

WHITEPAPER

Training the Digital Leaders of the Future

How HR and L&D can grow digital gurus from within the organization

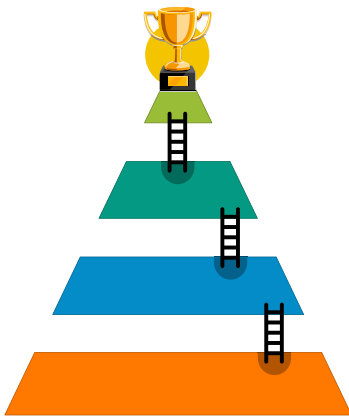
CONTENT

- Where organizations are going wrong with digital transformation
- The inside track for soft skills-based digital transformation
- How to grow your own digital guru
- Digital transformation is never done

Training the Digital Leaders of the Future

How HR and L&D can grow digital gurus from within the organization

Technology can transform business, boosting productivity and profit. Companies are embracing digital transformation – but too many are going digital, and not seeing the hoped-for transformation.



Those who implemented **digital strategies** in the workplace reported **20 - 30% greater performance** in every category, from profits to productivity.

An IDC survey of more than 1,500 Asia Pacific businesses identified two types of businesses – leaders (only 7% of all organizations) and followers¹. Leaders were those who had implemented digital strategies in the workplace and reported 20–30% greater performance in every category, from profits to productivity. Follower companies were also growing by embracing digital technology, but reported lower performance improvements.

What were leaders doing differently, then? IDC found that leaders put technology at the heart of their business strategy, while followers use technology to augment their existing processes.

Digital transformation is not a goal in itself. It should not just involve digitizing existing processes, but start with a focus on customers, their desires and needs. Consider what the company wants to achieve by adopting digital technology. Where are your competitors, and which market segments can you grow by applying digital technology? How might individual employees use technology to better serve customers? Successful digital transformation will provide clear answers to these questions.

Organizational change should go hand-in-hand with digital transformation, breaking down old hierarchies and siloed departments. Employees at every level will need to be more flexible and adaptable – as well as more customer-facing. It is increasingly clear that employees' soft skills are as important as new technology to ensure successful digital transformation.

Where organizations are going wrong with digital transformation

Faced with the need for radical change, many companies seek out external support. It may seem sensible to hire a digital guru who has handled the process of digital transformation many times before. However, outsourcing digital transformation in this way is far from being a failsafe option.



Organizational change should go **hand-in-hand with digital transformation.**

Consultants who are parachuted in to support digital transformation projects do not have a deep understanding of the business and the way it currently works. They do not have the daily experience of understanding and meeting the needs of customers. As a result, the vision and strategy that external consultants develop for digital transformation is often slightly off the mark, and employees and leaders don't buy into radical new changes. A lot of money may be spent on technology that either simply digitizes existing processes or, worse still, leaves customer service no better than it was before. The solution to this is simple and cost effective – grow your own digital gurus from within.

Consultants who are parachuted in to support digital transformation projects do not have a deep understanding of the business and the way it currently works.

The inside track for soft skills-based digital transformation

The wisdom is in the room – the knowledge you need for digital transformation is right in front of you. The experts on your products and service are hiding in plain sight. HR and learning development professionals have a central role to play in identifying and developing employees that will become the most effective digital gurus.

Most organizations have a few 'super users' – people who are keen to be first to try out and use new technology and who are enthusiastic about promoting the benefits of new technologies. Most companies also have employees who are well-known as good communicators, people who help create a cohesive corporate culture and are natural, charismatic trendsetters. And organizations that have built a strong learning culture will have individuals who stand out for their contribution to peer learning and mentoring. These employees, who understand the business and are willing to learn and share their learning in a way that is authentic and approachable, can become the digital gurus who transform the business.

Anybody can be a digital guru – this is not the preserve of technical staff. Fledgling digital gurus will have an entrepreneurial mindset and a willingness to learn. Ideally, they should already come across as authentic and be well-connected and liked inside the company. Your digital gurus will be happy in the role of evangelist and be able to inspire others.

Of course, even these smart employees may not have all the skills needed. Effective digital gurus will need not only technical skills, but also soft skills such as language and communication skills that will help them assess the needs of customers in many territories and keep other employees on board with the digital transformation.

How to grow your own digital guru

There are a number of steps organizations should take to ensure they are developing digital leaders of the future and a pipeline of their very own digital gurus:



Employees can take you to a digital future that no one can imagine now. Create **diverse teams** with the skills that you need.

1. Establish where you are on the digital transformation journey.

The first step is to create a status report setting out where the business is in terms of digitalization, and how far along the curve it is in achieving transformation goals. The [Speexx Essentials](#) platform can help with this by assessing organization-wide skills and requirements. On the other side of the equation, it is important to collect quantitative and qualitative data to help find out as much as possible about your customers and prospects before embarking on customer-first digital transformation.

2. Foster a culture of failure.

Make sure that employees know failure is an accepted part of the process of learning and change. Put a strategy in place to detect failure and be ready to react quickly and adapt your processes when it happens.

3. Listen to your people and empower them to make changes with the right tools.

Employees entering the workplace will take you to a digital future that no one can imagine now. Give them the tools to do that. These must be tools that employees enjoy using and that reflect the standard of technology, tools and apps that they use in their daily domestic lives. Build a learning culture that emphasizes transformation and helps employees understand how new technologies can improve products and sales channels. Make the communication two-way – provide employees with the means to share their insights about potential improvements with the rest of the business. Empower them by providing them with the tools they need to evangelize within the company.

4. Use recruitment intelligently.

Create diverse teams with the skills you need. Rather than hiring consultants to drive digital transformation from the top down, work with existing employees and teams to assess which skills you already have and where it might be necessary to hire new people with the complementary skills that you are missing.



Your digital gurus will need to be able to **communicate** with employees **at every level** of the business to **establish pain points and opportunities** for serving customers better.

A sensitive approach is key: Some workers may be opposed to or afraid of change and may perceive technology as a threat to their job. They may need reassurance that their job is safe because new technologies will almost always deliver better customer service when used in conjunction with the human touch. In contrast, other employees may just focus on the tools and technology and may miss the connection to the business and customer needs. These employees will benefit from learning that is more focused on soft skills.

5. Digitize your learning strategy.

If you want the business to go digital, your learning should be digital, too. New learning technologies allow learning professionals to collect more data about learners and help create a learner-centric solution that better reflects the day-to-day workflow of individual employees. Provide them with the right learning tools and content supported by coaching and mentoring. This blended learning approach is particularly important for soft skills, such as language and communication skills.

6. Make sure everyone speaks the same language.

Digital transformation initiatives often take place in the context of increasing globalization. Businesses targeting and responding to an increasingly global customer base and supply chain need higher levels of language skills than ever before. Language and communication skills are a key starting point to any successful digital transformation. Your digital gurus will need to be able to communicate with employees at every level of the business to establish the pain points and the opportunities for serving customers better before work even begins. Language and communication skills will also be central to expressing and sharing the vision for change and making it happen.

Language and communication skills are a key starting point to any successful digital transformation.

Digital transformation is never done

Many companies have already started their digital transformation projects. It is not too late for these companies to review their approach and to develop a pipeline of digital gurus armed with the necessary soft skills to move forward with their efforts. [Building agile teams](#) to lead the digital transformation is the only way to keep up with continuous changes and make sure those changes benefit your company.

Skillsets change along with new digital technologies. HR and learning professionals might ask themselves “Am I able to assess the changing needs for learning and development within my workforce, and can I keep track of them and adapt my training to those needs accordingly?” It is vital to have ongoing visibility of the skills that are needed and to address these with appropriate and effective training options for your employees.

Digital transformation is a journey without end. And it has only just begun. No one knows what will happen in two, three, or five years' time. Constant change, new technologies, disruptive products and services will be an ongoing challenge. Digital transformation is an open-ended change process that demands innovation, speed and patience in equal measures. Businesses must be prepared not only to respond to constant change but also to actively develop their own vision for how they can be winners in a digital future.

Maintaining an open mind and willingness to learn are key success factors in a fast-changing business world. Creating a [culture of learning is key to digital transformation](#). Does your company have the right tools to create a learning culture with a focus on the soft skills that underpin success? If you would like to discuss this further, please contact info@speeXX.com



Businesses must be prepared not only to respond to constant change but also to actively **develop their vision** for how they can **be winners in a digital future**.

Digital transformation is a journey without end.
And it has only just begun.

References

1. <https://news.microsoft.com/apac/features/asia-pacifics-amazing-digital-transformation-race-us1-16-trillion-economic-boost-stake/>

About SpeeXX - empowering communication

SpeeXX uses groundbreaking AI technology to provide language skills testing, training and continuous performance support to global top 1,000 companies driving better ROI on training budgets and workforce productivity. Unlike traditional training providers, SpeeXX uses advanced technology to build, grow and maintain the language skills that matter.

More than 8 million users in 1,500 organizations around the world – including UNHCR, Adecco, Daimler and Credit Suisse – use SpeeXX to learn a language smarter and deliver results on time. SpeeXX is headquartered in Munich/Germany with offices in London, Madrid, Milan, Paris, Sao Paulo, New York and Shanghai.

For more information visit:

www.speeXX.com

www.linkedin.com/company/speeXX/

Twitter: @speeXX