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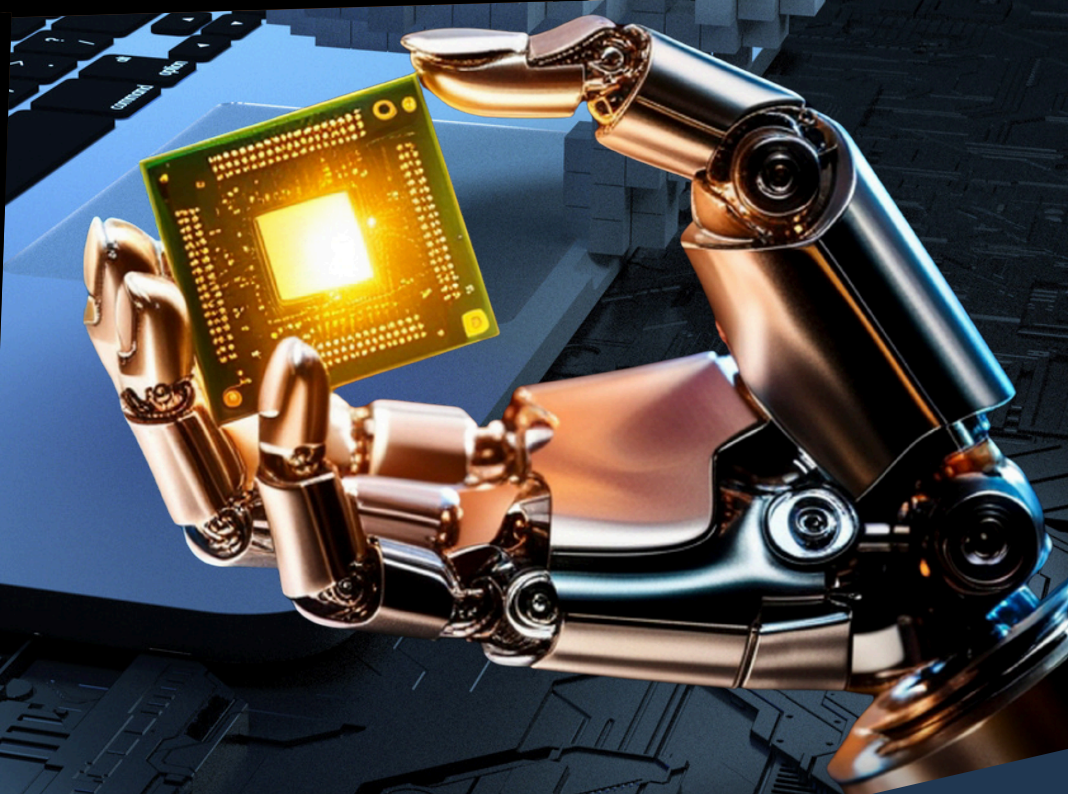


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DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: A MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE, NOT A TECHNOLOGY PROBLEM

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INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation is a strategic imperative for organizations aiming to improve efficiency, competitiveness, and service delivery. Despite the widespread adoption of digital tools, many transformation initiatives fail to achieve the expected outcomes. This suggests an important reality: digital transformation is not merely a technological issue, but also a management challenge that requires strong leadership, governance, and organizational alignment.

MANAGERIAL CHALLENGES

Digital transformation entails the incorporation of digital technologies into organizational processes, frameworks, and business models. However, research consistently shows that technology alone does not drive transformation. Vial (2019) emphasizes that digital transformation is a complex organizational change process that reshapes value creation and operational logic. More recent studies further emphasize that successful transformation requires alignment between strategy, structure, and culture (Kraus et al., 2021; Verhoef et al., 2021). Organizations that focus primarily on acquiring advanced technologies without addressing these managerial dimensions often experience fragmented implementation and low adoption.

Leadership

Leadership remains a critical factor in driving successful transformation. Recent studies emphasize that leaders must ensure strategic alignment and cross-functional coordination to support digital initiatives (Verhoef et al., 2021). Managers play a key role in ensuring that digital efforts are not treated as isolated IT projects, but as part of a broader organizational transformation. Without effective governance and ownership, technology adoption risks becoming disconnected from business needs.

Change Management

Change management and workforce engagement are equally critical. Kane et al. (2015) highlight that organizations with digitally mature cultures prioritize learning, adaptability, and collaboration. Employees may resist change due to uncertainty or skills gaps, making

managerial support essential for training, communication, and cultural alignment. Leadership commitment bridges the gap between technological potential and organizational capability.

In Malaysia, digital transformation initiatives in government systems illustrate both success and ongoing challenges. The MyGovernment Portal and *Whole-of-Government* initiatives have improved the accessibility and integration of public services. These successes demonstrate that managerial coordination, governance, and strategic planning are pivotal in achieving meaningful outcomes, not technology alone (MyGovernment Portal, 2025). Conversely, reports of fragmented adoption across ministries highlight persistent institutional and governance challenges. While technological platforms exist, the lack of unified processes and data integration limits the overall effectiveness of digital public services (Juwono, 2025).

Information and Data Management

Data and records management further reinforce the idea that transformation is a managerial challenge. High-quality, well-governed data is essential for analytics, automation, and informed decision-making. Poor governance undermines even sophisticated digital systems, highlighting the importance of integrating information and records management into strategic planning (Verhoef et al., 2021).

Ultimately, digital transformation requires managers to rethink how work is organized, how decisions are made, and how value is delivered. Technology acts as an enabler, but management determines whether transformation efforts translate into sustainable organizational change. Organizations that treat digital transformation as a leadership and management responsibility are more likely to achieve long-term benefits rather than merely short-term technological upgrades.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Several important lessons emerge from these examples. First, strong leadership and a clear strategic vision are essential, as digital transformation success depends heavily on managerial alignment and vision (Sebastian et al., 2020). Second, organizations must invest in workforce capabilities, as digital maturity is closely linked to employees' skills and adaptability (Nadkarni & Prügl, 2021). Third, robust governance and data management practices are necessary to ensure that digital initiatives generate sustainable value (Verhoef et al., 2021). The Malaysian government case demonstrates that technology enables transformation, but managerial alignment, coordination, and cultural readiness ultimately determine success.

In the Malaysian public sector context, these lessons suggest that while digital platforms are increasingly available, their effectiveness depends on coordination, policy alignment, and consistent implementation across agencies. This reinforces the argument that digital transformation is ultimately a management challenge rather than a purely technological issue.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, digital transformation is fundamentally a management challenge. Technology acts as an enabler, but leadership, governance, and organizational capacity are the key drivers of sustainable and meaningful outcomes. Organizations that approach digital transformation as a strategic management responsibility, rather than merely a technical

upgrade, are more likely to achieve long-term success.

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