Why Your Culture Is Connected to Digital Success

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Many companies today undervalue or don't fully understand the meaning of culture. Sure, it lives in the social aspect of an organization, the collective attitudes and the "vibe" — but that's only half the story. Culture also exists in business operations. The culture *in* the work is why people love their actual job. On the outside, a company can seem like a great place to work while the job is filled with friction and angst, and that's where we have to get precise.

When businesses grow organically, that growth tends to be accompanied by a whole suite of technologies designed to empower employees to make better decisions, faster. On paper, this is a recipe for success for both the business and its culture: a company that empowers its people to make better data-driven decisions creates a more collaborative and impactful workplace.

Except in the real world, it doesn't really work like this.

The majority of organic growth is unpredictable and unplanned. The Covid-19 pandemic tested businesses' ability to take on rapid technological development and we saw the gaps created because of it. With the accelerated shift to digital-first, enterprises of all sizes were forced to develop remote, digital cultures overnight, integrating new tools, new API ecosystems, new data analytics platforms and so on to survive.

Now employees are more empowered than ever to make data-driven decisions. This, however, has created an unexpected paradox. With numerous sources of data available, no one ends up using the *same* data, causing teams to draw very different conclusions to the same problem. Cross-company data sharing is being increasingly impeded as individual or group-wide data silos take shape and companies struggle to find common ground.

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Speed up or slow down?

By and large, being forced to make the leap to digital was good for businesses. The more companies embrace technology, the faster they can move, and that's ideal. In a 2014 book entitled *How Google Works* former Google CEO Eric Schmidt shared that the tech giant's success largely rests on its ability to move faster than competitors, an advantage it achieves in-part by sharing data across the organization to empower more real-time decision making.

But what should the data and decisions be connected around? What can serve as an effective nexus or central hub? Conveniently, Schmidt left that out of the book. Jeff Bezos and Amazon, however, pick up where Schmidt left off, claiming that the goal should always be to "start with the customer and work backward."

Ostensibly, these two points are the secret to unlocking the tremendous digital success tech behemoths like Google and Amazon have had. They've shared data about customer behavior across the company, in real-time.

When every employee can access the same data, businesses can reinvent their culture around one common view. This opens the organization to greater innovation and risk-taking, but in a controlled, iterative fashion. It is the central, cultural

component of acting at speed, allowing teams to act with agility and alignment and respond to customer needs as they arise.

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Taking a customer-centric continuous approach

Business and IT teams often clash or are misaligned because they've created tremendous complexity and data silos. What's needed is a way to reconnect the data and decision-making, because when everyone wins by themselves, no one wins together.

Incorporating methodologies such as continuous product design (CPD), companies can address these cultural barriers of informational complexity and the silos that slow them down. CPD brings customer signals into every step of the digital lifecycle and brings business and IT teams together so they can agree on a single version of truth. Empowered with a true understanding of customer drivers, behaviors and expectations, digital cultures become fast, aligned, customer-centric and even more entrepreneurial.

The pandemic forced us to reexamine how we work, how we connect with our customers and how we build a culture on both remote and in-person interactions. The situation demands that a business create its culture from the way it works. To give it meaning, that culture must be part of the business cause — giving customers the best possible experience and the best possible products.

It's important that big enterprises act deliberately to balance a culture of discipline with a culture of creativity so they don't crush the entrepreneurial spirit that fuels

digital innovation. The companies that can manage all the above will find themselves poised to lead their industries into a new era, where great digital products are created at speed, perfectly aligned with customers’ needs.

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