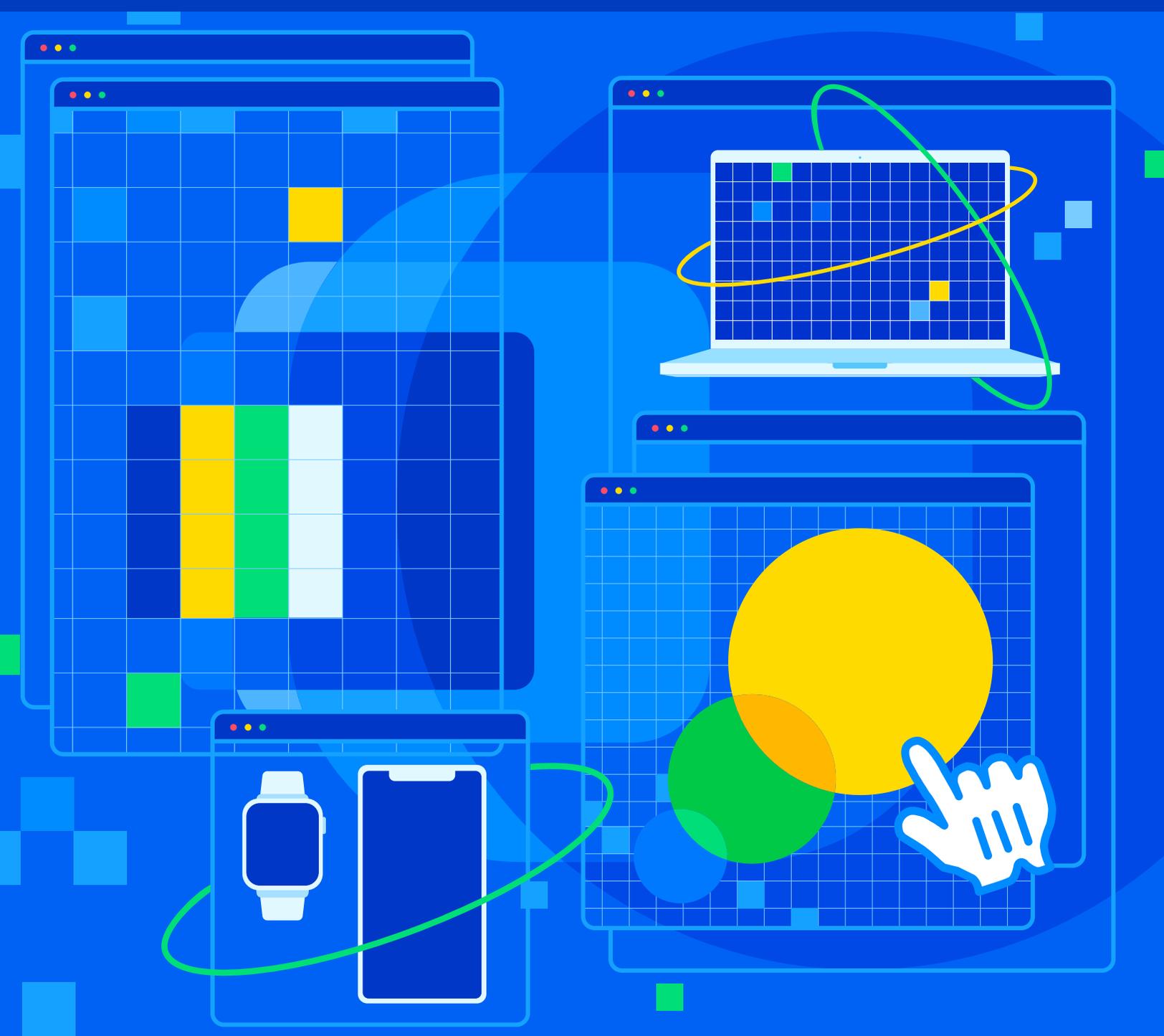




# The digital transformation maturity model

A road map with strategies for accelerating transformation to a digital-first, digital-fast organization



## INTRODUCTION

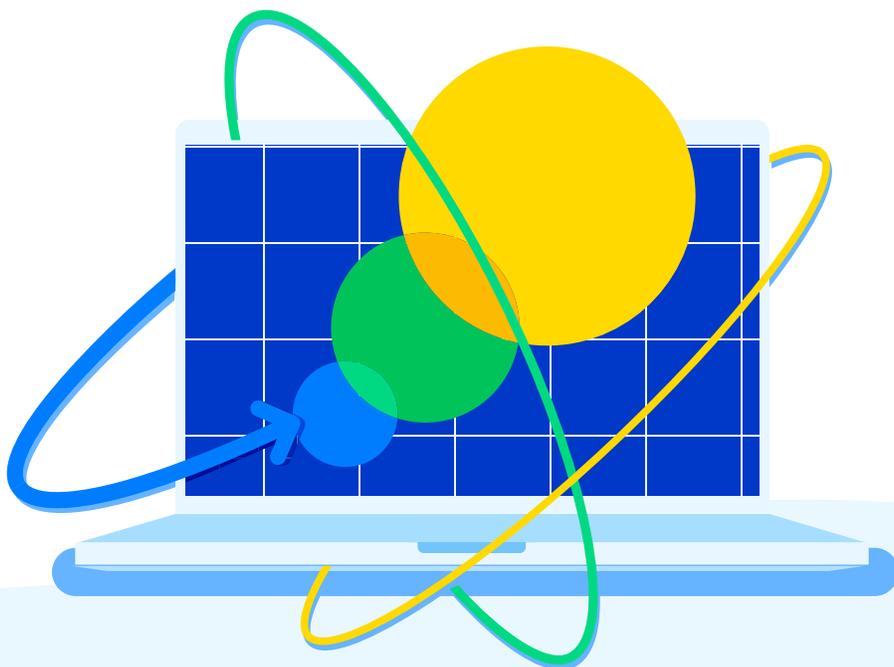
Digital transformation is how businesses are adapting to the impact of rapidly emerging technology and changing consumer habits.

When we first wrote about it, digital transformation was a slow process with a high rate of failure: 84% as reported by [Forbes](#) in 2016. There are many reasons for this, but one could argue that digital transformation initiatives lacked a sense of urgency.

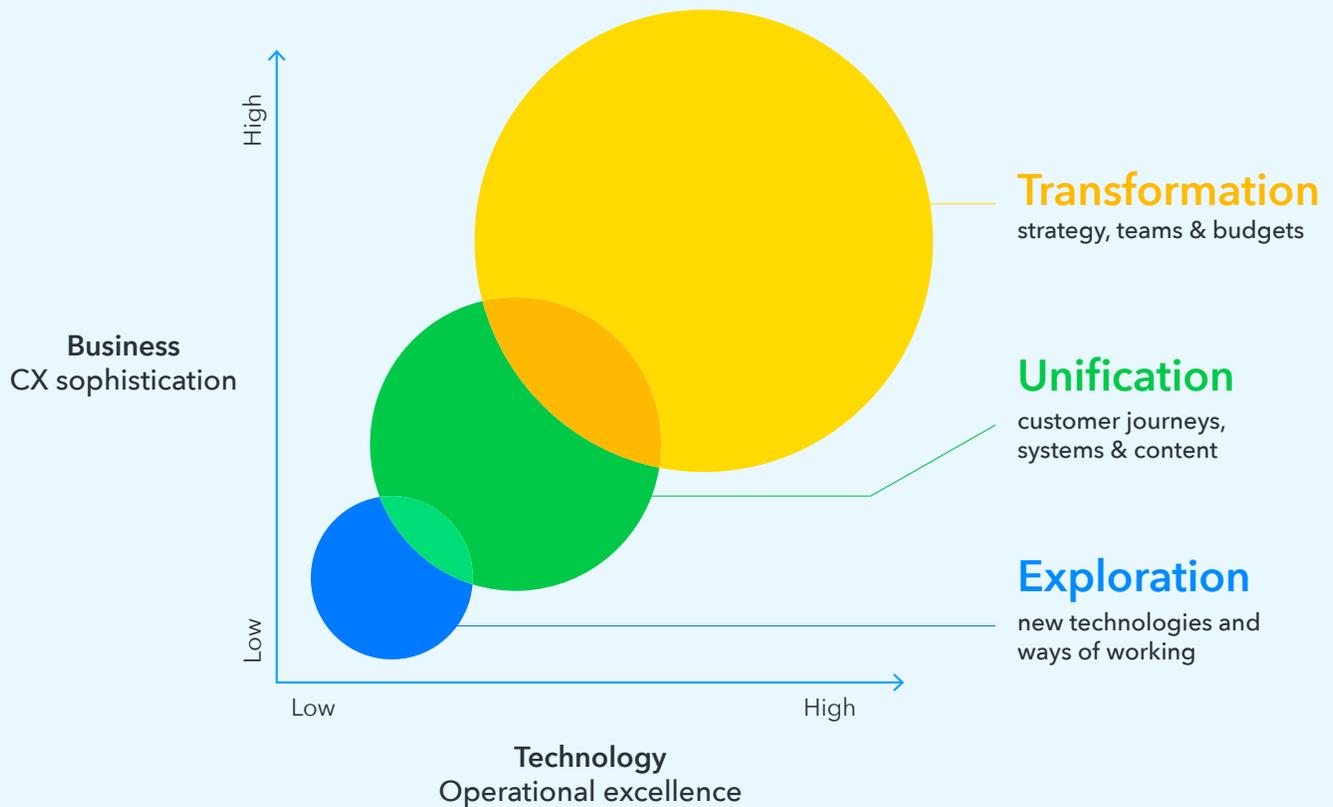
The pandemic changed that almost overnight. Digital initiatives that were on a slow roll, were suddenly needed right now. Teams had to find ways to work remotely and digital became the only way to engage with many customers. During this time, companies accelerated the digitization of their customer and supply-chain interactions and internal operations by three to four years, and accelerated the share of digital or digitally enabled products in their portfolios by seven years, reported [McKinsey & Company](#).

Digital leaders are updating their transformation plans to build on the gains they've made and things we've learned. In a survey by [TechRepublic Premium](#), 60% of respondents said that Covid-19 forced them to alter their digital transformation plans in 2020. That number increased to 62% in 2021, with 60% of respondents planning to spend the same or more on digital transformation projects.

This paper provides a framework for thinking about digital transformation. We'll break digital transformation down into three stages and provide strategies you can use to accelerate progress at each stage, as well as an overarching strategy that can provide focus across all three stages. These strategies will help you align people, processes, and technology to create a digital-first, digital-fast company that is ready for the future.



## Mapping the digital maturity journey



Knowing where a business is on the digital transformation journey helps business leaders and individuals better understand their role and where to focus their attention to effectively move forward.

To help further understand the process of transformation, we'll be mapping progress on the chart below. On the technology axis, higher values reflect increased speed, flexibility, reusability, and standardization. Moving up along the business axis denotes more sophisticated engagement, conversion, acquisition, retention, and generally improved customer experiences. The exploring phase lands lowest on both the technology and business axes.

There is no one "right way" to progress from the lower left to the upper right. Some businesses choose to invest in technology that enables more sophisticated customer experiences. Others push teams to overcome technology challenges to deliver outstanding customer experiences and then invest in tools to streamline those processes.

## STAGE ONE

# Exploration

## Signs that a company is at the exploration stage

- There is growing interest in new technologies and ways of working.
- Some teams or individuals are experimenting with new ways of achieving business goals.
- There are some innovative projects that can be used as a proof of concept to build momentum.
- Progress is happening in silos without a unified plan across the organization.

## Getting started: Push the limits and encourage experimentation

If you're at the beginning, an ideal starting point is a project that pushes the limits of your current technology stack. This encourages teams to look for new technologies and ways of working that can potentially be scaled up after an initial success.

As teams begin to push the status quo, encourage further experimentation by celebrating those pioneers, surfacing their experiments, and expanding on their successes.

## Find your champions

In time, champions for change will emerge. These champions, or "builders," as we like to call them, have the vision to see how technology and new ways of working have greater potential for the organization. They begin to build the case for enterprise-wide innovation, while simultaneously continuing to adopt new technology within their own spheres of influence.

**What's a builder? Learn how the builder ethos is driving change within organizations.**

[Learn more](#)



## Look for signs of progress

At this stage, the drive toward transformation can be top-down, bottom-up, or both. Companies might see progress along one or both axes as changes happen organically without a lot of coordination between teams.

At one organization, builders might experiment with new technology or use existing technology in new ways. They drive adoption on their own teams and begin to influence their peers, gaining more interest and support from the bottom up.

At another organization, leaders might prioritize the need for innovation and invest resources in a center of excellence to drive the organization forward, or initiate a cultural shift toward tech-enabled growth.

Progress can also be seen in cultural changes such as a changing view of technology from a cost center to an investment, a willingness to try new things, and a sense of urgency that is both customer-focused and data-driven.



## Accelerate: Build a foundation for people, process, and technology changes

To transition from exploration to the next stage, unification, organizations should move toward a formal digital transformation strategy. The following strategies can help you avoid or overcome common roadblocks and build a stronger foundation for the next stage.



### STRATEGY

#### Identify and fill skill gaps

It can be hard for companies that are just starting to invest in new technologies and digital-first experiences to find people with the skills they need. One solution is to think about skills across the company as a whole. Encourage builders to learn new skills and share them outside their own team. When hiring, think about the new skills a person brings to the company, not just the position.

[Not sure what skills you need? Take a peek at the people, roles, and skills on modern digital teams.](#)



### STRATEGY

#### Be proactive in managing organizational culture

Culture issues are often listed as a top challenge for transformation. Office politics, leaders who are too risk-averse, lack of urgency, or overreliance on what's worked in the past can make it challenging for pioneers to introduce new ways of working. Change management programs can help alleviate fears and reinforce traits that help individuals embrace change.

[Try these four steps to build change management into your transformation strategy.](#)



#### STRATEGY

### Align technology to business goals

Adopting new technologies because other businesses are using them is tempting, but choosing technology that's the right fit for your business goals and capabilities now, will help you move faster in the long run.

Think about how technology can solve a business problem or deliver more value to customers. Look for places where business and customer value overlap. Enable people to do more with existing technology through training and skill development before investing in new tools you may not need.

When you do invest, we recommend focusing on API-first tools that empower you to build a custom tech stack.

[Learn how to assemble tools that fit your business into a modern digital platform.](#)



#### STRATEGY

### Reduce technical debt

Legacy systems slow transformation by placing high demands on budgets and developer skills. We often see this materialize as interdependency between content and engineering teams. Changes that could be completed in days or even minutes, can take weeks. Marketers and editors are left frustrated by the slow pace, while developers are held back from bigger projects by a queue of requests.

[See how a content platform can unify legacy systems into a single hub.](#)

## STAGE TWO

# Unification

## Signs that a company is at the unification stage

- The business recognizes that adopting new technology and building digital capabilities is critical.
- There are huge gains in technology and skills across the organization.
- Technology infrastructure is changing. It's common to see organizations moving to the cloud, implementing more sophisticated data analytics tools, and replacing legacy systems with an integrated technology stack.
- Discussions about digital strategy are more formal and extend to the highest levels of the organization.

## Align efforts with a formal digital transformation strategy

At this stage, companies are seeing more people using technology to work smarter and faster. This is the time to start scaling successful changes across the organization and formalizing digital strategy and leadership.

A unified digital transformation strategy helps avoid the pitfalls of too many disconnected or redundant tools. Digital leaders can learn from successes and failures across teams and use that information to optimize the growing digital ecosystem across the business. A unified plan is also a first step toward realigning the organizational structure to facilitate new ways of working, break down silos, and bring builders together on cross-functional projects.

This requires a high level of executive support and a commitment to change management. At this stage, some individuals and teams might be resistant to change. Business leaders need to lead by example, cultivating a culture that is data-driven and comfortable with accepting failure as a means of learning and succeeding faster.

[Build or refine your digital transformation strategy.](#)



## Accelerate: Prioritize enterprise-wide initiatives with measurable impact

Forward-leaning organizations can accelerate their progress by balancing technology gains with strategies that help individuals and teams adapt and align on organizational goals. It's easy to mistake change for progress, but those individual changes should be coalescing into a larger strategic plan.

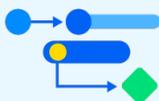
This is the time to prioritize enterprise-wide initiatives that pull siloed teams together. Focus on the big picture and keep measuring the impact of changes against your organizational goals.



### STRATEGY

#### Build broad support for transformation with big wins

Politics, egos, and fear are the main obstacles to achieving the collaboration and solidarity needed within companies to make the changes digital consumers want. Fear and risk-aversion at all levels can slow progress. Companies need to gain executive support while also creating a culture where it's safe for builders to fail as they try new technology. Implementing solutions that touch as many parts of the business as possible engages more people in transformation and helps them see direct benefits. We'll talk about the benefit of choosing an enterprise-wide function as a focal point in the last section of this paper.



### STRATEGY

#### Use agile methods to accelerate decision-making

Teams should replace long planning and procurement processes with agile methods. Traditionally, businesses used long planning and procurement processes to minimize risks. Now, the greatest risk can be moving too slow.

Accelerate the pace of change by empowering teams to move faster, experiment with new technology, and embrace failures as part of the process. Ongoing change management should focus on underlying reasons for resistance, including fears around skill gaps and changing career paths.

[New to agile? Check out these six tips for piloting agile teams.](#)



#### STRATEGY

### Choose integrated technologies to connect siloes

Businesses should focus on how technology can connect silos, integrate systems, and enable data and insights to flow freely across business units.

As the business moves toward a modern tech stack, the organization needs to seek tools that make it easy to tie the stack together. Even if teams use different technologies, they need to be integrated into a core infrastructure to prevent silos. It's much harder to go digital-first if a business is still held back by a traditional, all-in-one digital experience suite. Despite being positioned to deal with larger amounts of content and channels, most legacy DXPs are not able to easily cope with new changes or channels.

[Learn more about the modern tech stack in our web strategy guide.](#)



#### STRATEGY

### Start with the customer, not the technology

Don't forget why you're seeking to transform in the first place. Simply throwing more technology into customer experiences doesn't cut it. Think about your end goal: A better customer experience driven by engaging products, leading to increased revenue and a larger share of the market. Digital products should be created with customer expectations in mind. Otherwise, you're just adding complexity with no clear return on your investment, and your customers will run off to your competitors.

[See how industry experts connect digital trends to better customer experiences in this strategy guide.](#)

### STAGE THREE

## Transformation

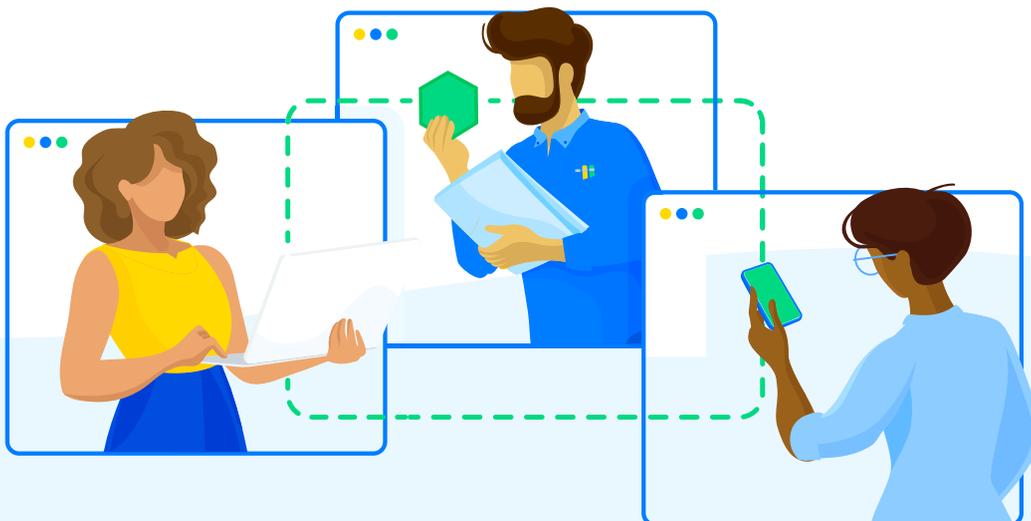
### Signs that a company is at the unification stage

- Strategy, teams, budgets, and technology are all aligned on building digital-first experiences.
- Digital capabilities extend into all functional areas of the business. Modern technologies, agile workflows, and team structures help attract and retain top talent.
- The business is unified by a flexible stack with integrated technologies that empower faster innovation and shipping.
- The company culture is customer-focused, data-driven, and forward-thinking.

### Celebrate your ability to continuously adapt

Reaching this stage is something to celebrate – you’re likely enjoying increased speed, efficiency, and a culture that embraces ongoing change. At this stage, you’ll also realize that digital transformation isn’t an endpoint. It’s the process that takes you from a slowly evolving traditional organization to an agile, tech-enabled business that can quickly adapt to opportunities and threats.

These are businesses that push the boundaries of what’s possible and are viewed as leaders in their industry. They continue to evolve their digital strategy, supported by a flexible infrastructure and a resilient, innovative culture. They don’t just focus on the future, they set the course.



## Accelerate: Apply the skills and technologies you've gained to go even faster

Companies at this stage have the people, processes, and technology to pursue bold ideas that might have seemed impossible before. It's time to start flexing those muscles with strategies that accelerate development, delight customers, and secure your position as a future-ready, industry leader. We included some examples with these strategies for added inspiration.



### STRATEGY

Keep investing in people and improving process

To keep moving forward, companies need to continuously add new skills as technology emerges and find ways to share those skills across the organization.

[Wärtsilä](#), a Finnish marine and energy company founded 1834, is using a platform created by a startup within the larger company to speed up cultural transformation. WeLeap uses gamification and storytelling to help people across the company share what they do.

[Learn more about how Wärtsilä is using content-based apps to drive transformation.](#)



### STRATEGY

Delight your customers with new products and experiences

At this stage, you should have the tools you need to anticipate and respond to changing customer demands with new products and experiences.

Established in 2003, 3 Denmark was, at first, just a phone and data plan provider. To stay competitive they recognized they had to do something different. They decided to build an ecommerce site to sell phone accessories and turned to Denmark-based IT agency [Novataris](#) for help.

[See how Novataris used a stack approach to build a site that helped 3 Denmark push past competitors in its new market.](#)



## STRATEGY

### Choose future-ready technology you can build on

You've come all this way. Make sure that the tools you're investing in grow with you – no one wants to replatform. Modular, API-first tools enable companies to start small and build agile technology stacks that evolve with them.

Notion, a San-Fransisco-born notetaking and project management tool, took this approach when they chose Contentful as an alternative to monolithic CMSes. After successfully transforming content operations, Notion extended their use of Contentful to implement a knowledge base, educational content for customers, and localization and translation capabilities that enabled them to launch Korean and Japanese versions of the product.

[See how an extensible platform made it easy for Notion to build on its technology investment.](#)

## Choose a focal point to accelerate digital transformation at any stage

Digital transformation requires companies to improve individual business functions. Choosing one function as a focal point can help businesses move through the stages faster.

Focusing on one area in the exploration stage creates a safe place for experimentation and encourages teams to develop their own best practices that can be applied to broader transformation efforts. It can also make it easier to measure progress and build momentum.

As companies move from exploration to unification, a focus area provides a logical point from which to build cross-team support for larger transformation efforts. In the later stages of transformation, successes in one enterprise-wide function can be scaled up and extended to other areas.



## How transforming content operations helped propel TELUS ahead

TELUS Digital has been the driving force behind Canadian telecommunication giant TELUS's digital maturity strategy. Early in its transformation efforts, [TELUS Digital focused on a common business challenge](#): Too many CMSes and content repositories. They chose to unify these with an agile, modern approach using Contentful's extensible content platform.

This enabled TELUS Digital to dramatically cut time to market from weeks to days in the POC. When the Apple iPhone X launched, this new architecture helped TELUS beat the competition to market – it was the only company in Canada to offer the new phone during the first 15 minutes after its release.

Continuing to invest in content infrastructure helped TELUS reach more major milestones around operational efficiency, technology, compliance with evolving brand, accessibility, security standards, and future-proofing their architecture.

[See how content infrastructure helped TELUS transform its customer care experience.](#)



## Empower builders across the business with a modern content platform

A modern content platform empowers editors, product managers, marketers, and developers in two important ways:

First, it frees up resources. Instead of copying and pasting, content creators can focus on creating content that helps your business stand out. Developers can stop acting as gatekeepers for every update, and focus instead on developing new digital products and features.

Second, it helps people to do their best work. Contentful's content platform provides intuitive tools that empowers marketers and product managers to push content, campaigns and experiences without relying on developers. Meanwhile, developers can code in their preferred language and pull content in with APIs instead of time-consuming content migrations. This helps retain developer talent and attracts new developers who want the freedom to use the best language and tools for each project.

What's more, Contentful integrates with other top tools in the modern tech stack, meaning that personalization, experimentation, localization, knowledge bases, and more all mesh seamlessly into content operations. From a small POC, to enterprise solutions with higher levels of support, we can meet you where you are on your transformation journey and help you move to the next stage and beyond.



# Learn more about how your business can grow with Contentful.

Let's talk

