

Focusing on the new paradigm of business transformation

1 November 2024



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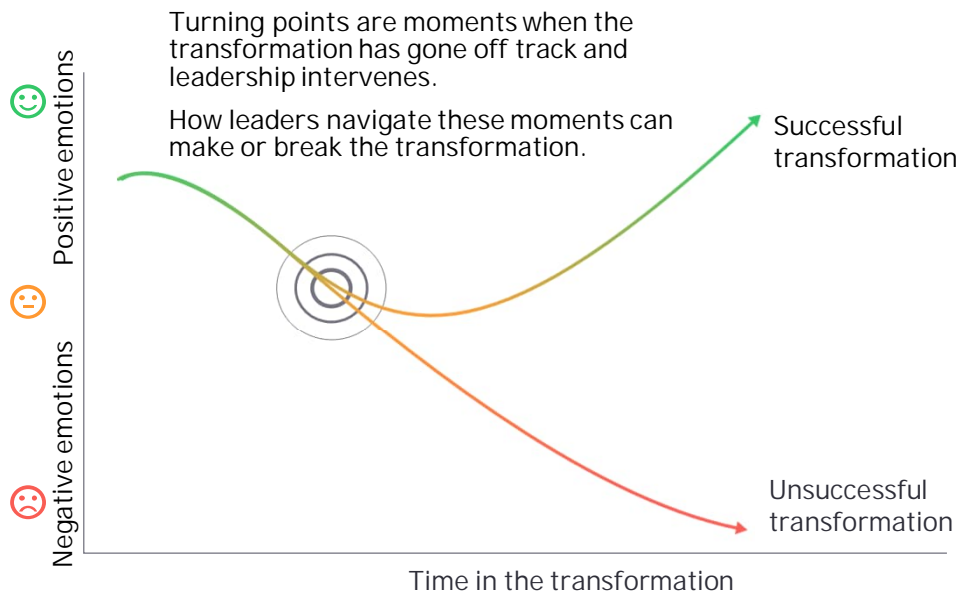
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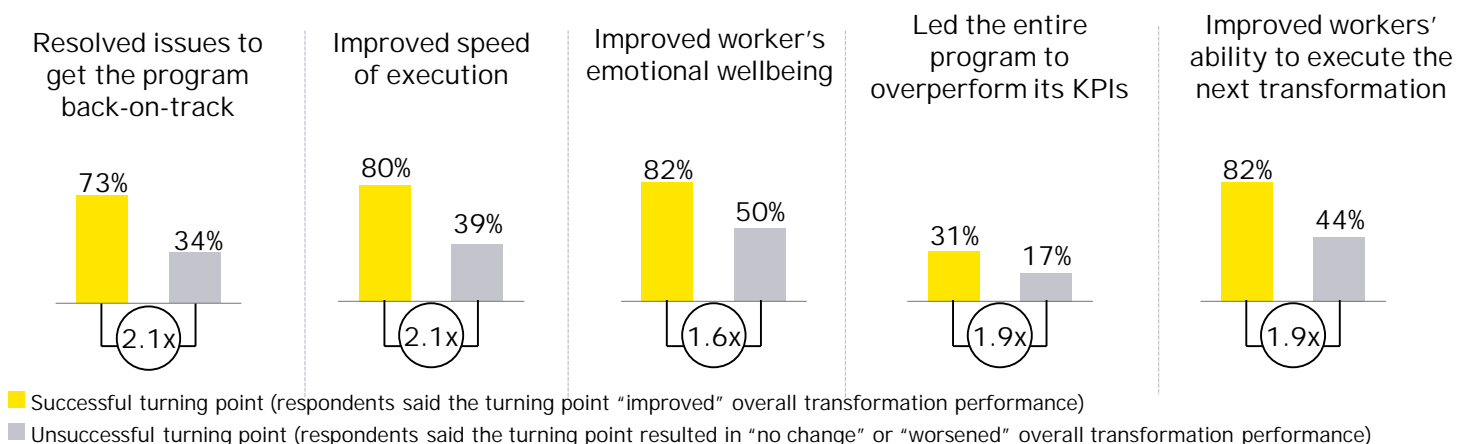
In the current era of the 'new normal', transformation has emerged as a buzzword. However, as we progress along the transformation journey, it is crucial to ponder: Does transformation guarantee success? What are the key elements for a successful transformation? How should organizations prioritize and allocate the required resources? Addressing these questions lies at the heart of winning this contest.

In 2024, the EY team collaborated with the University of Oxford to conduct a study on the C-suite executives of companies undergoing transformation programs. The study includes more than 80 in-depth interviews and over 1,600 survey responses from chief executives (25%), senior executives (25%), middle management (25%) and employees (25%). The findings revealed that critical moments affect most transformations, with 96% of transformations experiencing at least one turning point. Among these, 75% of turning points occur during the planning phase or early stages of implementation. These critical junctures often arise when management initiates the execution of the transformation plan, unveiling discrepancies between expectations and realities throughout the transformation process. Such disparities can lead to a decrease in employees' motivation for the transformation initiative.



Nearly 80% of the surveyed leaders agree that turning points are both inevitable and vital for the success of transformation programs. How leaders navigate and action on these moments can make or break the transformation.

Effectively managing a turning point can lead to positive and lasting impacts on both the transformation and the organization. Hence, recognizing and responding to these turning points is fundamental to achieving a successful transformation.



Source: Transformative Leadership Study 2024; EY Knowledge analysis

Q: What causes a turning point?

Organizations often go through a temporary fragile phase during the transformation. Issues encountered during the transformation process stem from misalignment between how we work today and how we expect to achieve tomorrow. All functions are in a state of adjustment and breaking in, putting the organization in a vulnerable position of internal and external challenges and thus making the critical turning point occur.

Our case studies identified three triggers of turning points and explored the mechanism behind them, enabling organizations to better understand and successfully navigate the critical moments.

I. Gaps in expectations vs. reality around the current state of the organization

Our case studies suggest that 71% of turning points involve at least one internal issue and this is often due to gaps in expectations vs. reality around the current state of the organization and its capabilities.



Source: Transformative Leadership Study 2024; EY Knowledge analysis

II. Re-aligning the complex and systematic internal dynamics is necessary amid a transformation

Every organization functions as a complex and interconnected system, where even a minor change in one area may have ripple effects throughout the entire entity. Transformation is a dynamic process and requires ongoing adaptation. Leaders should closely monitor and intervene at the critical moments and navigate the transformation toward a successful direction.

► From ambiguity to clarity in responsibility for the transformation vision

More employees would be involved once a transformation is carried out, requiring senior leaders to ensure that responsibility for the transformation is distributed across the organization. Employees will be more proactive to work and develop a sense of ownership of the transformation only if they feel it's closely connected with themselves.

► Shifting the governance structure from past to future

The implementation of the transformation program will lead to the reallocation of decision-making power and resource management power, leadership need to consider whether the speed of power transfer to the future (post-transformation) architecture is fast enough – this is the key to accelerate transformation and increase response speed and flexibility. On the contrary, if the governance and management structure remain at the status quo (before transformation), they may become internal obstacles to change.

► Building confidence in the organization’s ability to implement transformation

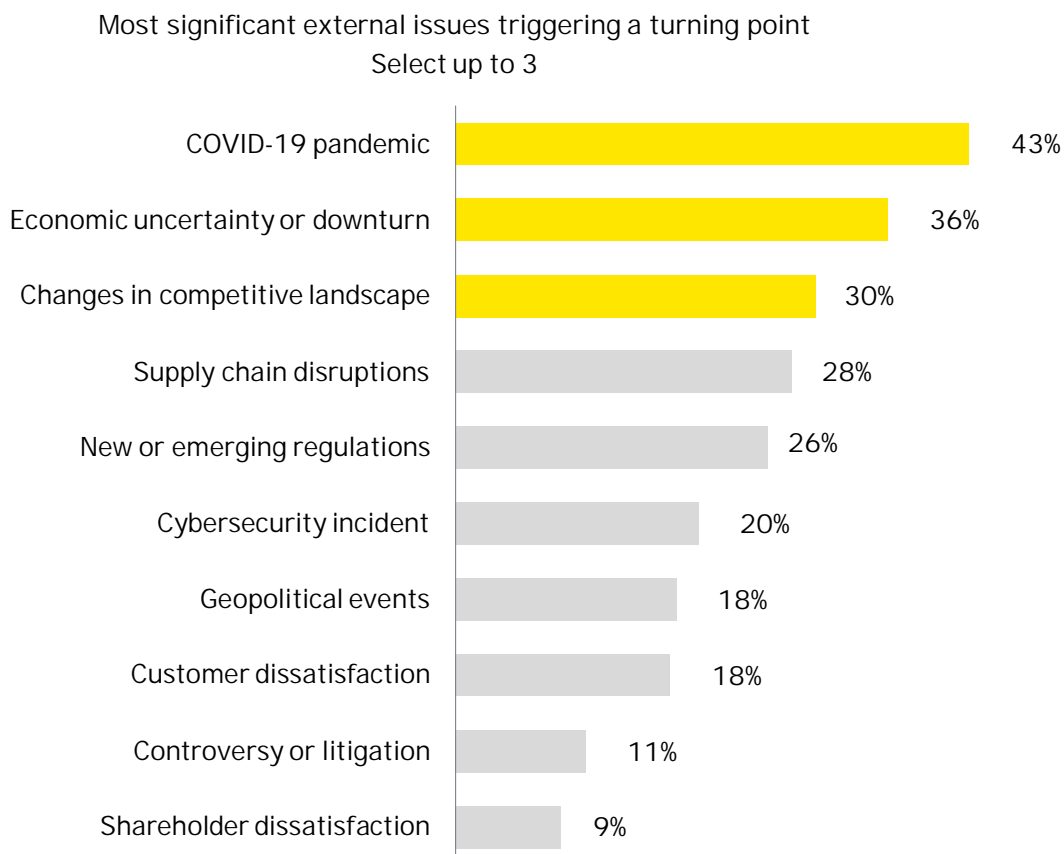
At the outset of a transformation, skepticism often prevails among employees. Leadership needs to evaluate if the employees have enough faith on the program. Insufficient confidence may lead to lower work efficiency and higher turnover rate. Externally, a lack of confidence may undermine the trust of investors, clients and other stakeholders, affecting company’s market performance and brand reputation.

► Scaling the transformation capabilities from limited to robust

Significant skills and capability gaps become apparent once the transformation starts, leadership need to monitor and assess the organization’s skills and enhance the relevant capabilities continuously towards a successful result.

III. Being in a state of transition makes the organizations more vulnerable to sudden external shocks

External disruptions are becoming more complex, frequent and interconnected, creating sudden shocks that can trigger a turning point.



Source: Transformative Leadership Study 2024; EY Knowledge analysis

Q: How to navigate a turning point successfully?

By using predictive modeling on 1,600+ turning points and 40+ factors, EY team identified three steps that increase the likelihood of successfully navigating a turning point. These three steps increase by 12x the likelihood of significantly improving transformation performance.

I. Listening: Building an advanced warning system to detect issues early

Listening the turning point in early stage is crucial - organizations need to build an early detection system to rapidly identify when issues arise and sensing a turning point. Leaders believe that detecting issues earlier would improve their ability to navigate a turning point, however, it's easier said than done amid a complicated environment.

Monitoring the traditional key performance indicator (KPIs) together with changes in the key behavioral indicators (KBIs) involved in the transformation will improve the probability of success to sense a turning point.

For example:

- ▶ The traditional KPIs include delays in achieving or missing project milestones, failure to meet KPIs, budget overruns or budget shortfalls, etc.
- ▶ KBIs include lack of clarity on how to proceed, ineffective collaboration, increasing negative emotions, mistakes or misunderstandings, decreased engagement and excessive interpersonal conflicts.

Middle management is often the first to detect issues and the most likely to support leaders to solve problems and give workers emotional support and proceed toward it. Thus, during a transformation program, EY team suggest organizations should cultivate middle management's transformational leadership capabilities and empower them to listen to and support others.

“

Leadership sets the vision, they architect this, but they don't actually say this is what has to happen ... it's not up to the senior leaders to get momentum in a bottom-up perspective, it's up to the appropriate level to get the momentum.

”

– Vice president of a leading global pharmaceutical company

II. Sense-making: Gaining a systemic understanding of what the issues really are, creating a path forward and continuously iterating the plan during the implementation process

Gathering information to understand the issues in a comprehensive way and identifying the root causes is important for organizations to create the improvement plan. EY team suggests convening the right mix of leaders and workers, often in a physical space, to explore issues and develop the action plans.

- ▶ Getting the whole system in the room – bringing a representative set of people into the room who bring a whole system perspective.
- ▶ The initial issue is often a symptom – not the root problem. Making space to identify the underlying issues.
- ▶ Using emotional energy and conflict as data – to inform your understanding of what is going on.

The improvement plan needs to be adapted quickly, with pilots and trials rolled out in a dynamic process. There is no need for organizations to develop a perfect plan at the first place, they should test the measures through quick implementations, act to better understand the root causes and form a continuous loop of listening, learning and adapting to implement the transformation.

III. Acting: Putting people at the center is the key to transformation success

We identified that there are six drivers to improve the rate of successful transformation by 2.6x – from 28% to 73%, such as creating purpose, high autonomy and psychological safety.

The impact to a successful turning point, ranking from largest to smallest:

- ▶ Making it real with technology (+21%): Using technology to bring the vision to life. Making it real - quickly – and invest in your people to develop the required mindsets and skills.
- ▶ Purposeful vision (+16%): Clarifying the necessity of internal transformation by benchmarking external best practice, building belief by communicating why change is needed.
- ▶ Disciplined freedom (+15%): Creating autonomy for the organization to experiment and execute. Incentivizing this shift and accepting that the pace of progress will ebb and flow.

- ▶ Psychological safety (+13%): Planning for the emotional journey. Creating conditions where people can speak up and managing stress to drive urgency, not anxiety.
- ▶ Adaptive leadership (+10%): Leaders who lean in, are constantly working on themselves, and emphasize we not me.
- ▶ Collaboration (+8%): Co-creating new ways of working across the different functions and fostering for connectivity and creativity.

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Everybody needs to be onboard and continually communicating and monitoring and reporting in order to make it stick. We hadn't understood that it needed a full organizational effort to make it work.

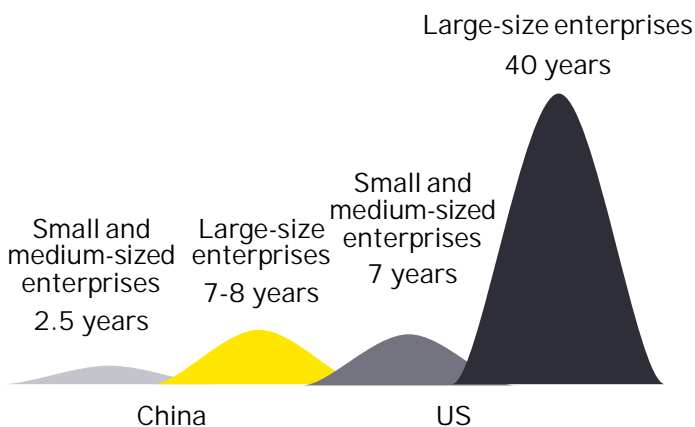
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– Chief strategy and product officer of a leading global advertising company

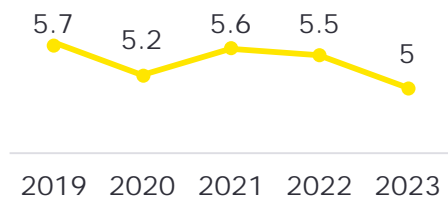
Chinese market is changing more rapidly than the US and organizations that fail to adapt to the fast-paced market will face challenges for survival. According to statistics, the average lifespan of large-size enterprises in China is around seven to eight years, while that of small and medium-sized enterprises is only two and a half years. By comparison, the average lifespan of enterprises in the US is only 20%-33% of that in the US and continues to decline. In a fiercely competitive environment, only those who embrace self-innovation and self-transformation can achieve sustainability.

Competition in China is fierce: The market iterates 5 times faster than that in the US

...and is getting increasingly fiercer: Companies in China close down within 5 years in 2023



Average lifespan of enterprises in China



In this context, how to build and improve transformation capability and turn it into an advantage has become the key to achieving sustained success in the Chinese market. According to EY statistics, transformation can generate substantial value and organizations with transformation capability have an average return on capital expenditure of 40% to 120% and an additional shareholder return of 25% compared to those that haven't embraced transformation or built transformation capability. Meanwhile, we have found that transformation is not easy as data show that about 70% of transformation programs failed to achieve expected results.

The failure to fully realize the value is often associated with challenges frequently encountered amid transformation, including poor governance and visibility, misaligned goals and insufficient technical support, inadequate resources and capabilities and limited readiness.

EY team believes that organizations need to take into account the following six drivers of success amid all-round capability development to fully realize the value of transformation and achieve transformation targets.

Six drivers for successful transformation



1. Transformation is your competitive advantage

Reinventing the core of value creation: Transformation is more than a project management skill, but an organizational skill.



2. Future-back agenda

Setting up a purposeful transformation vision and a consistent transformation story across the whole journey to help the workforce connect the transformation vision to something they can believe in.



3. Integrated roadmap

Establishing an integrated dynamic transformation roadmap to harmonize digital and non-digital, management and business.



4. Transformation hub

Establishing a mechanism to govern transformation mainly to support portfolio management and orchestration, resources allocation, program/project priority and synergy management, tools and platform establishment.



5. High-performing team

Humans@center is the key to embrace diversity to challenge the status quo and to balance agility and flexibility to drive transformation outcomes.



6. Technology as enabler

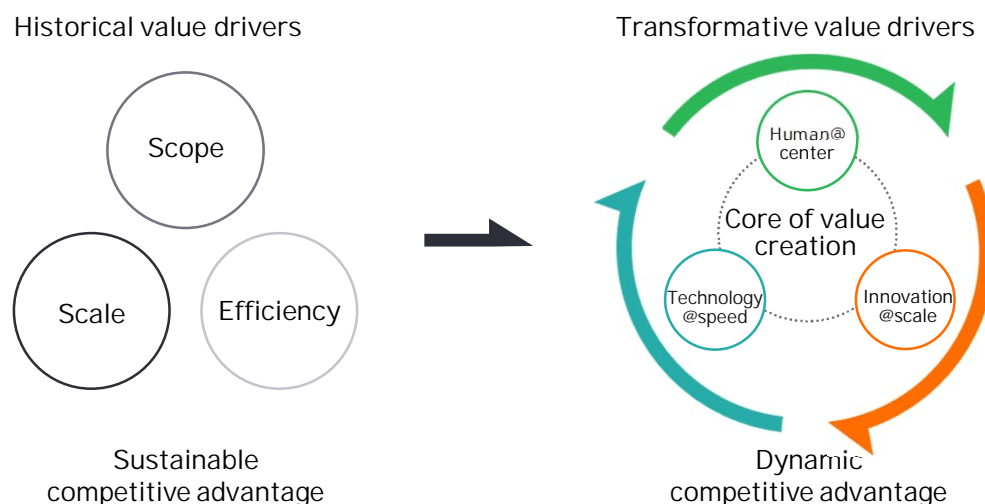
Leveraging better aligned technology and toolkits to transformation objectives, to bring transformation vision to life and embed into organization business-as-usual.

1. Reimagining transformation value and vision driven by business growth targets

Q: What is the value of transformation? How can each of investment align with the value and return without deviating from targets amid the transformation?

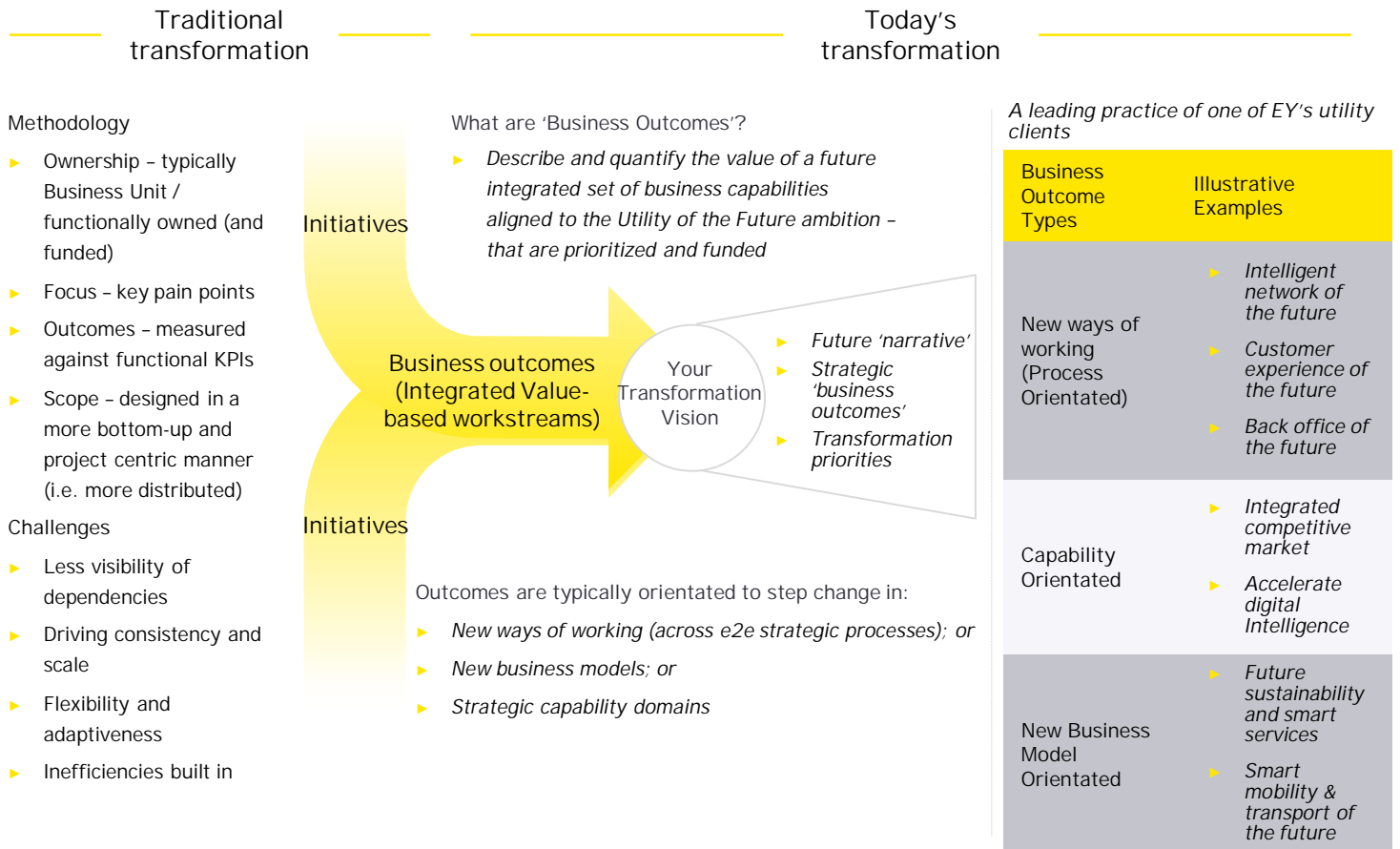
In the past transformation, many organizations are risk-averse, possibly starting from the perspective of a single business unit or responding to a single market trend. Some organizations addressed a small part of superficial issues by such transformation, while some transformed just for the sake of transformation and simply followed the trend.

EY team believes that business leaders should clarify the value and vision prior to transformation and have a growth-mindset to align the program with organization's strategic goals. Hence, organizations need to integrate their resources, technology and innovation to realize their growth potential and align goals continuously amid a dynamic transformation, thus driving the long-term value of the transformation.



Traditional transformation programs are always fragmented and misaligned with the organization’s overall strategy. Nowadays, business leaders should set up clear objectives at the initial stage and adapt dynamically while a top-down approach is used, allowing KPIs for business units to be aligned with the transformation KPIs.

Case study: EY team assisted a utility company in focusing ‘Business Outcomes’ to drive prioritization and alignment of the transformation agenda



2. Developing a vision-led strategy and pathways

Q: How to build a future-back strategy?

Traditionally, the transformation methodology aims to address pain points at business unit level with roles and responsibilities dispersed and shared by different functions for the purpose of improving unit-based KPIs. This bottom-up methodology brings challenges including less visibility of dependencies among programs, lack of consistency and scalability in program outcomes and poor adaptability and effectiveness.

We believe that organizations should start with a well-defined vision and evaluate the outcomes of programs based on their contributions to the delivery of the vision.

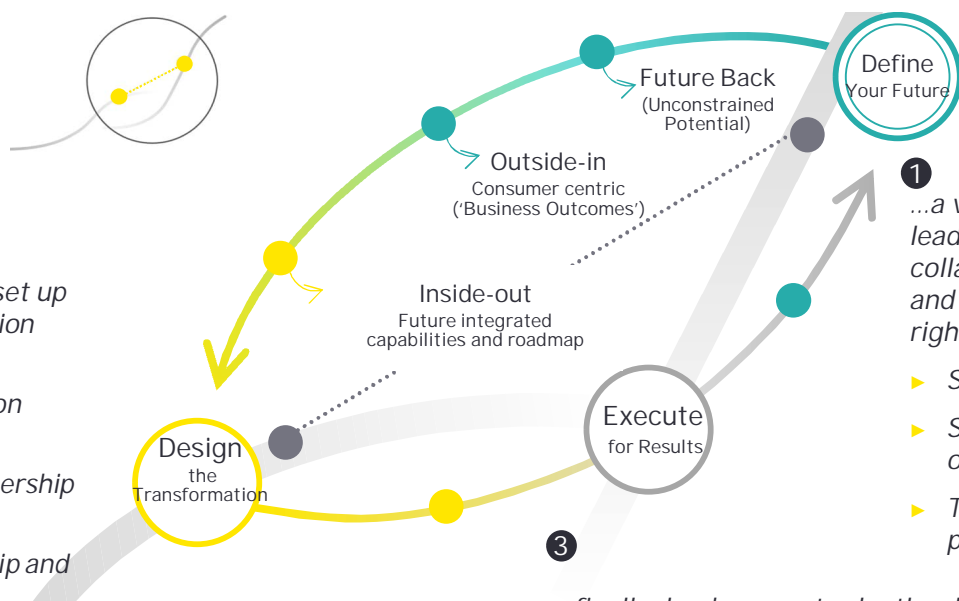
Leaders should introduce a future-back and value-focused approach and work together to define transformation goals and priorities that are aligned with strategic vision of an organization.

Challenge: How can we jump to the next value S-Curve to achieve the future ambition?

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...next, leaders must set up the right transformation foundations:

- ▶ Streamlined decision making
- ▶ Clear business ownership and empowerment
- ▶ Enhanced leadership and experience
- ▶ Integrated transformation co-ordination and facilitation
- ▶ Aligned roadmap and business commitment



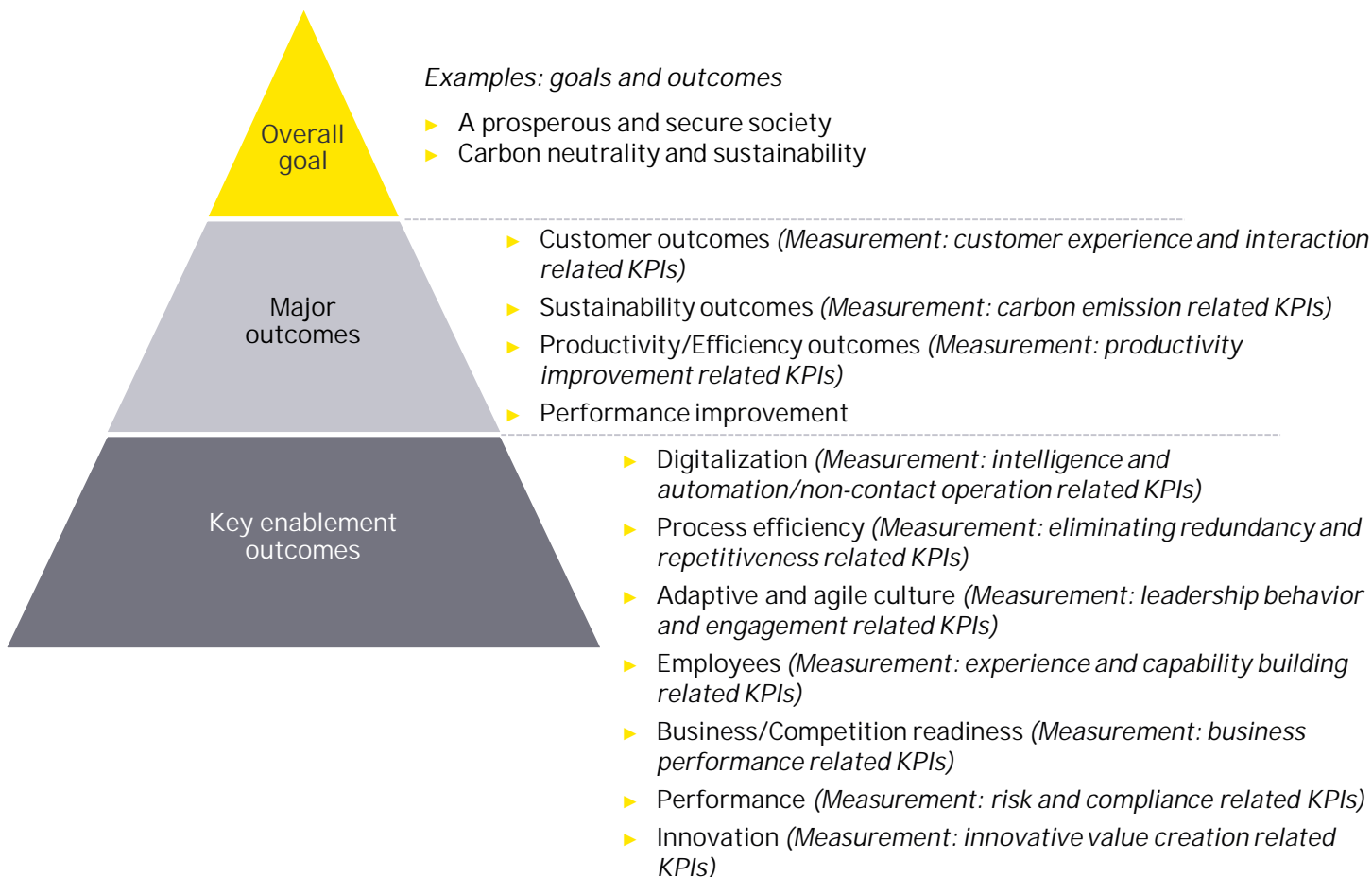
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...a vital first step for leaders is to collaboratively define and align around the right:

- ▶ Strategic narrative
- ▶ Strategic business outcomes
- ▶ Transformation priorities

3
...finally, leaders must relentlessly drive performance and outcomes

- ▶ Seamlessly mobilizing business and transformation resources
- ▶ Accelerating and scaling new capabilities
- ▶ Continually course-correcting and reimagining the next wave of change

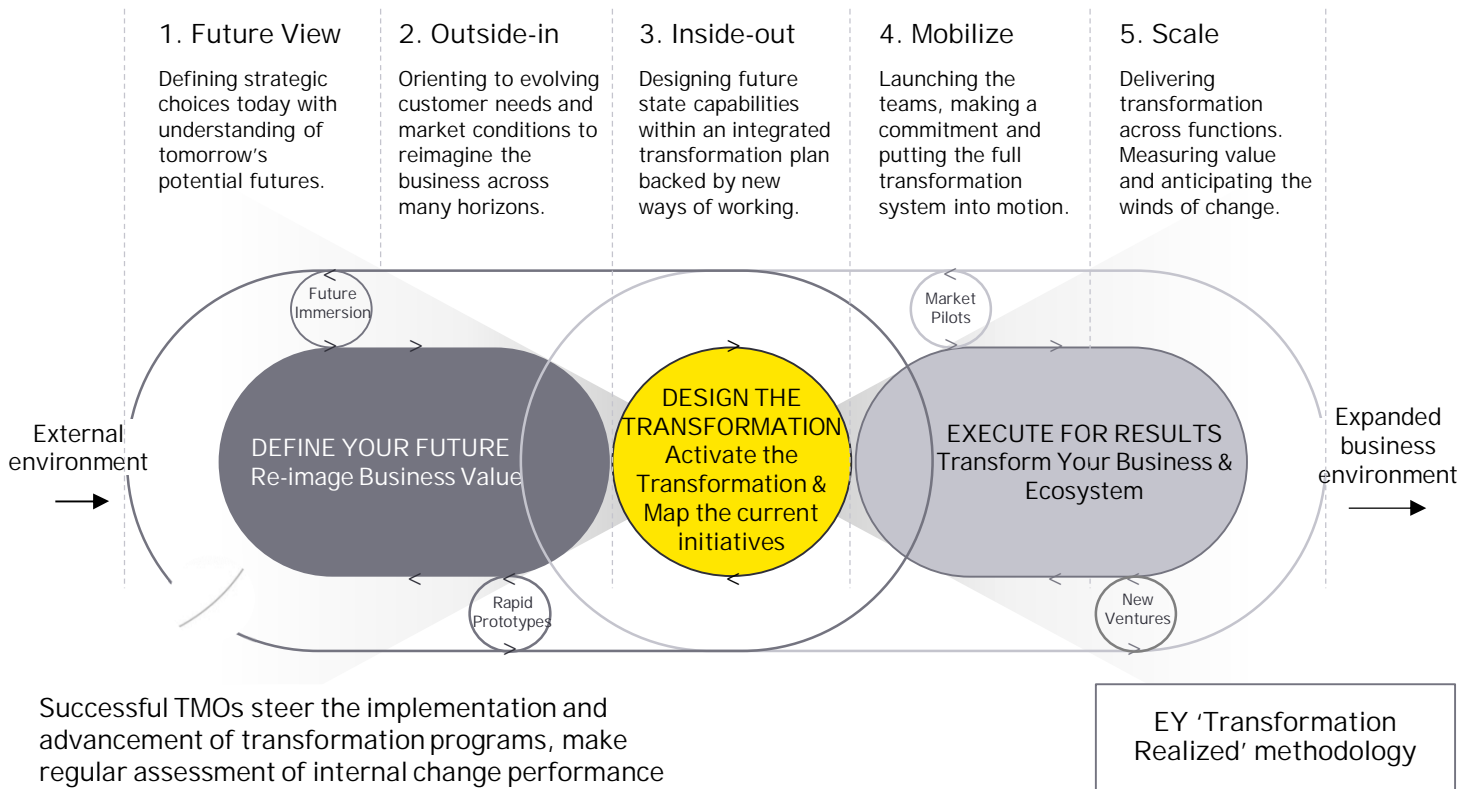
The future vision provides a clear direction that guide the transformation narrative and program prioritization.



3. Developing an integrated transformation blueprint

Q: How to evaluate the relationships between programs, identify priorities and manage programs through a portfolio?

Leadership often believe that a single program's success can drive transformation of the whole organization, however, in fact, the business transformation should start from a clear vision and strategy, which clarify the transformation objectives first then design the sub-programs. This is an integrated and interlinked process and requires leadership's overall designing and managing capabilities. It would also enable organization to reduce management frictions and lower transformation costs from both financial and non-financial dimensions.



Successful TMOs steer the implementation and advancement of transformation programs, make regular assessment of internal change performance and keep an eye on market dynamics.

4. Setting up an integrated yet streamlined transformation management office (TMO)

Q: How to govern the transformation and make transformation operationalized?

Our previous article, titled "Spotlight on new paradigm of organization transformation – Redefining program management office (PMO)", states that the traditional PMO may not live up to management's strategic expectations or effectively cooperate with business units, where the challenges typically encountered include misalignment of programs with transformation goals, disconnection between programs and routine operations and separation between programs.

To address these challenges, EY team suggests organizations set up four functions:

- ▶ Thinking and aligning
- ▶ Co-ordinating, orchestrating and unblocking
- ▶ Building and deploying
- ▶ Innovating

EY team observed that the organization structure of the best-practice TMOs in the market typically includes the following tiers:

- ▶ Governance: Transformation Committee, consisting of executives, is responsible for defining vision, strategy, risk appetite and accountability.
- ▶ Coordination: TMO is responsible for coordinating resources needed, managing programs in an integrated manner, as well as communicating on transformation initiative and change management. Transformation coordination team is responsible for coordinating feedback on business design standards and expert resources.
- ▶ Execution: Executive leadership team is responsible for the design, development and deployment of the transformation in alignment with business strategy and announcing business updates and changes.

5. Building high-performing teams

Q: How to engage employees at all levels in transformation and enhance talent skills

The delivery of transformation outcomes needs to be tied to the performance of both management and employees. The transformation vision can be decomposed into key values (including consumer experience optimization, sustainable development, performance growth and efficiency improvement), as well as key enabling factors (including digitalization improvement, process optimization, agile culture cultivation), upon which KPIs are built.

Meanwhile, the organization transformation should start with the transformation of leadership. The unsuccessful transformation is partly because leaders are neglectful of difficulty of execution at the primary level or fail to build confidence among employees in the transformation, leading to voluntary turnover.

We have identified the following attributes of the leadership with successful transformation:

- ▶ Embracing changes and being comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty
- ▶ Proactively exploring and adopting new working models and approaches
- ▶ Attracting and engaging other relevant people in the transformation through compelling communications
- ▶ Being adept at collaboration and working with team members
- ▶ Caring for and supporting employees by providing a safe, protective working environment
- ▶ Being the role models to commit and embrace changes and making persistent efforts to move forward

EY team believes a three-step approach can be introduced to achieve future-back leadership.

- ▶ Leading with purpose
 - Crafting an inspiring, practical ambition narrative
 - Driving alignment, ownership and accountability
 - Building capabilities and model behaviors
 - Running innovation and events for idea exploration
- ▶ Co-creating the future
 - Engaging the business in the transformation narrative
 - Cascading empowerment, accountability and support
 - Syncing plans to transformation strategy and culture
 - Co-creating experience driven ideas and change journeys
- ▶ Amplifying culture strengths
 - Aligning performance culture and KPIs
 - Engaging with consistency, insight and personalization
 - Testing, learning and sharing success stories
 - Driving structured readiness and change management

Case study: EY team assisted a multinational in defining the leadership competency framework essential for a high-performing team

To better adapt to the changing customer needs and business environment, 82% of companies are reorganizing or planning to, underscoring the necessity for the role of LEADERS to shift to an agile culture and transforming with purpose.

Collaborative leaders who...

- ▶ Build strategic alliances
- ▶ Drive alignment, innovation and responsiveness
- ▶ Act as stewards for the organization
- ▶ Are comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty

Customer centric leaders who...

- ▶ Design services with the customer at the center of their thinking
- ▶ Drive a customer experience across the organization's eco-system
- ▶ Lead digital change to enhance employee experience

People focused leaders who...

- ▶ Enable and empower people
- ▶ Invest time in developing others
- ▶ Create stand-out employee experiences

Leaders who are operationally excellent...

- ▶ Are performance driven and understand the unique characteristics and needs of their organization

Purpose-driven leaders who...

- ▶ Lead with purpose: role-modelling behaviors
- ▶ Communicate purpose, promote aligned values and behaviors through story telling
- ▶ Inspire people with a clear sense of purpose and direction, helping people to understand the part they play



Building a high-performing team requires leadership competence and individual capability to transform. EY team suggests that the organization should improve its capability to transform in five dimensions including technology, data, operation, process and mindset.

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6. Intelligent digitalization empowerment

Q: How to empower transformation with digitalization and intelligence to improve the effectiveness of transformation itself and the transformation operation?

Technology serves and aligns with business, thus providing an underpinning to bring the transformation vision to life.

We observed that organizations with flexibility and adaptation upon underlying technology architecture and their IT organization are more likely to succeed.

- ▶ Building a modern, open and extensible technology architecture that can rapidly reconfigure, integrate new technologies and launch new capabilities for the business in quick cycles
- ▶ Shifting IT from a back-office cost of doing business type of function, to a front-office function that is embedded into the core customer value proposition and a strategic advantage to the business
- ▶ Staying informed of emerging technology solutions and tracking use cases, trends and statistics
- ▶ Developing toolsets designed to release technology more quickly
- ▶ Establishing the right alliances with leading technology providers





- ▶ Committing to a rapid, agile and proactive approach to decision-making and teaming
- ▶ Automating and digitizing workflows to realize organizational efficiencies
- ▶ Moving away from thinking about IT and stepping into the mindset of advanced technologies solving global challenges

Conclusion

Overall, the following three principles are the key to successful transformation in the new era.

- ▶ Prioritizing the right things – Balancing strategic priorities and immediate capability demands
- ▶ Delivering the right design – Managing change for sustainability and avoiding breaking the business
- ▶ Implementing in the right way – Transparent oversight of progress and value

EY team observed that there are four transformation models nowadays in the market, among which balanced transformation applies to most organizations. This model is always driven by purpose, outcome and value and aligns with business needs, with clear roles and responsibilities to realize maximum potential of employees by mitigating risks while pursuing innovation and transformation.

Dimension	Market leading practice			
	 Traditional	 Transformation Light	 Transformation Balanced	 Transformation Heavy
Orientation	Functionally Driven	Capability Driven	Purpose Driven	Disruption Driven (Reinvent market models)
Ambition	Regulatory Targets	Continuous Improvement	Step Change Performance	Market Disruption
Decision Making	Functionally Driven / Distributed in Projects	Functionally Driven / Centrally Monitored	Business-Led / Empowered	Centralized / Restrictive
Leadership	BU_Function-led / Dependencies Managed	Programme-led / PMO Supported	Leader-led / Transformation Supported	Acquisition-led / Investment Driven
Orchestration	Project-based / Reactive	Programme-based / Monitored	Outcome-based / Proactively Facilitated	Investment Payback-based / Directly Controlled
Scope	Distributed Functional Projects	Core Programmes	Core Business Outcomes / Integrated Dependencies	Whole of Business
Communication	Decentralized / Local	Business Unit Driven	Aspirational Narrative / Leader-led	Centralized / Directed Top Down
Risk Appetite	Conservative	Low Risk	Balanced Risk / Reward (within Risk appetite)	High Risk
Delivery	Compliance Heavy	Project Specific	Programme Driven / Consistent Methods	Centralized / Scaled

EY team provides comprehensive assessment and advisory services in multiple dimensions including vision, strategy, driving force, system and capability and enablement and empowerment to help organizations develop a tailored transformation model. We look forward to navigating the turning points and winning in the future with the businesses.

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