

The building blocks of digital transformation

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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When Instagram was bought by Facebook in 2012, it was only two-years old and comprised 13 people. The startup used their digital smarts to change the concept of photography as we knew it, and it paid off - a total of \$1 billion in fact.



Anthon Muller, executive head: enterprise mobility pre & post sales, Vodacom Business.

Kodak, by comparison, at one point employed a whopping 140,000 staff members. The one-time industry giant, established in the 1800s, filed for bankruptcy protection in 2012 and today has a market capitalisation of less than \$1 billion. Kodak's fall from grace now serves as a stark warning of the peril that awaits companies that don't adapt to digital change and embrace the technologies that come along with it.

"If you're not going to digitally transform your company and adopt new technologies, you're going to go out of business." These were the words of Anthon Muller, executive head: enterprise mobility pre & post sales for Vodacom Business, at the Cape Town ICT Summit this week. He spoke on the current business buzz-phrase 'digital transformation', which he says needs to be decoded into simpler terms that are applicable to all levels of business – from SMEs, to government and multinationals. According to Muller, SMEs equate to approximately 55% of South Africa's GDP, so it's especially important that they are digitally enabled and that it's made more affordable for them to do so.

Enterprise mobility 101

Part and parcel of digital transformation is enterprise mobility. If you're in the dark about what this means Muller gives the following definition: "enterprise mobility is the set of tools that need to be adopted in order for [digital] transformation to occur." These technologies, he says, are needed to remain competitive, by improving products and services, as well as streamlining business processes within the organisation.

Transformation needs to extend to the individual as well. Muller asks the question: "how are we as employees transforming as individuals to adapt to the jobs of the future?" We have a personal responsibility to adapt our skill-sets accordingly and acquire new ones.

A rough guide

Muller offers the following key considerations when embarking on a transformation journey.

Culture and leadership: Yes, the big back-end systems and data centres are important, but digital transformation ultimately begins with [company] culture. If business leaders and senior executives don't have a good grasp of the concept it won't filter down correctly to employees. It's not the sole responsibility of the CIO either. Leadership needs to buy into digital change and invest in it.

Creativity and design thinking: Get creative! How have you done business up to now, and how are you going to do business going forward? Can anything be changed for the better? The answer is probably yes. It's important to note that these decisions cannot be made by the executive board in isolation, because the really creative ideas often sit with one's employees. The creativity is there, but a think tank needs to be created so that the innovation can be harnessed.

Balance – inside and out: Transformation can't only be worthwhile for your end customers. Internal systems need to be considered as well. How can digital transformation be used to make things simpler for employees? It must be remembered that a company that is digital on the inside also attracts new talent, namely the AlwaysOn workforce that thrives working from just about anywhere. Flaunt your digital wares to attract the right talent.

Holistic approach: Look at digital transformation as a holistic process and approach it as such. There's no quick fix, and doing a patchy job will inevitably result in problems down the line. Remember, it's a journey.

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