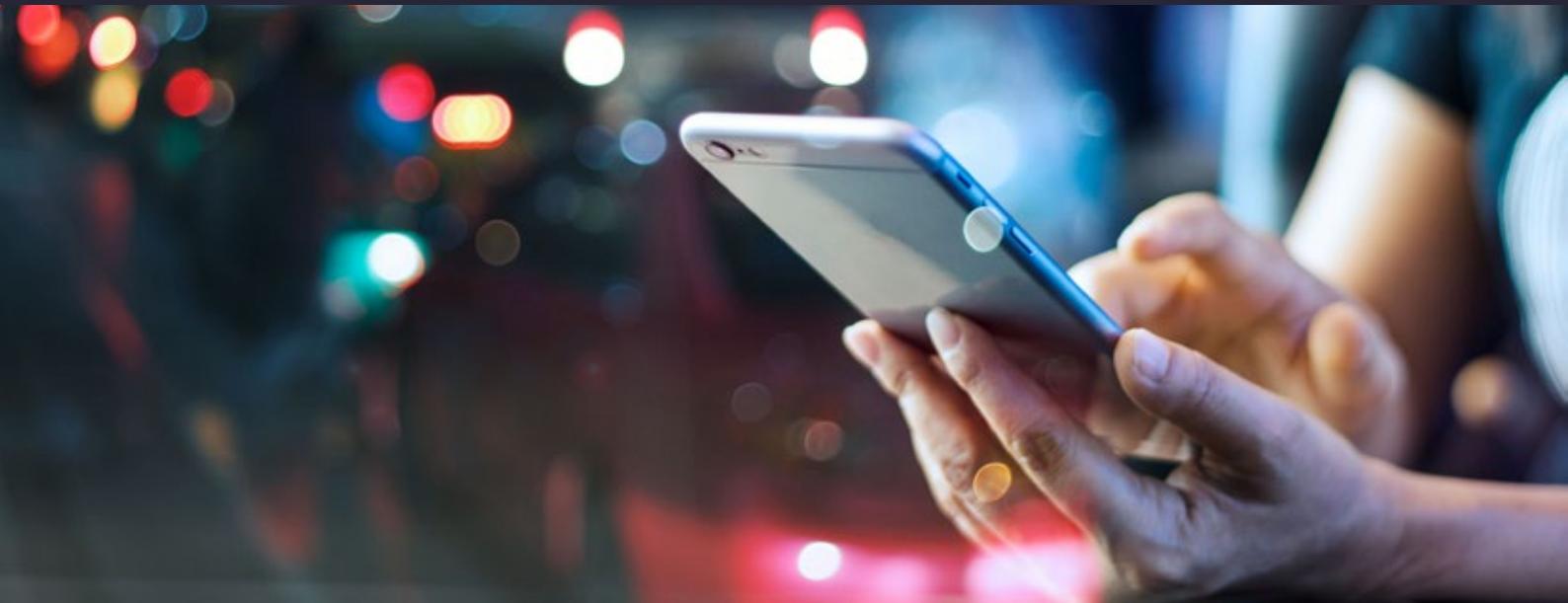




The Role of Mobile in Digital Transformation Strategy for 2021 and beyond.

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Today, people can connect to the digital world in real-time, from anywhere. Robots can automate work processes. Cars can drive on their own. Cities can run themselves. Mobile technology is central to all of these new digital ecosystems.

Using mobile as the foundation of digital transformation is an effective way to drive business results. With mobile playing a significant role in a wider digital strategy, rather than being siloed, companies can accomplish so much more.

Brands can be there for their customers in the moments that matter. They can redesign the customer journey and provide personalised solutions for customers' lifestyle and tactical goals.

Many businesses still have unexplored opportunities afforded by the central role mobile can play

in digital transformation, because there is pressure to bring artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), 5G, and the very cutting-edge of innovation into their business transformation strategy. But mobile is the platform that makes all of these technologies accessible.

With mobile – location-agnostic, yet everywhere and always connected to everything – the possibilities are endless. This is why activating mobile will be the key to successful digital transformation in the next decade.

Introduction.

Business leaders have recognised the importance of mobile technology to digital transformation for years. However, capturing the true potential of mobile, remains an opportunity for many. Over the next decade, 5G, edge computing, smarter AI, and other advancements will make even some of the most innovative mobile apps of today seem limited.

That doesn't mean mobile should take a backseat in 2021 and beyond. For those businesses that want to thrive in the future, mobile will be the foundation for what comes next.

Businesses that are looking too far ahead, may be missing opportunities

As customer expectations evolve and more people expect exceptional experiences, there is significant pressure to invest in the latest technology trends to improve the customer experience (CX). To try and compete digitally, companies create huge technology budgets and work hard to translate that spend into growth.

Organisations are investing millions into AI, the internet of things (IoT), mixed reality (MR) and other leading-edge technologies, but they don't always capture the potential. In 2018, enterprises spent \$1.3 trillion (USD) on digital transformation initiatives, yet \$900 billion of that investment never achieved stated goals. (1)

With huge resources going into next-generation possibilities, identifying the platform to drive tangible results with these technologies is where mobile can play a significant part.

Mobile is the logical key to the future of digital transformation. With mobile as the foundation, it's possible to integrate the latest technologies, win new customers, improve workflows for employees, and drive efficiencies. But, to unlock the potential, businesses will need to redefine their approach to mobile.

Mobile makes all other tech trends accessible

Mobile apps are the most widely developed type of application other than web apps, despite the introduction of new immersive technologies such as voice, chat, wearables, and augmented reality (AR). According to the Gartner report, Insights to Kick-Start an Enterprise Multiexperience Development Strategy, among enterprises that have deployed more than three applications, 91 per cent developed mobile apps. (2)

Instead of new technologies diminishing the value of having a robust mobile strategy, they've given mobile an even more central role in digital transformation. The reality is, mobile technology is deeply embedded in society, work, and finance today. For the world's 3.8 billion smartphone users (3), it offers everything from an easy way to complete mundane tasks like paying bills and ordering dinner to functional wellness, lifestyle, and work solutions. And it's through mobile devices that customers can interact with these new technologies in a way that's comfortable and familiar to them. Allowing organisations to get their existing and future products and services literally into the hands of their customers.

It's an ideal platform for delivering a better CX and employee experience (EX), which is the heart of many digital transformation initiatives. Mobile technology empowers businesses to engage stakeholders with meaningful interactions, meeting customers where they are in the moment and solving pain points in seamless ways.

The challenge businesses are facing right now is, figuring out how to use this potential to distinguish themselves in the next decade of mobile innovation and maturity. Where mobile phones are ubiquitous and organisations want to instantly connect and communicate with their customers and employees.



Consumer trends and new technology are pushing the boundaries of what's possible

The rise of mobile technology over the past decade has both driven and been driven by customer needs and social trends. As more people adopted smartphones, it became clear that a mobile-first digital transformation would help businesses distinguish themselves from the competition and become market leaders.

This is exactly what has happened with some of today's digital transformation success stories.

When fast-casual restaurant chain Chipotle upgraded its mobile app to allow customers to easily customise orders, its digital sales increased by more than 100 per cent year over year for the next two quarters. (4)

Furniture giant Ikea solved a practical problem for customers with its Ikea Place app. Using AR, the app allows customers to visualise what IKEA products will look like in their home. At the end of 2019, the company announced a new iteration of the app that will use AI to render complete collections of furnishings. (5) Ikea is known today as one of the most innovative companies in the world, thanks to its customer-friendly mobile app.



Nike is another strong digital innovator relying on mobile technology to improve CX, and like Ikea, it keeps refining the technology. The company recently improved its apps' algorithms to reward active loyalty members. It offers apps with running and training programmes, and Nike SNKRS, which uses storytelling to drive engagement. The company's mobile apps helped to boost revenue – in Q3 of 2019, Nike Digital grew 36 per cent globally. (6)

It's not only retail brands that have shifted expectations through mobile app development. Mobile technology has become a core medium for financial transactions, content consumption, and social interaction.

People use mobile apps to shop, create, bank, and exercise. Being digitally immersed – interacting with a digital device every day – is so commonplace that many feel lost without their smartphone.

Data from YouGov RealTime research found that most people would feel anxious if parted from their device for a day. Nearly 60 per cent of 18–34 year-olds, half of 35–44 year-olds, and over a third of those 45 and older would feel uncomfortable without their phone. (7)

This digital immersion intensified people's reliance on mobile devices even more, while at the same time increasing digital competition. With stakeholders high demands for personalisation, convenience, and speed, businesses have been left scrambling to become digital innovators.

New technologies are pushing the boundaries further

At the same time, the pace of technological development has been incredible. There are more ways to engage with customers and empower employees, and the scope of possibilities is virtually limitless.

Augmented reality, virtual reality, and mixed reality are making experiences more immersive.

5G, IoT, and edge computing are opening the door to heightened interconnectivity and functional smart cities.

Predictive analytics and AI are driving hyper-personalisation at scale.

This fast pace has created its own set of challenges. Businesses have to figure out what technologies to use and how to integrate them within digital transformation. Those that can't position themselves as a digital innovator in 2021 and beyond, risk being left behind.

To leverage new technologies, meet customers in the moment with right-time interactions, and avoid digital initiatives that miss the mark, businesses should revisit the place where it all of this started – mobile apps.





Mobile bridges the gap between the digital era and the future

Mobile trends that will dominate in the next decade

A mature mobile strategy will drive a more effective digital transformation. By looking at trends and understanding what's possible, businesses can use mobile as a platform to drive effective digital transformation. These are the technologies that are going to make the biggest impact over the next ten years.

5G

5G will reduce latency to less than one millisecond, while also delivering more bandwidth and stronger connections. This technology may be relatively new – telecom companies in the UK only started launching 5G networks in 2019 – but it's expected to be one of the most pivotal of the decade.

5G will act as a springboard for IoT, which has the potential to revolutionise industry. Apps that connect mobile devices to machines, including industrial automation technology and robotics in manufacturing, agriculture, and healthcare, will completely change the way people work, through rich media, immersive interactions and continued innovations in AI.

It's also the precursor to smart cities. Combined with edge computing, which will turn mobile devices into roaming 'pieces of the cloud', there will be endless applications for smart cars, smart buildings, and intelligent public transport, allowing users to control their environment in yet-to-be-imagined ways.

Mobile devices and apps will be the literal remote control of this brave new world.

Beacon technology

Companies use this technology to deliver right-time, right-person experiences. A beacon-based mobile app can send and receive information with a beacon, which is a small device equipped with Bluetooth low energy technology.

Sending out automated push notifications when a customer nears a business' location is one popular use case, but there's so much more that can be done. The Shout team developed mobile apps for a major UK football club and the largest sporting event organiser in the UK using iBeacons and NFC (near field communication) technology. Beacon apps can direct fans to their seat, alert them to snack and drink opportunities, or engage with event participants in unique ways.

Wearables

According to the International Data Corporation (IDC), the worldwide market for wearable devices grew 82.3 per cent in Q4 of 2019. (8) There's huge potential here for the health and fitness sector. Market leader Nike is already capitalising on wearables, building smart sneakers, including smart basketball shoes that lace via a smartphone app. Another important use case for this mobile app trend is in worker safety. Wearable clothing synced with mobile technology can be used to detect when a worker may be in danger or in need of help.

AI

Right now, AI is being used to analyse data and spot patterns in customer behaviour, which can then be used to deliver more customised experiences. McDonald's uses machine learning to personalise its drive-thru menu based on the time of day, the weather, local events, nearby traffic, and historical data. (9) Companies can apply a similar approach, using AI and predictive analytics to deliver personalised experiences at scale via a user's mobile device.

Meet customers exactly where they are with mobile

Here's how companies can build an impactful digital transformation strategy:

- Identify the moments that matter to customers or other stakeholders.
- Look at the data to define the lifestyle goals, tactical goals, and moments where users are open to a solution.
- Establish which mobile trends can be used to meet those needs.
- Redesign the customer journey, reducing friction at every micro-moment and providing personalised solutions for customer goals.

This will require an out-of-the-box mentality, but it's the digital innovators that will be the market leaders in the next decade.



Conclusion.

Mobile is so engrained in culture, lifestyle, business and commerce that the idea of viewing it as one part of a digital transformation strategy doesn't make sense. Mobile applications are also the gateway for many of the new technologies on the horizon, and in some cases, serves as a hub for connecting different applications for users.

Instead of taking a siloed approach, companies that design their mobile strategy to serve as a key driver of business transformation will be able to unlock all that the mobile decade has to offer. The sine qua non of CX is to know what customers want or need before they do and to offer solutions in the moment. This ultra-effortless customer journey is the future of digital transformation.

About Shout.

Shout are a software consultancy headquartered in the UK, with offices in Newcastle, London and Philadelphia. Led by founder and CEO Gary Boon, author of this paper, Shout design, architect and engineer software solutions for clients across finance, property, sport and leisure sectors, and for UK government.

Digital partners to the UK ICO and Hitachi Capital, Shout provide Cloud Strategy, Application Development, Data Analysis and UX Design Services to a host of public and private sector organisations.

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