



Change the Abstract

Changing the conversation and
using IT synergy to drive growth



Change the abstract

New technologies are driving significant transformation in all industries. From aerospace and defence, to banking, automotive and retail, change is accelerating everywhere and it is not industry specific. Borders between individual industries are starting to dissolve. Whether it is about staying competitive by expanding into new industries or companies simply using their capabilities in new ways, industries are having to adapt quickly to new and disruptive influences.

The key is how you make this disruption work for you and your business. How can you be sure that you stay ahead of the curve? Whilst disruption is often seen as a threat, with the right mindset it should be an opportunity to be seized. You just need to understand how that change can have a positive effect on your business and how you might use it to drive the future. Some forward-thinking companies have already started to transform and drive the future of their industries, but in many cases the desired results are not being realised. Others know they have to change, but aren't sure how, or in which direction.

A vision for the future

It is clear that much of the change is being driven by new technology, whether it is artificial intelligence, block chain, robotics, or even machine learning with most organisations already making forays into this space. Of course, the real challenge is around understanding where these technologies might be headed. How might these technologies be combined to bring greater business benefits? So, although you need to keep the tech conversations going, it is time to add a 'futures' conversation in to the mix. After all, change isn't risky if you're prepared for it. What is your long-term vision? Where is your industry headed? What is the game-changing strategy and supporting technology that will give you that advantage?

I have recently spent some time with futurist Matthew Griffin, who has some interesting perspectives on what the future holds. One thing that quickly becomes clear from our conversations is that the future is already here whether we like it or not - what was once deemed science fiction, is now science (or technology) reality. Take for example AI, which many see very much as emerging technology that can improve business processes and customer interactions. However, it is already bringing business advantage in some unlikely industries. As an example, a creative AI called Amper was involved in the world's first album composed and produced by an AI back in August 2017. Similar things can be seen emerging in the genetics space where last year the first 6 base DNA was created - DNA that could store all the world's data within the size of a pinhead.

Matthew talks of how we are seeing exponential technological progress, which is measured using the yard stick of cost versus performance, and is accelerating the rate of cultural, industrial and societal transformation. Today these technologies are democratising and proliferating faster than ever before, thanks to lower production costs and new digital distribution models. Many of these exponentially expanding technologies are now combining to create an accelerating, virtuous cycle of almost limitless disruption.

So, what we're seeing is the rise of some incredibly powerful emerging technologies that are being democratised and decentralised by new platforms that are, in turn, helping to drive the creation of new business models, products and services. This is a future vision that's coming at us head on - fast. We can't stop the juggernaut, but we can consider how we're going to respond.

There are, of course, some industry-specifics that point to the accelerating pace of change. 2016 saw the first autonomous robotic lawyers handling bankruptcy cases for an American law firm. In retail, Amazon aims to be fully autonomous by 2019. Yes, that's next year. So, if retailers currently think they've got it tough, especially fashion retailers, it's about to go to the next level. Amazon isn't the only big retail player to go down this route, of course. Chinese online retail giant JD.com is planning hundreds of unmanned convenience stores that will use facial and recognition tech to record payment and product information.





The right response

So how do we respond? Let's say you've invested in chatbots, AI, data analytics, virtual assistants and more. It's clever stuff that really will change your world. In fact, in many cases, digital is already changing how you engage with your employees and customers. It's cutting the cost of your IT services delivery and making customer-facing processes more efficient. Bringing together data and analytics creates a level of insight we have never previously been able to achieve. And technology such as cloud and automation have enabled businesses to become more agile, more proactive and more responsive to fluctuating demand. Or at least, that's what we've been promised.

There is a problem, however, in the current lack of synergy across these investments. Typically, we're seeing organisations applying new and emerging technologies independently, as abstracted, standalone entities. They're missing a trick because they're not viewing them as part of the complete and changing enterprise IT picture. Data is great, but only if you can use the technology that enables intelligent, analytics-led decision making based on that data. IT leaders must move away from their siloed approach because real value comes in bringing it all together (machine learning, AI, automation, etc). That's how you create a powerful competitive advantage.

Planning for change

Currently, very few organisations are looking far enough into the future to form an opinion on how creating synergy through technology might enable them to manage the accelerating pace of change in the coming months and years. Let's not deceive ourselves, while change is constant, it is now accelerating like never before.

We know that change brings threats. My belief is that you need a point of view on these threats. How else will you respond? Change also brings opportunities. If you can see what's emerging, then you have the potential to build and lead in new markets and create new products and services that delight your customers.

Of course, people don't like change. They want to carry on as always. Yet this is naive in the context of today's digital enterprise where customers and employees expect to interact or work how, where and when they want to. They need to be empowered with new, digital capabilities that create competitive advantage and an excellent experience.



Adapt but how?

Increasingly, I hear from customers that they 'get it'. They know they must adapt, or lose the battle for talent, fall behind born-in-the cloud competitors, and damage the digital customer experience. What they don't know is how to get there. How do they bring it all together in a seamless, digital IT landscape that scales and is future ready? Well, firstly you don't always have to go it alone. Working with an experienced transformation partner who has a strategic vision for the future can ensure that you bring about change the right way.

Sopra Steria has both the transformation experience and vision to ensure you confidently adapt to change. Our premise is to start by 'changing the abstract'. This is Sopra Steria's perspective on the need to see the complete picture, as I've set out above. Each game-changing technology development you've invested in can no longer be viewed as an abstract, but must be part of the enterprise whole. Applying them all independently, without the bigger picture of how they might be combined further down the line, will ultimately require a potentially costly way of bringing them all together in the future. Instead, think about the complete picture. Start with a view on how to be digital ready today, not tomorrow.

Own the future

There are so many opportunities out there and, with the right vision, there are both new and changing industries to lead. With a vision for a digital future, you'll equip your business to differentiate itself against the competition and to easily out manoeuvre your rivals. Creating synergy through technology - changing the abstract - will enable you to rapidly respond to both the opportunities and challenges wrought by change and to derive the desired value from your investments.

No one owns the future yet. With the right attitude and vision, why can't it be you?

Contact us if you would like to discuss how you can use technology to drive the future for your business. Or join us for one of our upcoming roundtables.



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Ian leads the Sopra Steria team to deliver large-scale, multinational, strategic transformations. With extensive experience in IT Services, Cloud technology, Telecommunications and Sales and Marketing, he's an expert in restructuring businesses and designing highly tailored Corporate Services to support them at every stage of the transformation.

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Find out more

To learn more about how we can help you accelerate change within your organisation, get in touch with one of our specialist consultants.

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