

How digital transformation made way for digital evolution

Digital Transformation
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Digital transformation. The goal of the 21st-century enterprise.

Hyland and the larger technology world has been using the term "digital transformation" for years to describe the practice of modernizing and automating processes and operations at an enterprise level. And there's a lot of value in that term — after all, Hyland believes technology should transform the way you work.

But recently, we've started thinking in terms of our customers' digital *evolution* as it relates to their digital *transformation*.

What is digital evolution?

Digital evolution is the gradual accumulation of change in an organization's process digitization. It covers not only the software solutions themselves, but also the solutions' strategic implementation, an enterprise-wide enthusiasm for regular, iterative process improvements, and a culture of change management.

Digital evolution vs. digital transformation

Digital evolution is the ongoing, gradual accumulation of change in an organization's process digitization.

[Digital transformation](#) is the holistic upheaval of outdated manual processes in favor of modern digitized processes.

Here's where we think a lot of people get it wrong: The two aren't in opposition. There's a time and a place for both, and circumstances that necessitate one in favor of the other.

Often, what we refer to as digital transformation is one of two things: the catalyst for a shift into digital evolution, or the culmination of many years of digital evolution.

A digital transformation can't transform your organization without a digital evolution mindset.

Yes, implementing a new, modern solution can feel quite transformative. It really can transform the way your organization works, especially if it's been a long time coming.

But the word "transformation" implies a one-time initiative, culminating in the big reveal of a job well done: Implement a [content services platform](#) and poof, you're transformed! You can move on to the next goal.

Except ... not really.

Digitization isn't a set-it-and-forget-it initiative.



What makes a digitally transformed organization?

A digitally transformed organization isn't necessarily one with the newest iterations of the hottest technologies. It's one that embraces the idea of an evolving, agile tech stack that supports its strategies to meet the needs of customers, employees and the market.

It's an organization with a flexible mindset, ready to digitally evolve in order to transform.

Mindset: Transitioning from point-of-transformation to ongoing evolution

What's left to do after digital transformation? If you're thinking about it correctly, a lot.

We've collectively arrived at a point in which digitization is so normal and expected that the goal of achieving a moment of *transformation* will become irrelevant. But *evolution*, on the other hand, won't stop.

Incrementally enhancing your digital efforts is now the cost of entry for the global market.

Imagine an organization with leadership that invested in an [optical character recognition \(OCR\)](#) solution a decade ago to replace manual entry. The impacted teams would have found that switch transformative. Suddenly their employees didn't need to devote dozens of hours every week to the tedious, manual transfer of data, and the output had fewer errors than ever before. Transformative technology swooped in and changed everything!

But how long did that satisfaction last?

Soon, solutions evolved to take those capture capabilities further and further. Where traditional OCR software was limited to recognizing and digitizing letters and numbers from unstructured data, its abilities stopped there.

Today, technologies like [intelligent document processing \(IDP\)](#) and [intelligent process automation \(IPA\)](#) have built on that original OCR technology to provide much more value across the enterprise. Not only can IDP recognize and extract data, it can also classify, validate, verify and deliver that data to the next system in the process using [robotic process automation \(RPA\)](#). In comparison, that OCR solution of yore seems downright quaint.

Does that mean the organization that implemented OCR a decade ago made the wrong choice? That the "digital transformation" it celebrated then was eventually discovered to be a flop? That the organization should have waited for the technology to work out its kinks and become a better version of itself before investing?

Not at all.

The initiative would be a flop only if the organization stopped paying attention immediately after the transformation — if it considered itself transformed and lost sight of the subtle shifts in technology that their competitors were taking advantage of.



Leveraging a digital transformation mindset for digital evolution

Again, digital transformation is not a concept to be looked down upon. In many ways, having a digital transformation mindset is crucial to your digital evolution success.

First, the enthusiasm and innovation mindset behind early adoption of a solution are incredibly valuable. An organization's willingness to take a risk and implement a technology before it goes mainstream not only speaks to its priorities and reinforces a culture of change management, it also puts it in the right place to nimbly adjust to disruptions as they arise.

A [2021 study by Forrester Consulting](#) found that while more than 80% of organizations had their operations disrupted by the pandemic, those that began 2020 with a strong content services strategy in place demonstrated leadership in resiliency and capacity for digital transformation.

In short: They recovered more quickly and effectively.

When organizations across the globe were faced with the prospect of transitioning to a fully remote workforce essentially overnight, they saw the collapse of paper-based processes.

"Processes that are critical to day-to-day operations but assume that workers and files are in the same place crumble when most or all employees are working from home," the study said.

Everyone felt the disruption, but those still relying on paper and manual processes had a much steeper hill to climb than those that had already begun digitizing their processes.

Those that had strategically digitized their content and processes before it was necessary still needed to evolve, but the evolution came more naturally — it felt like an update rather than an overhaul.



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—[Forrester Consulting](#)



Building a digital evolution mindset at your organization

Issues arise when leadership checks off the box of "digital transformation" and moves on to the next initiative, satisfied with the "transformation" of their processes. Unfortunately, that's not how it works.

Organizations that value modernization should expect their solutions to shift and evolve iteratively, almost continuously, as time goes on.

The organizations that do this best are those that focus on people before processes. The best solutions that do this best are no match for a workforce that's resistant to, or even hostile toward, change.

Building a digital evolution mindset starts with coaching your employees to be comfortable with change, enthusiastic about innovation and focused on the customer experience. Teams with this type of culture get the most value from technology because they understand technology is only a tool that allows them to focus more time and energy on the people they serve.

Free digital evolution self-assessment

Even if you consider your organization digitally transformed, there's always more room to evolve.

However, where, why and how you take the next step toward digitization is unique to your organization.

You can get tailored recommendations on the right transformative technology solutions for your business by taking our [digital evolution self-assessment](#). It only takes a couple of minutes and is applicable no matter where you rank your organization's content and process management maturity.

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