



Financial Services, Digital Transformation and Covid-19

Description

Are your managers ready to lead the digital transformation in your business?

If you believe the managers in your business have what it takes to lead your digital transformation, you're in the minority. Most businesses aren't so confident. A recent survey found that three quarters of boardrooms feel their senior people are not up to the task.

And little wonder: there's a whole range of skills that leaders need to apply in order to manage remote teams, align technology to business strategy, and develop the agility and flexibility essential to driving transformation. If you want someone to do the job, you've got to give them the tools.

Upping the ante

The financial services sector was on a journey of digital transformation long before Covid-19 struck. Driven by changing consumer demands, the threat from fintech disruptors and an increasingly challenging commercial environment, the high street bank of today is very different from that of even a few years ago.

But the pandemic has raised the stakes again. What had been a drive towards greater efficiency and an improved bottom line has become an existential crisis for some. Many businesses will not survive; others will emerge weak and vulnerable.

The firms that will survive and thrive are those with the leaders to drive the changes required to harness the advantages offered by digital. And while knowledge of new technologies will be essential, so too will be the ability to lead colleagues through change and disruption.

Leadership in a digital world

Digital transformation has forced us to reimagine our products and services; it also demands that we reimagine the role of the leader. Take the case of Danske Bank which recently announced plans to change how its staff work, in an attempt to address customers' digital demands.

Under the new model, teams known as 'squads' will answer to customers, not management. Squads will be organised into 'tribes', or collections of squads, that contribute to the bank's business strategy. Leading this sort of set-up is an analogue world away from managing a traditional team.

Remote working doesn't mean remote leadership

Thousands of employees have been sent from the workplace to work at home. Danske told 19,000 staff to work remotely, and the post-Covid plan is that they will continue to work from home at least one or two days per week. Barclays and Tata Consultancy Services have announced similar intentions.

The role of leaders is crucial if we are to make the 'new normal' work. And it will be no easy task. On the one hand they must create a productive and flexible work environment; on the other maintain the energy, enthusiasm and social connection that comes with having a physical workplace and team.

While we can't predict exactly what the future of remote working looks like, as my colleague [Dr Ian Stewart](#) notes, we can predict the human needs that drive us. The desire to feel part of something bigger than oneself, to feel in control, to feel a sense of recognition – all of these apply in the workplace, whether you're in a traditional office or a remote setting.

Managing a remote team means managing those needs. Leaders need to find ways to create a virtual watercooler where colleagues can share and bond, ways of recognising team members' achievements publicly, and ways of giving – and being seen to be giving – responsibility and autonomy.

Ill-prepared or ill-equipped leaders are the biggest single threat to successful digital transformation, and effective and sustainable working practices. Financial services need to invest now to remove it.

At [Kaplan Performance Academy](#) we understand what it takes to lead a successful team, which is why we have developed a solution that brings together three essential elements that are integral to the success of any organisation. The combination of these elements will help you to support a digital transformation at scale by:

- Providing engaging learning content in a variety of modalities – videos, animations, job aids, articles, podcasts, and so on.
- Integrating online coaching – to support individuals in their personal and professional development.
- Utilising assessments – to ensure managers are engaged in supporting the learning.

5 ways you can support digital transformation

As a business leader in your organisation, here are five things you need to consider now. Ask yourself:

- Do my team members have the tools they need to thrive in a digital world?
- Am I investing in the development of my team to cope with the speed and amount of change

happening around them?

- How will I lead my team remotely?
- Does my team have the effective and sustainable working practices required to operate as a remote unit?
- What is my version of the virtual watercooler?

The clock is ticking

The changes we have seen to consumer habits, social behaviours and working practices are here to stay. Making sure leaders are properly prepared to lead in the new environment should be top of the agenda in every boardroom across the financial sector. The long-term future of the business may well rest on how well it is led over the next few months.

[Kaplan Performance Academy](#) is a digital environment that hosts and co-ordinates learning, coaching and assessments. It provides all the tools to create and choreograph learning and development programmes to meet specific business needs at scale and at pace. Listen to Andy Perkins tell the extraordinary story of its genesis [here](#).

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