

# Is Your Digital Transformation Headed for Failure?

**ARTICLE | FEBRUARY 14, 2019**

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**W**ithout support from the C-suite, digital transformation is “doomed to fail,” says Tod Rathbone, managing director of digital transformation at ad agency Wongdoody.

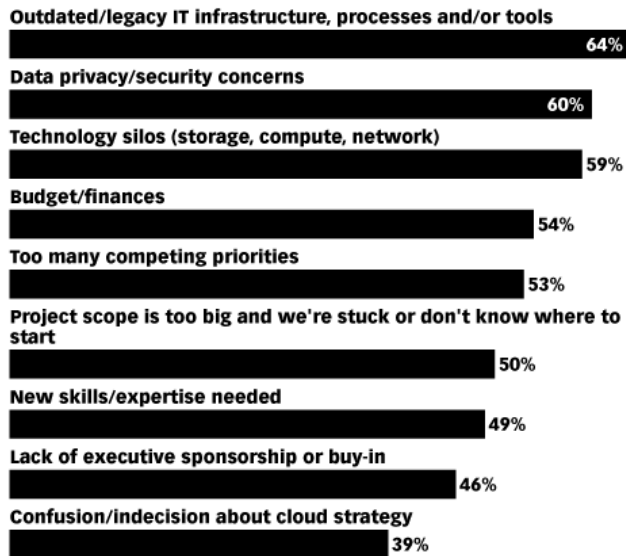
According to Rathbone, in large organizations, different departments are often not designed or encouraged to work together. And the only way to fix this is with the support of top-level management.

“In most companies, unless senior management is behind a clear vision of what the future could look like, no one feels it is a strong enough, unifying mandate,” Rathbone said.

For example, three-fourths of decision-makers polled by [Salesforce and Northstar](#) in September 2018 said their digital transformation efforts are supported by executive sponsorship. And in an [IDG study](#), 46% of IT directors said a lack of executive buy-in is a leading barrier to transformation.

## What Are the Leading Barriers to Transformation in the IT Infrastructure of US Companies?

% of respondents, Sep 2018



Note: top 5

Source: IDG, "The Challenge of Change: IT in Transition," Nov 13, 2018

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When pitching a transformation initiative to an executive, it's important to collect supporting data before advocating for wider change, according to Chris Jacob, product marketing leader at Salesforce. Outcomes like higher return on investment (ROI) and repeat purchase behavior should be shown as proof as to why the transformation initiative is worth the investment.

Transformation initiatives should be measurable and connected to reliable key performance indicators (KPIs), said Bertram Schulte, chief digital officer of SAP. If the transformation project is likely to be expensive, A/B testing can determine whether the project is worth deploying.

"The executive leadership team is often dealing with several change imperatives at once, so it is important to make your case as to why your program is good for the business," said Scot Carlson, global head of digital transformation at ad agency Reprise Digital. "For example, saying, 'We need to improve the customer experience,' isn't enough. Go beyond marketing metrics and build the business case that explains how the change will impact the bottom line."

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SCOT CARLSON

GLOBAL HEAD OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, REPRISE DIGITAL

Once the decision has been made to move forward with the transformation initiative, project stakeholders must regularly gather feedback from employees throughout the company to address issues early on, according to Carlson. Ensuring that everyone understands the goals of the transformation program and their role within it helps prevent mistrust and apathy.

“Good transformation programs inspire the wider organization to participate,” Carlson said. “Give your people an inspiring purpose and reason to believe in the future of the organization.”

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