

The Time is Now for Digital Transformation in Your A/E/C Firm

Introduction

It has been said that your organization can either drive digital transformation, or digital transformation will happen to you. Clearly, a more proactive stance on this matter is ideal. But what exactly is a “digital transformation”, and why is it so critical to today’s architecture, engineering, and construction (A/E/C) firms? This brief whitepaper will introduce you to the concept of digital transformation, provide specific examples of how A/E/C firms can use technology to transform their business, and describe how Microsoft is leading the way in helping A/E/C firms drive these critical digital transformation initiatives.

What Exactly is Digital Transformation?



In the hyper-competitive A/E/C space, staying ahead of your competition is the key to survival in the new digital-first world. Simply put, digital transformation is the process of finding new ways to bring together people, data, and processes to create value for your clients and maintain a competitive advantage.

Digital transformation can take many forms, and each firm's specific digital transformation strategy will be driven by unique circumstances related to the specific markets you serve, services you offer, and other factors. But, in the end, all digital transformation initiatives share a common thread – they leverage disruptive technologies to reimagine how you will win new business, deliver your services, and perform critical administrative and operational processes in the future.

Why the Time is Now

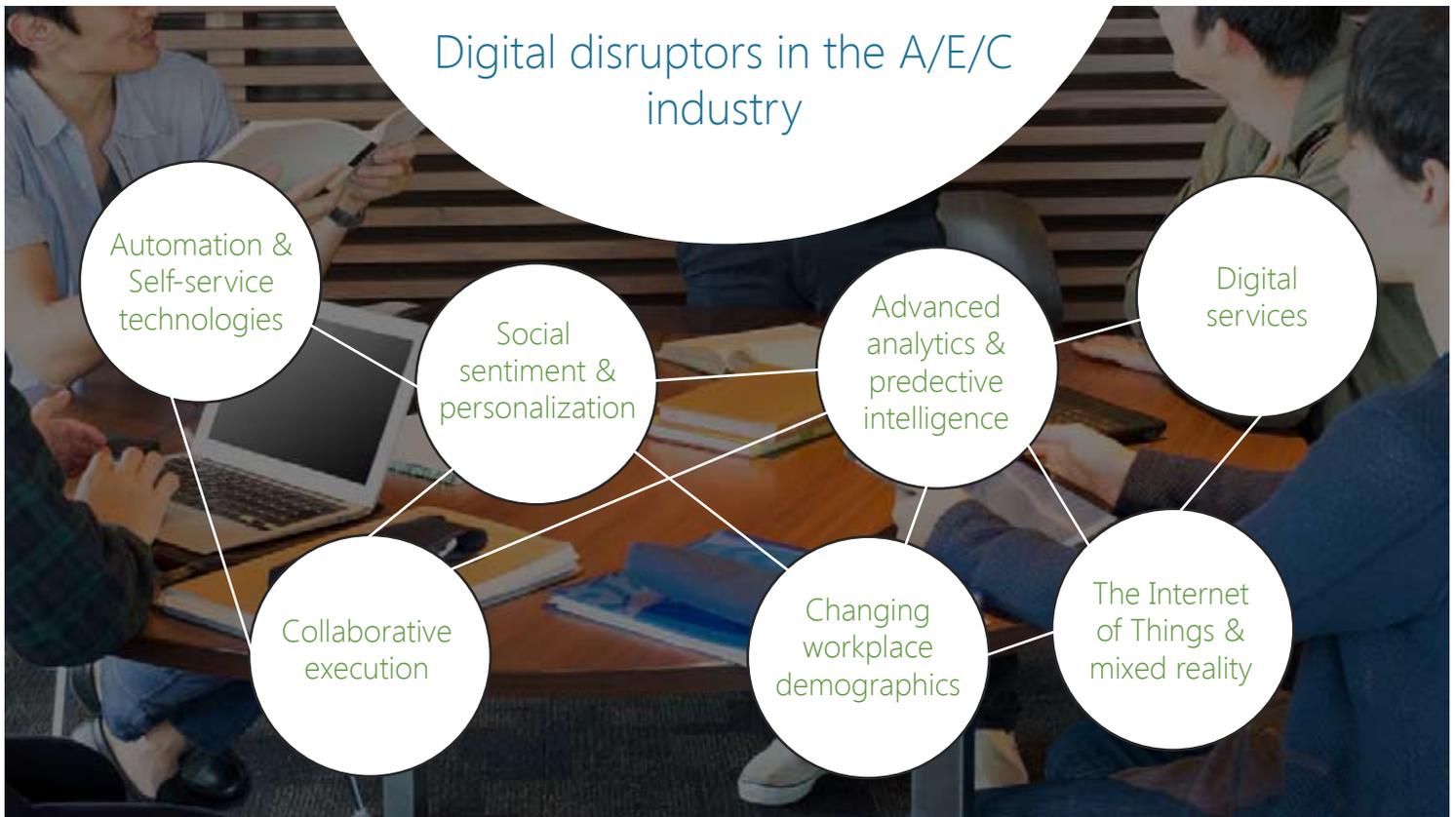


If you perceive the A/E/C market to be a slow-paced, “old school” industry that’s resistant to change, think again! Consider that today, only 60% of the 20 largest firms from the ENR Top 500 list from just five years ago are still intact in their original structure! As market dynamics evolve, customer contracting patterns change, and mergers and acquisitions accelerate, firms are looking for new ways to distinguish themselves from the competition and grow their business. Leading a digital transformation within your firm can help you do just this!

The recent emergence of “digital disruptors” provides A/E/C firms with new opportunities to better understand client and business needs, provide differentiated service offerings, more easily pursue new opportunities, and transform how you do business. A few examples of these digital disruptors include:

- ✓ Advanced analytics – the use of big data, little data, the Internet of Things (IoT), and cloud-based machine learning technologies to collect unprecedented levels of data and improve insight through advanced analytics and predictive intelligence capabilities
- ✓ Virtual reality – emerging technologies like the HoloLens that are transforming the design experience by offering virtual reality design environments
- ✓ Collaborative execution tools – new collaboration platforms that bring together teams from inside and outside your firm to share knowledge, documents, and collaborate on deliverables

- ✓ Changing workplace demographics – the emergence of the next generation of workers who have come to expect consumer-oriented and “app”-like technology experiences, as well as pervasive mobility, all woven within a social context



Examples of digital disruptors in A/E/C

While these disruptors can be intimidating to many firms, they also provide new opportunities for forward-thinking organizations. Facilitated by data and the cloud, firms now have the ability to dramatically improve insight across all aspects of the firm, leverage this insight to develop new services and revenue streams, and collaboratively make strategic decisions that move the firm forward.

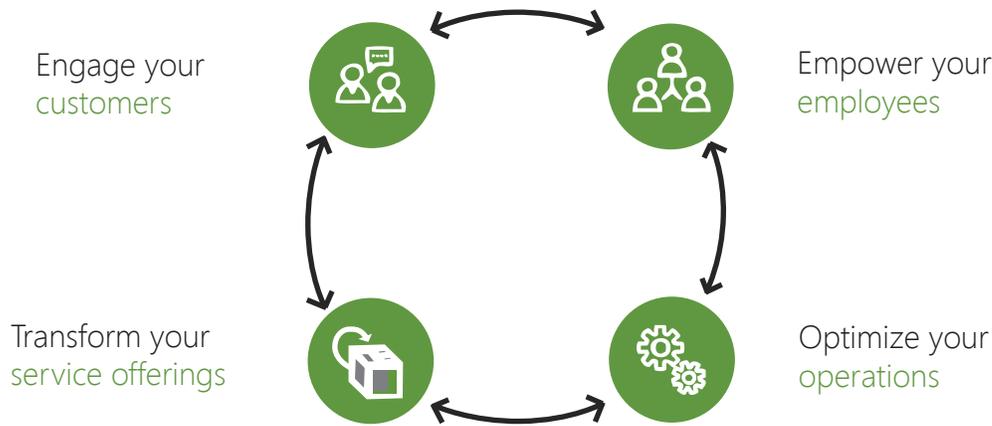
How A/E/C Firms are Driving Digital Transformation

The discussion around digital transformation can be broken down into several categories, and can be described as the process of reimagining how your firm will do the following in the future:

- ✓ Engage your customers
- ✓ Empower your employees
- ✓ Optimize your operations
- ✓ Transform your service offerings

Digital Transformation Pillars in A/E/C

Redefining how your firm will:



Four pillars of digital transformation in A/E/C

More specifically, the following examples illustrate specific measures A/E/C firms can take to drive this transformation across their business.

- ✓ Engage customers in new ways
 - Combine data from ERP and CRM software systems, market data services, and social channels to gain a true 360-degree view of your clients, leveraging these insights to provide differentiated service and support
 - Collect data from new sources (such as monitoring social media sentiment) to analyze feedback, better anticipate client needs, and proactively engage your clients
 - Leverage technology to develop automated and self-service offerings that increase client engagement and satisfaction
 - Employ collaborative CRM tools to more effectively pursue new opportunities, bring together cross-functional teams, share knowledge, and more quickly assemble proposals and respond to client RFPs
- ✓ Empower your employees
 - Deploy tools that facilitate the highest levels of employee productivity and collaboration across all core business functions, and within the context of today's preferred consumer and social paradigms
 - Provide employees with pervasive mobility for gaining anytime, anywhere access to critical business data to speed decision making and accelerate business processes
 - Utilize Human Capital Management systems to develop talent, optimize employee performance, and build the necessary skills required to thrive in tomorrow's world
- ✓ Optimize your operations
 - Deploy tools and systems that automate non-value adding activities and improve operational efficiencies to reduce the cost of service delivery
 - Leverage repeatable assets, knowledge, and processes to drive down costs, improve service quality and consistency, and accelerate time-to-value
 - Employ intelligent resourcing tools to find best-fit resources, avoid scheduling bottlenecks, and balance utilization levels across your firm
 - Provide project managers with the tools they need to gain real-time project visibility, complete projects on time, and "wow" your customers

✓ Transform your service offerings

- Create new and differentiated service offerings that attract new clients and generate additional revenue from existing clients
- Leverage the cloud and advanced analytics capabilities to develop new, data-driven services using tools such as the Internet of Things and machine learning
- Don't limit revenue streams to traditional consulting services! Increase client connections by creating new, recurring revenue streams and subscription services such as data collection, monitoring, and analytics services

How Microsoft is Enabling Digital Transformation



Microsoft is at the forefront of the digital transformation discussion, actively engaging with leading A/E/C firms to help them reimagine how they can leverage disruptive and emerging technologies to transform their business. With the rapid growth and innovation of Microsoft Azure-based cloud services (IoT, advanced analytics, machine learning), the pervasiveness of Office 365 technologies, and the continued evolution of Microsoft's Dynamics 365 ERP and CRM software tools for A/E/C firms, dreams of digital transformation are now a reality.

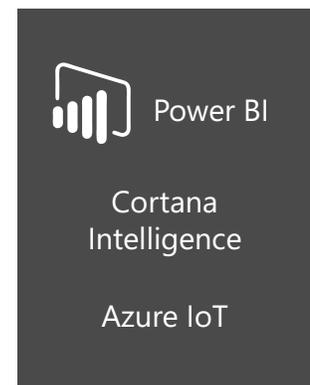
Microsoft Technologies for Digital Transformation

Broad suite of cloud-based tools to drive digital transformation

Microsoft AppSource



Microsoft Dynamics 365



Common Application Platform: PowerApps, Microsoft Flow, Common Data Model

Microsoft Technologies for Digital Transformation



As this graphic illustrates, the Microsoft cloud provides many opportunities to leverage industry-leading technologies to drive digital transformation. The key elements of this strategy include:

- ✓ Empowering Employees with Microsoft Office 365 – Microsoft’s cloud-based productivity and collaboration suite goes far beyond the traditional Office applications like Excel, Word, and Outlook. Office 365 provides a comprehensive platform where you can leverage Office Groups and SharePoint for internal and external team collaboration, Skype for Business for integrated communications, Delve and Yammer for knowledge management, and other innovative tools to empower your employees and drive productivity and collaboration across your firm.
- ✓ Engaging Clients and Optimizing Operations with Microsoft Dynamics 365 – Microsoft’s state-of-the-art Dynamics 365 ERP and CRM applications, tailored by their consulting partners for the A/E/C industry, provide a complete set of functionality to manage all aspects of your firm’s business, helping you to engage clients in new ways while, at the same time, optimizing your operations.
- ✓ Empowering Employees and Transforming Services with Advanced Analytics – Microsoft’s groundbreaking BI and analytics tools provide advanced data visualization and exploration capabilities through Power BI to empower employees to take immediate action to achieve optimal outcomes. And Azure IoT (Internet of Things), combined with Azure-based machine learning technologies, can provide data collection and analytics capabilities that help your firm develop new services and revenue streams, thereby transforming your services.

Only Microsoft can provide the full range of mobile-enabled, cloud-based productivity and collaboration applications, business management systems, and analytics tools necessary to successfully drive digital transformation in the A/E/C industry.

Summary

In summary, there’s no better time for your firm to start redefining how it will do business over the next 5 to 10 years. Many opportunities now exist for your firm to leverage technology to better engage your customers, empower your employees, optimize your operations, and transform your service offerings. Here’s to success on your firm’s digital transformation journey!



Let’s talk



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