

Getting unstuck: Redirect your implementation strategy

U.S. Viewpoint

CGI



The 2020 CGI Client Global Insights* revealed that both business and IT executives interviewed cite “becoming digital” and “IT modernization or integration” as the most impactful trends in their industries. Executives also report “managing cultural change” and “legacy technology or agility constraints” as top challenges. No wonder that the lack of significant improvement in achieving digital strategies reported (with only 12% seeing success) has raised expectations for measurable returns on project investments.

Fast forward to today...

- Unprecedented challenges and opportunities face all industries as they navigate through the global pandemic.
- Many companies have retooled overnight, relying on digital channels, remote working and collaboration tools more than ever.
- Pressure to respond, rebound and reinvent in the midst of massive change has reset expectations and heightened the need for progress.

With extraordinary speed, agile organizations have adopted new ways of working, evolved their business models, developed new products and services, expanded their supply chains and pursued alternative distribution channels. Many of these transformative initiatives, which normally would take months and years, were accomplished in just a few weeks.

The last few months have shown us that developing a culture of innovation and organizational agility has never been more important – and the sense of urgency never greater.

The traditional linear approach to large-scale implementation projects must yield to new ways of thinking, especially during times of rapid and unexpected change. Even for those organizations who struggle to achieve agile at scale, blending old and new approaches can help transformational programs get unstuck and moving in the right direction.

Each year, CGI leaders meet face-to-face with business and IT executives across the globe to hear the trends affecting their organizations and the implications for their business. In 2020, nearly 1,500 executives across 10 industries around the world participated in these in-depth, in-person interviews. The findings from our conversations provide a valuable global antenna that helps both our clients and CGI identify and benchmark industry best practices.

A fresh approach to systems integration

In the past, well-established delivery teams could apply best practices and a waterfall approach repeatedly and effectively to minimize risk. Maintaining operational excellence took priority over innovation, and IT could control and monitor the pace of technology change. In a steady state environment without major disruptions, organizations naturally defaulted to a process-driven, predictive pattern. Innovation took a back seat, or happened in pockets, making enterprise-wide transformation a significant challenge.



Today, project stakeholders have little tolerance for systems integration (SI) initiatives that:

- Focus on the wrong problem to be solved
- Perpetuate disconnects between the business and IT
- Force teams to toil over hundreds of unnecessary requirements
- Create reams of documentation that no one reads
- Fail due to poor collaboration between developers and product owners
- Leave cultural barriers and resistance to change unresolved

An adaptive hybrid approach provides the best of both worlds, reducing pressure on organizations who may not be fully agile in their pursuit of achieving business outcomes.

Projects based on traditional methodologies that take months or years to deliver functionality will no longer be acceptable. Neither will the pressure to manage the Triple Constraint – requiring tradeoffs between time, cost and scope as an “either/or” proposition that forces teams to:

- Deliver faster, or increase costs or cut scope
- Increase scope, or increase costs and time
- Reduce cost, or cut scope and time, and quality suffers

However, an adaptive hybrid approach can ease that tradeoff pressure, balancing costs, schedule and scope of delivery through:

- Iterative development to deliver solutions the business wants and needs in progressive releases that avoid big-bang disappointments, over-runs and catastrophic risk

- Human-centered design (HCD) methods to create an experience that truly matters to customers and end-users
- Management of change to knock down cultural barriers and ensure enterprise-wide adoption and competency

Traditional SI approaches based on decades of best practices have an important role to play – providing a stable foundation for operations to develop the adaptive skills essential for organizational quality and agility. Innovation and operational excellence do not need to be mutually exclusive goals. An adaptive hybrid approach provides the best of both worlds, reducing pressure on organizations who may not be fully agile in their pursuit to achieve their business outcomes. Transformation can happen at a pace that works for them.



Frozen in place – avoid getting stuck

When the stakes are high and the challenges deep, SI projects run the risk of getting stuck – defaulting to methods that have worked in the past and operating within silos, often leaving projects frozen in place.

Organizations are challenged to:

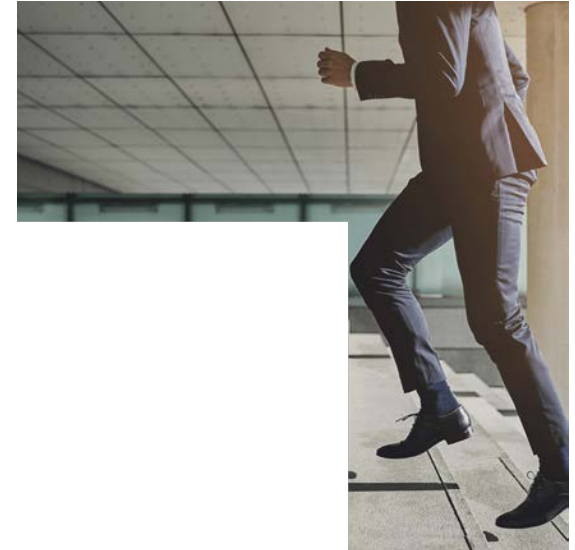
Create alignment and foster collaboration early on – As programs grow larger, with more at stake, it is human nature to become more insular and revert to what has worked in the past. When complexity is introduced, pervasive collaboration is required to resist inward focus and perpetuate silos. Delivery teams must engage in purposeful and disciplined discussions to gain agreement on desired outcomes and the journey for getting there.

Embrace integrated planning – In a culture that has depended heavily on legacy systems, processes and centralized control, distributed teams and resources require orchestration at an executive level, to ensure independently empowered teams are driving towards the same outcome.

Assemble the right team – SI projects require empowered leaders who are available to make informed decisions and drive progress during significant change. As an example, in the case of an ERP implementation, the temptation to automatically assign the finance director with an already full plate as project lead doesn't allow for balance between managing the day-to-day work and making project innovation a priority.

Promote situational learning to mentor and grow ambassadors and cohorts of change agents. Traditional training won't build the organizational capacity and knowledge transfer required for cultural change and successful implementation.

Mitigate risk – Maintaining an issue log with hundreds of entries isn't an optimal risk management strategy. Through a macro view of the project's risk profile, time is best spent proactively monitoring and managing the top issues that may derail the initiative.



The best of both worlds – apply a hybrid approach

For many, the answer lies hiding in plain sight.

With complex SI projects, organizations need a modernized approach that will allow them to focus on the right problem to solve, adapt to change quickly and provide the best business value and experience for users. An implementation approach should build organizational agility, based on agile principles and incorporating elements of human-centered design, to improve the user experience and manage change. These complementary disciplines should be intrinsic to every aspect of project delivery.

While some organizations may have embraced these principles in silos,

many have yet to apply them to traditional SI projects. However, can systems development projects leverage these principles without being “all in?” An organization needn’t be fully agile-enabled to see tremendous benefit. It’s possible to set aside the quest for agile purity to explore middle ground through a hybrid agile and traditional approach. A hybrid methodology, tightly coupled with the following tenets, will best support SI initiatives to achieve better outcomes, especially during tough times.

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1

Infuse your implementation with a spirit of agility

Apply a “spirit of agility” to projects, not only from a development perspective, but also to drive the necessary cultural change required for successful adoption. In an environment driven by uncertainty, room to adapt, adjust and address new challenges must be fostered. A waterfall approach, while acceptable for steady state or slow change, fails when the rate of change outpaces the ability to react and adapt to mitigate risk. Iterations of configuration, verification, adjustments and validation are essential to keep pace with potential changes and alignment with goals.

2

Win a popularity contest with your users

While many solution providers have made major investments in product development to improve the user experience, few have applied human-centered design principles prior to implementation to ensure the right functionality is actually delivered. Matching a long list of requirements that may be obsolete or no longer needed to product features is not an effective place to start. Innovation is impossible to achieve simply by mimicking the routine processes of the past.

The human-centered design process more accurately identifies how the user performs their work according to their unique role in the organization and to build a process based upon business need, not initial system features. This creates a deeper understanding of user needs and current pain points that will be addressed through the new solution, independent from the technology selected. Business issues and bottlenecks are uncovered early, and resolved more easily.

An added benefit – early engagement of users builds an understanding of what cultural barriers may lie ahead and establishes a ready reserve of ambassadors to facilitate change when its needed.



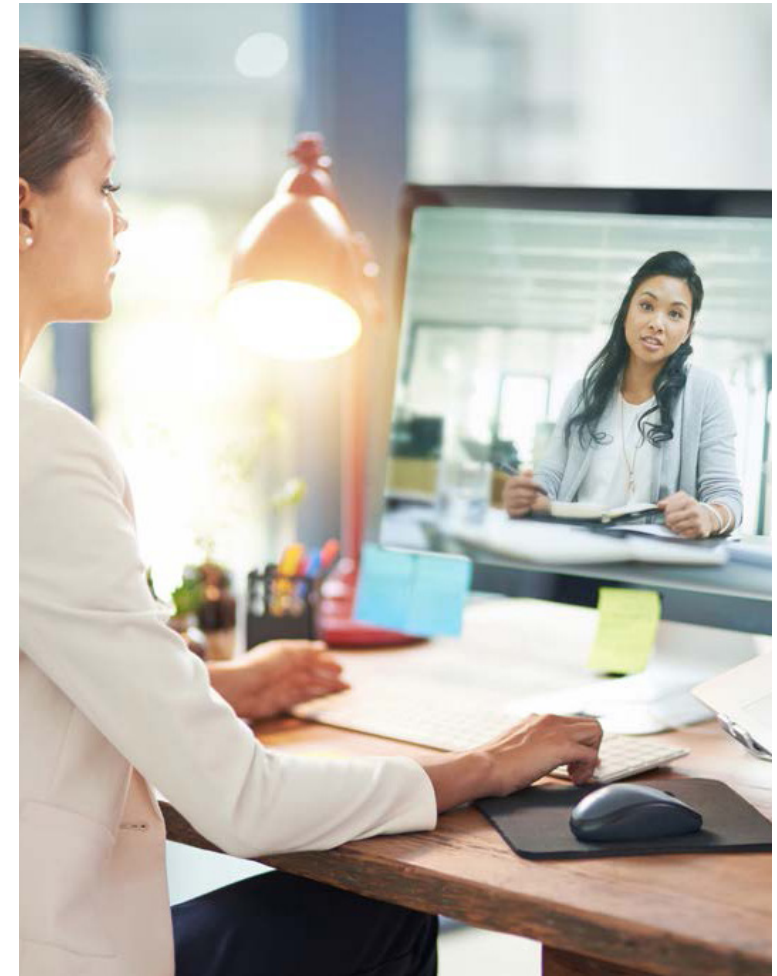
3 Embrace, don't resist, change

In the 2020 CGI Client Global Insights*, 84% of executives cite cultural change and change management as a top challenge. Organizations aren't getting stuck as much on the technology, but rather on the human elements of transformation required to gain optimal results.

Like human-centered design, organizational change management disciplines and resources must be initiated at the outset and embedded in the project. If not, project teams will resist the new way of working and will revert back to old processes and behavior, stifling innovation.

Proactively establishing a forum for agile and human-centered design collaboration within the project team and across the organization from start to finish will ensure all are working in concert and with an eye towards innovation. Change management should never be an afterthought, or reduced to a line item that can be cut. Management of change happens on the first, and every day, of the project – not starting on day one of go-live.

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Discover the path that's right for your organization

Initiatives that simply reengineer obsolete business processes and ignore potential innovations represent lost opportunities for the business.

The evolving nature of technology necessitates more than one path for implementation. A hybrid approach of agile and traditional practices, complemented by change management and human-centered design, breaks down organizational barriers and generates innovation-seeking conversations that will build a roadmap to organizational agility.



Shaping what's next

For organizations looking for a hybrid approach, CGI offers a project execution methodology to achieve a more streamlined delivery. Organizations can preserve the “best of” traditional SI methodologies but also incorporate agile, user-centered design and organizational change management principles. We are your partner in seeing around corners – discovering and co-creating with you the most relevant and effective business and IT solutions that are next, as part of an end-to-end strategy. By multiplying the sum total of our experience and sitting together on the same side of the table with the challenge in front of us, let's discover and imagine your digital future together.

This viewpoint is part of CGI's “Getting unstuck” series on how organizations can overcome the challenges related to becoming digital.

*Source for all statistics: 2020 CGI Client Global Insights



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Insights you can act on

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We are insights-driven and outcomes-based to help accelerate returns on your investments. Across hundreds of locations worldwide, we provide comprehensive, scalable and sustainable IT and business consulting services that are informed globally and delivered locally.

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