

The digital transformation opportunity starts with you

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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“ We become what we behold. We shape our tools and then our tools shape us - Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan ”

Accenture Digital MD Wayne Hull used this quote to open his keynote on ‘Leading in the new’ at this year’s IAB Summit, which took place on Thursday, 30 May at the Joburg Theatre in Braamfontein.

While new digital tools are critical, it’s new practices, new norms, new regulations, new principles and ultimately new models that we have to accelerate to make the digital transformation opportunity real, and a lot of these decisions are in our hands, he said.



Wayne Hull

Photographer: Rikki Hibbert

He looked at digital transformation through three critical lenses:

- **Customers:** “In the digital world, everything starts from the digital customer.” The question here is: how do we, together as an industry, bring remarkable experiences to our customers?

- **Business:** How do we harness new ecosystems? “Not new partnerships – partnerships are much more transactional. Yes, we both win, but really, we’re in this sort of tennis relationship. An ecosystem is where you co-create together, where you share IP together, where you share assets together and ultimately where you can win together.” And then, how do we build a frictionless business or platform economy?
- **Society:** Why do we want to accelerate digital transformation? “Ultimately, we want to create a society that’s better for all. A society where growth prospers. And a society where individuals ultimately get better lifestyle services.”

The digital customer

- **Hyper-personalised engagement**

Hull said that the expectations of the customer are so rapidly evolving that they’re becoming liquid. “The experiences that customers are getting from channels and products and services and brands across industries start to become their normal expectation, and the benchmark gets risen every time they have a great experience.”

- **Access instead of ownership**

The second principle of the customer is that it’s no longer around ownership. “It’s much, much more around access,” he said. People would prefer to access products and services and pay as you go.

- **Experiences instead of products and services**

Likewise, digital customers would rather move to where great experiences happen. According to research undertaken by Accenture, 50% of global business leaders prioritise experience as a defining attribute for the digital customer. “Not the advertising industry, not the CMO, the business leader. So, we have to be able to build capability, teams, insights to be able to respond to this attribute that digital customers are expecting of us, which is just building amazing experiences.”

Silence is golden

“In the digital world, things are super noisy. In Fjord, our design business, we talk about silence is golden... Never before have customers disengaged, deleted and unsubscribed as much as they are today.”

“ *Organisations must learn how to offer value to users who crave quiet in a noisy world. – Silence is Golden, Fjord Trends 2019* ”

So we need to learn to meet our customers where they’re at.

Hull referred to MTN Chat with its ‘lightning-quick recharge’ as an example. “We’re working strategically with MTN and Clickatell and MTN did a very innovative silence is a golden moment with their customers. They chose the WhatsApp channel as a means for their customers to do their recharges. This was a first for mobile operators worldwide.”

They choose WhatsApp because 49% of mobile users today use the app, and out of that, 15.5m are MTN customers. “They have a direct voice to their customers to be able to enable this business service, and they did it in a channel that’s a super utility, super easy to use and very personal and direct to their customers.”

It was easy to use, it was lightning fast, it was hyper-personal and there were 100,000 users in the first week. “This is the opportunity that gets created when we go directly to the customer in a very personal, easy, high-utility way.”

The frictionless business

A frictionless business is one that works across boundaries and companies and one that leverages and shares important assets that are not necessarily only yours but that are also in your ecosystem, Hull explained.

“Traditional partnerships are no longer going to suffice to be able to deliver on the mandate that the digital customer is expecting of us. We’re going to have to work very differently with our suppliers, strategic partners and our competitors, and we’re going to have to come up with a different way of operating together because it’s going to require that in order to deliver on what the customer ultimately is expecting.”



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Operating in an integrated ecosystem and platform economy

We are going to have to integrate. “We’re going to have to leverage, we’re going to have to share, we’re going to have to work out how we jointly monetise and ultimately we’re going to have to be able to integrate with partners and suppliers as we’ve never done before.

“This is the basis for what the world is now calling the platform economy, and this is probably the next big step in the African digital economy.” He said we have a few platform examples, but to really accelerate digital transformation in South Africa and Africa, the platform economy has to become prolific.

These are some attributes of the platform economy:

- **Refresh the ecosystem by forming new partnerships**

Traditional partnerships are not going to cut it. “Our ability to build an ecosystem where we share and leverage and jointly gain and jointly lose is really what it’s going to be about.”

- **Share all ecosystem data and processes**

Data has to be shared. “How are we going to share data with our partners, our suppliers, our customers, our competitors? How are we going to create a central digital file? And how are we going to work out a way that we regulate this in a secure and private manner equally to how we need to be able to monetise and benefit from this?”

- **Ensure seamless integration into core platforms**

This has to be seamless. “This can’t be clunky, it can’t have regulatory, monetary and process complications. It has to be seamless so that we are able to respond to the customers liquid expectations.

“The underpinning component of the fourth industrial revolution is our ability to build platforms, and more importantly our ability to operate in a platform economy.” So, he encouraged delegates to lean into it. “Lean into this, don’t shy away because every small step you make in your space of work pushes this platform economy forward, and if we don’t push the platform economy forward, we cannot build the foundation for the fourth industrial revolution... It’s not about the macro, it’s

about what we can do.”



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As an example of this platform economy, another strategic client of theirs, Hull referred to the South African Rugby Federation, which is at the intersection of sport, media, content and entertainment and in this case, the customer is essentially the fan. “They wanted to go from 500,000 quite disengaged digital fans to 2m fully engaged South African rugby fans. And to do that they had to build an ecosystem... and they had to be able to integrate this in a way that the fan can digest it when they want, how they want and also get the content they want in the format that they like it.”

The unlocked society

Hull believes this lens is the most critical. “Why is digital transformation important in society? Why do we have to be the accelerators? Ultimately, what’s the benefit going to be for society?”

Digital technology is going to be very active in education, healthcare, agriculture and at an individual level for citizen services in terms of access, and all of these will change people’s lives and hopefully make a significant impact in terms of the environment and the society we live in, he said.

The following are fundamental building blocks for us to evolve and transform society through digital transformation:

- **Develop digital infrastructure and unified access to physical connectivity**

The first one is around accessibility and affordability, which is the responsibility of service providers and government. “We have to be able to provide infrastructure and digital connectivity to the lowest common denominator at the most affordable price if we really want digital transformation to transform society.”

- **Collaborate to unlock the value – form public-private partnerships**

We have to form new types of relationships between government, business, communities and individuals. There needs to be a joint responsibility to work out “how we regulate, how we share, how we look after privacy, how we manage security, how we bring this to a rural environment, how we bring this to a more high-end infrastructure environment, how we bring this to an entrepreneur, to a corporate. Together we have to work out how we do this”.

- **Allocate capital for investment in digital tools, technologies and skills**

There will be an immense need for new skills, new tools and new ways of working, so we need to create an environment that develops this and start at the primary education level. “How do we bridge the digital divide at that starting point, so that people become immersed in the new technology and tools – not only the kids that are in an environment that allows them that affordability, but more that it becomes almost like a standard in the way that young kids, school kids and then adults start using digital tools?”

- **Address new digital skills and training requirements**

Hull believes there will be more jobs but that they’ll be different. “There will definitely be more jobs if there is more growth.” He said the reason there aren’t more jobs at the moment is that South Africa has grown at 0% for 5 years, but societies that have embraced digital transformation have accelerated economic growth and if you accelerate

economic growth, you create more jobs, he explained. “So irrespective of AI and robots, I still believe based on research and experience that we will create more employment, but it will be very different.”

This is why we need to make sure that we have the skills to respond to the different types of roles that will be required. “And once again, particularly in a country like ours, we have to bridge the digital divide. We cannot create skills for certain segments of society. We have to create skills for all segments of society, equally... and if we get this right and we start building new skills, we’ll have a whole next generation of very talented people ready for the digital economy.

All of us in some way or form can move the needle in getting people ready with the new skills for the digital economy. “This might sound like someone else’s responsibility, but every single one of us can move the needle when it comes to education and digital skills training in some way or form.

“You don’t have to be ‘a coder’, but you have to be very familiar with coding.

“So, we can start in our house, we can move to the school, we can move to the community, we can move to the business and then we can move to the economy.

Hull shared an example of their work with an NGO called Codex. They’ve invested R15m and have committed to hiring 20 coders (at least) a year. “We want to be able to move the needle from 20 to 2000 to 200,000 over the next few years... We’re starting small and it’s humble, but we have this real passion and desire in that we believe that coding skills are going to be fundamental tomorrow in the digital world.”

“Digital transformation has the ability to unlock R5tn of value in South Africa across multiple industries. If we unlock a proportion of that R5t over the next 10 years and plus, we will add incremental economic growth to South Africa. We’ll move the needle... And if we do that, we will change South Africa.”

“ “SA could generate up to R5 Trillion by implementing as few as 96 digital initiatives over the next decade” -

[@wayne_hull @AccentureACTIVE #IABSummit19 pic.twitter.com/hvnmWUaDS](#)— Kyle Fraser (@Kyle_Fraser) [May 30, 2019](#) ”

His final question was, “Whose responsibility is it to ultimately accelerate digital transformation in South Africa?” And his message was that digital transformation starts with you.

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