the truth is that these are both significant misunderstandings that could leave an organization vulnerable to breach either via misconfiguration or hacking."

These individuals should be involved from day one of planning rather than a disrupter brought in at the last minute, Levine advises.

6. Data scientists



analyzing data, says Eric Sigurdson, who leads the CIU practice at [Russell Reynolds Associates](#). As we've pointed out, [data architects](#) play a significant role in the development of data architecture and infrastructure.

Data scientists are also mission-critical, agrees Shane Long, president of custom software development firm [SevenTablets](#). "A data scientist will have the experience required to really dig into and interpret your company's data elements," Long says. "A data-based approach is critical as you're developing the documents that will serve as the basis of your digital transformation project."

7. The DataOps engineer

Data is the engine that drives digital transformation: IT leaders who apply methodologies like [agile](#) development, [DevOps](#), and lean manufacturing to data pipelines and analytics workflows can supercharge their efforts. "If you want to attain greater business agility through faster, more responsive data analytics, then the DataOps engineer should be your first hire," says Chris Bergh, CEO of DataOps consultancy and platform provider [DataKitchen](#).

DataOps engineers implement the continuous deployment of data analytics and give data scientists tools to instantiate development sandboxes on demand. They can automate the data operations pipeline and create platforms used to test and monitor data, eliminating data lifecycle bottlenecks, Bergh explains. "A DataOps engineer who understands how to automate and streamline data workflows can increase the productivity of a data team by orders of magnitude," he says. "The DataOps engineering skillset includes hybrid and cloud platforms, orchestration, data architecture, data integration, data transformation, CI/CD, real-time messaging, and containers."

8. The HR ambassador

"As businesses react and evolve, we are seeing new roles emerge, including those that relate to assessing workers' morale and motivation," says [Stanton Jones](#), director and principal analyst at technology research and advisory firm [ISG](#). "Leading companies have created that role inside HR to coach employees on working from home and keeping their sanity. This has increased productivity, so we can expect it to become part of the new normal."

HR professionals and change management specialists are probably the most overlooked and critical component to a digital transformation project, says Dux Raymond Sy, chief branding officer at [AvePoint](#). "The technologists that drive digital transformation projects sometimes forget that access doesn't always mean adoption. I'm seeing more and more people in HR be the catalyst and even drive these types of projects from an employee engagement standpoint."

9. Director of automation

these [automation](#) projects started with the drastic shift of working from home employees,” says Sumita Mavros, vice president of product management at [Ephesoft](#). “The need to automate workloads and do more with less became a reality.”

As a result, many organizations are creating roles like director of process automation, head of intelligent automation, or director of robotics and automation, says Stephen Boals, senior vice president of strategy & evangelism at Ephesoft. “Whether it’s an executive sponsor or a head of automation,” Boals says, “a project champion is critical to success, completion of the project and get company-wide buy-in.”

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