How to tackle disruption and innovation in the modern sense

By Phil Lewis   1 Sep 2020

Today the demand for disruptive innovation is insatiable. Originally put forward in a Harvard Business Review piece in 1995, entire industries have now become accustomed to prolific market transformation, driven by technology innovation. The net result is that it is now only the fastest, most agile companies that survive and grow. It is evolution at full throttle, and it is relentless and unforgiving.

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This demands technology platforms that prioritise agility - the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, embrace simplicity and innovate faster and better with each iteration. These iterations have included modern software functionality such as augmented analytics, process intelligence, machine-learning, artificial intelligence, and Internet of Things (IoT) capabilities. With these innovations, the need for agile, streamlined deployments has become the dominant concern. Technology projects must now be focused on accelerating process improvements and ROI.

Delivering disruptive innovation

Rapid deployment strategies built on agility are the keys to delivering disruptive innovation. Infor's initial approach to this was the development of standardised CloudSuites, industry-specific solutions built on a refined understanding of what functionality should be included 'out-of-the-box'. This enables a relentless, industry-specific focus on key deliverables based on proven implementation methodologies and clearly defined paths that accelerate the go-live process, create early-wins, and build momentum.

To further speed the process, the company developed Implementation Accelerators (IAs). These IAs are industry focused, preconfigured yet flexible solutions designed to deliver industry leading business processes, along with application configurations, implementation playbook, tools, and templates. The tools provide a framework for implementing industry business processes, migrating data, establishing workflows, and educating users on the features and functionality of the solution.

The final piece of the puzzle is delivering the capability and agility for businesses to develop their own innovation. Enter "60:30:10TM". While CloudSuites and IAs provide industry specific business processes, not all business processes are created equal. Businesses need to determine which processes are most important to differentiate themselves.

The first 60% are core industry leading processes that businesses can adopt with truly little effort. These are the processes that are necessary but do not provide differentiation. The goal for these 60% of the processes is remarkably simple: adopt technology that delivers industry best practice, as quickly as possible.

For the next 30%, businesses need to focus on the processes that are differentiators but still fall within the realm of configuration or small tweaks. While this does demand some effort, a business is not starting with a blank sheet, but instead is choosing from options that can be tailored and configured quickly to best fit their needs.

The magic

The goal of these first two steps is to free up more time and capacity to focus on the 10% of processes that are highly differentiating/unique. This drives dramatically better decision-making, better customer experiences, or better performance within a specific supply chain. To coin the phrase: 'this is where the magic happens'. The leading businesses of tomorrow will spend most of the time defining, refining, and then redefining this last 10%. This approach keeps implementations on track, keeps teams from wandering off into uncharted "wish lists" and getting lost in theoretical ways of engineering a better mousetrap.

This strategy is not a one-time deal, or a 'big bang' approach. Businesses have realised that their technology must support continual innovation. If a business wants to embrace disruption, it must embrace it many, many times over and start on a path that is endless. As a result, when it comes to the technology that enables this innovation, the business must plan for multiple go-lives that are often a lot faster than previous project (or liken it to multiple laps of the racetrack).

To keep the teams working in such intense 'bursts', there is a pressing need for flexibility - remote delivery is a key option. In addition, there needs to be a heavy investment in the cultural change required to achieve these results, when faced with IT teams that are used to older patterns of work and project timescales. This cultural change should not be underestimated. The pay-off for businesses that can achieve this kind of change is huge: for the most agile businesses, the prize is nothing short of market and industry leadership in a new age of continuous delivery.

Recent examples of this impact are the standard fare of marketing and MBA courses. Blockbuster falls to Netflix. Wikipedia takes the crown of Encyclopedia Britannica. Kodak tries to take on digital photography and loses. LED light bulbs decimate the incandescent market.

The question is what is next?

3D printing takes on manufacturing? Online education elevates to the highest levels? VR and augmented reality redefine leisure? The question that quickly follows is how to lead these markets of tomorrow...

It is obvious that these new markets will demand that the simplistic automation of current 'as-is' processes transform into a focus on high-value differentiation areas. Expensive and risky waterfall or big bang approaches will be forced to become a strategic, rapid series of incremental improvements that shrink time to market. Instead of just surviving to reach go live, the IT department will have no choice but to become an engine of continuous delivery of innovations. It is a long overdue evolution.

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