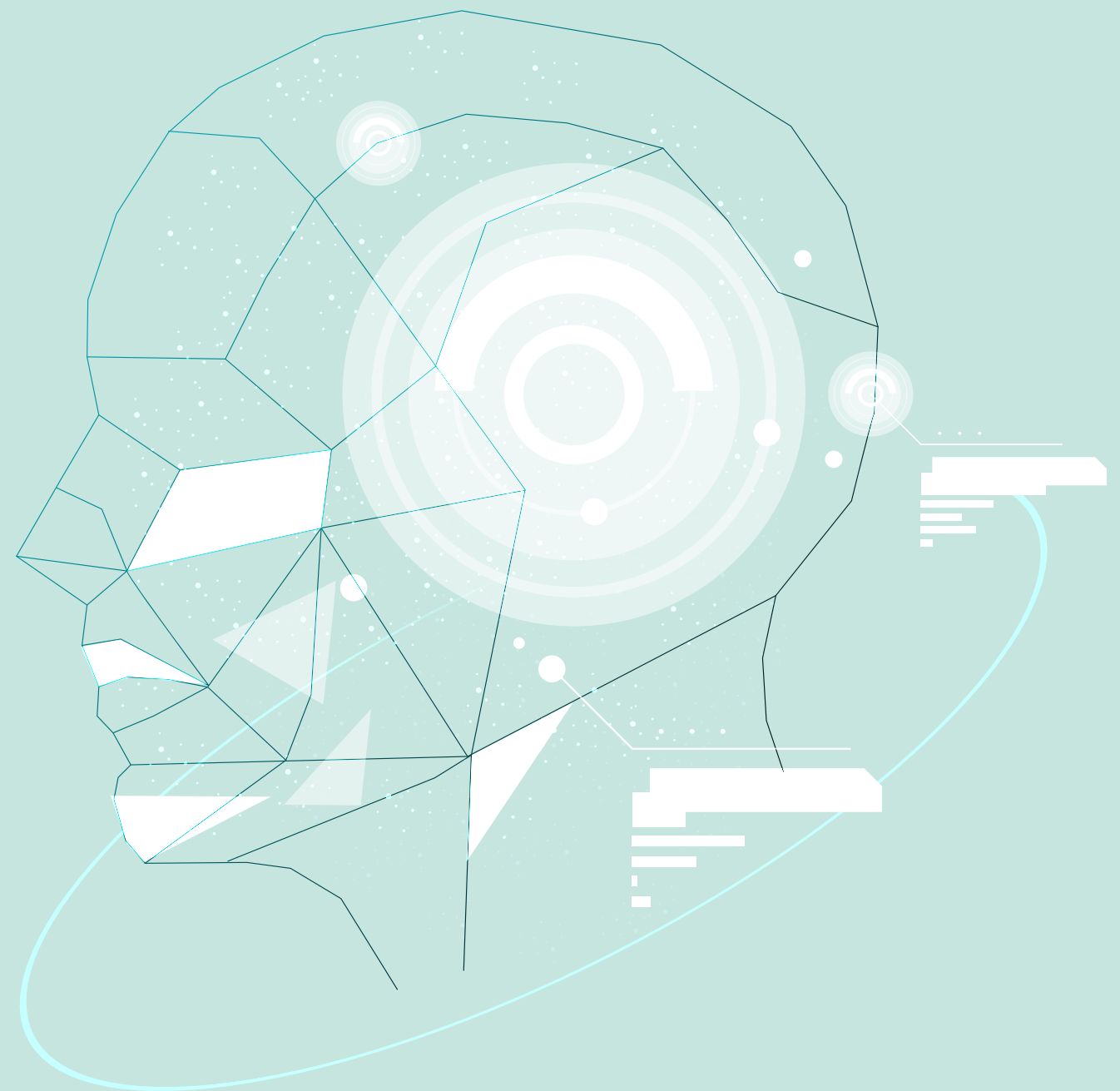


The CIO's Step-by-Step guide to digital transformation

Actionable strategies for delivering business
value through technology



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The CIO today is unlike any in the past

CIOs today occupy a very important place in the boardroom. The time when they were merely responsible for delivering technology to enable operations is a thing of the past. Modern businesses call for a new kind of technology leader. This leader has to move beyond experimentation and transform IT into a core driver of business value.

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The mandate for digital transformation is not just in the hands of the CEO; **the CIO is an equal partner in delivering tech-forward businesses that can weather the worst of storms and make use of the best opportunities in the marketplace.**

”

Take the example of 2020—a year we will all remember as one of massive unpredictability. Where previously businesses said, “We need to innovate,” they're now asking, “How do we respond dynamically to the changing market conditions amid a pandemic?”

“

Let's face it—a long software delivery cycle holds no currency in the world today. Customers change behavior with the click of a button. **Not only do you have to deliver value, but you also have to deliver it consistently, repeatedly, and in near real time.**

”

Perhaps the biggest challenge you'll face as a CIO is the disconnect between your IT and business teams. They both have different outcomes to realize, and thus have different agendas. While they may not entirely be working in silos, they aren't collaborating to the fullest extent possible either—and this derails a lot of enterprise-level digital transformation programs.

How to approach digital transformation?

The right approach to digital transformation is the key to unlocking business value and delivering outcomes faster than is possible through traditional software development. Businesses need to redefine the way they approach any digital transformation project, and this begins with the CIO. You have the mandate to deliver disruptive technology to users, both internally as well as to customers. Whether it's supporting your staff to work remotely or delivering services to customers through a digital channel, as a CIO, you need to differentiate yourself from the pack. You're responsible for delivering:



Better time to market



Superior customer and employee experience



Higher operational efficiency



Direct contribution to higher revenue and profitability

As a CIO who's leading a digital transformation agenda, you have to align your thinking on three levels:

Strategic level

Every digital transformation project begins by evaluating and proving a strategic impact that your program will have across the organization. You will have to begin by putting into place the pieces needed for establishing a rapid application development vision. By focusing on high-impact use cases, you can demonstrate that your approach truly works.

Program level

This is the point where your focus will be on proving the ROI of the program, connecting the IT and business units together, and communicating new guidelines across the organization.

Application level

This is where your team tinkers with the tools. The idea is to deliver apps that are right from the business point of view and a technical point of view. Here you'll have to take into consideration the time, cost, and quality of applications delivered.

We recommend a five-stage process to deliver business value on all three levels:



Develop a vision and strategy



Build your digital team



Deliver the first set of applications



Measure the success of the digital transformation



Scale by fostering a digital culture

Now let's deep-dive into each of these stages:

Developing a vision and strategy



1

Objectives for this stage:

- Understand your current situation
- Start with the end goal in mind
- Define personnel requirements
- Influence internal stakeholders

“

A successful digital transformation initiative begins with a holistic vision. To create a strategic plan for your organization's digital transformation, begin by aligning IT capabilities to strategic organizational-level outcomes and business value.

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Understand your current situation

Take stock of your existing IT infrastructure and the teams handling it. This lets you know what resources you have and what you need—whether it's new talent, new processes, or investments in new hardware and software. You should also take a look at the current work culture. It's often difficult for legacy companies to change because of the size of the initiative, which can hamper adoption at a later stage.

Start with an end goal in mind

Think of what the priorities of your digital transformation program are and who you are looking to empower

Do you want to:

- Find better ways to support business leaders and empower them?
- Speed up the development of new applications to respond faster to customers?
- Reduce IT costs and empower your operational teams?

The right priorities will allow you to set up a list of use cases for which to build applications.

Define personnel requirements

Identify what you need your new digital team to look like, in terms of technical skills, functional roles, and operating styles. With digital transformation, you'll be creating a new digital team that may be used to working in traditional ways, so you may need to upgrade their skills or recruit new talent.

Influence internal stakeholders

As a CIO, you'll be working very closely with business units to deliver technology that makes their lives easier. You need to build trust with all business stakeholders, as well as senior executives, for two reasons:

- Requirements coming in from business users may be unclear, and will need to be refined through a feedback loop where business stakeholders are not merely sitting in for reviews, but are collaborating throughout the application development process.
- You'll have to both justify the ROI on the new applications you build to senior executives, and also have them act as advocates for the new digital-driven culture you'll eventually set in place to transform the mind-set of staff.

Build your digital team



2

Objectives for this stage:

- Attract and manage talent
- Set clear roles, responsibilities and ownership

“

The top three scarcest skills today are in big data/analytics, cybersecurity, and AI.

”



People build technology, and technology enables people. So having the right talent on your team will be crucial to the successful execution of your digital transformation program. But skill shortages are also at an all-time high. In fact, 67% of businesses are struggling to find the right talent. When building your digital team, consider filling the following roles:

Program owner

The program owner leads the overall initiative. They should have a sound understanding of the value of user stories and make sure that the requirements supplied by business users are being met.

Architects

They help establish a target architecture, infrastructure, and governance for the new set of applications you develop.

Product owners

They come with in-depth knowledge of the business, the product, and its users, and will have immense insights to share on the impact the applications can have for end users.

Application development manager

They spearhead the initiative, and drive the program and cross-functional teams who work on the digital transformation project.

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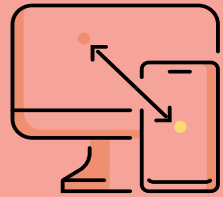
Your digital team will be at the core for creating and delivering applications, which is why they must come together as a strong team.

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Keep in mind these four points when setting up your team:

- Every person on the team should be passionate about solving business problems. Technical proficiency will only bring them to their desks, but unless they have a sound understanding of your business challenges, they won't be able to supply innovative solutions.
- Agile methodologies are effective for successful collaboration. Since digital transformation demands a close working relationship between IT and business, it's advisable to train your team on this.
- Move beyond the traditional assignment of responsibilities centered around technical requirements, and instead let people own user stories. This will help them think deeply about the problem from every angle and work towards a business-enabling solution.
- Digital transformation goes way beyond just delivering amazing technology. It's about a cultural shift, where people can experiment and explore to build solutions that can be scaled easily. Let your team breathe freely.

Deliver applications



3

Objectives for this stage:

- Identify the first applications to develop
- Make data and systems accessible via the cloud
- Realize value with rapid application development
- Mine insights and evaluate feedback on applications
- Involve business stakeholders

“

You'll first need to test out your team and prove the value of the new applications before you embark on a full-fledged digital transformation program.

”



Follow these seven steps to start developing applications that will help you realize value quickly:

1. Identify a mix of high-value initiatives (strategically relevant) and quick wins (immediately deliver a wow factor) as the first few applications to develop.
2. Choose from use cases that center around innovation, customer engagement, and operational efficiency.

Note: The top three operational priorities of CIOs are - i) delivering consistent and stable IT performance, ii) improving business processes, iii) increasing operational efficiencies.

3. Opt to build using rapid application development, a methodology that allows you to deliver value quickly. It also allows you to pivot quickly and address changes in the market in a matter of weeks.
4. Make data and systems accessible via the cloud, as getting the necessary hardware may take months, and at this stage, you want to eliminate the wait time to show value to senior management quickly.

5. Involve the business stakeholder and work on frequent iterations based on user feedback.
6. Gather feedback from all those involved in the project, especially the business stakeholders. Rapid application development platforms like Zoho Creator allow you to get feedback from everyone in real time, and mine insights for rapid, iterative development.
7. At this stage, you'll be testing out your new digital team and building continuity into the team's process.

Measure the success of your digital transformation



4

Objectives for this stage:

- Build digital use cases
- Convince business stakeholders of the value of your new applications

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With quick measurable wins, you'll be able to prove to other stakeholders in the organization that your new approach works, and gain their support for scaling.

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To measure the success of your project, follow these steps:

1. Capture the details of the use case.

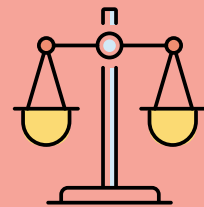
- What was the existing situation—the challenges, gaps, competitive vulnerabilities?
- What was your vision of the solution?
- What is the ideal solution supposed to look like?
- What value is it expected to create: what positive impact and benefits will it have for the intended users of the applications?
- Which KPIs to track: set out the important KPIs which will determine the success of the application. Group these based on impact on revenue, cost, user satisfaction, and/or regulatory requirement.

2. Demonstrate to business stakeholders and senior executives your application in action. Go beyond the application's features and show how the application solves business problems.

Note: The top 5 business priorities are customers (57%), growth (49%), performance (48%), cost (40%), and innovation (35%)

3. For the demonstration, use data that's representative of real-world scenarios, so that business users get a genuine idea of how the application will make a huge difference.
4. The idea is to get all stakeholders excited about the impact of the new solution, so that they want to know more, ask for quick delivery of other new solutions, and adopt them wholeheartedly without you having to force the new applications on them.

Scale by fostering a culture of digital



5

Objectives for this stage:

- Put a governance structure in place
- Communicate value delivered across the organization
- Create a culture of collaboration
- Build fast, learn fast, fail fast, and succeed

“

By now, you'll have won over any skeptics and enlisted the support of the important stakeholders. It's now time to grow from the first set of applications you developed into multiple use cases, and scale your efforts towards a full-fledged digital transformation.

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Put a governance structure in place

Begin by formalizing your rapid application development process. Create a central hub or repository that list the best practices on how to build new applications that can be easily accessed by anyone working on the program.

Create a culture of collaboration

Whether your company follows innovative processes or legacy ones, with the digital transformation program, you'll have to establish a collaborative way of working where technical teams, like developers, business users, and operations, come together. By integrating previously disparate units into a full-stack team, you'll be able to deliver value across a larger portion of the value chain.

Note: Almost two-thirds of organizations allow business-managed IT spend.

Change the way things work

From technical requirements, your team will now move on to satisfying business needs. This calls for establishing a common language, across all stakeholders, that is user-centric. You'll also need to reduce the bureaucratic process and lend more autonomy to your team to work rapidly, thus empowering your workforce. In the end, you'll have created an ecosystem of IT talent that understands market dynamics.

Build fast, learn fast, fail fast, and succeed

Leverage rapid application development platforms to build and deploy applications in a matter of days. Such platforms let you collaborate and make iterations much faster, allowing you to build fast, learn fast, and succeed.

**You're now ready
to kick off your
program!**

The role of the CIO in this day and age is loud and clear—you either have to reimagine what technology can do for your organization, reinvent the manner in which technology is developed, or make your systems future-proof to survive any catastrophes.

You cannot be content with delivering just for today's business needs. Everything you do now has business implications for the future, which looks more uncertain every passing day.

This is why digital transformation has moved beyond delivering automation or efficiency, to delivering technology that can be used to make solutions that can pivot quickly with changing business needs.

Methodologies like rapid and low-code application development make this possible. However, before adopting such platforms, you must understand your current situation, build a new kind of digital team, and change from a traditional role-based working style to one of collaboration, based on user stories. With the aid of the right tools, you should begin by developing the first set of applications that can quickly demonstrate business impact to stakeholders across the organization, and win their approval. Then you can go ahead and scale your efforts to deliver for business needs on an enterprise-level and create a digital culture that thrives on collaboration.

About us

Running a business is no mean feat, and we believe we can help. At Zoho Creator, we've always worked towards a key purpose - enabling the citizen developer to build functional apps without having to learn to code. Rapidly build custom applications that are a perfect fit for your business, or choose from our extensive range of pre-built apps and modify them. Just sign up, pick a plan, and start building!



www.zoho.com/creator/

We'd love to talk! Reach out to us:

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