

From Awareness to DX

MORIKAWA, Hiroyuki*



The introduction of digital technology in every corner of the world will drive the transformation of all types of industries, drastically reshaping industrial, economic and even social structures. The world is currently in a period of transition, and we must strive to establish new industries and social systems, keeping in mind that there will always be room for new business in the digital age.

What we are concerned about is the unpredictability as to how the world is going to change.

For example, it was clear that the advent of washing machines would significantly reduce the burden of housework, but this was not the only impact of washing machines on society. With this great change in the concept of hygiene, people began doing laundry every day, and the subsequent upsurge in the clothing market also had a very big impact on society. Though it seems obvious in retrospect, back before the introduction of washing machines, no one would have recognized the fact that these machines would change the concept of hygiene and increase the demand for clothes.

There is an interesting video made by Tandem, a British fintech venture (a business combining finance and information technology), that prompts viewers to think about bank teller services. The video demonstrates what it would be like if a pub were like a bank teller counter. It starts with customers who want to order beer being told to take a ticket and wait for their number. When they approach the counter after their number is called, they are told that they will be transferred to someone of another department, and are asked to fill out a questionnaire while they wait. When they pay at the end, they are charged for processing fees in addition to the beer.

Pubs and bank teller counters are the same in that they both offer services to customers, but the way they serve their customers is completely different. The differences is clear when we stop and think about it, but we don't notice it in our day-to-day life.

The management scholar Peter Drucker once said, "The greatest praise an innovation can receive is for people to say 'This is obvious. Why didn't I think of it?'" We humans rarely notice things that are obvious

until we think about them.

Noticing a potential need that has not yet been satisfied is the starting point of DX. While recognizing that it is not easy to notice potential needs, we must continue to frequent worksites both inside and outside of the company and understand our customers on a deeper level in order to identify which processes need to be digitized.

At the very least, we must avoid being a product-oriented business by being selective about technological features in digitization. To find fields in which digitization will work effectively, you need not look any further than familiar situations. It is essential to actively engage in activities to find these fields by going out to the worksites of our customers and observing them closely.

Customer success refers to business development from the viewpoint of the customer. Our target customers are all those who take advantage of digital technology irrespective of whether they are from inside or outside the company. In order to realize customer success, we have to be empathetic and selfless. We need to have deep empathy with those who are at the site and selflessly identify the hidden needs. Human resources who can perform such a task are required for digitization. In other words, we can think of them as the human resources who serve as a bridge between the worksite and the technology. They do not necessarily need to become experts in technology. Digitalization blooms with the proper appreciation of human resources who can create value by serving as a bridge.

And what we need in order to gain awareness that will lead us to customer success is diversity. Getting together with people of all backgrounds makes it easier for us to gain awareness. Diversity, which has been said to be an indispensable factor for innovation, is especially important in the uncertain world of today. Those who maintain diversity while identifying processes that should be digitized from a customer success perspective will come out on top in business.

Digitalization severely transforms economic structures. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the foundations that we had taken for granted have now collapsed, and instead, we are experimenting with various concepts, such as remote work, online classes, and

* Professor (Engineering), Graduate School of Engineering, the University of Tokyo

telemedicine. The digital shift is accelerating as we begin a grand experiment in a digital society that signals the future.

Instead of going back, we need to accelerate digital shifts and carry on redefining the very foundations of

social, industrial and economic systems. By stepping into the digital world while valuing the awareness we have gained from the COVID-19 crisis, we hope to gain deep awareness into the future that will lead us to build a new society and businesses.





* All brand names and product names in this journal might be trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective companies.