

# PROPHET

A Playbook to Get Your  
Business Back on Track

**Back to  
the Future**

# Contents

## Step 1: Chart a Clear Way Forward

08

## Step 2: Power Change from the Inside Out

How to Drive Cultural Transformation in Your Organisation 16

Equipping Your Team for the Future Way of Working 24

## Step 3: Accelerate into the Future

Four Priorities for CMOS 34

Brand Behaviours: Critical for Leaders,  
Managers & Employees 42

Social Distancing Doesn't Have to Interrupt  
B2B Customer Relationships 50

## INTRODUCTION

# Achieve Uncommon Growth in Uncommon Times



**Tobias Baerschneider**  
Partner & EMEA Regional Lead  
[t\\_baerschneider@prophet.com](mailto:t_baerschneider@prophet.com)

For most business leaders, this is a pivotal time. The decisions being made are dictating whether you survive or thrive in these uncertain times and there is enormous pressure on leaders to step up and provide the structure, guidance and clear communication that people are looking for.

This playbook brings together some of the latest thinking from our experts to help with those decisions, from how to double down on your company culture and equip your teams for the future way of working, to understanding the new needs of your customer and making the digital go to market shift. It provides some actionable ideas to get your business back on track now as we move out of this crisis and for the growth opportunities beyond.

---

These past few months have made us rethink a lot of the ways we run our businesses, protect our employees and manage our relationships. Many of the shifts that have been made to more virtual offerings, seamless interfaces and remote working have been accelerated by the pandemic but fundamentally validate one of Prophet's core convictions—and one that you will see throughout all of our thinking in this guide—is that business transformation shouldn't be determined by what companies think is technically feasible. Too often, we have seen companies spend tens of millions—and sometimes hundreds of millions—in tech investments before understanding how such initiatives might drive actual growth for their business. Digital investments, like any other use of capital, should only be made when companies are clear on how they will serve the largest purpose—a genuine human approach to customer-centricity. It has to start with us human beings, putting the real needs of people at the centre of every decision. It is clearly digitally driven, but at the core, it needs to be about people and customer-centricity, which is always a deeply human endeavour.

There is an opportunity to come out of this crisis even stronger, it offers the greatest platform for change, but it requires customer-centricity going into hyperdrive and processes being reimaged.

**If you need help determining the right path forward for your business, then do not hesitate to reach out.**

STEP 1

# Chart a Clear Way Forward

# The Essential Traits for Impactful Leadership

by Chiaki Nishino & Merritt Robinson



---

Between a renewed focus on racial injustice and the reality of a global pandemic, we have been challenged on our perspectives of ‘business as usual’—including what we consider great leadership.

We believe this is an opportunity to embrace—and prove —that a different way of leading is here to stay and we’re better off for it.

It is well-documented that we perceive leadership traits to be either more masculine-coded or more feminine-coded. For example, we associate being collaborative, cooperative or nurturing as feminine-coded, while being analytic, authoritative or ambitious is more masculine-coded. This “coding” has led to bias that has not historically supported women advancing in leadership. Amongst other things, this is because traits that are more traditionally feminine-coded, while seen as advantageous, are viewed to be “bonus” or “plus-ups” for leaders, versus being the core attributes required for success.

Enter the era of COVID, and we’re suddenly seeing traditional models of leadership upended. The pandemic environment is highlighting the tremendous, and even mission-critical, benefit that more feminine-coded traits bring to the table. In times of crisis, we look to our leaders for trust, compassion and collaboration—leadership dimensions that are all feminine coded. But closer inspection shows us that it’s not just female leaders, it’s all leaders—regardless of gender—that are finding success in the current pandemic by exhibiting these historically feminine-coded traits.

No matter our gender identification, we can, and should, all lean into these more historically feminine-coded traits to have a critical impact. We see examples of this all around us right now, and they offer blueprints for better, more effective leadership:



## Trust

Driving trust through transparency and a focusing on facts have already been critical to strong leadership. However, a demonstrated comfort with uncertainty is one dimension of trust that has revealed itself in this moment. Gone are the days of defining leaders by their total certainty in what's to come—vulnerability might, in fact, be the new marker of confidence. From German Chancellor Angela Merkel's science-led explanations to New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's plainspoken Facebook briefings, we find enormous comfort in a focus on known facts with a transparent acknowledgement of what we don't know.



## Compassion

Governor Andrew Cuomo's daily briefings have been marked by facts, but also a sense of genuine compassion for the overwhelming loss we're experiencing. Historically an authoritative, even bullying figure—the more recent experience of seeing his emotion and empathy is likely a key part of why people are looking to his leadership right now.



## Collaboration

Our historical views of a strong leader probably more often emphasised being a lone warrior, but it's a willingness to listen to many different voices and to bring teams into decision-making that is providing comfort and calm in this environment of unknowns. Synchrony CEO Margaret Keene (long known for her inclusiveness) has explicitly noted how leaders must solicit and listen to many voices to successfully navigate the crisis. You can see her doing this, looking to external expertise to inspire and support her bold decision making, bringing in outside mental health support for employees and holding weekly company-wide calls with an infectious disease expert. She's both leading the way and working with others to do so.

Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky has been commended on the company's handling of their recent layoffs. And in it, we can see elements of all of these traits. He provides the facts about what went into the decision-making, and also, the unknowns remaining. He demonstrates empathy for his team and the pain this situation brings. And he builds and strengthens his community, calling on everyone to work together to support the exiting employees. He is leaning into all of these more feminine-coded traits to be a strong leader.

With all of the terrible things COVID has wrought, we also see many good things happening— clearer skies, an increase in kindness and the rapid digital transformation of businesses. We can only hope this revelation will be one such advancement: that our template for leadership becomes a more balanced aspiration, one that women and men alike can see themselves achieving.

The leaders at Prophet have been actively working to embed all of these traits into the way in which we work with our team. Have we done everything right? Probably not. But we'd like to believe that we, too, are making progress in learning the type of leadership skills and styles that will not only help us wade through the current crisis but make Prophet come out stronger on the other side. We hope all of you are doing the same, challenging traditional views of how we work together and finding ways to embrace a new, more inclusive normal.

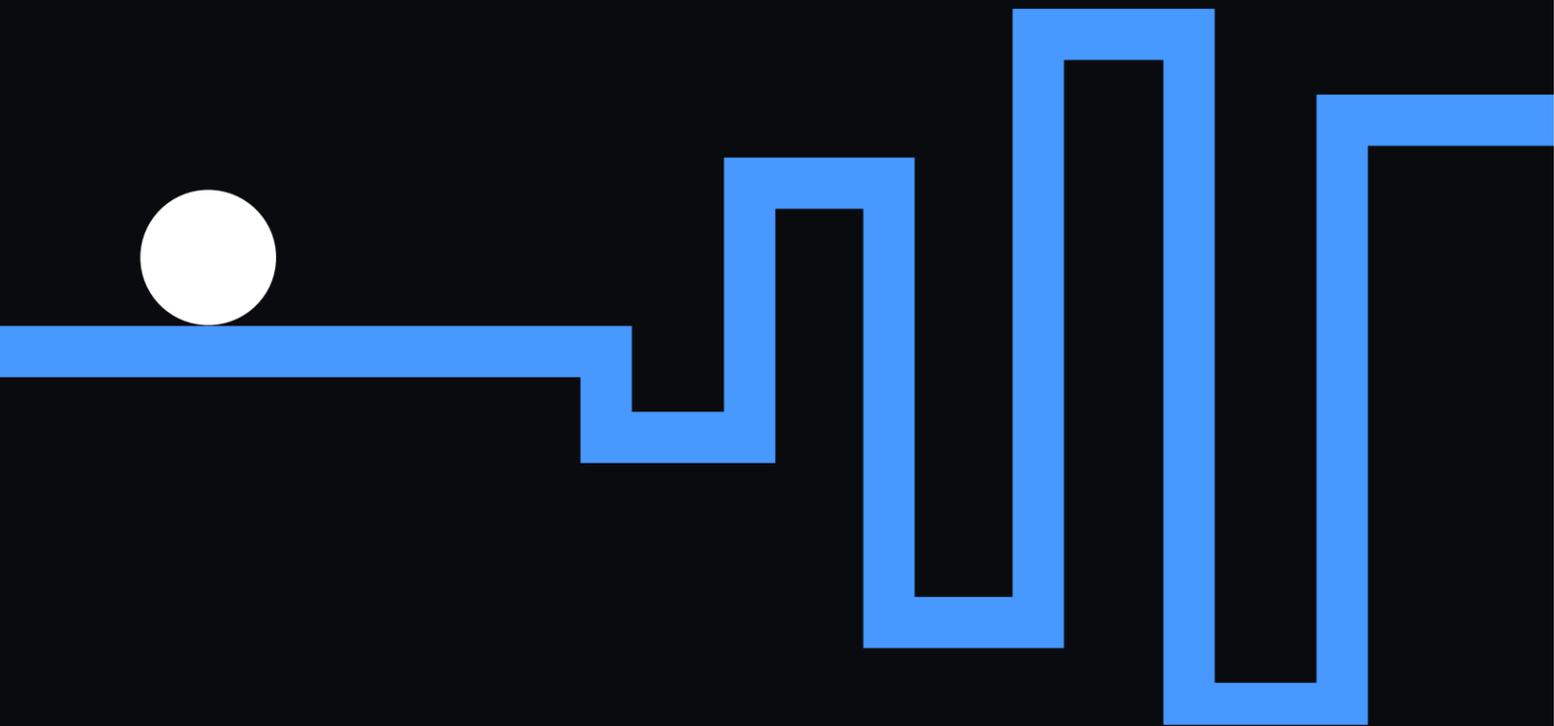


STEP 2

# Power Change from the Inside Out

# How to Drive Cultural Transformation in Your Organisation

by Amanda Bhalla



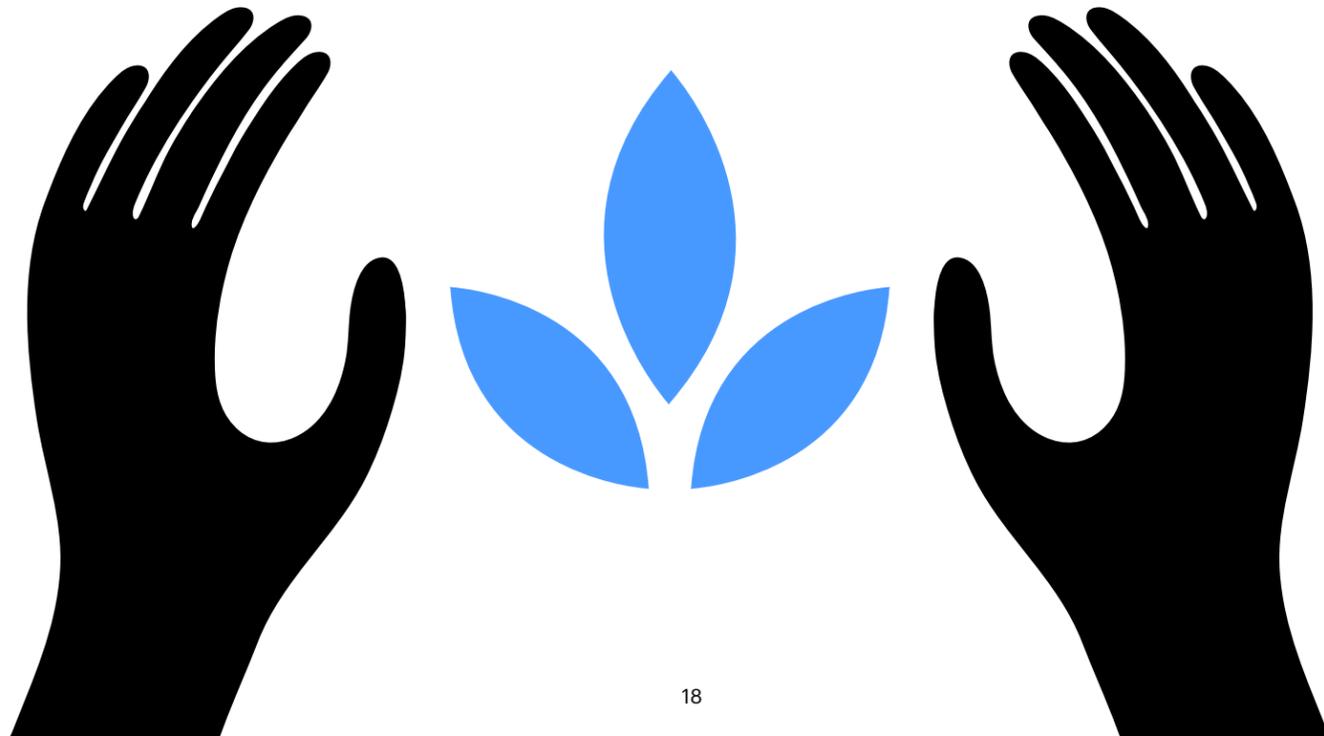
---

Transformation has become more relevant than ever as organisations build the resilience required to serve their stakeholders in the midst of world-altering shifts, such as the COVID-19 global pandemic and its inevitable economic consequences.

Prophet's 2020 global research report: [Catalysts in Action: Applying the Cultural Levers of Transformation](#) intends to help organisations determine how and where to focus their efforts to continue powering their transformations from the inside-out and ultimately emerge even stronger.

## The Future is Here

Companies no longer have discretion when it comes to transformation for the Digital Age; it is their only option. Deferred digital decisions— which previously may have shown up as small chinks in a company’s armour— have now exposed significant vulnerabilities in organisational cultures across industries and regions, shattering any reason to hold onto historical behaviours, skillsets, organisational designs and operating models.

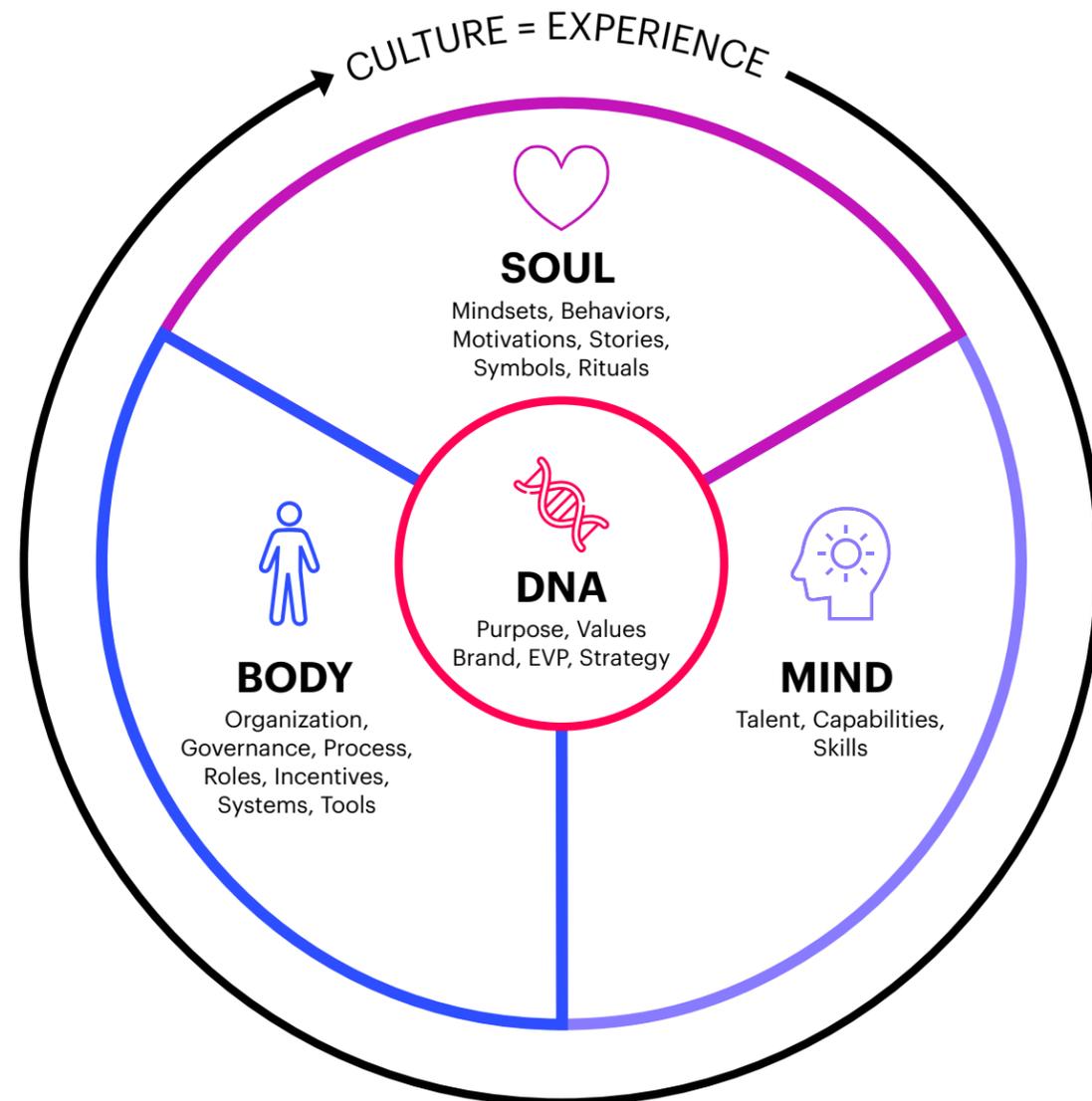


## The Methods of Transformation Still Work

Though the context for companies’ transformations has dramatically changed, the core methods have not. Our research shows the need to address culture as part of an effective transformation, through a set of cultural levers around which Prophet’s Human-Centred Transformation Model™ has been built. This model acknowledges that just like the humans that comprise them, organisations have DNA and a Mind, Body and Soul and successful transformation depends on these elements working in sync to drive sustained cultural change.

The application of these cultural levers invites its own set of questions and challenges. We’ve observed that organisations are often unsure where to start or where to go next in terms of which levers to pull. We have identified four pathways of cultural change that are intended to help organisations focus their efforts and make sustained progress toward transformation. These pathways are not intended to be prescriptive but rather a helpful aid for how organisations might navigate transformation based on overcoming primary roadblocks.

## THE HUMAN-CENTERED TRANSFORMATION MODEL™



## The Pathways of Cultural Change

We've identified the following four pathways of cultural change. These pathways align to our Human-Centred Transformation Model™ and can be viewed as either entry points into the model or ways to move through the model, i.e., where to focus next:

### DEFINING THE TRANSFORMATION

Consider this pathway to be the “control tower” for all other pathways. This is where a company solidifies its DNA: its business and brand strategy; purpose and values and employee value proposition. Once established, DNA serves to continually direct the ongoing change. In order to successfully define the transformation, organisations must set a powerful, actionable ambition and clarify the leaders who will lead the transformation.

### DIRECTING THE TRANSFORMATION

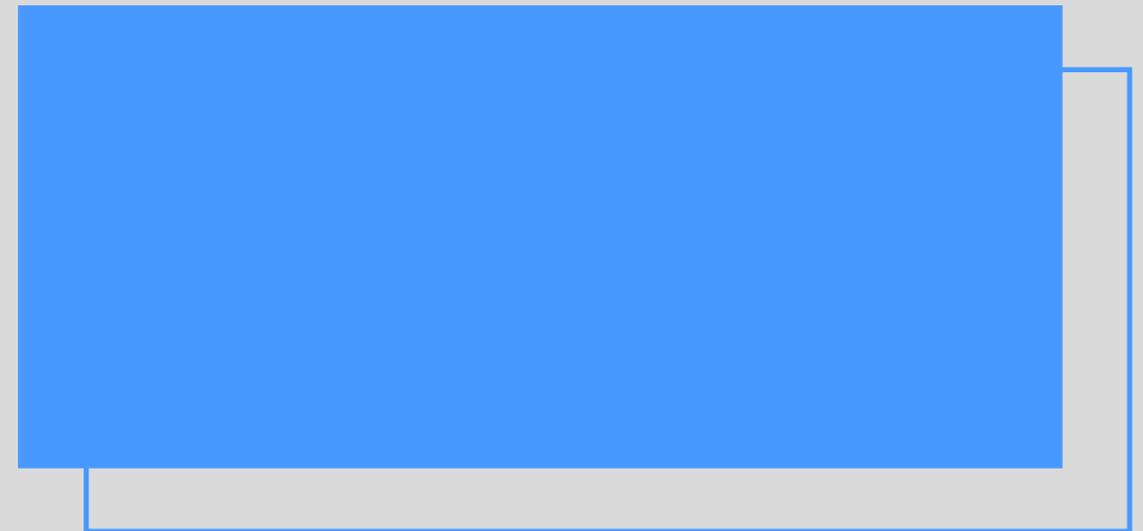
Directing the transformation requires focusing on cultural levers related to the Body of the organisation. This focus ensures organisations are taking a holistic view of the governance, processes, roles, systems and tools needed to enable an operating model that makes transformation real. Many organisations have made progress on a clear roadmap and KPIs, though other key levers, such as pushing decision rights downward have proven more challenging. Our research provides examples from organisations that are successfully overcoming these hurdles. Furthermore, a powerful story emerged in the data where organisations with an empowered transformation management office (TMO) are experiencing more positive impact and transformation success.

## ENABLING THE TRANSFORMATION

Enabling the transformation requires focusing on the Mind within our Human-Centred Transformation Model™. The Mind is where organisations identify, source and build the capabilities required for employees to thrive and for organisations to succeed in the Digital Age. These organisations will benefit from a focus on levers related to upskilling their employee bases and upgrading the ways they identify, recruit and retain talent — resulting in a supercharged workforce, that is prepared to take ownership of operating in new ways.

## MOTIVATING THE TRANSFORMATION

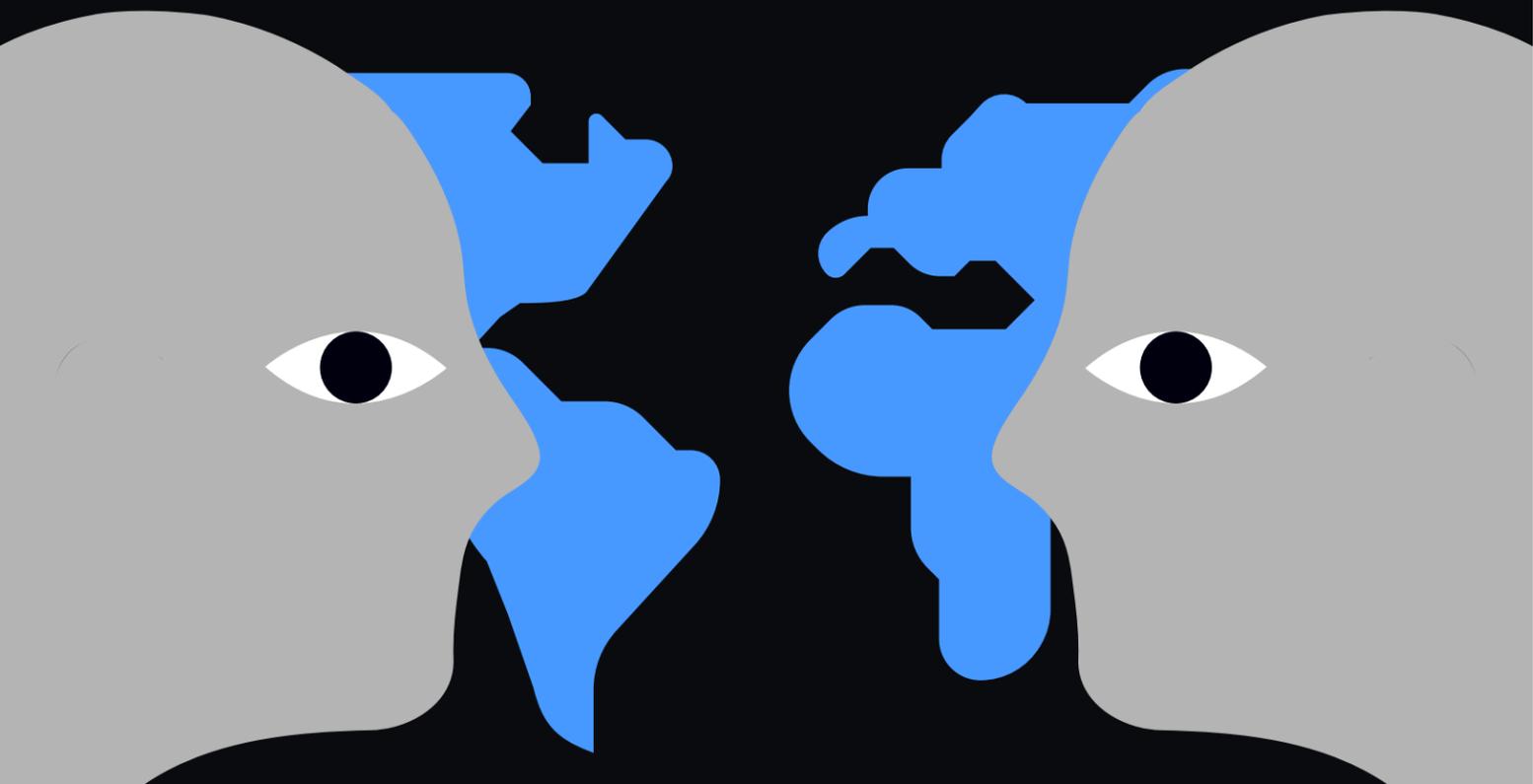
Organisations that are motivating the transformation must focus on the organisation's Soul. In our Human-Centred Transformation Model, the Soul is where leaders are equipped to both talk and "walk the talk" around the transformation journey to create trust among employees to adopt and evangelize new ways of working. Stories, rituals and symbols help build belief among employees and connect their day-to-day work to where the organisation is heading. Focusing on levers that help create safe spaces and meaningful mechanisms for employees to adapt to the change are critical, as is recognising progress being made along the way and sharing these stories of both successes and lessons learned.



# Equipping Your Team for the Future Way of Working

by Tony Fross & Merritt Robinson

The COVID-19 crisis launched the largest volume ever of workers into the world of remote work and virtual collaboration.



---

The advent of remote working technologies 20 years ago didn't have a widespread effect on how most people work.

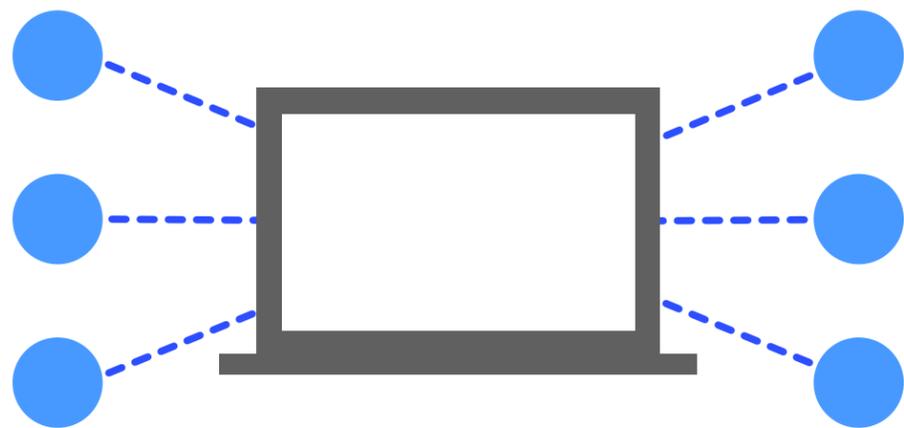
From Fortune 500 companies to digital natives, it has been common to find remote work happening in only one isolated part of the business or not at all. In fact, remember when Yahoo! famously banned remote work? Or IBM? So, it was not a surprise at the outset of the COVID crisis to see waves of announcements about “testing the technology”.

That “test”, of course, is still ongoing. It is only now in this unprecedented moment that a deep and unavoidable business need and the existing technology have come together. Suddenly, what was once largely implemented as a lifestyle choice for most companies is a universal necessity. From companies extending work from home policies through the end of the year to Twitter's announcement that it's employees will be allowed to work from home forever, it's looking likely that our working lives may never be the same again.

## The Technical Foundation is in Place

Whether or not we're individually skilled at remote work, collectively most corporations are dominated by those who have relatively little experience navigating the new world into which they have been unwillingly thrust. This is evidenced by the many articles about the perils of back-to-back video conferencing on Zoom.

As a result, every employer now realises that their workforce needs both proper equipment and real skills to work effectively remotely and that they, as a culture, had better get good at remote collaboration or they will be outpaced by those companies that already can.



Whether or not we're individually skilled at remote work, collectively most corporations are dominated by those who have relatively little experience navigating the new world into which they have been unwillingly thrust.

## Core Skills for Remote Working

This moment offers the opportunity to take a hard look at how you might best equip your workforce for the future way of working.

There are well-known needs for skills around goal setting and time management for each individual when working from home. However, as many people are now discovering, working remotely with distributed teams requires new application of existing skills; and also, some skills which might be entirely new. At Prophet, we've identified three core skills for remote teamwork that need support and reinforcement:

# 1

### CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Working in offices offers the opportunity for what architects and workspace designers call “unprogrammed interactions”, by which they mean casual run-ins in the kitchen, rest room or on an open plan floor. It's not until you're remote full-time that you realise how often you depend on bumping into someone in the office kitchen and using it as an opportunity to quickly clarify your intentions, needs and objectives. Working remotely requires colleagues to communicate more clearly on the first go, often using new tools. Knowing when it's best to use messaging (e.g., Text, Teams, Slack) versus video chat or email is important, as is being able to articulate your information and expectations clearly in that format.

# 2

### VIRTUAL MEETING DESIGN AND FACILITATION

Working remotely, most of your meeting participants are going to be easily distracted, whether by virtue of the fact that their meeting attendance tool is also their tool for messaging and email; or because a partner, child, or dog demands their attention. We probably do not spend nearly enough time on meeting design in the normal course of events. Working virtually, however, makes 'magic meetings' with little or no design even more problematic. Knowing how to design virtual meetings, meaning how long a conversation or other activity should take, how to orchestrate different types of productive conversation and which specific tools will keep participants focused are all critical for making a virtual meeting successful. Equally important is knowing how to facilitate across the distance—which sometimes means separating the process role of facilitation from being in a participant role.

# 3

### REMOTE RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Anyone who has been on a great team knows that success is not just driven solely through processes and roles, but that team culture is part of the secret sauce that distinguishes exceptional output from the merely mediocre. With a pandemic that has separated us all physically, it's more critical than before to be able to lean into soft skills and drive connection across the gap. Team leaders must be able to create a safe space where individuals can freely share ideas, get advice and balance workload in a way that respects their personal lives. This is how creative solutions to pressing challenges will be found and how teams will come through the crisis intact.

A trained eye observing a successful virtual team will see all three of these skills in action. Individuals will interact with clarity and purpose. Meetings will have a clear structure and focused, engaged participants. And teams will bond in the ways great teams do — each person connected to one another’s passions, talents and needs — enabling effective working harmony.

### EMBEDDING SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

We’re still at a moment of change that necessitates rapid upskilling simply to achieve parity to the kinds of working methods we’d once enjoyed. But we’re now keenly aware that the skills our teams will need tomorrow will resemble none of the ones we’d prepared for today. Companies that are going to succeed in a post-COVID world are those that will be preparing their workforce to work and collaborate in fundamentally different ways.

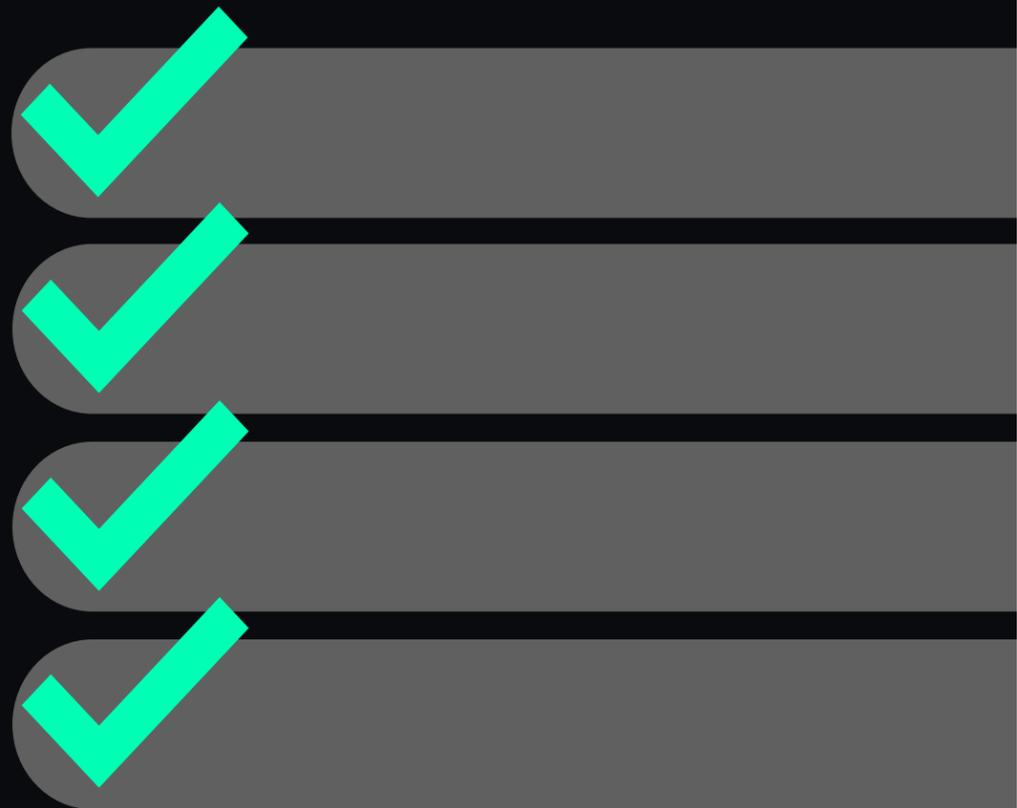


STEP 3

# Accelerate into the Future

# Four Priorities for CMOs

by Mat Zucker Partner & St. John Dunne



---

Even before the pandemic, chief marketing officers had been navigating a complex and shifting digital landscape.

And due to COVID-19, marketing leaders expect to be working with drastically reduced budgets. While some may view that as a doom-and-gloom scenario, we see it as an opportunity.

The CMO role is more important than ever, playing an essential part in guiding companies as they respond, reignite and reimagine themselves in a post-pandemic world. Here are four shifts we see as urgent priorities for CMOs today...

# 1

## ACCELERATE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Marketing leaders have long known, of course, that customers are shifting to digital across the entire journey. But the resiliency and dexterity shown during stay-at-home provide dazzling proof that customers are ready for much more than they've been given credit for.

The current disruptions in all parts of the value chain create breakthrough opportunities for digital to drive success in marketing and customer experience. They can stoke demand, build relationships, optimise customer data and predict channel shifts.

Yet many digital transformation efforts leave CMOs outside of the decision-making circle. The upcoming State of Digital Transformation report from our Altimeter research team finds that CMOs only "own" 4% of digital transformation efforts. CMOs can play a greater role by supporting the corporate digital transformation agenda in any manner they can.

# 2

## CONTINUOUSLY FUEL AND FEED CUSTOMER INSIGHTS

To determine how to win, CMOs need to understand their customers' needs—and accept that much of what they used to know is no longer true. Continue to collect and use customer data to augment existing market research, address market uncertainties and go one step further to create an insights engine. Look for new ways to capture more information on how customers and intermediaries are feeling and behaving. That intelligence will add value not only in marketing but through the entire enterprise.

Nike is a powerful example. While it built its reputation with great products and relevant marketing, business growth is powered by digital insights that it embeds into every part of the company. Its Nike Direct division hasn't just fueled sales. It provides data on fast-changing tastes and preferences, informing decisions in everything from innovation strategy to product design to community building. And it's led to breakthroughs like the Nike Fit app and the 30-day wear test.

## 3

**BUILD AT TWO SPEEDS**

To succeed, CMOs need to throw themselves into two-speed thinking. First, they must adapt and innovate marketing and sales to meet the short-term realities of business in this radically disrupted environment, while also planning for things that drive return in the long run like purpose and customer experience. The second speed requires reimagining different scenarios and which bets will be successful. Armed with customer insights and investments in digital, it can be done.

Even as the world waits for a “new normal” to emerge, reinventing marketing for immediate challenges looks different for each company. According to our State of Digital Transformation research, the majority—64%—of companies say revenue has fallen since the pandemic began. And for 15% overall, the drop is significant. For these companies, marketing is all about restarting the engines. But a lucky 17% have seen revenues increase. And while that’s nice for now, they face short-term challenges in retaining those new customers.

Starbucks has been perfecting the art of operating at two speeds. Short-term, it is taking advantage of its mobile app and loyal base to keep relationships and drive growth. For the longer term, the company is revising the experience for both customers and employees, investing in new drive-through stores, pick-up windows and better machines. All will allow Starbucks to continue to increase and meet demand.

## 4

**RE-DEFINE AND RE-EXECUTE YOUR BRAND PURPOSE**

Purpose, a brand’s reason-for-being, means so much more today, as consumers demand better corporate behaviour. They want to buy from ethical companies that are trying to do the right thing. They expect businesses to be empathic, responsible employers—and recent events have shown us they are willing to walk away from brands that mistreat people. And while they’ll forgive many missteps, they expect transparency.

Amazon, for example, has come under shareholder and employee fire for its refusal to disclose how many workers have contracted COVID-19. In response, the company went beyond mere words, committing an astonishing \$4 billion—about a quarter of its annual profits—to make Amazon workers safer and fulfill its mission.

“Providing for customers and protecting employees as this crisis continues for more months is going to take skill, humility, invention and money,” founder and CEO Jeff Bezos says in its statement. “If you’re a shareowner in Amazon, you may want to take a seat, because we’re not thinking small.”

It’s not enough to be trust-worthy. Consumers expect companies to make an impact on society. They want assurances that the brands they buy are protecting people’s health and the environment. And they want to see them promoting social change, such as addressing racial bias. Procter & Gamble, for example, had already established itself as an outspoken advocate for social justice. As a result of recent protests, it stepped up its commitment with a \$5 million pledge and compelling new content in its “Take On Race” challenge.

## Building a New Action Plan

CMOs need to make sure their plans get ahead of budget cuts. Do more with less. Get ahead of budget cuts. Do more with less, re-evaluate marketing ROIs, setting up more frequent reviews to challenge assumptions

But more importantly...

- Show marketing as a value creator. How can marketing contribute to the organisation versus being seen as a cost centre? How can it use brand purpose to increase relevance?
- Create or recalibrate a continuous customer insights engine, to understand shifting customer needs. How and when should the CMO initiate new market pulsing?
- Ensure the production of intelligent content, relevant to the moment, contextualised for the consumer.
- Make sure operating models can execute data-driven test-and-learn efforts.
- Audit the marketing technology stack to make sure the best moves are automated.

It's still too soon for any CMO to predict the months ahead. A vaccine could change the landscape, as could a second or third wave of infections. But planning for the known unknowns—and building in good behaviours now for marketing teams—will help ensure success over future horizons.

Are you lacking the joined-up real time data to understand how COVID-19 is changing your customer behaviours? Or the resource to surface who your most valuable customers are and who is looking to leave? Our new diagnostic tool helps to raise digital channel performance by arming marketers with the data and insights they need to deliver the right experience and messages to consumers at the right time.



# Brand Behaviours: Critical for Leaders, Managers & Employees

by Todd Redmon, Mike Fleming, Andrea Hall & Greg Hall



---

Think about the last time you ordered a cup of coffee. Did the barista who took your order smile and welcome you? Or was it clear they were ready for their shift to be over? How about the last time you needed to speak to a customer service manager? Was the manager reading robotically from a script, or did she take the time to ask questions and emphasise with your situation?

How your business leaders, managers and employees show up has always been a critical input for how customers feel about your brand. And when you have customers interacting with your brand weekly, daily, or even hourly — consistently positive interactions can drive trust, loyalty and repeat business, while even just a few negative interactions can cause customers to jump ship and head to a competitor.

This is nothing new — experiences have been built, and brands have grown through the way employees treat customers. What's new is how important these brand behaviours will be as the world adjusts to its new normal. We are being thrown, without warning, into new ways of interacting with customers. Brands who lead with care and purpose will build trust. Brands who are careless in their actions run the risk of losing out.

## A New Normal for Brand Behaviours

Brands with well-defined brand behaviours or service styles have a competitive advantage over their peers. There's a reason why Team Members at British Airways always respond with a "my pleasure" and genuine smile when you say, "thank you." It's core to who they are and how they serve, and it's engrained in every employee from Day 1.

Something as simple as greeting a guest with a smile, or taking a few seconds to ask how their day is going will always be strong examples of Brand Behaviours that build loyalty. But think for a minute about the new behaviours that might drive trust in a post COVID-19 world:

- An employee wiping down a touchscreen after every customer
- A cashier being empowered to give a nurse a free cup of coffee
- A manager knowing how to empathise with a customer who can't make a monthly payment because he's been furloughed

Now, the stakes are higher — the presence of positive, on-brand behaviours will build trust and loyalty, while the absence of these behaviours will force customers to go elsewhere. As a leader, it's a great time to revisit the standards for how your employees interact with customers and how your brand is experienced.

The presence of positive, on-brand behaviours will build trust and loyalty, while the absence of these behaviours will force customers to go elsewhere

## Building Brand Behaviours

Implementing a set of on-brand brand behaviours is an intuitive, yet careful process with many critical milestones

# 1

### CLARIFY THE AMBITION

Well before jumping right to “what do I want my employees to say or do”, it’s important to start with an ambition. At the end of the day, Brand Behaviours must be thought of strategically in the context of what your brand stands for and link back to the priorities of the business.

- What is core to our brand purpose and which aspects of our brand do we want employees to bring to life?
- How do we want our customers to feel?
- Why is this important to the overall growth of our business?

# 2

### DEFINE THE BEHAVIOURS

With the ambition in place, you can translate the strategy to behaviours for customer-facing employees; behaviours that will be recognised and appreciated by your customers, and easy to learn and display without disrupting the roles and responsibilities of frontline employees.

- Where are the moments that matter most in the customer’s journey and experience with our brand?
- How can our employees bring our brand to life in these moments in simple, memorable ways?
- Are there exemplary on-brand behaviours happening already that we can share more broadly? And which new behaviours will our employees be excited to display?

# 3

### CODIFY THE BEHAVIOURS

You won't get anywhere without thoughtful planning to share and create buy-in with those expected to display them. Here it’s all about simplifying the ask and telling a compelling story that gets employees excited to play a role.

- Why are we asking our employees to display these behaviours?
- What will get our team excited and incentivised to display these behaviours?
- How will these behaviours empower our team to serve our customers better, while being authentic to themselves and to our brand?

## Getting Started

Defining and implementing Brand Behaviours is a journey, but it's a journey that can get started with a few simple steps:

- 1. Reflect on how you want your brand to show up, especially in this uncertain world**
- 2. Think of the simple but memorable behaviours that will bring your brand to life and stand-out from the competition**
- 3. Connect your team to the bigger why and make it easy for them to exhibit new behaviours**

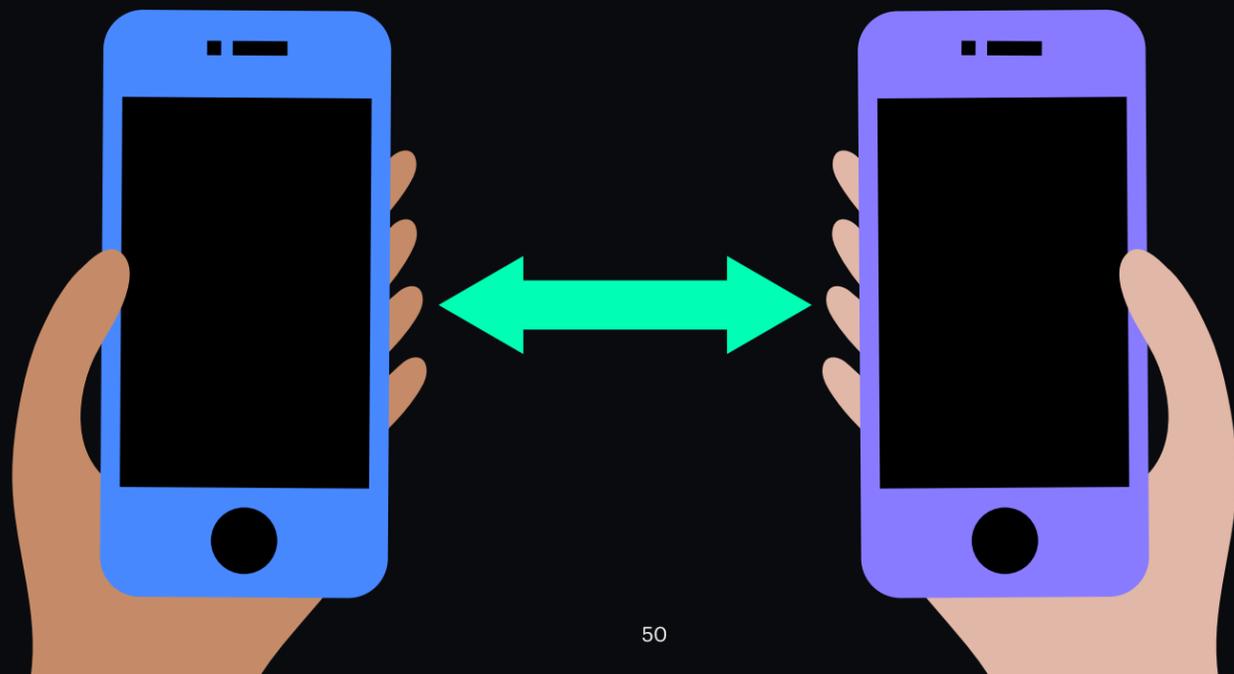
Now more than ever the experience your customers have with your brand is paramount. And the brands that come out ahead at the end of this crisis are the ones that will have started by leading with care and purpose.



# Social Distancing Doesn't Have to Interrupt B2B Customer Relationships

by Fred Geyer

Firms reluctant to make the shift to digital selling are finding that their hands are being forced as social distancing makes traditional interactions between suppliers and customers impossible.



---

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the ways suppliers and customers interact with remarkable suddenness and scale.

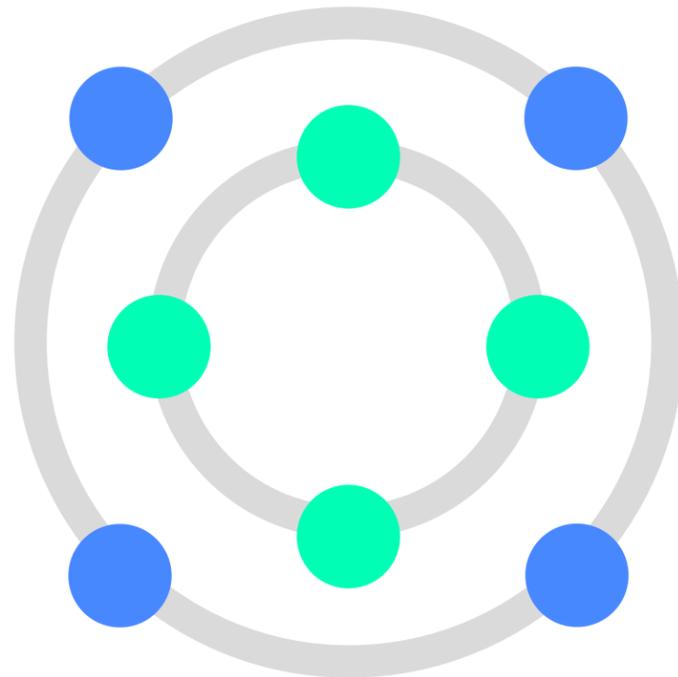
B2B companies that have relied on large sales forces, networks of intermediaries, call centres, and visits from technical support teams are particularly vulnerable to having their customer relationships interrupted. Making a shift to digital selling is an important way to sustain supplier-customer relationships in the environment we find ourselves in and arms businesses with the capabilities to accelerate revenue building once customer demand improves.

B2B companies that have successfully made the shift to digital selling — organisations such as integrated logistics giant Maersk and the commercial arm of ING bank — have reoriented themselves and are now using data and digital tools to acquire new customers; sustain and grow share of wallet among established customers; and expand the number of buying centres within existing customer organisations.

These companies have taken advantage of recent B2B advances in digital targeting, personalisation, outreach, content creation, account-based marketing (ABM) and always-on marketing, to position themselves well in today's uncertain times. A digital selling shift involves moving to a selling approach that relies extensively on digital marketing and data-driven selling. It integrates sales and marketing in a tightly linked partnership that is data-driven, digitally powered, and foregoes the need for person-to-person contact.

During a digital selling shift in the current environment B2B leaders pursue revenue generating paths to address the parts of the sales funnel that are at immediate risk and provide the greatest growth opportunity once recovery begins. The risks and the opportunities will vary by company and industry. For established leaders in mature industries the greatest risks and opportunities will often occur in the parts of the funnel dealing with renewal, cross sell and supporting existing relationships. For insurgent companies or rapidly growing sectors the opportunities and risk may reside primarily at the top of the funnel in acquiring new customers and encouraging them to make an initial or trial purchase.

Our study of successful digital transformation in B2B has uncovered several paths leaders can take to reduce their risks of selling disruption and boost their opportunities to build demand as economies begin to recover:



## Demand Generation to Accelerate Customer Acquisition

The explosion of data and a rapidly expanding set of vehicles for reaching B2B decision makers is making it possible to create direct relationships with end customers without cutting out their sales representatives, channel partners, distributors, advisors, or other middlemen. These channel and content alternatives are enabling established sellers to generate leads for their sales as well as for their intermediaries. Engaging in demand generation provides an added benefit: it creates a direct relationship with the customer that enables suppliers to learn from users and buyers, test alternatives, and more effectively probe for new opportunities. This path may be particularly important to insurgent companies or companies in rapidly growing sectors.

## Digital Sales Enablement to Accelerate Cross-selling and Boost Value

Here, companies use digital tools and digitally collected data to sell more effectively. Sales engagement and relationship management platforms, including those of Salesforce.com, Oracle, and SAP are so well established that Gartner reports that the market reached \$48.5 billion in 2018 and represents a quarter of all corporate purchases of enterprise software. Sales enablement platforms, networks, and apps help individual salespeople achieve more and help sales teams work more effectively together. In the past few years, these platforms have shifted from individual customer relationship management to helping sales teams engage more fully with their customer's entire decision-making team. The payoff is immediate: better equipped and coordinated sales teams perform better. They generate more revenues, strengthen customer relationships, and stay with companies longer. This path may be particularly relevant to leaders in mature industries.

## Digital Relationship-Building

New, more targeted vehicles, such as LinkedIn advertising, along with compelling content (such as video and virtual reality) have paved the way for Account Based Marketing (ABM). ABM is more personalised and tailored to the needs of individual decision makers than traditional push email and digital advertising campaigns. As an integrated approach, it combines salesperson interactions and digital engagement for maximum efficiency and impact. Its digital components extend engagement into an anytime, anywhere experience through the 24/7 advantage of online and mobile vehicles. This path is likely to be relevant to all companies with sales teams whether they are leaders or insurgents.

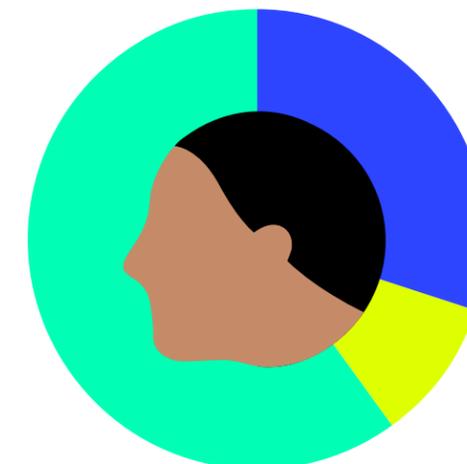
## Digital Customer Support

Companies are also using digital technologies to shift more of the routine chores online. B2B companies are now using advanced AI bots in combination with live person-to-person chat to enable customers to easily order parts and accessories and get problems resolved online. Companies are also shifting their technical support and client-learning functions to digital formats. These new tools boost team efficiency and effectiveness through improved resource deployment and enable customer 24/7 customer support. This path is helpful in any industry where technical support or customer training is an important part of the supplier value proposition.

One of the biggest opportunities digital has created for customers is allowing them to make purchases directly from suppliers and bypass intermediaries.

## Direct Digital Commerce to Accelerate Acquisition and Cross-selling

One of the biggest opportunities digital has created for customers is allowing them to make purchases directly from suppliers and bypass intermediaries. As more customers demand 24/7 access, intermediaries' have become increasingly open to allowing suppliers to directly engage with customer segments that are hard to access, fulfil offers that are costly to serve, or supply information directly that enhances the customer experience. Direct commerce can be valuable at renewal, upgrade or cross sell occasions in addition to initial purchase. It's important that suppliers determine how they will integrate direct digital commerce solutions with their intermediary relationships or their own salespeople. This path has broad relevance for both incumbents and insurgents but the scope of bypassing the intermediaries will vary based on the power of the intermediaries and the willingness of the supplier to challenge them.



## Our 4 Step Approach

By examining case studies in successful transformation by B2B companies we've identified a step-by-step approach to following each path and generating measurable impact:

- 1. Choose where to play by understanding where in the sales funnel to sustain or grow customer demand and by understanding the barriers customers face in achieving their goals.**
- 2. Determine how to win by building a compelling digital strategy based on clarifying the target, capturing the target's attention, cultivating their interest, and converting them to buy, buy more, or recommend to others.**
- 3. Accelerate what to do by using scrum agile methods to conduct a series of sprints to pilot new digital selling approaches, scale previously piloted approaches, or build capabilities required for digital selling.**
- 4. Ensure you have who is needed by setting up and enabling a customer data team with the resources they need to put in place a system to undertake the shift and maintain progress through continuous customer-driven improvement.**

The bottom line: making the digital selling shift makes sense in ordinary times. At a time when in-person contact is extremely difficult it is even more important.



## Our EMEA Leadership Team



**Tobias Baerschneider**  
Partner & EMEA Regional Lead  
[t\\_baerschneider@prophet.com](mailto:t_baerschneider@prophet.com)



**Alexander Beutel**  
Partner  
[a\\_beutel@prophet.com](mailto:a_beutel@prophet.com)



**Alex Whittaker**  
Associate Partner  
[a\\_whittaker@prophet.com](mailto:a_whittaker@prophet.com)



**Artur Arutiunian**  
Associate Partner  
[a\\_artutiunian@prophet.com](mailto:a_artutiunian@prophet.com)



**Benjamin Gilgen**  
Partner  
[b\\_gilgen@prophet.com](mailto:b_gilgen@prophet.com)



**Bernhard Schaar**  
Associate Partner  
[b\\_schaar@prophet.com](mailto:b_schaar@prophet.com)



**Clive Rohald**  
Partner  
[c\\_rohald@prophet.com](mailto:c_rohald@prophet.com)



**Gregg Finlay**  
Associate Partner  
[g\\_finlay@prophet.com](mailto:g_finlay@prophet.com)



**Helen Rosethorn**  
Partner  
[h\\_rosethorn@prophet.com](mailto:h_rosethorn@prophet.com)



**Jan Doring**  
Partner  
[j\\_doring@prophet.com](mailto:j_doring@prophet.com)



**Jessica Holdcroft**  
Partner  
[j\\_holdcroft@prophet.com](mailto:j_holdcroft@prophet.com)



**Paul Teuton**  
Partner  
[p\\_teuton@prophet.com](mailto:p_teuton@prophet.com)



**Tosson El Noshokaty**  
Partner  
[t\\_noshokaty@prophet.com](mailto:t_noshokaty@prophet.com)

## Our Core Work

Brand & Activation

Marketing & Sales

Experience & Innovation

Organisation & Culture

Prophet is a digitally-powered, creatively-inspired consultancy that helps our clients unlock uncommon growth in the face of disruption. Unprecedented levels of change and disruption require new thinking and transformative approaches to growth. From purpose to product, brand to experience, customers to operations, we bring the insight, rigor and expertise needed to help our clients realise transformative opportunities.

Our global team combines insight, creativity, data and technology to help our clients unlock growth that is human-centred, transformative and durable. We are guided by a mission and set of values that are focused on a higher-order approach to growth. Our global footprint operates within a single P&L, enabling us to bring the right people with the right experience together to solve our clients' current business challenges from across our 12 global offices.

Want to know more about Prophet and how our global team can help you achieve uncommon growth? [Get in touch with us today.](#)

[prophet.com](http://prophet.com)

**Berlin — Germany**  
Oranienburger  
Straße 66 10117  
Berlin-Mitte  
+49 30 847 107 80

**London —  
United Kingdom**  
10 Bedford Street  
London  
WC2E 9HE  
+44 207 836 5885

**Zürich — Switzerland**  
Talstrasse 83  
8001 Zürich,  
+41 44 218 7810

# PROPHET