

# LeaderShift in a Digitally Transformed World

By Joe Hunt

*Collaboration between all functional verticals is imperative in the organization's quest to digitally transform. Best-in-Class organizations don't just collaborate, they integrate and synergize. IT and marketing are at the epicenter of this digital convergence.*

I remember when Big Data was the new business driver. That was 2015. Now, it's barely a buzzword lost amongst the multitude of variables driving the accelerated digital transformation all organizations must make to survive. At its lowest common denominator, digital transformation is about interacting completely differently with customers, having more data, and using that data more effectively. Digital strategies can enable more accurate and deeper insights from data, which in turn, enables a better experience and new ways of engaging customers. IT and marketing departments must form a united front to properly develop and implement transformative digital strategies.

It's no trade secret or competitive advantage to know that chief marketing officers (CMOs) and chief information officers (CIOs) must work closely together. It's common sense, but as we all know, common sense is not always common practice. In the most progressive customer-focused companies, best-in-class CMOs and CIOs are taking collaboration to the next level.

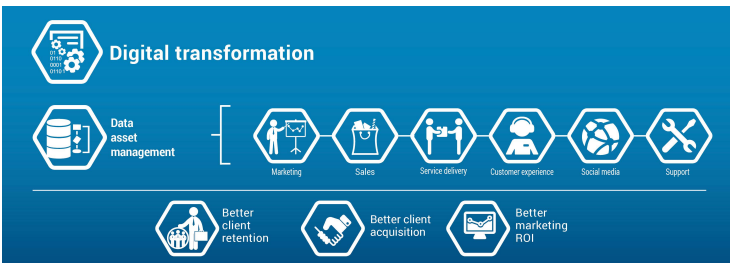


By integrating their teams to the point of intentionally overlapping the boundaries between their respective departments, CIOs and CMOs can best pioneer the pursuit of company-wide goals. As more enterprises create hybrid teams and roles, the technology and marketing leaders of tomorrow are living in both worlds, seamlessly integrated.

Digital transformations are fundamentally changing the way organizations do business. Customized solutions are being deployed not only in what have historically been consumer-led businesses, but also in B2B organizations that historically have been led by operations and sales.

## Customer-led Digital Speak

For years, CMOs and CIOs each spoke their own unique language. This was an obstacle, as brand-driven marketing conversed in ideas, while technology tended to be process driven. In many instances, marketing and technology were adversaries competing against each other for project prioritization and associated capital.



Today, best-in-class CMOs and CIOs have developed fluency in each other's language. CMOs demonstrate appreciation for what technology can do, while CIOs have developed business acumen and understand the need for customer-centric solutions. Marketers' and technologists' bi-lingual speech development has also enabled a hybrid language that's closely aligned with the overall business enterprise goals and priorities. The outcome of which becomes a product greater than the sum of its parts:  $X+Y=>\Sigma$  (cute, huh?)

A deeper relationship between marketing and technology has evolved with a sense of urgency to harness the power of digital technology to drive customer-centric business solutions. Mutual needs drive accelerated collaboration, and one of the benefits of seamless marketing-technology collaboration is an enhanced ability to create customer-centric solutions using a high level of analytics and more granular segmentation that is well beyond traditional customer relationship management (CRM).

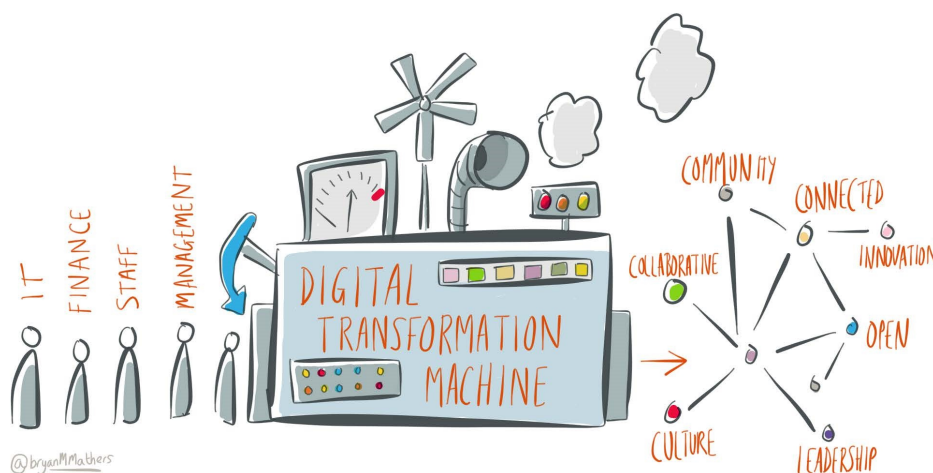
## Integrating Hybrids

Creating cross-functional fluency starts with awareness and education. The CIO and the IT team educate marketing about what's possible by using technology, data, and analytics. These tools can create more interactive and targeted marketing to drive higher customer engagement and retention. The CMO and the marketing team help IT understand the business value of having the right data, as well as greater market expectations for speed, transparency, and personalization.

Each side brings out the best in the other, with mutual strengths and complementary skills that overcome weaknesses. IT needs to appreciate marketing's know-how and understanding of the customer, while marketing must appreciate IT's capability to translate customer requirements into effective and efficient solutions. Marketing brings the voice of the consumer and trade, and pushes the need for speed, flexibility, and avoidance of one-size-fits-all solutions. IT brings skills in project management, discipline, alignment, redundancy avoidance, clear processes, and strategic streamlining.

Creating the customer experiences of tomorrow will require even deeper level of team partnership. We find that someone from IT needs to be included in marketing discussions to make sure what was being asked for can be delivered. Conversely, it's not a bad idea to have a marketer in an IT leadership function - someone who has great technical acumen but also understands the consumer perspective.

Through close engagement, marketing and IT jointly project the voice of the customer to the organization. Together they “speak” with the authority of customer data to illustrate how to positively improve customer experiences. Thus, financial and technical resources can be more readily committed in support of strategic imperatives. Hybrid teams are most effective when they are formed to achieve specific, challenging objectives. This kind of enhanced collaboration happens when teams are given the mandate to operate beyond the narrow scope of their respective functions and technical expertise. Such focus on big picture goals leads to enterprise-wide transformation.



## Building Effective Teams

While we recognize that it is important for CMOs and CIOs to develop, lead, and ultimately integrate their teams, paradoxically, these leaders have a crucial blind spot and difficulty getting work done through others. Our experience is that CMOs and CIOs may not always be the skilled managers/leaders of people they think they are. To be best-in-class in the digitally transformed world, these leaders must be committed to continuously develop and improve their skills to build and manage effective teams - especially teams capable of the kind of collaboration that brings departments together seamlessly and fluidly.

Best-in-class CMOs and CIOs who can partner most effectively share a common mission, and jointly celebrate the milestones achieved. They exhibit learning agility, a capability that enables leaders to succeed in tackling new challenges and situations. As research has demonstrated, learning agility is a highly desirable capability at the most senior level as well as within the teams that work across the enterprise. Learning agility enables teams to tolerate ambiguity, handle and even create necessary disruption, and innovate in ways that take advantage of a changing environment to create new business solutions. Among IT and marketing professionals, learning agility is a crucial strategic capability that enables thinking beyond their functional areas of technical expertise.

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In the next generation of marketing-IT collaboration, there will be no distinction between marketing and technology. Instead, they'll exist in the same department and with the same leader. The result is a matrixed organization in which IT has been embedded within the commercial (marketing and sales) operations. Combined, these functions will have greater understanding of how to carry out enterprise strategy and enhance the customer experience.

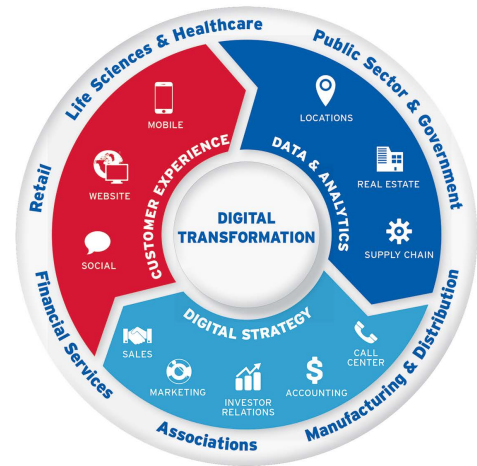
### LeaderShift Matrix

Beyond marketing-IT teamwork, there can be a greater degree of affiliation that brings together multiple business units and functions. In this context, the marketing-IT integrated team becomes the first “axis” in an organizational “LeaderShift matrix” in which diverse entities are closely aligned. Developing an idea or launching a new product might bring together R&D and marketing, with technology providing data. Finance and legal may team up as a joint venture is being formed or an acquisition is being made. Or, Supply and sales might actually solve the omni-channel conundrum.

The result will be collaborative, deeply integrated ecosystem that is supported at the top of the organization. A technology literate CEO can make all the difference in the world and will soon be a requisite competency for the role. If there is enough pressure coming from the top, the whole organization will be able to advance the benefits of a synergistic CMO-CIO alliance.

When efforts are fully integrated, initiatives are no longer labeled technology or marketing projects.

Instead, such endeavors are organized to support the realization of overarching business strategies, and are viewed as organizational requirements and achievements. Teams come together fluidly as they add their capabilities to a particular project, driving innovation through the company stage-gate or next level modus operandi born from the synergism.



### Digital Lexicon Endgame

In today’s digitally transformed world, CMOs and CIOs must foster a culture of collaboration that creates alignment within and among their teams to drive enterprise-wide results. Both functional leads need to be tied into the company culture and working toward the same end goals. If the leaders are working well together because they are looking at the same goals, then their team members will follow suit.

World-class CMOs and CIOs are partnering to the point of intentionally blurring, even erasing, functional boundaries. This approach is imperative for implementing data-driven solutions to address heightened customer expectations and the complexity of today’s extremely competitive and fast-moving business environment.

For those who are no longer content with talking about change, best-in-class CMOs and CIOs offer a powerful example of what it takes to drive change and win in a digitally transformed world.

Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) and delayering is permeating every organization. Many people still think it's a passing fad rather than the permanent metamorphosis it is. Successful leaders must embrace these changes, evolve with the times, and be willing to - in a word - **LeaderShift**.

**Hunt Executive Search** understands today's digital disruptors and knows what's necessary for traditional consumer brands going through digital transformation. If your organization needs help orchestrating its own **LeaderShift** in this or any other realm, give me a call.

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