Expert opinion

Successful service digitalization strategy

By Nicolas Odet, Hardis Group Executive Vice President

Recent technological innovations have accelerated the service digitalization movement in all sectors. From the standpoint of the IS department, who edits these services on behalf of core business managements, implementing a coherent and progressive strategy is essential to properly negotiate the change.

A digital service economy

All companies are witnessing their customers' demands moving towards more advice, personalized follow-up and a rich customer experience, regardless of the channel through which they enter into relationship with them. This trend is surely and lastingly affecting all sectors at different speeds and intensities.

At the same time, the technological innovations related to the connected society are opening the door to a range of possibilities that it was still hard to imagine only a short time ago in terms of process automation, interaction between businesses and their customers, or improving comfort (mobile Internet, home automation, connected objects, etc.). This has not escaped the notice of sales, marketing and HR departments, who are becoming much more imaginative with regard to new digital services to offer their customers, whether internal, external, B to C or B to B.

Clearly define your digital strategy

These new services are of necessity interfaced with the information system (CRM, ERP, CMS, HRIS...) of the company that wants to offer them, when they are not connected to that of other companies. Their design can no longer be understood as satellite micro-projects, increasing the pressure on IS departments, pressed by senior management and businesses to do well quickly. Hence the need for companies to develop a digital strategy involving businesses and IT, to take into account all the stages of the life cycle of these services: design, development and integration into the IS, quality monitoring, continuous improvement of the customer journey, etc.

Proceed by successive iterations

However, because of the rapid evolution and heterogeneity of terminal technologies (PCs, mobile, tablets, TVs, connected devices), it is difficult for the IS department to make choices that will be sustainable in the long term. For a successful shift to digital, without getting caught up in "service silos" that are inflexible and reduced to their original features, they need to adopt an agile approach: identify with businesses the services and platforms to be developed first and complete them as they go along with iterative projects. This phased approach reduces the time-to-market of new digital services to meet the needs of increased productivity and / or rapid differentiation from the competition, while ensuring consistency, security and continuity of the applications developed .

For the IS department as well as for business departments, adopting an agile approach is also the way to learn to understand each other, test and fine tune the digital strategy, so that they can all shift up a gear together.

Be beyond reproach for "basic services"

Innovation is crucial for automating processes and standing out, but it should not overshadow the need for companies to be beyond reproach for "basic" digital services. While both internal and external customers can appreciate to the full services that provide them with real added value, the non-existence, complexity or ineffectiveness of "everyday" services such as an on-line change of address, or the ability to quickly get in touch with a call center rep has a negative impact on the company 's image.

About the author

Nicolas Odet, Hardis Group Executive Vice President

Nicolas Odet joined Hardis Group in 2000 and successively held the positions of Head of Sales and Marketing in the New Technologies Skills department, Director of the Infrastructure and Facilities Management Department from 2006 to 2008, and Director of Services, Marketing and communication from 2009 to 2012. In particular, he led the transformation of Hardis Group's offering to cloud computing. Executive Vice President of the Hardis Group since early 2013 and a member of the executive committee, he helps to define the group's strategy and manage its operational implementation.

Prior to joining Hardis Group, Nicolas Odet held the position of business engineer at IBM (systems and storage division) and Sagem (network and optical fiber solutions).

Nicolas Odet graduated from Grenoble Ecole de Management in 1998 with a degree in technology management.

About Hardis Group

Hardis Group was created in 1984. It is a software publishing, consulting and IT services company which helps its customers to digitize their services. Ever since it was created, the company has built growth in a resolutely different way, based on pragmatism and the core values of local presence and a strong commitment to both customers and employees. The founding directors still run the company, 25% of employees are shareholders, and all the personnel is based in France.

Hardis Group focuses on seven major sectors: infrastructure and facilities management, development and Third-Party Application Maintenance (TPAM), consulting and project owner support, business intelligence, logistics and transport (Reflex solutions), development tools (Adelia Studio), and payroll outsourcing (Saphyr software).

As a software publisher, Hardis Group is capable of integrating its own solutions and can also call on the services of a network of partners. Its consultants are experts in high-quality IT project methodologies (such as ITIL and CMMI).

Hardis Group posted turnover figures of €54.7 million in 2012. To date, the Group has more than 2,500 customers and employs 630 people. Its head office is located in Grenoble, with four other branches in Lyon, Paris, Lille and Nantes.

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