

# How to grow TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS

Tap into digital intelligence to create transformational leaders.

**D**igital intelligence not only describes a new set of skills and capabilities but also sheds light on the need to change behaviors and attitudes. To excel in an environment undergoing substantial digital transformation, it is crucial to understand how both dimensions contribute to achieving this kind of new intelligence. To help our leaders succeed in this rapidly changing industry, we worked with Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning to continuously upskill and reskill our employees, not just in technological skills, but in management and leadership capabilities too. The aim was to improve personal leadership, enhance strategic thinking and build an agile, collaborative culture.

It is important to understand that the distinction between the disciplines of business and



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technology, with their different approaches to way-of-working, mindsets, behaviors and cultures, is now gone. This is difficult for many people to accept because most have grown up in traditionally siloed cultures (i.e. being a deep technologist or a business-savvy person) and may have established a certain bias toward either of the disciplines. In the new world, successful teams with high digital intelligence have overcome that thinking to bring a deep integration of methodical navigation skills, architecting and digital solutioning capability, design creativity and data science proficiency to the table, so that they may shape, lead and deliver digital transformations successfully. Everybody on the team must have a sound understanding of how digital technology drives the convergence of business and operating models.

With this understanding, teams can reimagine and reinvent customer experience and relationships, shape platform services for multisided businesses and openly embark on partnering with competitors. This is essential for organizations because differentiation in a digitally transformed world strongly relies on the capability to step onto a learning curve, and then progress on this curve with speed. These new and innovative learnings cannot be imitated by your competitors as simply as they may have been in the past, giving you a competitive advantage.

**Leading digitally intelligent people**  
While having a group of digitally intelligent people leads to great business outcomes, it can be difficult to lead a team of people with these skills. People with high digital intelligence are fast in problem-solving, organize themselves easily, prefer to choose their leaders themselves, and do not accept simple top-down hierarchies and rigid leadership styles.

Leaders who want to be successful with



such teams have to become a role model for nurturing the convergence of disciplines and cultures that were siloed in the past, by applying the virtues of open management. These virtues include empathy, openness, sharing content thoroughly, the appreciation of multiple viewpoints, a passionate approach to ideation and designing almost everything for the inherent capability of continuous change. Teams appreciate being challenged by being asked for diverse opinions and viewpoints, so challenging them shows recognition and appreciation for them while benefiting from hearing others' perspectives. As an outcome, you will be able to have a better and deeper understanding of the problem to be solved to all team members, allowing you to foster and increase the "digital reputation" of the team.

If you want to step up to become a successful leader in this environment, to harvest new talents and career opportunities, you also have to try your best to get a strong understanding of these new technologies. Watching and listening to your younger employees is a good place to start. For example, if you're asked to create

a new product yourself, consider visiting the technologists on the ground, actively listening to their comments and concerns. Even as a senior leader, you can make use of reverse mentoring.

In order to become a highly accepted leader with real followers among digitally intelligent people, you should be both passionate and clear on purpose, focus and direction when leading your team through digital transformation challenges. Take the lead in shaping digital initiatives and be keen to focus on real transformational approaches with recognized lighthouse character, so that your people know why they trust you. Also, be willing to manage in uncertain terrain. There is a significant likelihood that something will come around the corner with disruptive momentum which could shake your ecosystem. With your people and a high level of digital intelligence, you will be prepared for anything. ■

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