

Editorial: Moving forward the frontiers of the feasible, considering marketing's digital orchestrator role, and rethinking the marketing technology ecosystem



In the last part of September 2021, the European Business Review hosted an article written by Hannes Gurzki (a Program Director at European School of Management and Technology/ESMT Berlin) and Joachim Junghanss (the Associate Director at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam/CvA), and entitled “Leading in an Age of Disruption”, the authors drawing attention to the leadership challenges in the current state of affairs meaning: *“Today’s leaders, especially, must operate in an environment that is substantially different from what they were used to... Management analogies using music are nothing new. The orchestra model, for example, has been used to describe the leadership challenge for decades... A future full of changes is about to come, and with it rapidly changing technologies, markets, organizations, and business models. Leaders have the possibility to shape the future they would like. While this is certainly not easy, and successes might also meet setbacks, it is the open mind and willingness to learn as an individual, team, or organization that can make the difference... And the future starts now. Any moment you step on the leadership stage to play a tune with your team and co-create a performance is the occasion to further push the boundaries of the possible... Jazz is not the solution to all of today’s leadership challenges. But we believe it is **a useful metaphor to help leaders gain a new perspective on the old but increasingly important aspect of how we deal with uncertainty**”* (Gurzki and Junghanss, 2021).

Their reflections remind us not only that we’re all in the current unprecedented uncertainty together, but also of some main ideas expressed in April (Purcarea a, 2021) and August (Purcarea b, 2021) this year with regard to various aspects such as: (April 2021) “Leading the RAU Customer Experience”, total CX, understanding and responding to the emotional needs of customers, “evidence management”, remote and in-person teamwork teamwork; (August 2021) innovations and insights within high level of uncertainty, speed as a choice, digital disruption as a transformation caused by emerging digital technologies and business models, the era of disruption and digital transformation, digital transformation-driven

business model innovation, the need of going beyond disruption, a sharper focus both on resilience, and on strategic risk management in the new normal, reskilling and retraining workforces under the double pressure of digitization of everything, and the necessary ability to work from anywhere, letting employees to bring their so-called ‘whole person’ (a holistic method) to work, motivating them to innovate and push the frontiers of knowledge and its application, this being exactly what the Romanian-American University (RAU) is doing at the significant moment of its 30th Anniversary. On October 1, 2021 RAU marked the opening ceremony of the academic year 2021-2022 (<http://holisticmarketingmanagement.ro/opening-ceremony-of-the-academic-year-2021-2022-at-the-romanian-american-university/>), Rector Costel Negricea delivering opening remarks and highlighting: the significantly important place of these ceremonies in students’ lives and how RAU is making a difference in students’ lives by continuously better understanding students’ rising needs and expectations in academic quality, employability (considering the above-mentioned new skills defining today’s work) and the facilities offered to them, and by agilely adapting to the international and national structural changes caused by COVID-19 pandemic and to the accelerated digital transformation caused by the digital technology; the opportunities for RAU students within the context of RAU advancement on the path to the next normal while going from innovation to demonstration to building the necessary pillars accordingly.

Introducing Gartner’s “*Chief Marketing Officer Leadership Vision 2022: 3 Strategic Actions for Success*” (Gartner a, 2021), Chris Howard, Chief of Research, Gartner underlined that: “*As we head into 2022, we continue to feel the human toll of the global pandemic... attitudes and norms have permanently shifted... Businesses have also changed. For many organizations, the pandemic has catalyzed digital business initiatives as we adapt to the demands of employees, customers and other stakeholders, who were forced into new digital options that they have now come to favor... Gartner Leadership Vision provides top-level guidance to leaders and their teams on where to focus...*” According to this Gartner’s Vision, there are clear trends, priorities and actions for the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), as shown in the table below:

Table no. 1: Trends, Priorities and Actions for the CMO

Trends	CMO top priorities	Key actions
Journeys evolve as customers' pandemic channel preferences persist.	Rebuild the marketing engine for flexibility in a changing environment.	Prepare for the future of hybrid marketing.
CMOs cede accountability for digital initiatives as CEOs focus on digital growth.	Reassert marketing's digital orchestrator role to avoid further loss of influence.	Redefine the CMO's role as the organization's "chief connecting officer."
CMOs lose resources as budgets shift to fund enterprisewide digital investments.	Execute adaptive strategies that prove marketing's value to the enterprise.	Build holistic marketing measurement.

Source: Gartner, 2021. *Chief Marketing Officer Leadership Vision 2022: 3 Strategic Actions for Success*. [pdf] Gartner for Marketers, p 4. (Work cited)

As we can see above, one of the CMO top priorities is to reassert marketing's digital orchestrator role to avoid further loss of influence (together with rebuilding the marketing engine for flexibility in a changing environment, and executing adaptive strategies that prove marketing's value to the enterprise), Gartner's research findings indicating that within the context in which the enterprise looks to digital channels and experiences to fuel future growth digitally savvy CMOs should be in a leading position, as shown in the below figure. While one of the necessary key actions is to redefine the CMO's role as the organization's "chief connecting officer" (together with preparing for the future of hybrid marketing, and building holistic marketing measurement), as shown in the next figure below.



Figure no. 1: Reassert Marketing's Digital Orchestrator Role to Avoid Further Loss of Influence

Source: Gartner, 2021. Chief Marketing Officer Leadership Vision 2022: 3 Strategic Actions for Success. [pdf] Gartner for Marketers, p 13. (Work cited)



Figure no. 2: Redefine the CMO's Role as the Organization's "Chief Connecting Officer"

Source: Gartner, 2021. Chief Marketing Officer Leadership Vision 2022: 3 Strategic Actions for Success. [pdf] Gartner for Marketers, p 17. (Work cited)

Coming back to by Gartner recommended (one of the three keys) key action of preparing for the future of hybrid marketing (agile approach to marketing strategy, budgeting and planning; the adoption by CMOs of an integrated, channel-agnostic, hybrid approach to marketing activation with regard to digital and traditional channels; diversified digital experience portfolio

shaping customer journeys), allow us to make reference to a connection we are seeing with tree distinct approaches:

- The recently developed framework possible to be used by companies to audit their digitization efforts and figure out their next move, framework introduced by Jan Van Mieghem (a Professor of Operations at Kellogg) and Robert Boute (a professor of Operations Management at Vlerick Business School in Belgium, and a visiting professor at Kellogg) as a diagnostic tool that can also inspire debate on a better use of digitization. The questions to be asked in the recently developed framework (starting from picking one business process; for instance, you can see in the below figure the approach for how “digital” is the workflow) were as follows: how “digital” is your workflow”, how “automated” is your workflow”, and how “smart” is your workflow” (Van Mieghem and Boute, 2021).

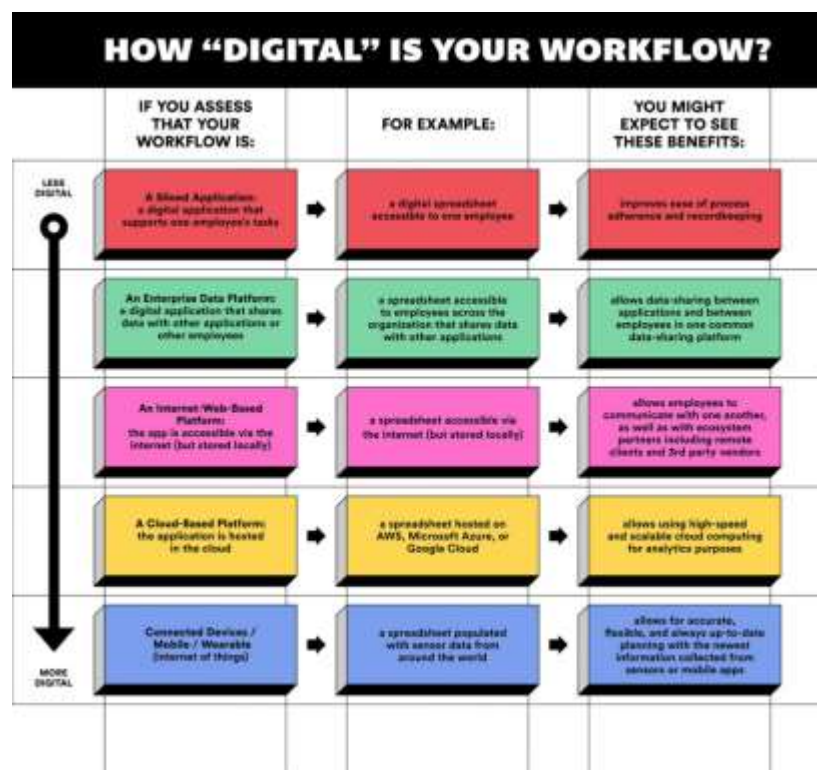


Figure no. 3: How “Digital” is your Workflow?

Source: Van Mieghem, J. A., Boute, R., 2021. Looking to Further Digitize Your Operations? This Tool Can Help, Kellogg Insight, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, June 18 (Work cited)

- A recent conference paper by Bitzer et al. (2021), that revealed how the authors derived the transformation triad of Digital Transformation, Agile Transformation and Cultural Transformation to enable continuous change (see the figure below), providing this way a potential explanation for the well-known Dang and Vartiainen’s (2020) assertion that people are the engine for the transformation, beyond the fact that technology plays an important role in Digital Transformation, the authors findings showing that: all three above-mentioned

transformations play a key role in enabling continuous change (based on the understanding of the interrelation of this transformation triad and due to their ongoing nature; organizations need to make sure with regard to their employees' understanding of the necessity and direction of change, employees being the most important driver and barrier for this change, hence being also necessary to be putted in the middle of their Digital Transformation efforts.

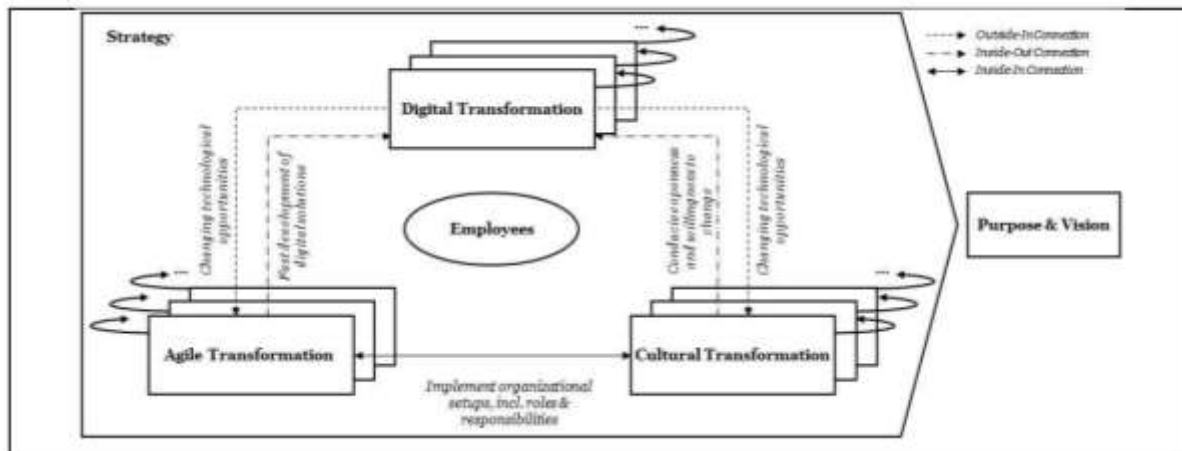


Figure no. 4: The Transformation Triad to Foster Continuous Change

Source: Bitzer, M., Hinsin, S., Jöhnk, J., Urbach, N., 2021. Everything Is IT, but IT Is Not Everything – What Incumbents Do to Manage Digital Transformation Towards Continuous Change. [pdf] Conference Paper · December 2021, Forty-Second International Conference on Information Systems, Austin 2021, ResearchGate, p. 12 (Work cited)

• “A study on Strategic Fitness of Digital Transformation and Competitive Strategy” by Kyoo-Sung Noh (Professor, Department of Business Administration, Sun Moon University, South Korea) and published on August 28, 2021 in the Journal of the Korea Convergence Society (see also the below table).

Table no. 2: Fitness of Digital Transformation and Type of Competitive Advantage

Type of Strategy	Type of Digital Transformation Project
Cost Advantage Strategy	Standardization and Integration of Company-wide Processes, Differentiation and Advancement of Specific Processes, Substitution of Human Work or Collaboration with People, Business Process Automation, Creation of New Business, Changes and Substitutions of Products(Services), Consistent Customer Response from an Integrated Perspective, Digital Marketing, O2O Integration and Linkage, Collaboration, Information Sharing
Differentiation Advantage Strategy	Differentiation and Advancement of Specific Processes, Business Model Innovation by Platform, Creation of New Business, Changes and Substitutions of Products(Services), Value Delivery Process Innovation, Consistent Customer Response from an Integrated Perspective, Digital Marketing, O2O Integration and Linkage, Increase of Customer Experience, Collaboration, Information Sharing

Source: Noh, K.-S., 2021. A study on Strategic Fitness of Digital Transformation and Competitive Strategy. [pdf] Journal of the Korea Convergence Society Vol. 12. No. 8, p. 261 (Work cited)

In the above table we also can see “Digital Marketing” ... Allow us to also refer to other identified connections, such as:

- Gartner’s Digital Marketing Survey Report 2021 eBook – “Digital Shakes Up Marketing Strategy and Tactics Gartner for Marketers. What CMOs can learn from the 2021 Gartner Digital Marketing Survey” (Gartner b, 2021) – showing that in order to align with their customer acquisition and retention goals digital marketing leaders are scaling their use of emerging technologies (such as artificial intelligence/AI and machine learning/ML), 84% of respondents agreeing that the marketing function’s ability to deliver real-time, personalized experiences to customers is enhanced by the use of using AI/ML, but despite this fact there is still a low adoption;

- The recent article entitled “The CMO And CIO Partnership In Digital Transformation”, (Husson, 2021) written by Thomas Husson (VP, Principal Analyst, Forrester), who underlined the shrinking of the collaboration gap between marketing and IT under the impact of COVID-19pandemic, opening new opportunities for the alignment of CMOs and CIOs teams to accelerate digital transformation (mainly around hybrid commerce), the acceleration of the convergence between marketing and technology being possible (beyond driving growth by focusing on hybrid commerce experiences) by rethinking the marketing technology ecosystem in order to stay ahead of data deprecation, using a new operating model to speed-up innovation, and accepting willingly the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues as a catalyst for enterprise transformation on the path of growing a sustainable business.

Without doubt, on the path to the Next Normal (as coined last year and continuously redefined by McKinsey), the above-mentioned lessons to learn are suggesting significant ways to connect organizations to customers, succeeding and thriving accordingly.

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