

# DIGITAL LEADERSHIP READINESS: LESSONS FROM SINGAPORE



PARTNERS:



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: THE STUDY IN 5 CONCLUSIONS

## 01 **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION REQUIRES DIGITAL LEADERSHIP; IT IS A PEOPLE BUSINESS**

Unlocking the power of digital transformation to deliver business results requires Digital Leadership. Digital Transformation is primarily a people business; technology is only a distant second.

## 02 **DIGITAL LEADERSHIP REQUIRES DIRECTION, ALIGNMENT AND COMMITMENT**

Digital Leadership involves Setting Direction, Creating Alignment, and Scaling Commitment through nine roles. These create the right culture, mindset, skillset, and toolset for successful transformation.

## 03 **SINGAPORE LEADERS NEED ALL-ROUND DEVELOPMENT; CREATING ALIGNMENT IS KEY**

Singapore leaders need all-round development of digital leadership capability. Among Singapore leaders, there is a comparatively higher level of Commitment. However the red flags on Alignment show that the 'how' is being worked out in a lot of organizations. Alignment is key because it is the precursor to successful scaling of culture. It develops the right environment for success, shows leaders new ways, and develops new habits in real business situations.

## 04 **SINGAPORE LEADS IN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

Singapore is ahead of many other countries in the digital transformation journey due to the government's ongoing efforts to set up best-in-class infrastructure, to work collaboratively with industry, and high levels of readiness to learn from the world and take an outside-in-perspective.

## 05 **TALENT DEVELOPMENT IS KEY TO SINGAPORE'S SUSTAINED LEAD IN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

Sustaining the lead that Singapore currently has, requires it to develop an "ok to fail" mindset, bridge the digital talent gap, and increase support for digitally-ready and ready-to-scale companies.

## Study Objectives

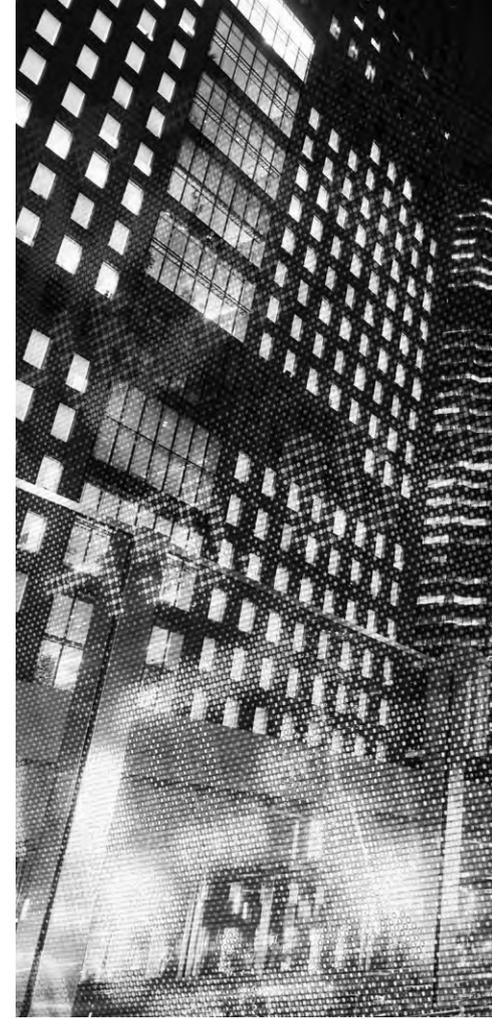
The *Digital Leadership Readiness: Lessons from Singapore* study aims to:

- Understand the state of digital leadership in Singapore
- Identify key strengths and development needs for digital leadership
- Determine organizational shifts that can improve digital leadership
- Propose progressive development practices for digital leadership
- Recommend policy/macro shifts that can improve digital leadership

## Research Methodology

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) and the American Chamber of Commerce-Singapore (AmCham Singapore) gathered inputs from 198 leaders, using a combination of 179 surveys and 19 interviews. The participants in the survey and interviews were senior leaders who oversee, have responsibility for, and play a role in their organization’s digital transformation efforts.

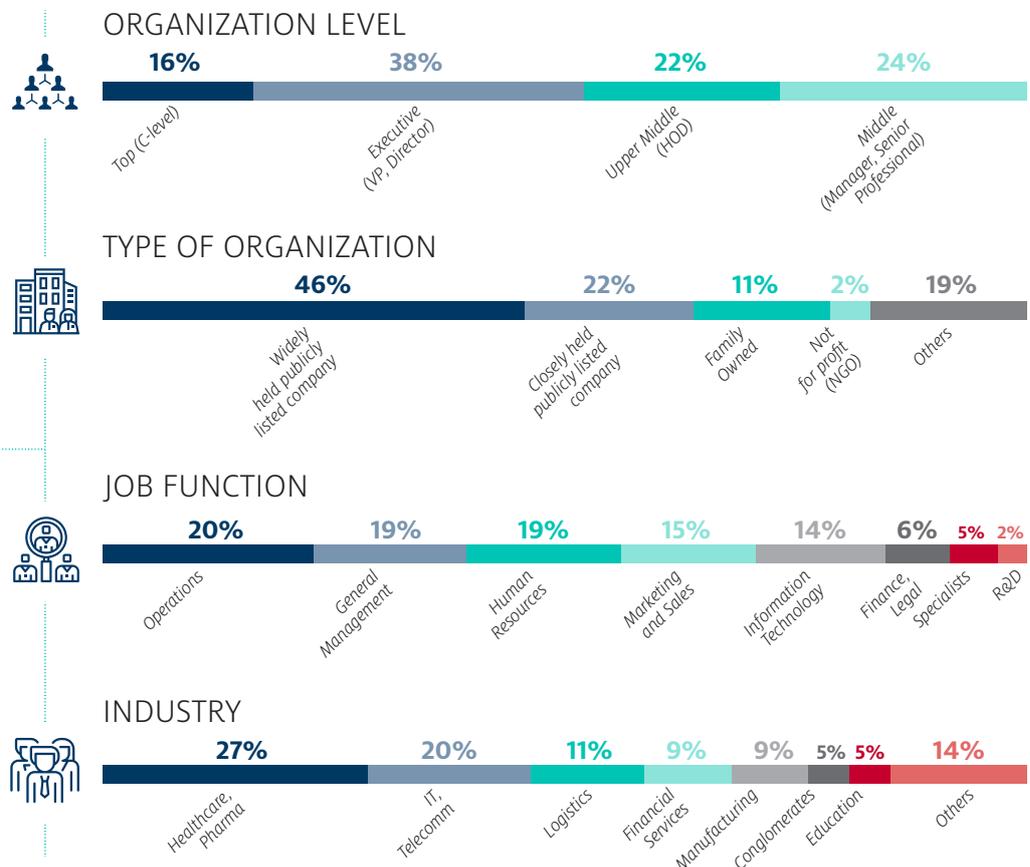
CCL’s Digital Leadership Survey was used to identify areas of strength and development on nine key digital leadership roles. The interviews with senior leaders were focussed on obtaining insights and practices on their organization’s journeys in digital transformation and their views on macro changes to improve the level of digital leadership readiness in Singapore and across the region.



## Respondents: Organization Level and Type, Job Function, and Industry

179  
LEADERS  
RESPONDED  
TO THE  
SURVEY

19  
LEADERS  
INTERVIEWED



# THE STATE OF DIGITAL LEADERSHIP IN SINGAPORE

## A Forced Acceleration

While efforts and investments to achieve digital transformation are not new, 2020 has brought three to seven years of transformation in digitalization of customers and operations, and rapid introduction of digitally enabled products and ways of working in a matter of months<sup>1</sup>. The pandemic has forced most people across the planet to embrace virtual and digital services in every aspect of their life. Many positive breakthroughs have been created enabling businesses to stay afloat and people to stay connected and active in the midst of a pandemic that would have had far more devastating consequences a couple of decades ago. At the same time, many governments and organizations are struggling to keep up with the accelerated pace of digital and manage some of the repercussions, including: new hybrid ways of working, increased mental health issues and more acute skill gaps. Insufficient internal skills<sup>2</sup>, lack of clear vision and resistance to change have long been top on the list of challenges organizations face in their digital transformation efforts, preventing them from realising optimal business results despite significant investments. Looking ahead, the most important factor that will determine success in overcoming these challenges and taking advantage of this forced acceleration will be capable digital leadership.

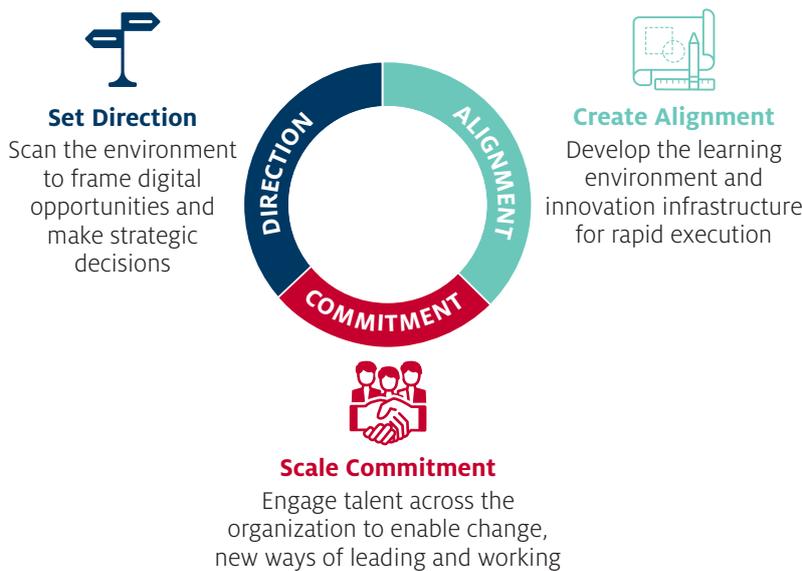
## The Role of Leadership in Digital Transformation

Let's start by differentiating between digital and digital transformation. Digital is the introduction of new and innovative technologies to improve the experiences of clients, customers or employees. Digital Transformation is about the required changes to strategy, processes, products and platforms, ultimately changing the way people work. It requires a different organization, culture and mindset. In many cases, organizations have focused on digital but not necessarily focused on digital transformation. Leading digital transformation is ultimately a people transformation and is a team effort. No individual member of an organization is fully-equipped to deliver on digital transformation. Top team alignment, involvement across all levels, including the board and C-Suite alignment is paramount to success.

Leadership is a social process that enables individuals to work together as a cohesive group to produce collective results. The leadership process is effective when it generates three crucial outcomes: **Direction, Alignment and Commitment** (DAC).<sup>3</sup>

Transformation requires leaders to create a compelling story of the digital journey and lead the change. Leaders need to understand the language of 'digital' and value its importance for business. Digital leaders thus require a growth mindset that understands that intelligence can be developed to learn how to adapt to the changes posed by digital disruption.

For many businesses and governments, digital transformation efforts have, until now, been approached piecemeal or in a fragmented and uncoordinated manner, with different functions or departments failing to work together to build a cohesive play for the whole organization. There are nine digital leadership roles that have been identified and mapped to the DAC framework. These nine roles provide a holistic picture of what is really required to make digital transformation happen.



## 9 Digital Leadership Roles



“ The Singapore government is pretty good at driving ecosystems around digitalization, for example in Gov Tech and in Health Tech with a vision to make the Singapore society healthier. People in sub-20s, early 20s have done startups in Singapore; not so much in other places in the world. Early on education makes a difference, with mechanisms like accelerators and hackathons. ”

*Head of Digital Transformation,  
Global Internet Services Company*



## Digital Leadership in Singapore Today

There is no doubt we have entered a next wave of globalization which is digital. The governments and businesses that are more digitally enabled will not only be more resilient to future lockdowns, they will also be far better positioned to cater to regional and global consumers and ecosystems. Singapore is ahead of many other countries in South East Asia with a clear vision to be the digital capital of Asia and a digital road map to get there.

In addition to a variety of digital initiatives within Singapore, the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) between Singapore, Chile and New Zealand, signed in June 2020, is a recent example where

Singapore is leading the way. The DEPA is a first of its kind agreement to facilitate seamless end-to-end digital trade, enable trusted data flows and build trust in digital systems between countries. It is already being used as a model for other nations and regions.

When we asked the leaders we interviewed “What is Singapore doing right in driving digital transformation?” Leaders pointed out three areas where Singapore is leading the way for other nations in digital transformation. These three areas are ease of conducting business, government–industry collaboration, and outside-in perspective.

### EASE OF CONDUCTING BUSINESS

“The ease of setting up business (speed, access to technology infrastructure, legal framework) is best-in-class in Singapore.”

### GOVERNMENT-INDUSTRY COLLABORATION

“The government works in close collaboration with industry, have their ears close to market. The ministers take a hands-on approach to what is being solved or to market opportunities, and try to respond with policy changes, funding, or industry associations.”

### OUTSIDE-IN PERSPECTIVE

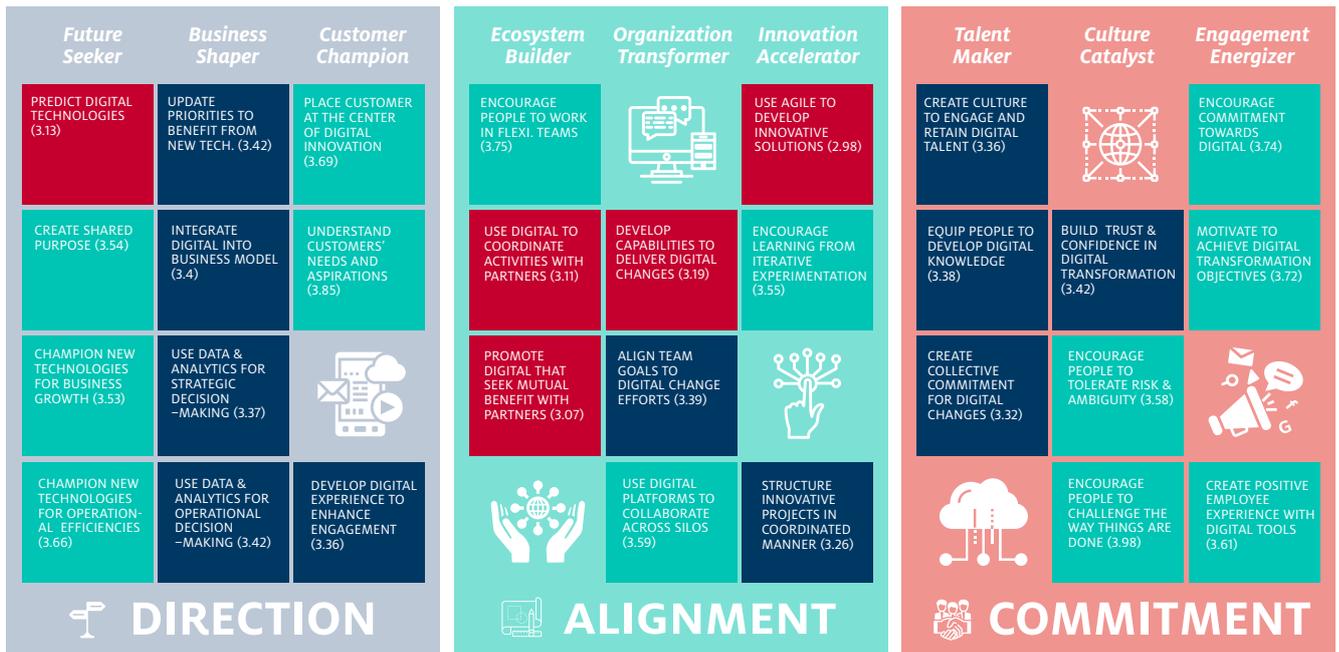
“Singapore is very good at learning from outside – outside-in perspective. Once the learning is brought in, transformation can happen faster.”

With a strong concentration of digital companies that have established their regional headquarters, management and innovation teams in Singapore, with a commitment to channel resources toward disruptive ideas, and the talent, infrastructure and the research ecosystems to support them, a solid foundation has been set. While Singapore is ahead in several aspects of digital transformation, sustaining the lead will also require addressing aspects of digital maturity where Singapore is lagging. Based on Cognizant’s recent Digital Maturity score<sup>4</sup>, while APAC leads Europe and only trails North America slightly, Singapore still has some catching up to do to reach similar maturity levels as China, Japan and Australia levels. The capability of digital leaders in Singapore will be an important factor in driving digital maturity and

success in this next wave of globalization. From the 2020 AmCham Manpower Survey<sup>5</sup> results we see that an ongoing challenge for the multi-national and SME companies participating in the survey was to identify local candidates with the right skills and experience for leadership positions. In particular, management positions are the most difficult, with 60% saying they are somewhat difficult or very difficult to recruit for.

From the results of our survey, we can see leaders in Singapore reported a low- to mid-level of ability in performing all of the nine roles associated with digital leadership. There is a need for all-round development of digital leadership capability. We can also see some specific strengths and areas for development based on the survey findings.

# Heat Map of Digital Transformation Readiness in Singapore



■ Development Area (Score <3.25)    
 ■ Opportunity to Improve (Score 3.25-3.5)    
 ■ Strength Area (Score >3.5)

(1 = Not At All Ready, 5 = Ready to Very Great Extent)

**Alignment** stands out as a priority that must be addressed to accelerate the ability to lead digital transformation in Singapore. Using agile methods to develop innovative solutions, using digital to promote mutually beneficial activities with partners, and developing capabilities to deliver digital changes, are a few of the areas that with the right focus and attention could make a significant shift. The role of **Innovation Accelerator** scores the lowest, indicating that leaders continue to be risk-averse, less ready to allow for and learn from failures.

Bridging the digital talent gap is another area that needs to be addressed. While commitment towards digital is high, more effort is needed in the role of **Talent Maker**, by fostering a culture to retain digital talent and equipping people to develop digital knowledge.

Two key strengths from our survey results that are important to highlight are in the roles of **Customer Champion** and **Engagement Energizer**.

**Customer Champions** bring the mindset of customer-centricity, putting the customer at center of the digital transformation journey. Every transformation is looked at from the lens of: What would it mean for the user? Why would the customer want technology? How would the user would interact with technology? And, what impact would it have on the customer? Placing the customer at the center of digital transformation, and understanding the customers needs and aspirations, were specific areas with relatively higher scores.

An **Engagement Energizer** shares a compelling view of the digital future of the organization and creates positive and engaging digital experiences to connect to others. Close to 60% of Singapore leaders role model digital behaviours, motivating their employees to remain committed to digital transformation efforts. Specifically, encouraging commitment toward digital, and creating positive employee experiences with digital tools, were areas of strength.



# ORGANIZATIONAL SHIFTS TO IMPROVE DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

In this section, we discuss organizational shifts necessary to bring about a successful digital transformation.

# State of Digital Leadership in My Organization

Think about your organization's leadership, and select the applicable option in the questions below.

## DIRECTION

### Future Seeker

(In our organization, we...)

	YES	NO
Curiously scan digital trends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inform new strategic direction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Champion new technologies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create shared purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTAL Ys</b>	<input type="text"/>	

### Business Shaper

(In our organization, we...)

	YES	NO
Access the right data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Effectively collect and analyze data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Present business intelligence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make the right data driven decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTAL Ys</b>	<input type="text"/>	

### Customer Champion

(In our organization, we...)

	YES	NO
Understand the customer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep customer at the forefront	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider multiple customer perspectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adopt customer-centric solutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTAL Ys</b>	<input type="text"/>	

## ALIGNMENT

### Ecosystem Builder

(In our organization, we...)

	YES	NO
Establish a dynamic network	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Share experience and expertise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foster a culture of collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transparently test and prototype	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTAL Ys</b>	<input type="text"/>	

### Organization Transformer

(In our organization, we...)

	YES	NO
Define, design and align processes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create the right internal conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respond rapidly to change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Balance flexibility and control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTAL Ys</b>	<input type="text"/>	

### Innovation Accelerator

(In our organization, we...)

	YES	NO
Fast-track ideas using rapid prototyping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create psychological safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Celebrate failures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gather iterative feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTAL Ys</b>	<input type="text"/>	

## COMMITMENT

### Talent Maker

(In our organization, we...)

	YES	NO
Identify diverse digital talent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nurture digitally savvy leaders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Select the right technologies for employee productivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure involvement across levels, including the board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTAL Ys</b>	<input type="text"/>	

### Culture Catalyst

(In our organization, we...)

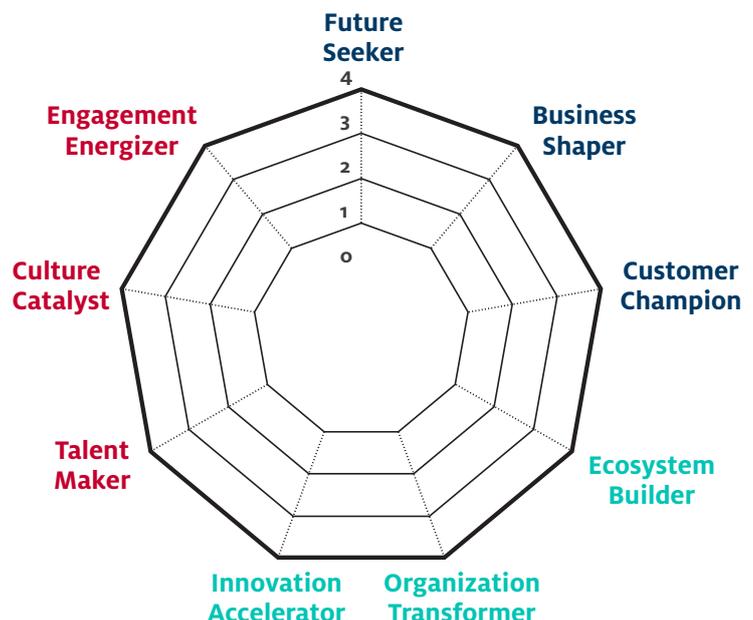
	YES	NO
Promote digital values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shift mindset to long-term gains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourage risk taking and feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrate commitment to change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTAL Ys</b>	<input type="text"/>	

### Engagement Energizer

(In our organization, we...)

	YES	NO
Inspire trust in a digital future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Role model the change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make digital everyone's business	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create community engagement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTAL Ys</b>	<input type="text"/>	

Plot the total score for each segment on the nine axes, join the points, and compare with the dark-coloured line. Gaps indicate improvement opportunities.



# ORGANIZATIONAL SHIFTS TO IMPROVE DIGITAL LEADERSHIP



## SET DIRECTION

### **Future Seeker**

From Events to Journeys

### **Business Shaper**

From Slogans to Language

### **Customer Champion**

From Technology to People



## CREATE ALIGNMENT

### **Ecosystem Builder**

From Secrecy to Collaboration

### **Organization Transformer**

From Introduction to Adoption

### **Innovation Accelerator**

From Achievement to Learning



## SCALE COMMITMENT

### **Talent Maker**

From Similarity to Diversity

### **Culture Catalyst**

From Short-term results to Long-term impact

### **Engagement Energizer**

From Compliance to Confidence



**DIRECTION**



### How are Singapore Leaders doing as Future Seekers?

**59%** REPORT BEING ABLE TO CHAMPION THE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS BY CREATING A SENSE OF SHARED PURPOSE.

**40%** ARE CONFIDENT OF THEIR ABILITY PREDICT HOW TECHNOLOGY COULD DISRUPT THEIR BUSINESS.

There is a large gap in the ability of Singapore leaders to predict the disruptive impact of new technologies, when compared to their ability to implement already identified technologies. Singapore leaders need to increase their capacity to pro-actively scan the horizon for disruption, so that they can shape any potential disruptions to their advantage.

# FUTURE SEEKER

A Future Seeker embraces the possibilities of digital to create a transformative vision for the future, and strives to leverage new technologies to constantly improve the business

## SHIFT NEEDED – FROM EVENTS TO JOURNEYS

Future seeking requires a shift from looking at digital transformation as disparate events of technological change, to viewing it as a longer journey that is tied to the company's business model.

There are two characteristics that distinguish a future seeker. First, a future seeker constantly scans the environment, looking for developments or changes in digital trends. The scanning happens not only in the industry that the leader works in, but more widely, often in seemingly unrelated industries.

Second, having obtained an understanding of the latest trends, the future seeker applies that knowledge to underscore the impact of these trends on their business, and inform the company's strategic direction. A senior leader we interviewed put it thus, "We have to ask ourselves; what would Google do, if it were in our industry".

“ Digital Transformation is not about technology. Amazing tech experiences – Automation, Cloud, AI – are pretty standard. Technology does not make them special, it is their business model, i.e., how they monetize it is what matters. Technology is a hygiene factor. Technology without an innovative business model is not digital transformation. ”

Head of Digital Transformation,  
Global Internet Services Company.

# Developmental Practices for Future Seeking

## WHAT MUST LEADERS DO?

## HOW ARE LEADERS DOING IT?

Curiously scan digital trends

*We have monthly drop-in sessions that discuss what is going on in the industry, sharing within the company in terms of what is available in the market. The idea is to create awareness of what innovations are happening in different regions of the company, and what is available in the market. People often do not know about solutions available in the market, hence creating awareness is important.*

Regional Engagement Lead-SEA, Food and Beverage Company

Inform new strategic direction

*Digital Transformation is a continuum. There is no end. Consumer/customer demand continues to grow. We are constantly challenging ourselves, whether it is with payments or search or videos or moonshots.*

Head of Digital Transformation, Global Internet Services Company

Champion new technologies

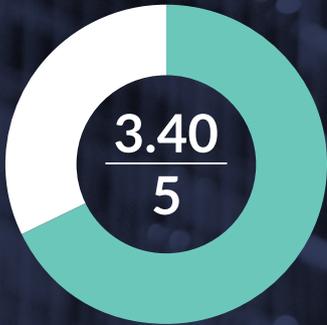
*For us, it is a self-initiated process, not a lot of standardized resources out there. It has been a “messy” journey for us, and we have now reached a stage of consolidating (e.g., from using many apps to how to minimize the number of apps required). It needs improvement, needs a better sense of direction in how to get things done. Digital transformation need not be “messy”. Someone needs to manage this “choice architecture” to help businesses navigate the marketplace of resources; a one-stop shop would be very helpful.*

COO, Professional Services Company

Create shared purpose

*Our biggest change has been where digital fits within the organization; from support to leadership function. In the past 3-4 years, we have seen a change of how digital has embedded into the broader ecosystem. We are investing in mobile, because they (leaders) think that’s really where digital is going in the future. Everything done in digital is done through a business impact lens. Teams are no longer working in silos, digital team is collaborating more with others (with business teams, etc.)*

Head of Digital and Customer Experience, Global Financial Services Company



### How are Singapore Leaders doing as Business Shapers?

**50%** SINGAPORE LEADERS ARE SPLIT DOWN THE MIDDLE IN THEIR ABILITY TO LINK DATA TO BUSINESS.

Half the leaders report low to moderate usage of data and analytics to drive strategic and operational decision making. More data does not always equate better decisions unless the data is used in decision making.

# BUSINESS SHAPER

A Business Shaper uses digital technologies and analytics to improve decision-making, and create new capabilities or growth opportunities

## SHIFT NEEDED – FROM SLOGANS TO LANGUAGE

To a Business Shaper, collection of data and digitization is not just a slogan, they seek to make the company speak the lingua franca of data and intelligence.

Today, thanks to increasing digitization, companies have the advantage of being able to access, and if necessary, generate a lot of data. However, the ease of data collection and availability does not always translate into business intelligence leading to data-based decision making. Data collected is prone to lose importance and impact if not analyzed and used at the opportune time. This is where the role of Business Shapers assumes importance.

Business Shapers ensure that the decisions made are data-based and the data collected by the organization is effectively analyzed, presented, and used to create new capabilities and growth opportunities.

“Context is more important than content. An abundance of data, with unlimited connectivity and processing, means skilled professionals are needed to transform all that data into insights, that can be consumed by management to make accurate, data-driven, and real-time decisions. These insights are valuable to not only engage customers in ways they see as meaningful, but to provide solutions to what customers see as important.”

Principal, Consulting Services Company

# Best Practices for Business Shaper

## WHAT MUST LEADERS DO?

## HOW ARE LEADERS DOING IT?

Access the right data

*Our Manufacturing Execution System is in an infant stage; we are still working on getting the records digital. For some, it is hard to see benefits at this point. We are trying to clarify this longer-term vision. We expect that going digital will help patients; we have not reached the point of data analytics, but hopefully will get there eventually.*

Digital Implementation Lead, Medical Devices Manufacturing Company

Effectively collect and analyze data

*We used to use Excel to track around 500 client projects. In 2018, we switched to Salesforce. We realized that the staff needed small nudges/incentives to input data into Salesforce. Now we have an abundance of data, and a question about what to do with so much data.*

COO, Professional Data Services Company

Present business intelligence

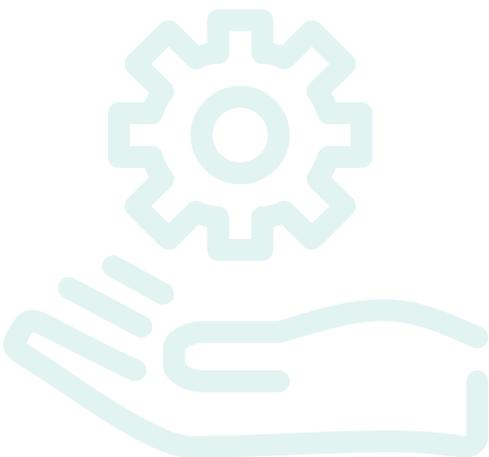
*We hired over 700 employees in April 2020 and provided coding training for 6 months. We try to make everyone an engineer, irrespective of what they were before they joined. We view coding as a way to exchange knowledge between tech people and business people. Additionally, our CEO looks at coding as a common language to enhance collaboration. So, we are doing Codenization through our Institute of Technology to expand coding to all people.*

Head of People & Culture-APAC, Online Retail Company

Make the right data driven decision

*Reverse mentoring program is happening in some pockets of our organization. Young graduates mentor senior leaders. Reverse mentoring helps senior leaders to be digitally savvy. When I hear the senior leaders say: "This is descriptive analytics. Can we have suggested order at the sales rep level to mine the data to give the right level of order at the store level?", I think: "This is brilliant".*

Regional Engagement Lead-SEA, Food and Beverage Company



# CUSTOMER CHAMPION

A Customer Champion focuses on understanding the customer, and using these insights to guide actions or decisions

## SHIFT NEEDED – FROM TECHNOLOGY TO PEOPLE

Customer Champions bring the mindset of customer-centricity, putting the customer at the front and center of digital transformation. Every transformation is looked at from the lens of what it means for the user: Why would the customer want technology? How the user would interact with technology? And, What impact it would have on the customer?

The term, customer, here refers to the employees of the organization, as well as the external customer. Much before the external customers of the organization interact with technology, employees of the organization interact with it.

Leaders repeatedly told us that the biggest mindset shift required was to view digital transformation as people transformation, and not merely a technology transformation. Technology, to them was an enabler of the process of efficient systems and processes, however the real change (and the biggest challenge) was in transforming the practices of people as a result of the change.

“ We are not a B2C business. Our work is not about putting a product on the web. There is a lot of consultation that takes place. We are very involved in testing and consultation. For us, the question is how do we digitalize the experience of consultation during the sales process to the client, who eventually sells to the consumer. ”

Regional Head-SEA, Specialty Chemicals  
Manufacturing Company

## How are Singapore Leaders doing as Customer Champions?

**50%** OF SINGAPORE LEADERS WANT TO IMPROVE THEIR ABILITY TO DEVELOP PRODUCTS OR SERVICES THAT ARE CUSTOMER-CENTRIC USING THE GATHERED DATA.

While more than two-thirds of Singapore leaders report taking steps to understand customer needs by collecting data, their ability to use this data to develop digital experiences to enhance customer engagement needs improvement.



# Best Practices for Customer Champion

## WHAT MUST LEADERS DO?

## HOW ARE LEADERS DOING IT?

### Understand the customer

*With Asia growing and transforming via urbanization and a growing middle class, we asked ourselves – How do we ride the Asia wave? We sought to understand what customers are doing differently. To us, UX (user experience) was really key; our focus was on the customer journey.*

Group Head for Strategy and Planning, Financial Services Company

### Keep customer at the forefront

*Our focus is on efficiency, cutting the unnecessary tape, laying the right foundations, putting emphasis on the needs. We focus a lot on customers: How to improve customer retention, customer loyalty, and continuously build new customers? Thereby, continuously enhancing customer experience is very important to us.*

Head of Digital Transformation, Global Internet Services Company

### Consider multiple customer perspectives

*We do initiatives where we engage customers early enough in product development and product management. This helps us understand what's happening in the market, and how we can participate in it.*

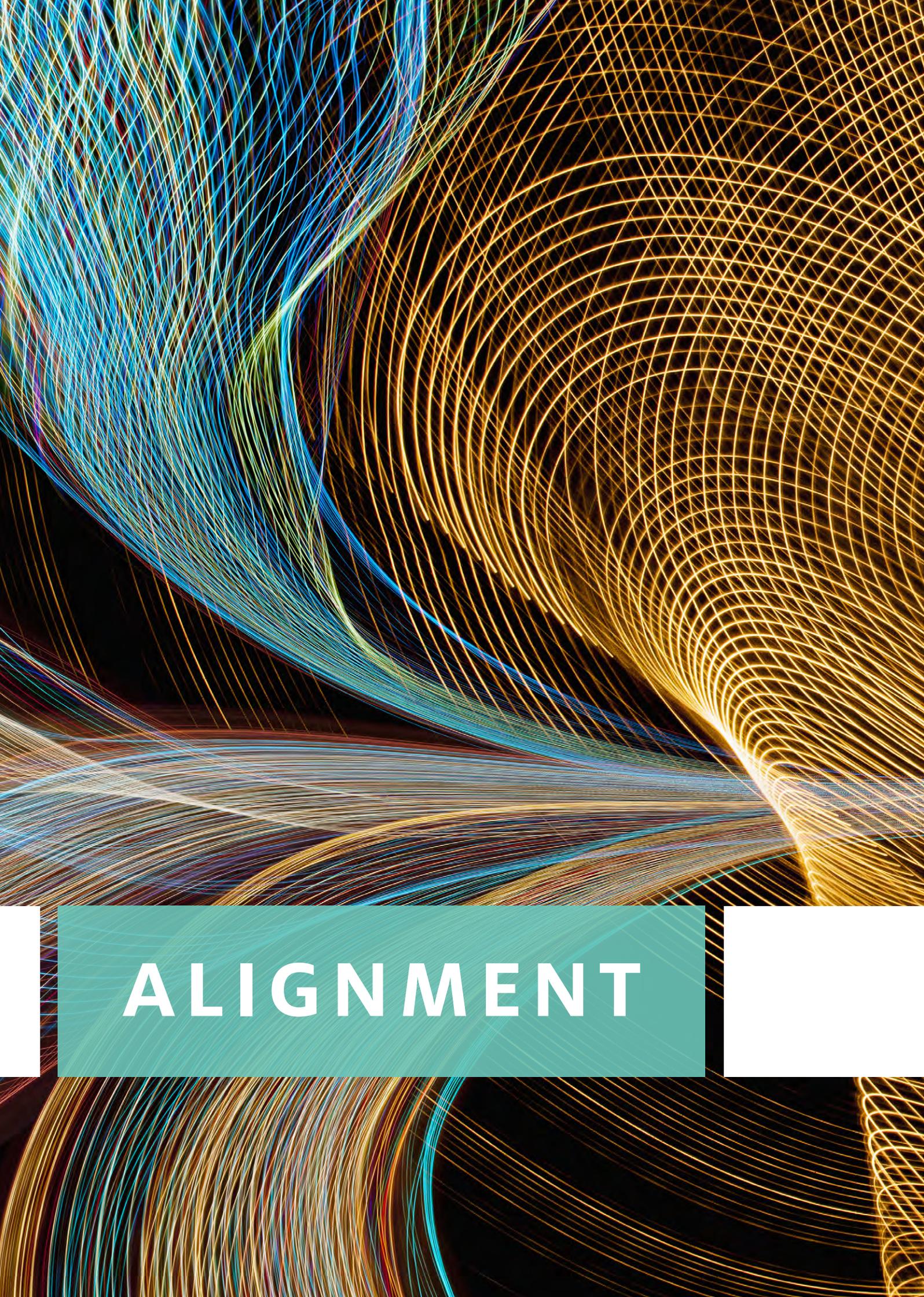
Head of Talent-APAC, Global Financial Services Company

### Adopt customer-centric solutions

*Focus on complaints that you receive from customers. Everything that a customer points out as not working needs to be fixed. It is painful to do it, but we need to get the team to fix it. One way of overcoming the pain is to gamify it. When customers give compliments for making the change, it provides reinforcement, leading to a momentum.*

Group Head for Strategy and Planning, Financial Services Company



The background features a complex, abstract pattern of glowing lines. On the left, numerous thin, blue lines curve and flow downwards. On the right, a dense grid of yellow lines forms a series of concentric, overlapping arches that create a tunnel-like perspective. The overall effect is one of dynamic energy and digital connectivity.

# ALIGNMENT



## How are Singapore Leaders doing as Ecosystem Builders?

**70%** WORK IN FLEXIBLE TEAMS WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION

**40%** WORK IN FLEXIBLE TEAMS OUTSIDE THE ORGANIZATION, WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Close to 70% of Singapore leaders encourage their employees to work in flexible teams. Flexible team work on digital platforms drops substantially to 40% when connecting with stakeholders and partners outside their organization. Singapore leaders clearly need to increase their skills at networking and their use of digital technologies to the mutual benefit of their and their partner organizations.

# ECOSYSTEM BUILDER

An Ecosystem Builder creates a networked, flexible, dynamic, multi-disciplined environment to build the right innovation partnerships inside and outside the organization

## SHIFT NEEDED – FROM SECRECY TO COLLABORATION

Rather than keep ideas a close secret, an ecosystem builder co-opts members in their network to test ideas and prototypes as soon as possible, rather than wait until the product or service is completely ready.

An ecosystem builder recognizes that successful digital transformation is not achievable by undertaking the journey alone. It has many components both people-related and technology-related that call for a high degree of collaboration both internally and externally.

To achieve a successful digital transformation in their company, an ecosystem builder sets out to build a network of people and organizations that their company can leverage in their digital transformation journey. They do so by sharing their own experience and expertise with others in the network, while deriving the benefit of others in the network.

Inside the organization, ecosystem builders build a culture of collaboration across organizational boundaries of function and hierarchy, so that the benefits of multiple perspectives in cross-functional teams are realized for the purposes of digital transformation.

“ Technology no longer drives the “roadmap”; it is now business-driven. A fundamental recent change has been that internally, cross-functional groups/ collaboration is now more important. Priorities are identified collectively and then fed back into the tech roadmap. Collaboration is a strength; no project would get initiated unilaterally without cross-collaboration. 10 years back, companies were very reactive and transactional when it came to digital. Today, digital, unlike some other functions, is very dependent on the ecosystem. ”

Regional Head-SEA, Specialty Chemicals Manufacturing Company

# Best Practices for Ecosystem Builder

## WHAT MUST LEADERS DO?

## HOW ARE LEADERS DOING IT?

Establish a dynamic network

*The organization ecosystem is like this: Employees (digital transformation changes how work gets done and helps staff work on meaningful assignments, and find new ways to solve internal and external problems), contractors, vendors and suppliers supporting the organization to improve capabilities; management and other stakeholders responsible to help the organization succeed; and customers seeking more tech-enabled solutions, better, faster and cheaper ways to solve their problems effortlessly and in a timely manner.*

Principal, Consulting Services Company

Share experience and expertise

*The structure of Singapore companies has changed, governance has changed very fast in the past few years; perhaps recent volatility has changed this. Technology is already there, but there must be a willingness to share data and be transparent to use/adopt this tech.*

CHRO, Energy and Urban Development Company

Foster a culture of collaboration

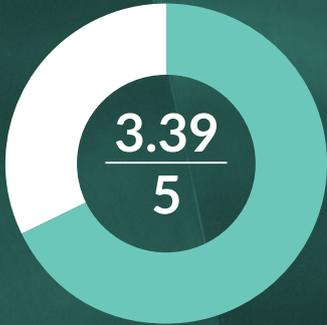
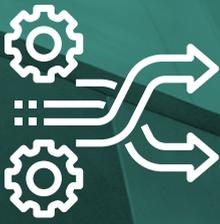
*The key thing is collaboration and open innovation. With open innovation, there is no need to keep secrets. There is no idea that anyone can bring to the table that has not been thought of, or is being done by someone, somewhere; except maybe in very specialized fields. Collaboration and innovation to solve problems is the key. I do not think signing an NDA is necessary in today's context. Every startup wants to believe that they have a unique idea, but the reality is that if you do not get your ideas in front of people and they do not know what you are doing, then it goes against design thinking, testing, etc. Informal ecosystem that drives collaboration, and individual's networks will allow enablement to happen from a technology perspective.*

Digital Advisor, Food and Beverage Company

Transparently test and prototype

*Don't be afraid to use what's already around there; use a collaborative process and make use of the ecosystem. Get over the need to reinvent the wheel. In my US\$ 3.5 billion company, we never built anything by ourselves. Use the 100 solutions that are around and find a combination (that works for you), and test it for yourself – you will have an 80% solution. Then get feedback and polish it.*

CEO, Retail and e-commerce Company, Asia Pacific



## How are Singapore Leaders doing as Organization Transformers?

**59%** USE DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR COLLABORATION

**47%** DO NOT ALIGN DIGITAL EFFORTS TO TEAM GOALS

**60%** DO NOT PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT FOR DIGITAL EFFORTS

More than half of Singapore leaders use digital platforms to collaborate on tasks. However, the use of these digital platforms does not always have a strategic alignment with team goals, with about half of the leaders reporting only low-to-moderate alignment.

Indicating a reactive approach rather than a planned approach to digital transformation, leaders report lesser attention paid to developing the capabilities of the organization to deliver on the digital changes, with 60% of leaders reporting a low-to-moderate attention to organization capability development.

# ORGANIZATION TRANSFORMER

An Organization Transformer understands and implements operating models, processes, roles and responsibilities or governance to support innovation and transformation

## SHIFT NEEDED – FROM INTRODUCTION TO ADOPTION

Technology and digitization can serve as the catalyst to streamline operations and eliminate non-value adding processes and activities. Introduction of change, however well-intended, does not always translate into widespread adoption of the change. Comfort with older processes, coupled with a sense of discomfort and challenge in learning new ways of working, often derails transformation efforts.

An Organization Transformer creates the right internal conditions necessary for digital transformation to be widely adopted by balancing flexibility and structure. An Organization Transformer aligns internal processes to digital change efforts.

“ In our company, once a decision has been made, a Steering Committee, created of senior executives and executive sponsor, is identified. The rollout is a very people-driven process, which is intentional. The key challenge is not rollout, but user uptake and reaching an optimal level of adoption whereby older processes can be “turned off” and replaced by new digital process/technology. ”

Vice President of Strategy & Marketing, APAC, Global Human Resource Services Company

# Best Practices for Organization Transformers

## WHAT MUST LEADERS DO?

## HOW ARE LEADERS DOING IT?

Define, design and align processes

*Our company has 3 pillars - Growth, Execution, Culture. Digital transformation should touch one of these three – Top line growth or efficiencies (cost reduction, process simplification) or organizational culture. Technology is a consequence that enables some of these things.*

Regional Engagement Lead-SEA, Food and Beverage Company

Create the right internal conditions

*Historically, companies have put too many rules in place for a variety of tasks. This has made them slow. Knowing parameters rather than rules, and developing the power of judgement will put you on the fast track whether it is about digital or any other priorities. In our company, six-month training is given to new hires on how to deal with ambiguity. Mentors and coaches use powerful techniques, such as storytelling and self-reflection, to enable and empower employees.*

Head of Digital Transformation, Global Internet Services Company

Respond rapidly to change

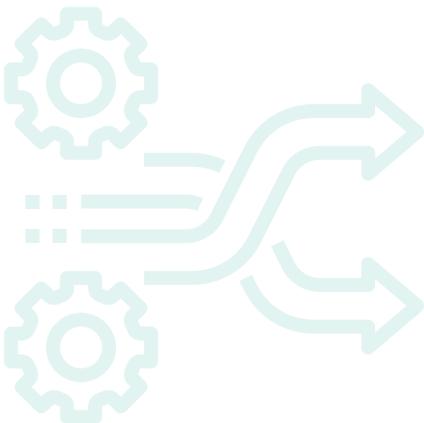
*We need user friendly and simplified processes to help management teams think through what it takes to digitize and implement Digital Transformations, and required spot checks (independent reviews and assurance) to successfully achieve desired business outcomes.*

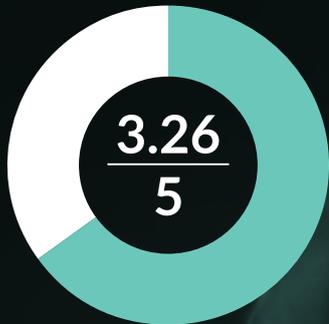
Principal, Consulting Services Company

Balance flexibility and control

*It is necessary to break down the challenges into manageable chunks. Companies are finding it difficult to break things down into manageable chunks and link them together. Learn to use a Balanced Score Card in a manner that is useful for you. I recommend a 50-50 (Today-Future) scorecard, with the 50% future being bite-sized to encourage movement to the next level. Cascading the group level scorecard to individual business units has to be done effectively. Measuring the whole organization in a scorecard brings about alignment, and maintains the same flavour throughout the organization.*

Group Head for Strategy and Planning, Financial Services Company





## How are Singapore Leaders doing as Innovation Accelerators?

Use of agile approaches among Singapore leaders

9%	NONE
25%	SOME USE
32%	MODERATE USE
27%	GREAT USE
7%	VERY GREAT USE

About half of Singapore leaders report some use to a moderate use of agile approaches for innovation, with 9% of them not using any agile approaches at all.

Singapore leaders appear to be slightly better at encouraging others to learn from experimentation as long as they do not have to apply the same on themselves.

# INNOVATION ACCELERATOR

An Innovation Accelerator accelerates digital strategy execution by setting the context for innovation, and encourages agile approaches and rapid prototyping to fast-track ideas

## SHIFT NEEDED – FROM ACHIEVEMENT TO LEARNING

Innovation Accelerators lead their organization in celebrating learning rather than achievement. They build processes and a culture that creates the necessary psychological safety for employees to build fast, fail fast, learn fast, and improve.

The design thinking approach to user-centered innovation stresses on two aspects – first, building empathy with the user; and second, prototyping and testing much before the product or service is perfect.

There is no wait for innovation to be perfect before it is tested. Rapid experimentation is actively encouraged, feedback is sought, and changes brought about in an iterative fashion. Learning and improvement over each cycle of feedback is used to measure individual effort rather than the perfection of the product.

“*Level of disruption and agility is the difference between leadership development and digital leadership development. Agility and resilience are the core competencies going forward. Formulae that have worked for the past 50 years won't work anymore. We have a very compliant culture. The need is to be able to take failure and fend for yourself. Develop high tolerance for failures and risks. Encourage divergent and disruptive thinking.*”

Board Member, Science and Technology Agency, Singapore

# Best Practices for Innovation Accelerators

## WHAT MUST LEADERS DO?

## HOW ARE LEADERS DOING IT?

Create psychological safety

*The key is to empower people to come up with ideas and support them. It tells people “You matter”, “I trust you; so go ahead and give it a try and see what comes out”. Then people will give their 120%. Such an approach became successful because people would naturally do it in small measures. It is experiential learning – school of hard knocks.*

Group Head for Strategy and Planning, Financial Services Company

Celebrate failures

*We have had 50+ Proof-of-concepts over the last 2 years; the success rate is around 30%; but 2-3 ideas have been great and we are scaling up. We allow people to fail and learn from that.*

Regional Engagement Lead-SEA, Food and Beverage Company

Fast-track ideas using rapid prototyping

*Remove the fear of failure. In general, we do not plan for all kinds of scenarios in digital; we do not have a digital plan for more than 6 months.*

CEO, Retail and e-commerce Company, Asia Pacific

Gather iterative feedback

*Courage should be a core value in the company to go digital. Start with a \$200K budget, not with a \$2 m budget. Consumers might not immediately like your offering, so go cheap and dirty to prototype it.*

CEO, Retail and e-commerce Company, Asia Pacific





**COMMITMENT**



# TALENT MAKER

A Talent Maker focuses on building diverse talent to develop the next generation of digital leaders

## SHIFT NEEDED – FROM SIMILARITY TO DIVERSITY

A skilled workforce is needed to optimize the right technology, analytics, and digitization to achieve objectives. Leadership can improve selection of the right technologies to enhance staff productivity, and address stakeholder expectations. Talent makers enhance the organization's commitment by enhancing the diversity necessary in the organization to introduce and sustain digital transformation.

In a fast changing landscape, it is crucial to attract, develop, and retain digitally savvy talent that can contribute to digital transformation. A Talent Maker attracts and nurtures digitally savvy leaders who want to lead the digital transformation in their organization, sometimes even to the extent that there is an atmosphere of friendly competition among multiple teams, with each one looking to the other to ensure that they do not lag behind.

Talent Makers must get involved across almost all levels of the organization – from the Board of Directors to C-Suite leaders to frontline leaders—to equip them with the necessary technology and people transformation skills.

“ We equipped people with statistical knowledge, six sigma; transformed team skills; hired data analysts, created cross-functional teams, dashboards committee, data-cleaning committee; formed a multidisciplinary and cross-functional structure that is non-traditional. We have machine-learning enabled teams. All these helped us to be prepared for the covid crisis when it happened. ”

CHRO, Tertiary Educational Institution, Singapore



## How are Singapore Leaders doing as Talent Makers?

50% LOW TO MODERATE EFFORTS

50% GREAT DEGREE OF ACTIVITY

Singapore leaders are equally split in performing their role as Talent Makers. One half of the leaders reported low-to-moderate efforts, while the other half reported a great degree of activity.

For Singapore, that is highly dependent on human resource, this halfway split is not good news. More efforts are necessary to build a larger pool of diverse digitally prepared talent.

# Best Practices for Talent Makers

## WHAT MUST LEADERS DO?

## HOW ARE LEADERS DOING IT?

Identify diverse digital talent

*Our CEO set a goal for us that more than 40% of our hires must be from diversified industries. That push set us up nicely and enabled us to relate to different customer groups.*

Head of Talent-APAC, Global Financial Services Company

Nurture digitally savvy leaders

*One cannot compete in the digital world without talent. Do not ignore the softer elements – the culture, the people. The employer reputation and other cultural perks of working in your company is what matters to attract talent.*

Head of Digital Transformation, Global Internet Services Company

Select the right technologies for employee productivity

*Internal communication is not only via email, we also use Viber for internal chats. We use Viber with special stickers that depict our company values. Employees can use this to give and get recognition for their practice of company's core values.*

Head of People & Culture-APAC, Online Retail Company

Ensure involvement across levels, including the board

*We have a talent pipeline gap. We outsourced in 80s/90s and now there is a gap. Singapore boards should get digital leaders onboard. Digital readiness program is missing.*

Board Member, Science and Technology Agency, Singapore



# CULTURE CATALYST

A Culture Catalyst understands and promotes values and behaviours that will support digital transformation, and builds trust and develops confidence around a digital future

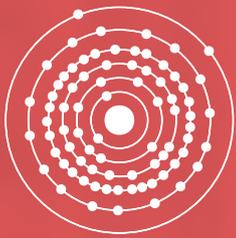
## SHIFT NEEDED – FROM SHORT-TERM RESULTS TO LONG-TERM IMPACT

Viewing digital transformation as a long-haul journey is crucial to ensure commitment to the change. This view is to be sustained in order to provide direction, ensure alignment, and build commitment. Culture Catalysts shift the mindset of the organization to consider long-term gains of transformation efforts, as compared to short-term losses.

A Culture Catalyst, as the word indicates, speeds up the process of digital transformation by influencing the culture of the organization. They do this by first creating conditions that encourage the giving and receiving of feedback. This creates a condition that provides employees with a feeling that it is acceptable to take risks and tolerate ambiguity that digital transformation necessitates. In turn, this builds trust and confidence in the initiative, allowing for quicker and more complete transformation.

“ Companies who fail at remote work are those whose employees are behaving as if they are still at the office. Some managers may see this as a loss of control, but successful digital leadership means understanding that interaction in a digital environment will be very different. ”

Regional Engagement Lead-SEA,  
Food and Beverage Company



## How are Singapore Leaders doing as Culture Catalysts?

Encouragement to challenge the way things are done



Three in four Singapore leaders encourage their employees to challenge existing processes. More than half the leaders we surveyed take a great deal of action to build trust and confidence of their teams to promote digital mindset of taking risks and tolerating ambiguity.

# Best Practices for Culture Catalysts

## WHAT MUST LEADERS DO?

## HOW ARE LEADERS DOING IT?

Promote digital values

*"When I help someone next to me, we are all growing". This feeling is needed and it is related to how the scorecard is set up and how people are measured.*

Group Head for Strategy and Planning, Financial Services Company

Shift mindset to long-term gains

*Everyone expects immediate results from digital transformation; it is however a multi-year journey. We need to be ready to think about medium to long-term results. We can look for some quick wins not related to revenue.*

Head of Digital Transformation, Global Internet Services Company

Encourage risk taking and feedback

*Get people to "own the journey", to develop the feeling that "I am also changing along with the organization". If you develop such a feeling, over a period of time, you would have moved the culture. As a leader you have to create opportunities for people to experience it.*

Group Head for Strategy and Planning, Financial Services Company

Demonstrate commitment to change

*It starts right at the top. If the senior team is not conscious, and does not give the right signals, it does not percolate down. Actions that senior leaders can do: include sponsorship; right messages matter. Our mindset of consciously pursuing agility over perfection and a test-and-learn mindset/culture is reinforced by messages from top leaders.*

Regional Engagement Lead-SEA, Food and Beverage Company



# ENGAGEMENT ENERGIZER

An Engagement Energizer shares a compelling view of the digital future of the organization, and creates positive and engaging digital experiences to connect to others

## SHIFT NEEDED – FROM COMPLIANCE TO CONFIDENCE

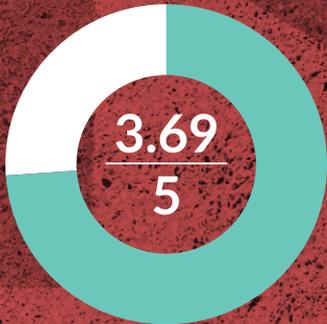
Digital transformation efforts also meet with resistance due to the ambiguity involved in the process of transformation. Digital transformation is everybody's business and it requires commitment and adoption throughout the organization.

Engagement Energizers engage with the community who are impacted by the transformation, and encourage their commitment to the change. They often do this by means of role modelling and being among the first to change to the new process.

As internal champions of the digital transformation efforts, their role is crucial to ensure that the mindset of the stakeholders shifts from one of compliance with change, to that of confidence to be able to navigate the change and achieve digital transformation goals.

“ We need salesmanship and leadership to sell this change to the company. Salesmanship is needed to do cost/benefit analysis. Leadership is needed to understand the value and opportunity, and to sell it to key stakeholders, especially to those who “write the checks”. ”

Vice President of Strategy & Marketing-APAC, Global Human Resource Services Company



### How are Singapore Leaders doing as Engagement Energizers?

**67%** ENCOURAGE COMMITMENT TO THE DIGITAL FUTURE

**68%** MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES TO ACHIEVE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OBJECTIVES

**60%** ACTIVELY CREATE POSITIVE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE WITH DIGITAL TOOLS

A majority of Singapore leaders role model digital behaviors, thus motivating their employees to remain committed to digital transformation efforts.

# Best Practices for Engagement Energizers

## WHAT MUST LEADERS DO?

## HOW ARE LEADERS DOING IT?

Inspire trust in a digital future

*First, understand the trend and communicate how various parts of business are to be impacted. Second, get the management team on board with the trends that you are seeing. Third, develop the ability to break silos across business/functions, and look beyond your function. Fourth, get buy-in from your own leadership team. This is most important; you should not be fighting your own team.*

Group Head for Strategy and Planning, Financial Services Company

Role model the change

*“There is no going back to old ways” - companies need to hear this from frontrunners, they need to hear how they have adapted and need to have a growth and agile mindset.*

Board Member, Science and Technology Agency, Singapore

Make 'digital' everyone's business

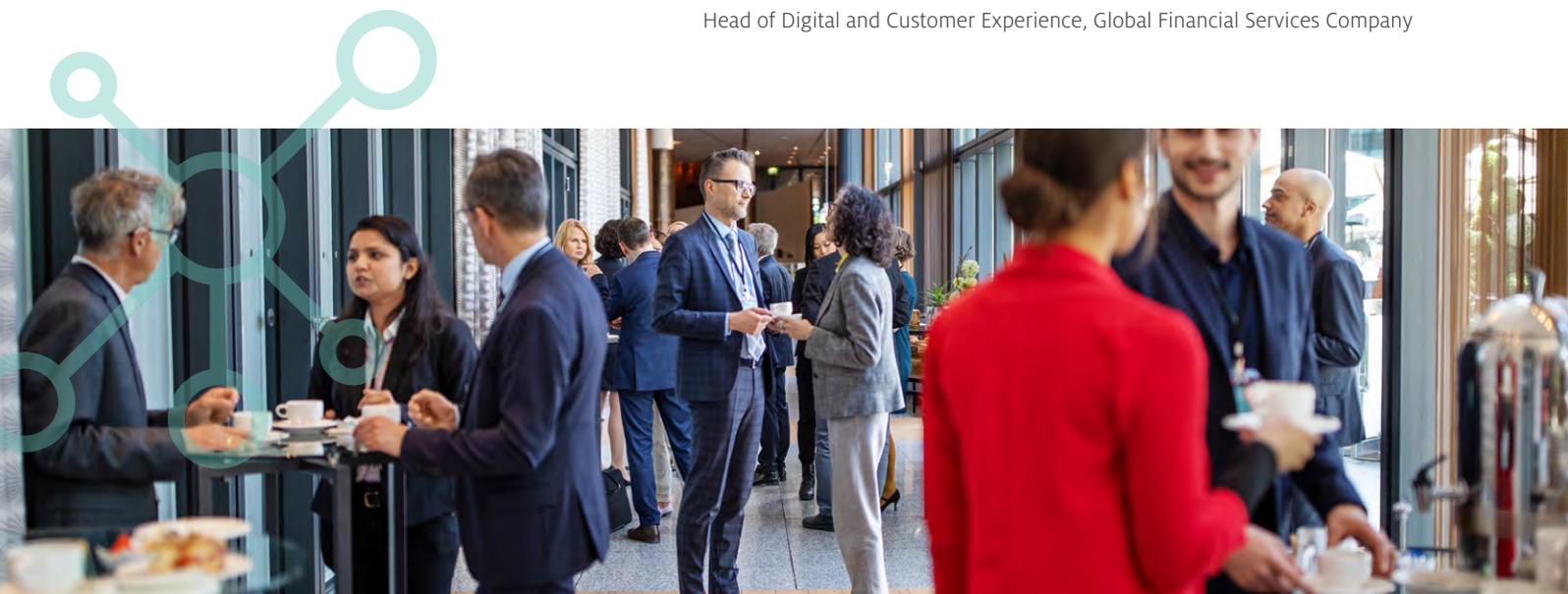
*If you want to be a digital org, it needs to be embraced from top to bottom. I am not a big fan of the Chief Digital Officer (role). The CEO needs to be the Chief Digital Officer. Everyone needs to be digital, not one department. The lingo needs to be digital.*

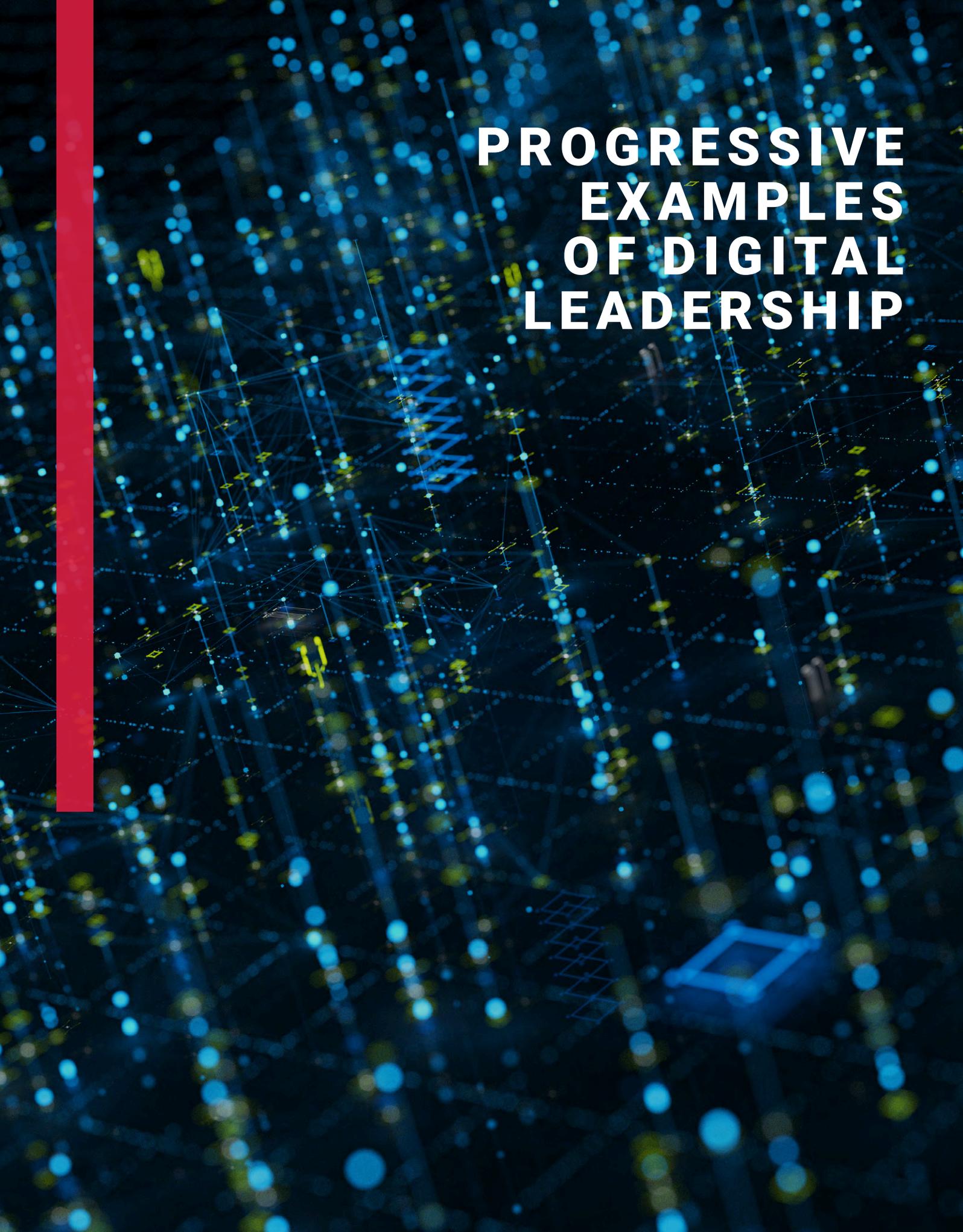
CEO, Retail and e-commerce Company, Asia Pacific

Create community engagement

*How to get staff committed? Prototypes are sent to users across the region; sometimes as many as 10,000 points of feedback from across the region before the project can move forward (“crowdsourcing”). The feedback is provided by customer ambassadors/champions, and cross-functional teams train customer ambassadors.*

Head of Digital and Customer Experience, Global Financial Services Company





# PROGRESSIVE EXAMPLES OF DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

# Company A

## Leveraging Talent Diversity through Codenization and Englisanzation

Company A, a large e-commerce and online retailing company, views its brand, customer data, and ecosystem as core assets. Offering over 70 services worldwide, the company, a digital native, undertook many measures to sustain digital leadership.

### Setting Direction

#### **Codenization: Coding as a common language**

Led by the CEO, Company A views coding as a common language to enhance collaboration. Termed “Codenization”, the employees of the company who are recruited from diverse fields are provided training in coding for six months. Coding is seen as way to exchange knowledge between the tech teams and business teams.

#### **Using Virtual Reality to enhance empathy**

Company A uses VR extensively in training to expose employees to another’s point of view. Using VR allows its employees to experience the minorities’ point of view, e.g., being a non-Japanese in Japan headquarters, being LGBTQ+, being of a different generation, etc.

### Scaling Commitment

#### **Englisanzation to attract diverse talent**

Although headquartered in Japan, Company A changed the internal official language from Japanese to English. This unique move in Japan, termed “Englisanzation”, allowed Company A to get more non-Japanese people; 30% of the employees in the Japan headquarters are non-Japanese. This move also served to enhance collaboration between English and non-English speakers.

#### **Book Readings to catalyze cultural change**

Every week during a “all-hands” meetings, the CEO discusses one of 80+ chapters from his published book, and answers questions on the approach to business. This helps to share the company culture and drive engagement.



# Company B

## Creating Impact through an Ecosystem

Company B, a global financial services corporation, was faced with rapid changes in the markets they operated in, along with increasing digitization.

In the past, the role of their Country General Managers was to be the face of the brand in the market, manage C-suite relationships, along with some sales responsibility. These roles were turning complex and critical. The Country General Managers now needed to see what was happening within the market, what customers were saying, what opportunities were there, and then look internally at what services, solutions, and capabilities the company had. Further, they had to decide if the challenges could be solved with internal capabilities, else they had to determine strategic partners in the market. They needed to be careful about not cannibalizing the existing business, and identify a suitable partner to work with in medium-to-long term. The leaders had no blueprint for what they were facing.

### Setting Direction by being Customer Champions

Company B created a Chief Customer Experience Officer role with a brief to look at what they were doing, and to consider how they could take it up to the next level.

With initiatives like Customer Proximity, they engaged customers early enough in product development, and product management. This helped them understand what was happening in the market, and how they could participate in it.

Internally, they instituted an Employee Advisory Council, which engaged their own employees as ambassadors to demonstrate how the company's products and services were to be used.

### Creating Alignment by being Ecosystem Builders

Company B built partnerships they would have never thought of before. They collaborated with competitors on developing an industry standard for online checkouts.

In offering their services to SMEs in the middle of the COVID pandemic, Company B realized that one of the key concerns of SMEs was how they would get paid. The company worked with government entities, trade associations, and commercial associations to facilitate that. This is something that they could not have solved by themselves, but were able to do as a part of the larger ecosystem.

### Scaling Commitment by being Talent Makers

Visionary leadership in being Talent Makers helped Company B to be ecosystem builders. In 2013, the CEO set a goal that more than 40% of their hires must be from diversified industries – retail, FMCG, government, non-profits, etc.

That visionary push on talent enabled Company B to relate to different customer groups, and has allowed them to set up ecosystems, partnerships with different customer groups, and think of solutions beyond their traditional service offerings.

# Company C

## Transforming Internal Processes to Support Innovation

Company C, a Singapore based financial services provider, was facing intense competition in the Singapore market. It chose to expand into regional markets in order to ride the Asian digital transformation wave. Using a combination of setting clear direction and aligning internal processes, Company C was able to successfully bring about digital transformation in their operations.

### Setting Direction by being Future Seekers and Customer Champions

To take advantage of growing opportunities in Asia, Company C obtained multiple 'views of the world' of its customers. They began by painting a vivid picture of how someone who is not in the financial services sector would approach the same opportunities.

They viewed technology as a hygiene factor, with user experience as the key. They focused on the customer journey to understand how to use digital technology to acquire, transact, and engage with customers, and to understand if customers would use it or not.

### Creating Alignment by being Innovation Accelerators and Organization Transformers

When Company C obtained an overseas digital banking license; they knew that they would not make a profit in the first few years. Hence, they did not set a target of expecting employees to make the organization profitable in the first years.

Instead, they created a measure of learning as a measure of success. The measure was around the number of experiments that employees ran and what they learnt from those experiments.

In the initial period of overseas operations, the target was to get more customers to sign up and use their app for financial services. However, Company C noticed that the ratings for the app were low. Being a digital bank, since the app was the main point of interaction with customers, they stopped targeting customers and began working to get the app rating to go up by through delightful user experience. It was only after the app rating went up that the focus shifted to expanding the customer base.

Company C ensured that the internal processes were aligned with its strategic direction.



# Company D

## Moving from Innovation to Scaling

Company D is a global player in the food and beverages industry. With their key pillars as growth, execution, and culture, Company D looks for digital transformation to touch any of these key pillars.

### Setting Direction by Enabling Future Seeking

Realizing that people are busy in their jobs, leading to a lack of awareness of available solutions, Company D brings the knowledge of the latest trends to its employees.

Monthly drop-in sessions discuss what is going on in the industry, sharing within company what is available in the market. This creates an awareness of what innovations are happening in the different regions of the company, and what is available in the market.

In every monthly forum, dedicated time is set aside to share new technology, new opportunities available in the market to solve business issues. The latest trends and use of sales technology, retail space, manufacturing and supply chain technology, are often discussed, along with the use of data analytics to drive decision making.

### Creating Alignment by Motivating Innovation Accelerators

Company D consciously pursues agility over perfection for new technology with a test and learn mindset.

This mindset is reinforced by messages from top leaders. Even if there could be 10-15% chance that the idea might succeed, Company D would pursue it to learn more about the technology, and as a way of communicating the message that it is OK to fail, and it is necessary to test and learn.

With 50+ proof-of-concepts over the last 2 years, a success rate of around 30%, and 2-3 great ideas, Company D is now in the process of moving from test-and-learn to focus on areas where the identified innovations could be scaled up.

### Scaling Commitment by Senior Leaders as Engagement Energizers

The senior leadership team in Company D sends the right messages through their sponsorship of necessary forums and willingness to commit their team's time to these forums. They are conscious about digital efforts, and provide the right signals to ensure that those efforts percolate down.

Company D has senior leaders who are digitally savvy, and they want to lead the digital transformation and not be laggards. There is an atmosphere of friendly competition among the regions, with each one looking at the other to ensure that they do not lag behind.

# Company E

## Building an Equal and Equitable Culture

Company E is a global Internet-related service and product company. Although it has the advantage of being a highly digital company, it is challenged to retain and grow its digital mindset, to remain customer centric, and to maintain its unique culture.

### Setting Direction by being Customer Champions

Company E believes that Digital Transformation is a continuum; there is no end. As consumer/customer demand continues to grow and change, the company constantly challenges itself in all ways, whether it is with payment services, search services, media services, or with moonshots.

### Creating Alignment by being Ecosystem Builders

“Internally we do not talk about digital transformation. If we build the right culture and move faster, remove friction, build efficiency, focus on customer needs rather than company needs, that’s the recipe for success. At our company, what you do is not as important as HOW you do it. You’re rewarded for the HOW; how you collaborate is key. Actual hard results become immaterial if you are not collaborative, no matter how great a sales person you are. Roots of founders are very strong. According to them, performance hurts if focus is only on results. Culture FIRST, performance SECOND is what the organization believes in; performance is an outcome of culture at Company E”.

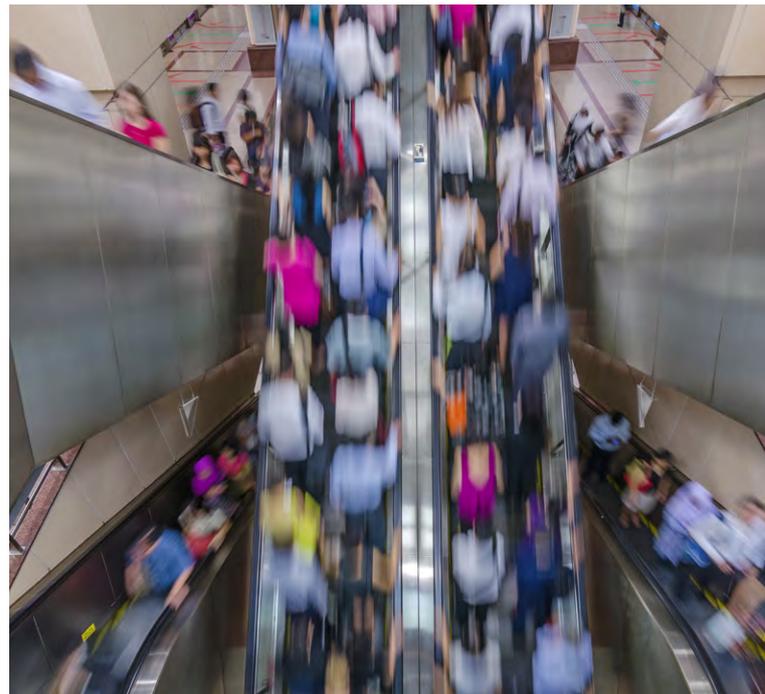
- Head of Digital Transformation, Company E

### Scaling Commitment by being Talent Makers

Company E celebrates diversity. This messaging is reinforced all the time, even during the interview process. It treats people equally and equitably.

The belief around Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in Company E may be summed up as: “You and I are treated equally, but you might need more help than me (due to diverse needs, special needs assistance, etc.). We each need to get the help we need to be successful.”

There is equality around how we treat humans, but equity around how you help them to get to the next level. Even the digital angle is approached through the EDI lens.





# MACRO SHIFTS TO IMPROVE DIGITAL LEADERSHIP IN SINGAPORE

# What must Singapore do better?

Without natural resources, the competitive advantages that made Singapore successful could be quickly eroded if digital transformation efforts are not managed appropriately. Investments in digital transformation takes time, with a slow ROI. We asked the leaders we interviewed “What must Singapore do to further drive digital transformation?” Leaders recommended three areas where Singapore must focus from a policy perspective – Education, Talent, and Support.

## 01 EDUCATION

The basis of digital transformation is the courage and the willingness to take risks, and indulge in and learn from experimentation. In a rapidly changing landscape, the readiness to prototype a solution that is not perfect, and learn from the feedback obtained is essential.

This mindset, often called "growth mindset", is best developed during early school and university education. The leaders we spoke to emphasized the need to shift mindsets of the youth from a "fear of failure" to a "confidence to experiment".

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- *Deliver experiences that develop “OK to fail” mindset in students. The school system must emphasize learning over the fear of “not failing”.*
- *Encourage divergent and disruptive thinking by exposing students to multiple fields of study, thus allowing for cross fertilization of ideas.*

“ Education is catching up, but still has room to improve. It is also hard to predict skills to prepare students in, skills that will be needed years from now. It is hard to “teach” entrepreneurship. We need people to be a bridge between technology and businesses. We need to make it clear that “OK to fail” mindset is important, and encourage youth to embrace this. It is not just about delivering the syllabus, but also about “experiences”, even starting in primary or secondary school. ”

*Digital Advisor, Food and Beverage Company*

## 02 TALENT

Policies are needed to bring in the diverse blend of talent with cross-functional skills to support local resources in planning and managing digital transformation initiatives. The global competition for a limited number of skilled professionals in this space creates significant challenges.

Leaders felt that this 'war for talent' is further exacerbated by the growing divide between the digital haves and the digital have-nots, especially in the wake of the covid pandemic. This divide is not just generational, but also a skill divide. The different levels of usability need to be addressed so that growth is inclusive.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- *Enhance psychological safety by fostering a culture of experimentation.*
- *Get top talent from abroad, and support development of local teams under their mentorship.*
- *Address the digital divide by incentivizing self-learning.*

“ The government can bring in star talent who are ready to train people so much that they are replaced by their trainees. These stars will find a place somewhere else. We need to attract people who are ready to train others for their jobs. We need to take the approach of “I will fund you to train people, but I want to see career movement in these people”. This might be intrusive, but I call it partnership. We need to track these indices. We need to build a leadership pipeline through succession planning. ”

*Group Head for Strategy and Planning, Financial Services Company*

## 03 SUPPORT

First, while the Singapore government has introduced various policies to support organizations in their digital transformation, the leaders we spoke to felt that information about the available support is not centralized. This leads to less awareness of the available avenues of support.

Second, while the government currently supports companies to transform their traditional operations into digital form, there is less support for companies that are digitally-ready from the beginning. Greater support for digitally-ready companies would help to provide a boost to digital transformation.

Third, given the size of the Singapore market, it is great for testing but not for scaling. Singapore companies need to be ready to go out, and the government can support companies to scale, not just survive disruptive technologies.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- *Enhance communication about the government support available for digital transformation.*
- *Support companies that start off being digitally-ready.*
- *Support companies to scale up to other geographic markets.*

“ We do not see many startups and unicorns in Singapore. The startup stories that we hear – Grab, Razr, Carousell, etc., are being talked about for the last 5 years. There are gaps in real transformational innovation. It is telling of the size of Singapore market itself. Many things are being done, but not at scale. ”

*Digital Advisor, Food and Beverage Company*

# CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

# Conclusion

Digital Transformation is about people transformation; with technology as an enabler. Singapore leaders report a mid level of ability to bring about digital leadership outcomes. There is a need for all-round development of digital leadership capability, with a focus on Enhancing Alignment. A higher level of Digital Leadership Readiness is possible with a focus on organization shifts on nine roles and macro shifts in three areas.

## ORGANIZATION SHIFTS

 <p><b>PROVIDE DIRECTION</b></p> <p><b>Future Seeker</b> From Events to Journeys</p> <p><b>Business Shaper</b> From Slogans to Language</p> <p><b>Customer Ambassador</b> From Technology to People</p>	 <p><b>ENHANCE ALIGNMENT</b></p> <p><b>Ecosystem Builder</b> From Secrecy to Collaboration</p> <p><b>Organization Transformer</b> From Introduction to Adoption</p> <p><b>Innovation Accelerator</b> From Achievement to Learning</p>	 <p><b>BUILD COMMITMENT</b></p> <p><b>Talent Maker</b> From Similarity to Diversity</p> <p><b>Culture Catalyst</b> From Short-term Results to Long-term Impact</p> <p><b>Engagement Enhancer</b> From Compliance to Confidence</p>
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## MACRO SHIFTS

 <p><b>EDUCATION</b></p> <p>Deliver experiences to develop “ok to fail” mindset</p> <p>Encourage divergent and disruptive thinking</p>	 <p><b>TALENT</b></p> <p>Enhance psychological safety</p> <p>Get top talent from abroad, and support development of local teams under their mentorship</p> <p>Address the digital divide by incentivising self-learning</p>	 <p><b>SUPPORT</b></p> <p>Enhance communication about the government support available for digital transformation</p> <p>Support companies that start off being digitally-ready</p> <p>Support companies to scale up to other geographic markets</p>
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# NEXT STEPS

Organizations embarking on digital transformation must initiate three actions as early as possible.

One, amplify exposure to global trends. Then set a clear direction for transformation and relate the changes that you are looking to make to your business strategy and your customer needs. Over-communicate and make digital the internal language for decision making.

Second, internally build a culture of experimentation and align rewards and recognitions to drive desired behaviors. Build, contribute to, and benefit from an ecosystem of external partners.

Third, attract and develop diverse and digital talent by creating the necessary culture using internal champions and influencers.

## COMMITMENT

- Develop diverse, digital talent
- Create a culture of trust
- Showcase digital transformation champions

## ALIGNMENT

- Create a culture of psychological safety to experiment
- Change rewards and recognition to drive right behaviors
- Participate in an ecosystem

## DIRECTION

- Amplify exposure to global trends
- Set direction and communicate the connection to strategy
- Be customer-centric

# 3-Phase Leading Digital Transformation Roadmap



Interpret Strategy

Digital Innovation

Movement

*Digital Strategy Interpretation and Execution*

*Excite, Engage and Build Capabilities with Innovative, Digitally Enabled Experiences*

*Leadership Development and Organizational Transformation*

How we do it

Through our network of expert faculty and partners, we anticipate the future and interpret digital strategies to establish a transformation roadmap to develop capability

By promoting agile ways of working, we engage in innovative, strategic leadership approaches and design-driven transformation to build skills and momentum for change

Transforming to a digital mindset requires digital leadership and new ways of working, focusing on a culture that embraces disruption and realises returns from Digital Transformation

Elements

*Digital Transformation Readiness Survey, Digital Transformation Workshops, Building a Transformation Roadmap, Digital Summits, Future Fluency Labs*

*Design Thinking and Innovation Processes, Agile Leadership, Global Digital Immersions, Large-scale Events*

*Digital Leadership Survey, Digital Leadership Programs for all Levels in your Organization, Digital Change Leadership, Developing a Digital Culture*



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Center for Creative Leadership and research collaborators thank the 198 senior leaders from Singapore for being generous with their time, views, and participating in the research.



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As Asia's leading publication and web portal for HR professionals for over 20 years, HRM Asia is a multi-platform network helping to support, educate and celebrate the professional HR community in Asia-Pacific. Across our magazine, digital content, and world-class events, we provide an array of thought-leading HR discussion and information to HR professionals and business leaders across the region.



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pymetrics is a talent matching platform that uses behavioral science-backed exercises and ethical AI to match people with the right opportunities based on their potential, not their pedigree. Our insights and recommendations equip employers with accurate and actionable information to manage the entire talent lifecycle, from hiring to internal mobility and beyond.



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Thrive HR Exchange is where global HR professionals and people leaders come together to co-create the future of work. Through global connections that foster the exchange of knowledge and fuel innovation, members find compassionate support, meaningful collaboration, and best practice sharing. Thrive HR Exchange empowers the people leaders of today and tomorrow to become agents of change within their industries.

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Somya is a Client Director at CCL focusing on enabling organizations and leaders in South East Asia and Sri Lanka to develop and practice future fluent leadership. Before this, Somya worked as a management consultant across future of work, talent, leadership and strategy domains in Asia and Africa with leading organisations, such as Aon, Hay Group, Arthur D. Little. Somya has completed an MBA from NUS Business School (Singapore) and London Business School (UK). Prior to that, she pursued Bachelor of Engineering from Delhi College of Engineering, India.

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Morgan was the editor of AmCham Singapore's publications, including the ASEAN Business Outlook Survey and Manpower Survey. She provided research and analysis for the Chamber on priority trade and policy publications. Prior to moving to Singapore, Morgan conducted policy research related to the fields of peace and security and humanitarian affairs, including fieldwork in Southeast Asia. Morgan holds a B.A. from Oberlin College in History and East Asian Studies (China), and an M.A. in Politics (International Relations) from New York University.



When done right, leadership development ignites transformational change in individuals, teams, organizations, and communities. That's why, at the Center of Creative Leadership, our sole focus is leadership development, education, and research.

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