

The data transformation game plan

In this new digital era, rapid and disruptive change is the norm, and we must evolve our data strategy to ensure future success.

Data is the oxygen that fuels all data transformations to derive business value. Organizations aim to accelerate business value through the responsible democratization of data. Data democratization empowers employees at all levels with the necessary insights to expedite decision-making, allowing organizations to gain competitive advantage. Expanding data access, though, creates heightened risk for data security, privacy, and integrity. Data governance can address these risks while advancing your data transformation.

Successful transformation involves interdisciplinary roles working in concert, connected through strong leadership, unified through a willingness to change, and set in motion behind a well-formulated strategy.

There are short-term and long-term goals in the board room or on the playing field. Position yourself for success through these different stages with a game plan and separate yourself from the competition.



Now is the time to establish your own data transformation game plan.

Team sport

A team can be defined as a number of people associated in work or an activity; a group coming together to achieve a common goal.

Data transformation is a team sport in which multiple business areas must come together and play their roles to succeed.

Digital transformation requires that executives, managers, and frontline employees work together to rethink how every aspect of the business should operate. Organizations embarking on their data transformation must invest in responsible data democratization to ensure that data-driven insights strongly influence key decisions.



Despite significant investment in data transformations, organizations struggle to realize the full benefits and ROI of their investment. A recent survey conducted by Accenture indicated that some of the biggest impediments include cultural challenges and a lack of enterprise data strategy. "Many firms still struggle to harness the power of data, and their challenges extend beyond just technology."¹ Often, this disconnect to realizing ROI can be attributed to the assumption that technology alone is the key to success for digital transformations.

A major reason for the lack of productivity gains from new technologies, including AI, is a failure to invest in processes and skills, especially reskilling and upskilling the existing workforce.

Team sport

Data transformations are regularly associated with change management challenges, requiring investments in technology-enabled people and processes.

How do you overcome these change management hurdles? First, you must recognize the interdisciplinary roles that make up your data transformation team. You can leverage a team sport structure, from players to coaches, to build a data transformation team.



Leadership = head coach

Strong executive leadership is the backbone of any organization or team. The head coach must create clarity, establish a vision, and generate enthusiasm. This vision aligns all teams across the organization towards the same goal.



Strategy = coaching staff

It's said that if you fail to plan, then you plan to fail. The coaching staff has a significant role in taking direction from their leadership and crafting a strategy to execute against the leadership vision.



Execution = team players

From data scientists to business users, data stewards to security analysts, every player on the team has a need and the desire to explore and utilize data to empower their daily activities.



Team structure

Embracing a data-driven culture requires an emphasis on learning and a leader-as-coach mentality to unlock the team's true potential. You need to help formulate the bonds, learning opportunities, and connectivity within your team to maximize individual performance. By doing so, you can unleash innovation, energy, and commitment to pursue the next big win with collective buy-in.

As you embark on your data transformation, evaluate how to leverage the existing leadership structure to accelerate momentum. Using the structure of team sports for comparison, coaches are integral in the alignment within the broader business team structure. In our case, we need coaches to lead successful data transformations.

According to Doug Laney, innovation fellow at West Monroe, "Effective data-to-value strategies address issues such as what new data sources to pursue, emerging opportunities to deploy data and insight, details for digitizing aspects of internal and customer-facing solutions, new roles necessary to drive a focus on data and insight, methods for measuring data's economical cost and benefits, and how to balance data governance and risk with data availability and innovation."²

81%

of leaders report their organizations to have enterprise strategies for creating a data-driven culture.⁴

Embracing data-driven culture requires an emphasis on learning and a leader-as-coach mentality to unlock the team's true potential.

>70%

of leaders are developing and maintaining applications that are responsive, interactive, and globally accessible, along with automating data-derived insights into business processes.⁴

Effective strategies must be inclusive of more than just technical solutions. They must incorporate the evolution of the team culture and how your plans are executed.

Team structure



Demonstrate Leadership

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Head Coach

The CEO has the primary role in your data transformation to ensure data drives innovation and transforms the organization to accelerate growth. Their eye is on the bottom line and achieving success through strong ROI. Throughout a game or a season, the head coach relies heavily on their coaching staff to strategize, prepare, and implement an approach to set the team up for success.



Develop Strategy

Executive Body

Coaching Staff

A successful data strategy should demonstrate how data will transform the business, develop new innovative solutions, adapt to the industry, and meet customer demands. This plan should incorporate the current climate and predict future needs.

Chief Data Officer (CDO)

Offensive Coordinator

The CDO views data as a transformational asset and recognizes the need to democratize data responsibly. Their primary focus is realizing the value of applied data to accelerate business growth. When on the field, preparation and the plays are designed to set the team up to score or realize incremental organizational advances, which correlates to successful ROI in our world of data transformation.

The state of data strategy

Leaders' organizations are more likely to have data-related enterprise strategies. Does your organization have a clear enterprise strategy for ...

● Leaders ● All others



Managing and extracting value from its data



Creating a data-driven culture



Developing and maintaining applications that are responsive, interactive, and globally accessible



Automating data-derived insights into business processes



Leveraging open-source analytics tools, databases, and application programming interfaces



Collecting and incorporating external sources of data



Using AI to augment decision making

Team structure

Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) or Chief Compliance Officer (CCO)

Defensive Coordinator

The CISO and CCO need to ensure that data is secure and compliant. They must protect sensitive data across clouds, apps, and devices. A strong defense is as crucial as scoring. It can prevent issues and enable the offensive approach to work at the pace and structure that fits the team dynamic. Defense coaches identify data risks and manage regulatory compliance requirements. The defense must be proactive in anticipating breaches and swiftly reactive when exposure does occur.

Chief Information Officer (CIO) or Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

Strength and Performance Coordinator

The CIO or CTO is vested in the technology that will enable your data transformation. Whether on the field or within your organizational structure, these roles ensure that teams have the necessary equipment and training to succeed during the game. In the business context, the CIO or CTO needs to empower the leaders and employees with appropriate technology to accelerate the transformation.



Seamless Execution

Employees

Players

When it comes to execution of the strategy, we must recognize the importance of the players—the individuals' skillsets, their roles or positions, and their fit within the cultural construct of the organization. Ensuring the employees have the right skills is the role of leadership, or coaching staff. Each player must be accountable for continuously learning and growing in their role.



"Business leaders must think ahead to make sure employees are prepared to navigate, and even embrace, change," states Mike DePrisco.³ "By making training, upskilling and reskilling a priority, you ensure that your organization will remain competitive and continue to deliver on outcomes; and just as importantly, you assure your employees that you are invested in their professional development."

As a coach, do you have the right players? Have you defined the roles and skills necessary for success?

Once these crucial leaders are identified within the organization, you must establish the strategy, or game plan. A clear, realistic, and visionary approach will inspire the team and provide direction to win.

Playing the game

Embarking on data transformation as part of your broader digital transformation is a long and sometimes arduous process. Because the industry and business targets are constantly evolving, data transformation initiatives require flexibility to adapt. How to traverse this evolution, though, can be unclear.

Data transformation is an iterative process and requires incremental navigation of data. How do you get started? Where to begin? These are common questions. When broken down into essential stages, you formulate your strategy and visualize incremental progress.

From competition in sports to the rhythm of business, there are stages, both short-term and throughout the season-long journey.

If we look at the data transformation in the short term, taking a one-game approach, let's break down some of the possibilities that might occur as a team navigates its data transformation.

There are moments when the team is focused on the defined offensive strategy, ensuring trusted data is widely accessible across the team to derive insights. In these stages of driving toward offensive success, data is at the core of accelerating growth and transforming the business. This is where the value is truly realized.

As we know, in both sports and the evolving business threat landscape, there are instances where the opposing team threatens our team and game plan, or organizationally data is either breached or exploited. In these moments, the defense must respond swiftly to mitigate the breach and reduce risk. The strategies defined and prepared by the coaching staff should enable the team to anticipate threats to minimize exposure.

As we look at your data transformation journey, consider this approach.



Pre-game warmup

Discover data



First half of the game

Describe data



Second half of the game

Manage data



Prepare for the next game

Democratize data



Pre-game warmup

Discover data

Can you answer the question: where is my data? To answer, you must inventory data and understand how it's connected throughout the entire data estate. First, you must create a modern data foundation by aggregating and connecting data cataloged in a common location so any team can discover and create insights and intelligent experiences.

Beena Ammanath, Global Deloitte AI Institute shares that "Most business leaders understand the business impact and value that come from more sophisticated data and analytics capabilities. The challenge comes in building a strong data foundation that can be leveraged across the organization to extract insights and enhance decision-making. Unfortunately, many companies—particularly traditional or non-digital-native companies—continue to grapple with challenges around data quality and centralization, including understanding where data resides, setting up a data architecture, cleansing the data, and providing the ability to extract insights out of it."⁴



First half of the game

Describe data

To democratize your data, you must find ways to scale data throughout your organization. You can scale through business teams by shifting ownership away from a centralized IT department to the business. As data is exploited in all corners of the organization, individuals must be able to contextualize the data within their business domains. Data owners and consumers must take responsibility to ensure proper use of the data.



Playing the game



Second half of the game

Manage data

Once you've established ownership and applied the appropriate business context, how do you ensure it can be trusted? Maintaining authoritative connected data throughout the data estate requires ongoing monitoring of data.

An Accenture study finds that "Executives listed inaccurate management of data in their top five obstacles to realizing value from data. Furthermore, 83 percent of companies don't have enterprise-wide multi-domain Master Data Management (MDM), while half of the respondents don't regularly reassess and update data-governance process definitions. The majority of businesses we surveyed don't even get involved in the company's various data processes."¹



Prepare for the next game

Democratize data

Data democratization is truly the democratization of insights. This is when the value realization genuinely starts to occur. "Our data's value is directly proportional to the number of people within our organization who can find it, understand it, know they can trust it, and then connect it in new and meaningful ways for deepest insights," in the view of Satya Nadella, chairman and CEO, Microsoft.⁴

"It's what you do with the data and learn from it through your AI and machine learning models that produces business value," according to Beena Ammanath. Companies that turn data into a valuable asset continuously use it as a source of insights about where the business is, where it's going, and what they should do next."²

Each game, or phase of a data transformation, will present different challenges.

Understanding where you are during the game and recognizing the iterative process is crucial to the success of a season.



Winning the season

Navigating a data transformation is a lengthy and iterative process—the true value is realized over time. There will be moments of success and disappointing moments. Winning is never about reaching just one championship, or one business goal, but making continual improvements throughout your organization.

There are disruptions, or penalties, along the way—not adhering to regulations properly or opposing threats may breach your data and cause a turnover. It's essential to have the executive body, or coaching staff, leverage these opportunities to evaluate and evolve where necessary. Pausing with timeouts to regroup and re-strategize throughout the game is recommended.

Each season is an opportunity to evaluate, reset, and evolve the game plan.

Some key success factors to consider:

Executive data transformation team

Without a clear vision, there isn't a North Star to reach for. Leadership must understand the vision to create the strategy for execution. Is there alignment on the strategy and how the organization will leverage data to truly transform the business? Navigating these interdisciplinary roles is crucial to success. Is your leadership team aligned?

Connectivity from the coaching staff to players

The players count on the coaches to create clarity, generate enthusiasm, and establish processes to pave the way for innovation. If there are fractures within the leadership, this erodes the foundation and affects your players' success. Coaches must be able to translate the vision into tactical goals on which the players can execute. Your coaches have a crucial role in ensuring data is truly transformative.

Building out the team

Do your employees have the right skillsets to be successful? Were they given opportunities to learn and grow to fulfill what is expected of them? There may be opportunities to trade for other players who are better suited for the role or train existing employees to achieve their full potential. Consider the position each player is assigned and whether or not there are positions to which they are better suited to be successful. The dynamics of the team's players, or employees, are fundamental and must not be discounted.

Conclusion

As organizations embark on data transformations, they strive to harness data's power to transform their business. When data value is unleashed, it can activate insights that improve operational efficiencies and create innovative solutions to optimize customer experiences.

Many organizations fail to attain these goals, and much of their shortcoming is in how they view and leverage data.

When data is viewed as a strategic asset and organizations establish a sound data strategy, the return on investment will explode. The interdisciplinary and cultural dynamics must be recognized as part of this strategy.

Embracing the data transformation as a team sport and acknowledging all the parts involved will ensure you are on track to succeed.

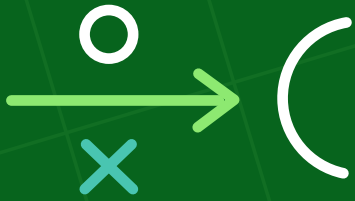
Everyone is empowered and can work together to win when each role—CEO as the leader, executives driving the strategy, and individual team members—execute the established plan across the organization.

Breaking down this process into iterative stages allows for easy adaptability in an ever-changing climate and helps make it digestible for the broader organization.



References

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2. [Harvard Business Review, Transforming Data into Business Value through Analytics and AI, November 2022.](#)
3. [Forbes, In training we trust: Reskilling and digital transformation, March 2022.](#)
4. [Harvard Business Review, Democratizing Transformation, May-June 2022.](#)



Every data transformation needs a game plan.

Is your team ready?

