



Platform Economy for Enterprise Services

WHITE PAPER II

A TESSER INSIGHTS DOCUMENT

About Tesser Insights

Tesser Insights™ delivers analytical business insights to operational systems, at speed, for small and medium businesses while keeping the complexity out. Our standout offering is a state-of-the-art modern analytics platform that can deliver analytical business insights, without the technical hassle. Our illustrious team develops and integrates business analytics, the key ingredient in any digital transformation, on a ready-to-use data lake platform supported by a range of managed and concierge services.

Author

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Content

1 Context	Page 1
2 Product and Platform	Page 2
• Big Tech, Product and Platforms	Page 2
• Platform Strategy and Global Tech	Page 2
• What is a Platform?	Page 3
3 Platform: Benefits	Page 3
4 Platform for Enterprise IT possible?	Page 5
• Enterprises: we feel the pain!	Page 5
• Value of a Platform for delivery	Page 6
• Platform benefits for stakeholders	Page 6
• Platform for enterprise	Page 7
• Agility on back of abstraction	Page 8
5 Proof Point – Data as a Service (DaaS) example for a leading bank	Page 9
• Client Background: Leading Bank	Page 9
• Platform-based Data as a Service	Page 9
• Impact: Significant Benefits	Page 10
• Change and Enablement: Mindset	Page 10
6 Interested in Learning More?	Page 11

Context

Duality: We are in a very dynamic business situation in the backdrop of pandemic. It is well acknowledged that this recession is different. This is very evident from looking at few patterns like IT Spend – where traditionally we would see a dip (as on way direction), there is divergence. While cost management is top of the agenda, we do see that pandemic has accelerated certain business initiatives. For example, we see that spend in areas – like Digital transformation. Automation, Cloud – has risen to double digits. This duality will persist where businesses continue to tackle the resilience need, but also actively transform to lead in the 'next normal'.

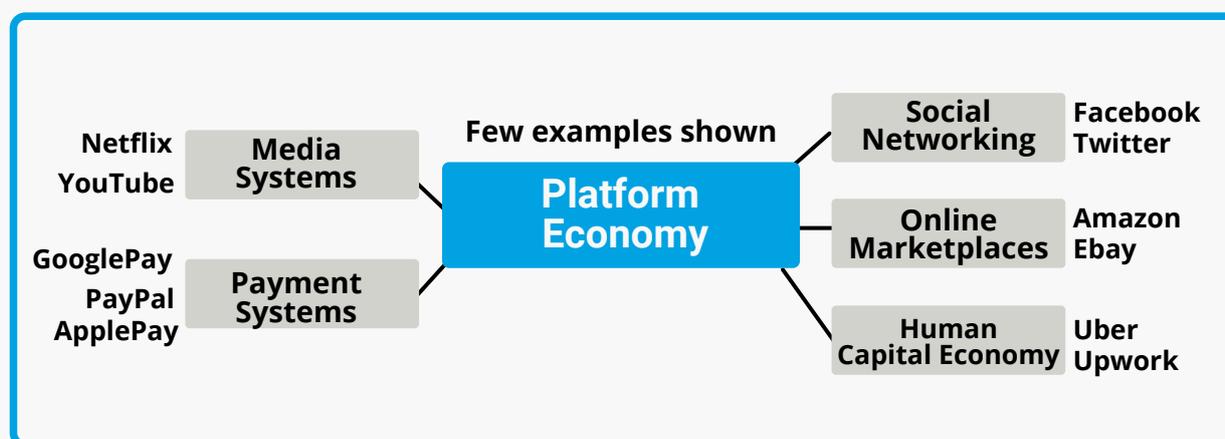
Technology no doubt has been a key enabler of this duality – which we see evidence of in public domains across industries (be it healthcare, banking, insurance or others). More importantly, the transformations are not one off initiatives – they are impacting core strategy and there is a need to scale. For instance, in a sector like insurance, digital initiatives and post pandemic ecosystem changes have impacted the core areas of products, claims, customer and risk management.

Agility (to tackle uncertain) and **Rapid Scaling** (from perspective of responsiveness) is need of the hour. Digital platforms have been key enablers of agility and scale for several decades in leading enterprises. But what are the 'digital platforms' and 'platform thinking' being referred to here? In this white paper, which is a multiple part series, we will deep-dive into platform thinking and enablement for regular enterprises.

Product and Platform

Big Tech, Product and Platforms

In the past several years, Global Technology firms of varying sizes have rapidly transformed to be “Platform” providers.



Following are few examples of this ongoing trend (depicted in the visual):

- **Social Networking:** Facebook became a platform opening up to ecosystem (e.g. developers, for marketing). Similarly, we see Twitter, LinkedIn
- **eCommerce firms:** Amazon, eBay are well known examples where many users (manufacturers, resellers, supply chain providers etc.) are benefiting.
- **Human Capital firms,** like Workday, Freelancer, scaling on back of a platform approach.

Is Platform a strategic technology limited only to Global Tech?

From a services perspective as well, there are many examples. Take the case of Financial Services leader American Express. American Express offers platform for developers enabling host of product capabilities for like Fraud, Open Banking, Payment Services to name a few.

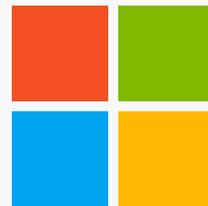
What is a Platform?

In simple terms, a technology platform makes available infrastructure (hardware and/or software) or foundational capabilities (like software) upon which other technology products and/or applications can be built. In the current scenario, a visible example is what is offered by the Cloud Services providers – providers, such as Azure, offer tiers of foundational capabilities as services, be it PaaS, SaaS, or DBaaS.

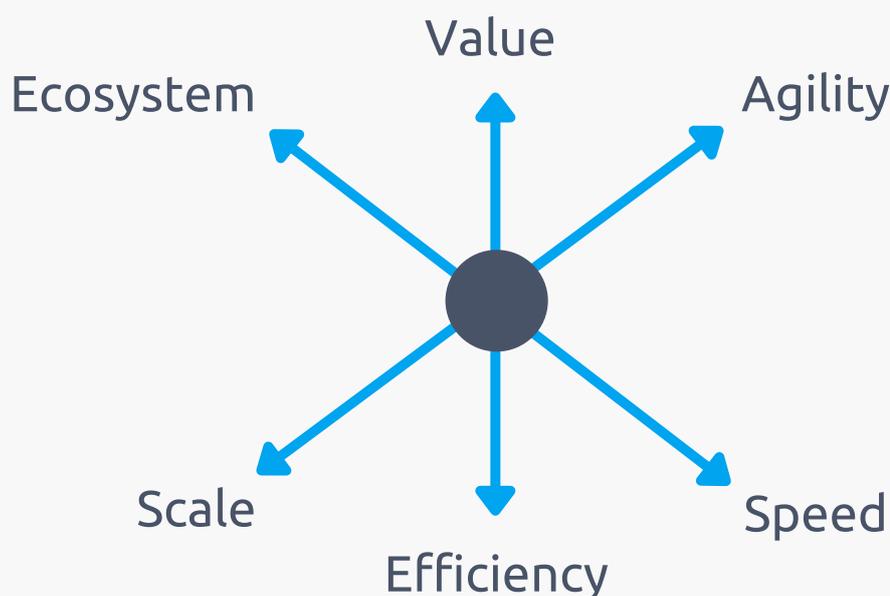
From a strategic perspective, Platform can be a “Business Model”- a business model that is underpinned by improved facilitation of transactions between groups or ecosystems. For example platform connecting book readers with book suppliers as a web based service.

Platform: Benefits

These technology powered platforms have helped with significant growth. This is very much evident from the market performance and shift in top companies by valuations. For example, in 2006 the top 5 brands included firms like Coca-Cola, GE. In 2020s, the top places/brands are that of Global Technology majors – these go by the acronym of GAFAM or FAAMG (Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, Google).



- **Ecosystem:** Platforms facilitate groups to come together for mutual benefit. For example, Uber brings drivers and customers.
- **Value:** Platforms allow application developers to build other applications leveraging core capability.
- **Agility, Abstraction:** I believe these are key and will elaborate in detail later but the ability to change, react and respond is core to power of platforms.
- **Scale:** Platform-centric businesses are able to rapidly scale (transitions in millions/billions) -riding on the back of network-effect.
- **Efficiency:** Cost/efficiency is strategic to some of the platform powered business models like Airbnb or Apple (e.g. music).
- **Speed:** Responsiveness was very much tested by the recent pandemic. Firms with a good Digital foundation were able to respond and even grow faster despite recession. Evident from the earnings of many of these firms.



Many firms are seeing benefits on back of platform approach. There are many more data points in public domain. This opportunity is well available to Enterprise IT as well. In this white paper, I talk about my experience in helping enterprises with scaling and growth on the back of such a “Platform Centric” approach. Major companies are also seeking to leverage the “Platform” approach. As a Data and Insights practitioner, I will draw from experience in the context of “Data, Intelligence and Insights”.

Platform for Enterprise IT possible?

Enterprises: we feel the pain!

There have been many surveys/reports on why “Data and Insight” engagements fail – whether traditional datawarehousing programs or Bigdata or the new age AI Machine Learning based transformations. From over two decades of experience, I see that the top impediments revolve around “Lack of Alignment” – specifically related to “Business” and “IT” teams not joining hands well enough for the greater good of the company. Lack of a shared understanding is a key issue.

Business



I.T

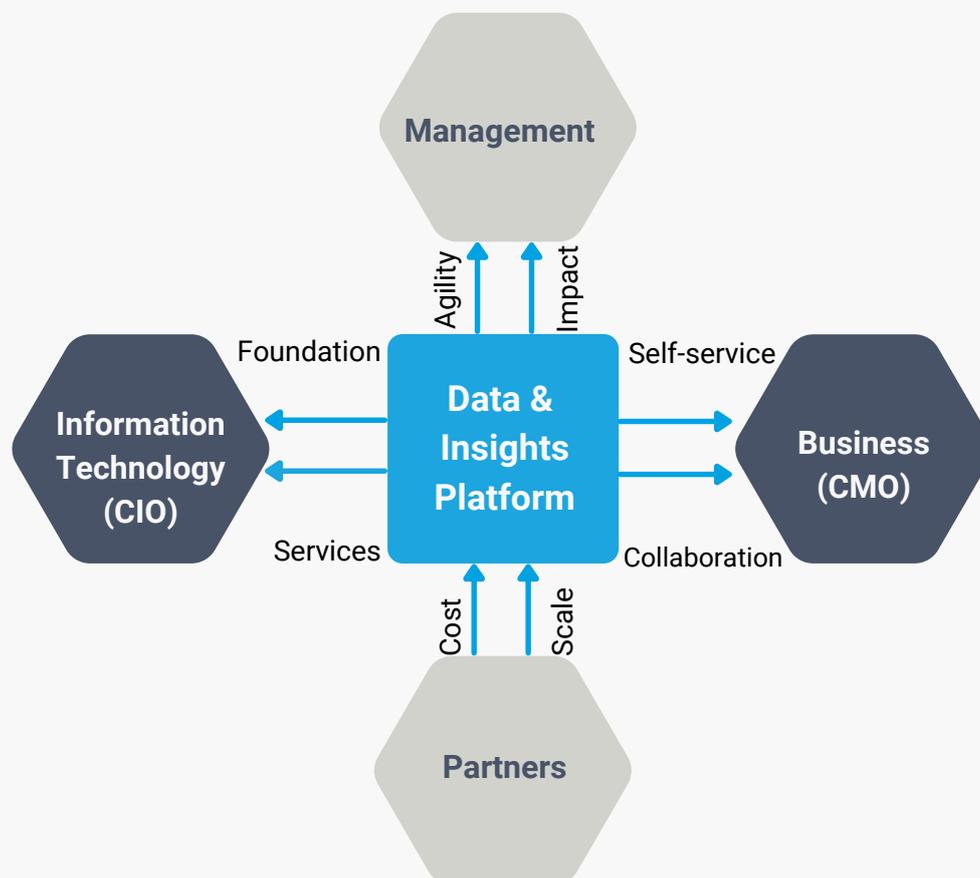
In many of these failed projects, we see that projects are lead by data experts (broadly speaking) who place less emphasis on full understanding of the bigger business goals and/or capabilities that the data project serves. They start building an “All Purpose” data lake. On the other hand, Business finds it extremely difficult to use and navigate such “data lakes”; they get minimal support when looking for answers to business questions. Over a period of time, there is a lack of trust, leading to another shelved (or inactive) data project.

Having turned around 8+ complex data transformation projects and having delivered successful value services to business, I do believe that learnings from “Platform” based approaches can help very well – on which I will elaborate in this white paper.

What is the value of a Platform for delivery of Business Insights?

Unlike ERP or CRM which are driven by business processes and that are static over a reasonable period of time, analytics questions change every single day. These questions can and will require multiple capabilities and therefore need an analytics ecosystem that is loosely coupled in a platform and that can be quickly integrated to deliver a particular analytics use case. While ERP and CRM serve a fixed meal, analytics ecosystem is a kitchen with all the ingredients that can be put together quickly to serve a fresh dish. Without this ability, organizations will not be able to respond quickly to market needs – either in understanding their customers better or serving them faster.

Platform benefits for different stakeholders



What should a platform for enterprise look like?

From services for “Data and Insights”, I refer to Platform as a set of foundational technology capability that enables :

- **Productivity by Collaboration:** Business and IT are able to collaborate easily.
- **Shared Perspectives:** It allows for the sharing of data, information and insights.
- **Agility from Abstraction of Technical details to speak the “Business Capability” language.** This is a key enabler of scale.
- **Manage lifecycle of Common Services easily:** There is a speed aspect but also shared usage (reuse and repeatability) factor.
- **Powered by Foundational Capabilities:** Similar to highly reliable Data Environment, High performing Application environment is also present.
- **Organization and Ecosystem:** At a minimum, a Platform should serve both Business and Technology. But taking a broader ecosystem perspective helps in deriving greater value from a platform.

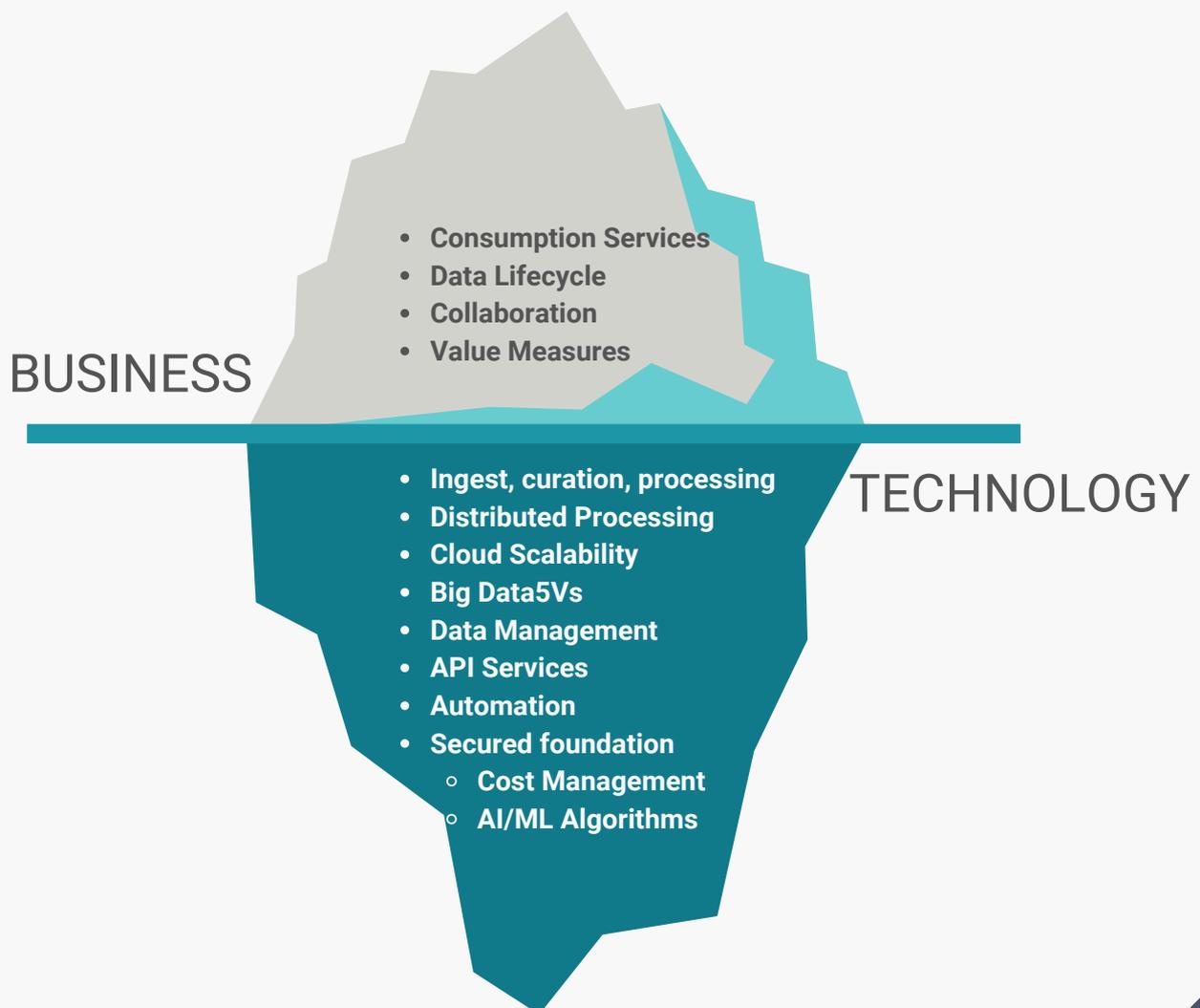
The example I have delivered is “Data as a Service” for a leading banking. There are many groups key to enabling DaaS – example legal, source system business owners, vendors etc. So consider the broader ecosystem – which is also the key to success for Global Tech platform firms.



A platform is a catalyst enabling higher degree of value creation for both IT and Business. The value is derived from business creating interactions and enabling networking to achieve a multiplier effect.

Agility on back of Abstraction

Abstraction: I would like to emphasize that the key is in “abstraction” – it is like an iceberg. From a Business perspective, the Platform provides purpose-built services. As in the case of Data as a Service, the key services could be around being able to look for data, ingest new data, preview/analyzing data, cleansing, processing/transforming, and making it available for discovery-driven consumption. That said, a host of capabilities (technology, process, people) is integrated to enable services – creating the much needed Trust and Robust Foundation.



Data and Insights Platform

Proof Point – Data as a Service (DaaS) example for a leading bank

Enterprise IT can very well leverage the concept of “Platform” for benefits being realized by Global Tech and others. Here, I elaborate with an example from my own work with a banking client.

Client Background: Leading Bank

A leading Europe-based global bank needed to enable data from ~600 sources to business for various banking needs (payments, retail, compliance etc.) With a traditional “project” services approach, each source would take upwards of 10 weeks to deliver to business in a data lake. To highlight a few other challenges, this was further complicated by lack of agility and lack of visibility to what was in the data lake.

Transformation: Platform-based Data as a Service

Incremental changes had failed to make a dent, and so we knew a fundamental Dimensional Change was needed. We borrowed from the “Platform” centric services delivered, brought in lot of learnings and the transformation was enabled. Post this, business users were able to achieve:

- **Speed:** Data lifecycle and Consumption in hours as opposed to weeks.
- **Process Change** to allow various stakeholders (like IT, Business, Legal) to get value in a simplified services approach with key concerns addressed in the “foundational” pillars of the platform.

- **Self-Service:** Business would be able to meet over 80% of their needs in a “Self-Service” model – with zero help from IT. Data Services included data sourcing, ingestion, curation, consumption, and propagation powered by robust data management underpinnings.
- **Collaboration Catalyst:** DaaS allowed for business teams to not only easily work-through data lifecycle, but also acted as a key enabler of information and insights sharing – with other teams (internal ecosystem/global stakeholders).
- **Architecture:** Platform Architecture is a key enabler of the other benefits we refer to – new age matured concepts of automation, services approach, low-code/no-code approach, data management, ease of consumption to name a few. Cloud Based Services is a key part of the architecture in current scenario.

Impact: Significant Benefits

At a fundamental capability level, business could get their data for their needs in less than 24 hours as opposed to 10+ weeks. This in itself is a huge productivity booster in an environment such as a bank – where data is the lifeblood. The business value from applying data and insight for business actions was not measured but can be extrapolated based on other similar data-driven business actions.

Change and Enablement: Mindset

The change involved multiple tracks of capability enablement – no doubt. But the key was in a “mindset” change – change focused on business self-service underpinned by collaboration, trust and robust foundational technology capabilities - abstracted from business.

- Enabling collaboration allowed business to share, reuse and deliver greater value themselves.
- Trust (enabled by Data management and governance) allowed for more usage and adoption – even for critical needs like compliance.
- Process change allowed high degree of automation and for removing blockers.
- Services allowed for abstraction and focus.
- Foundational capability allowed for Agility and responsiveness.

Platform was “The Catalyst” enabling rapid delivery and scaling of “Data as a Service”.

Interested in learning more?

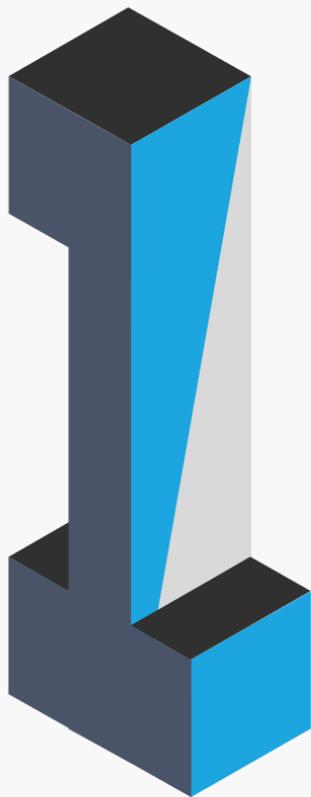
Delivering Data, Intelligence and Insight Services involves bringing together a host of capabilities to produce rapid value. From our experience, “Platform-Centric” approach is one potential viable option to consider – it is proven and can deliver significant benefits.

We do the heavy lifting of providing a robust foundational platform tailored to your needs so that you can plan for the flywheel effect and focus on harnessing the same! At **Tesser Insights**, we are happy to provide a two-week assessment to determine the readiness of your business for a platform-centric approach. Do write to us at ronak@tesserinsights.com.

References

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- [Platforms are Powerful Business Models – but Pitfalls Await the Unwary](#)
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