Making Digital Happen – an agile mindset is needed in all aspects of operations and institutional cultures

The Covid-19 pandemic might very well be the catalyst that drove broad-based digitisation and spearheaded the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

CAPE TOWN, WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA, October 19, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Covid-19 pandemic might very well be the catalyst that drove broad-based digitisation and spearheaded the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). In coming years we might look back on this pandemic as the 21st century's ultimate watershed moment in technological history, inasmuch as it has fast-tracked the widespread permeation of digital transformation throughout society.

The recognition that digitisation is our new reality is driving forward-thinking tech companies to explore innovative new angles and find opportunities to expand, and emerge stronger and

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more diversified. As remote ways of working and socialising have become our "new normal", a fertile breeding-ground has emerged for the development of new digital tools and innovations.

Prashaen Reddy, a partner at management consulting firm Kearney, believes that harnessing this momentum and prioritising digital transformation will assist governments to transition away from resource-based economies, and into the knowledge-based ones of the future .

In Europe, the spotlight has leaned towards bridging the digital divide and achieving equitable digitisation while in the Middle East the logic of digital transformation seems to be already infused within the legislature around many high-profile state projects .
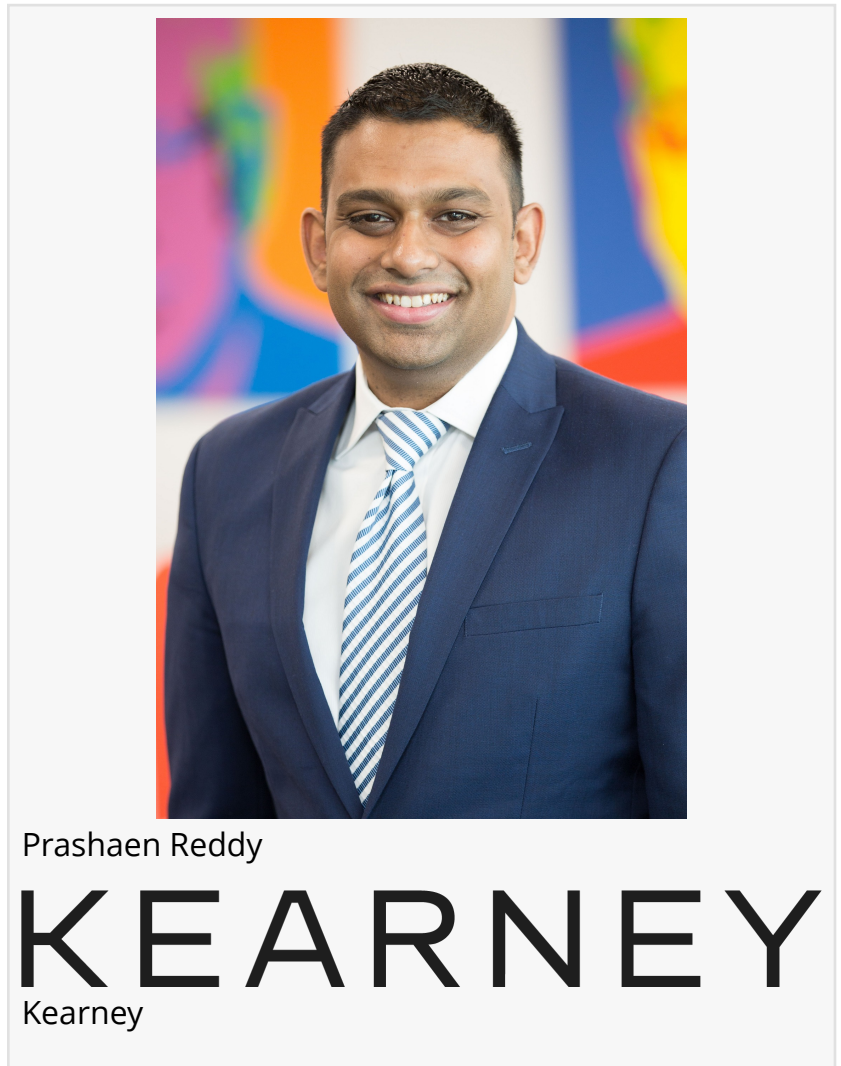
> **"** Transformation can't happen overnight but is rather an exciting journey towards a more resilient & promising tomorrow. Every one of us now stands to be up-skilled in exciting new fields of expertise."
>
> *Prashaen Reddy*

According to Kearney, UAE's government has made a powerful demonstration of its commitment to digital transformation by announcing that 50% of its service centres would be converted to digital platforms within two years, empowering it to make faster decisions, adapt more effectively to change, and better capitalize on emerging opportunities'.

Reddy adds that, in Africa, several nations have shifted their focus to ICT to accelerate economic transformation, thereby driving sustainable growth and alleviating poverty .

"South Africa's Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution has been established to increase the influence of digital on the economy by working on infrastructure and resources, research, technology and innovation, human capital, industrialization, and policy and legislation," he says.

The considerable investments that have recently been made by global tech giants like Microsoft and Amazon into cloud infrastructure and internet services is a testament to the rapid pace of technological change on the African continent, where cloud-based service space is expected to blossom in the next few years .

However, while digital transformation has long been a logical and progressive goal of many a government and organisation, adoption has often been slow. While legacy thinking and bureaucratic cultures will put a dampener on change, according to Kearney, the four key challenges to reaching digital transformation are, limited organisational buy-in; gaps between ideas and execution; failure to scale; and, minimal commercial impact.

Reddy offers some potential solutions: "By cultivating the nimble, highly reactive mindset required to bring about digital transformation, those organisations struggling to make the leap will find themselves able to compete with the agile disruptors who are currently thriving in the 4IR".

Kearney's Digital Control Tower methodology provides a map for profitably navigating this transformation. Unlike the micromanaging, backward looking PMOs of yesteryear, this conceptual tool enables an efficient convergence of all the core business functions that make digital transformation happen. The 'hard and soft blocks'-based approach of this methodology captures and combines effective models for strategising around the commonly expected obstacles along the path to prosperous digitisation .

"An agile, entrepreneurial mindset that is fluid and responsive within all aspects of operations and institutional cultures is a sure-fire way to swiftly and profitably gain a foothold in this newly digitised business landscape." Reddy suggests

The Control Tower approach brings an agile methodology already used to remarkable effect by global players like Spotify and Netflix to legacy organisations, by tailoring and implementing ideas like design thinking, digital factories, agile sprints and minimum viable products (MVP) . This will allow smaller firms to utilise these cutting-edge concepts that are the hallmark of this nimble, highly adaptive methodology.

Reddy explains that this methodology will assist governments and businesses to navigate these issues by building inclusive, participatory frameworks that bring in new talent while without excluding those with legacy knowledge of the organisation.

"Cocreation is key, and as such the Control Tower methodology allows for a collaborative space in which all stakeholders are involved in the journey of digitisation from the very beginning . Cocreation of digitisation projects that are mutually beneficial ensures widespread stakeholder buy-in, as well as the patience to see projects through when value realization is not immediate."

"The aim is to engender the best experience for everyone involved," explains Reddy "and the need to digitise must be balanced with tradition, because at their core, most businesses' functions are not inherently digital."

However the methodology has also been used to overcome recruitment and resource challenges, by attracting and retaining internal talent, and assisting with specialized outsourcing. Organizations are now embracing efficient and profitable digital transformation along with the new skill-sets it requires.

The Digital Control Tower approach eliminates both the hard and soft blocks by allocating the appropriate financial and human resources and providing complete visibility of the overall digital transformation program progress. Critically, this approach clears the blocks like financial approval processes, and outdated partner selections that are estimated to throttle approximately 80% of agile teams.

"In this paradigm, Venture-Capital (VC) style stage-gate funding replaces the cumbersome annual budgetary funding of the past , and is thereby better aligned with the agile methodology and can be constantly revaluated, and fine-tuned based on the success or failure of individual MVPs," explains Reddy.

There is now enormous impetus to innovate radically and rapidly so that we can not only survive, but thrive and 'build back better'.

Digital transformation is an iterative process of constantly executing practical scalable projects,

taking the right risks and fluidly moving forward, with experimental steps. The benefits of digital transformation are enormous and expressed through more effective public healthcare systems, enhanced environmental custodianship, and even more importantly the empowerment of people.

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