

Transforming Mindset for Technological Transformation

In today's world, technologies are radically transforming our lifestyles and ways of working. Now we have supercomputer-like gadgets in our pockets, we have unlimited access to the internet, terabytes of storage, and hyper-connectivity. Digital currencies are knocking on the doors of regulators, big data is flooding big insights for decision-making, three-dimensional printing doing wonders of virtual reality, and artificial intelligence has disrupted the skill set. The pace at which all these technologies are penetrating in our lives is unbelievable, WhatsApp gained more followers in just a few months than a religion attracted its followers in centuries. Amid such disruptive trends, the survival of the business relies on getting prepared for the change and embracing new technologies. However, the adoption of technology requires realignment of business models, adjusting the business processes accordingly, and designing the strategies for human resources so that they can willingly accept and enthusiastically adapt themselves to these disruptive changes.

What should be the way forward to cope with this ever-changing, and technology-dominated environment? In this regard, first, we must analyze the drivers for technological transformation. Then, we need to determine the impacts and expectations from this transformation. If we analyze the whole process of technological transformation from drivers to expectations, we will come across a constant element of people as employees, management, customers, suppliers, and owners. The enormous challenge and boundless opportunities of technological transformation can only be handled with the coordinated efforts of all the stakeholders and partners involved in this process. Hence, without focusing on people or the human element, any attempt to technologically transform a business or organization would be suboptimal.

There are several aspects of the human element to be considered while initiating technological transformation. People associated with a business can broadly be bifurcated into internal and external stakeholders, I mean to say that the technological transformation is going to affect every individual who interacts with an organization in any capacity viz. management, employee, owner, customer, supplier, competitor or even regulator in either positive or negative way. Technological transformation may occur in processes or products. Customers are the chief beneficiaries of product-related technical changes because here technological transformation is meant to improve customer experience. Consequently, owners also reap their share of the profit. However, innovation process with the help of technology is often directed toward cost-cutting, and customer experience does not get the due focus. Technological transformation gets the

most complex of all when it is initiated in process with the view to facilitate employees.

Employee-oriented technical transformation is so delicate that even a minor overlook in planning or a minute error in implementation can have catastrophic reverberations. Such transformation encompasses not only the wide-angle cogitations such as organizational culture, management

structure, and working environment, but also notional contemplations like employee perception, attitude, willingness, and expectations. These social and psychological elements are not that easy to gauge, they are somewhat vague and not directly observable. Organizations do consider the skills, competencies, knowledge, talent, and dexterity of the employees in the course of technical transformation. But what about deeper concerns of internal stakeholders i.e. job security, sustainability of change, sense of alienation, feelings of isolation, and disruption in world view?

Let's analyze the psychological aspects of employees first. Before initiating the transformation, Companies must ascertain whether they have a suitable governance mechanism in place or not. It means that the human agency is required to assume a leadership role to envision technological transformation. In the planning phase of transformation, the company's management must rethink the whole process from end to end. At every stage, management needs to redefine the skill set, knowledge requirements, and organizational restructure, which lead companies to look for fresh tech talent, and the focus of the strategy is on their recruitment, remuneration, and retention. Less attention is given to the existing internal stakeholders. Technological transformation can influence employees' morale, motivation, and relationships with colleagues. It can also create a sense of isolation, insecurity, exclusion, and even feelings of invasion of privacy. When technological transformation takes place, there will be a major shift in the assigned tasks, JDs, KPI, and reporting line. Of course, companies hire consultants for change management and trainers to equip existing employees with new skills. But for employees, this is not just a change in the way of working but a way of thinking as well.



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There is a strong correlation between previous experience and current performance. Now the question is how the management is going to inculcate a positive view of transformation in the mind of employees. Remember that implementation of new technology seems always easy if it is thought of an isolation, but when we attach ground realities such as ways of doing work by the existing employees, it gets complicated. In this scenario, management must liaise with each employee individually. Management simply can't expect employees to accept change and adapt themselves. Management must engage employees in the process of change. One has to develop the right people-technology synchrony. Ontologically speaking, technological transformation is a new reality for employees, it requires a change of mindset to deal with it. The human resource department should expand its horizon to rehabilitate the employees in this new technology-oriented disruptive environment by engaging mentors and life coaches with employees.

Let's now come to the social factors involved in the technological transformation of a company. These factors are not limited to organizational culture, management structure, and working environment. It encompasses elements such as customer relations, competition dynamics in the market, and cultural, economic, and environmental consequences as well. While process transformation may cause a sense of exclusion for employees, product innovation may cause a sense of exclusion for the customer or rather public, provided that it results in an expensive version of the product. Similarly, cultural and environmental aspects may also be affected due to technological transformation. The impact of product innovation on customer relations would be great. Preferences and expectations of customers change as technology progresses. Here, we are not going to discuss in detail the social factors external to an organization but the internal social elements of technological transformation, especially those that are related to employees.

Organizational culture is the key to successful technological transformation. Management openness, mutual respect, diversity, and appreciation are some of the common components of organizational culture. Here, appreciation is the most relevant component as far as technological transformation is concerned. Appreciation has several ways and avenues. Recognition of efforts is more important than rewarding successes only. Companies should be ready to accept a certain degree of failure as well, and such an approach in shaping the organizational culture will create a sense of security for existing internal stakeholders. Similarly, there should be a management structure that can support technological transformation more appropriately. It should be based on cross-functional teams and

decentralization. Finally, a conducive working environment is the essential ingredient in the recipe for successful technological transformation. By conducive, I would like to say that the existing working environment should be tech-oriented so that when the transformation takes place, it doesn't seem alien to employees.

There is always a tendency to overlook the people or human element in implementing technological transformation. Such an effort will usually backfire on the organization. Coherence in the transformation strategy can only be achieved by approaching it with the spirit of 'technology for the people and by the people'. Participation of all internal stakeholders in the process of transformation holds the key to its successful implementation. Participation connects people and it results in coordination. This positive shift in the working style of an organization can be made possible by readjusting the organizational structure and enriching the organizational culture. It requires inducing a sense of employee empowerment by encouraging experimentation, continual learning, and recognition. It will have a trickle-down effect on an organization from the social dimension to the psychological dimension. Without valuing the human element, technological transformation can only be performed in a piecemeal fashion; it would rather be optimizing subsystems than optimizing the whole system. There are always psychological and social silos in the mind of employees, which can only be removed when technological transformation is envisioned and implemented by transforming the mindsets of people.

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