Getting your business ready: A roadmap to digital empowerment
What makes a business ready for the future?

Is it an efficient operating model? Reliable connectivity? Today’s most innovative companies will understand that readiness is not demonstrated by any one thing at any one time.

Employees always need tools that will allow them to innovate freely. Leadership needs sophisticated defenses that neutralize cyber threats before they become serious. Sensors and software should not only collect and analyze data, but simplify processes and protect the bottom line. Customers want and need to be met at every touchpoint by experiences that are frictionless, memorable and secure—over and over again.

Readiness is fluid, and creating it is a project that far-sighted business owners never finish. They do, however, start somewhere.

In a recent study roughly two thirds (64%) of small to medium businesses indicated technology was a primary factor in pursuing their business objectives.¹ No matter their size, a comprehensive digital strategy can enable
organizations to adapt quickly to changing needs. And with technology becoming more accessible, affordable and more valuable to its end users, smaller businesses can drive better outcomes by taking advantage of solutions that were once cost-prohibitive.

Treating digital transformation as a continuous journey helps leadership not only drive change within their business, but across their category.

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25B things globally will be connected by 2021.

But while companies recognize the need for their own digital transformation so they can better serve their customers, its value goes beyond a one-time expenditure. Gartner forecasts that 14.2 billion connected things will be in use in 2019, and that the total will reach 25 billion by 2021. With so many points of connection and with 5G expected to provide unprecedented network speed, bandwidth and low latency, new business models will take flight, new customer experiences will emerge and new threats will proliferate alongside them. The task is to look at your organization and envision where you want to be in five or 10 years, and ensure you are laying the foundation to get there by using the latest technologies.

Digital solution providers tend to forget that small and medium businesses exist at different states of readiness. And few providers can make all the digital pieces of your business talk to one another – fewer still over America’s most reliable network. And now with 5G Ultra Wideband, the most powerful 5G experience for America is rolling out.

Organizations of all sizes need to keep up with the breathtaking pace of change. Today, readiness touches every part of your organization, at every millisecond. Preparing for an always-on business environment is complicated, but with the right roadmap and partner, deep, meaningful digital transformation is possible – and can be a major competitive advantage. Organizations that are ready will feel they not only can keep up with, but outpace, the changes, challenges and competition to come.

In this paper you will learn...

• What drives the need for digital transformation
• How businesses, no matter their revenue or headcount, can approach getting ready
• Why digital transformation is a play in five acts
• Why your business must prepare for a 5G-powered future

3 Based on RootMetrics® by IHS Markit RootScore® Reports: 1H 2019. Tested with best commercially available smartphones on four national mobile networks across all available network types. Experiences may vary. RootMetrics awards are not an endorsement of Verizon.
The rationale for Ready

The case for digital transformation emerges from profound shifts in the marketplace.

Intelligence on the move

The mobile digital workforce is exploding. In 2018, 70% of global employees worked remotely at least one day a week,⁴ and by 2023, it is estimated that 43.3% of the global workforce will be mobile.⁵ Smaller businesses are no strangers to having to be nimble and maintain flexible employment models, but as more team members log on remotely, a growing percentage of business owners will be thinking about how to best keep their team as connected and collaborative as possible.

Cloud migration and security

Additionally, organizations of all sizes are migrating from inefficient data centers to the cloud. Such shifts indicate a growing level of comfort with offsite storage solutions, but with adoption comes risk. In 2018 Verizon analyzed 41,686 security incidents, of which 2,013 were confirmed data breaches spanning 86 countries.⁶ Poorly configured servers practically invite bad actors inside.

CX

Customers, too, are demanding more advanced experiences from the businesses they support. By one study 67% of customers said their standards for good experiences are higher than ever, and a full 80% of customers said the experience a company provides is as important as its products and services.⁷

Fortunately, technologies are emerging that will allow organizations to innovate and develop new ways to care for their customers, their employees and their bottom lines. Deployed intelligently, digital solutions can help businesses stretch to achieve things they never could before. Again, it’s not whether these shifts are coming, but whether you’re ready for them.

**Approaching Ready**

Organizations that successfully tackle the essential work of digital transformation view their businesses through three lenses: Connection, Protection and Customer Experience.

Connect

Being ready to connect goes beyond Wi-Fi and WAN. It’s a reset around what it means to meet the world beyond your walls—both physical and virtual. Whether you’re migrating your databases to the cloud or exploring how mobile edge computing can help power new, immersive customer experiences, being ready to connect is being ready to react.

Protect

Readiness to protect should be top of mind for all businesses. Security threats aren’t solely the concern of large corporations, and becoming a target of bad actors is as much a function of a business’ vulnerability as its size.

Businesses have realized—at times painfully—that the reputational hazard of a data breach is far too great for security to be treated as just a line item on a budget. The breakneck pace of the digital economy requires organizations to think about securing their businesses in bold new ways that extend far beyond a lock on the door.

Customers

Being ready for customers is perhaps the most challenging and exciting work of all. Offering a valuable service is table stakes. Taking that service to market with a strategy backed by sound, actionable intelligence—and with the ability to adjust both the strategy and even the offering in near-real time—will separate the innovators from the imitators. And when businesses harness the power of 5G, opportunities for CX differentiation will expand exponentially.

5G will be more than the next generation of wireless connectivity. It’s the seed of a revolution with the potential to transform both society and numerous industries in remarkable ways. From augmented and virtual reality to self-driving cars, remote telemedicine to a fully realized Internet of Things, the viability of these life-changing technologies will depend on the ultra-low latency and lightning-fast speeds of 5G. Its wide-scale adoption will upend old business models and drive previously unimaginable innovations. The doors that 5G will open for the business and the customer are predicted to be so profound that this network technology has been called the key ingredient for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The power to act

In anticipation of this massive digital shift, owners must start questioning their businesses through the lenses of Connection, Protection and Customer Experience. Only then will they be prepared to start asking some challenging but tantalizing questions of themselves.

How might near-real time insights into parcel tracking improve your inventory forecasting? How might heat-mapping technology inform the layout of a retail planogram? How might the low cost of sensor and camera technologies allow you to compete against businesses twice your size?
Anyone can consider these questions, but not everyone is prepared to act on them. That’s why digital transformation must be treated as a journey, with clearly defined steps, states and milestones. Being ready means having the right insights—and the right partner—to help you strengthen operations, deepen customer relationships and safeguard your position.

The five states of Ready

Ready to start

The first step of digital transformation is to start—but where?

For some small businesses, this might mean overhauling and managing voice communications via a voice over IP (VoIP) solution, which better controls costs and streamlines mobility, video conferencing and online meetings. For others, it’s migrating data to the cloud, where software-defined networking in a wide area network, or SD WAN, can bring together distant and disparate assets more efficiently. Since management is centralized, orchestration of an entire network is easier—from provisioning to maintenance to upgrades.

The rise of cloud and mobile technologies, however, is driving the demand for a better-performing WAN. As your business races to deliver experiences to more people in more places on more devices, the need for bandwidth is skyrocketing. Traditional WANs—typically built on aging protocols, rigid routes and racks of hardware-intensive appliances—are simply not flexible enough to keep up.

An SD WAN solution helps businesses quickly connect their people to the data they need, when and where they need it—while being mindful of budgets.
Ready to adapt

The second state of digital transformation involves being ready to adapt. This is the kind of behind-the-scenes work that may never be noticed by customers – and that is precisely the point. The changes at this stage help businesses make their IT more agile and efficient, driving value at every level of the business.

With an SD WAN in place, your team shouldn't be burdened with ongoing network maintenance. A suite of Managed Network Services can help your network adapt on the fly to changing service levels and bandwidth demands using software-defined policies. Layering on top a smart suite of WAN optimization services can help improve the performance of the most demanding apps, whether in-house, externally hosted or in the cloud.

Ready to elevate

The third state of digital transformation is being ready to elevate. Technology can radically enhance business interactions both internally and with end-users and customers. For organizations that must consider supply chains and shipping logistics, a next-generation fleet telematics solution can drive better efficiency, increased productivity and improved safety for vehicles and drivers. Sophisticated telematics can help produce significant efficiencies at the pump and on the road.

No matter at what volume you may be shipping, remaining hands-on during the fulfillment process is vital. For retailers, manufacturers and suppliers, establishing a secure chain of custody is crucial to combatting wastage, limiting costly write-downs and delivering products to customers on time and in good condition. A truly intelligent supply chain is one that reduces blind spots and accounts for every set of hands the inventory passes through along the way. Insight from IoT sensors can capture crucial data, powering decisions that drive more on-time deliveries and more efficient shipping schedules. And with 5G-powered computer vision, these processes will become even more precise and scalable.

Product spotlight: Rapid Response Retainer

Protecting your infrastructure – and, by extension your customers’ data – is a critical obligation. With threat actors becoming more sophisticated and creative, the risks are real, but so are the solutions to help you manage those risks. Verizon’s Rapid Response Retainer matches your business with a security expert who learns your organization and trains your employees to respond with confidence. During an attack, Verizon experts lead response efforts. Between incidents they assess your company’s preparedness by reviewing network technology and outlining proactive steps to manage future risks. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, Verizon provides access to critical insight, helping create peace of mind for you and your employees.
Ready to innovate

The fourth state of digital transformation is about being ready to innovate. This goes beyond improving operations. To safeguard your business, this step is about deploying value-added, innovative solutions that will drive your operations forward.

Increasingly, being noticed in a crowded market is determined not by how well an organization reacts to its customers' needs, but how well it can anticipate those needs before they form. As they move along their journey, owners will be better equipped to determine what their customer values most, and orient their digital transformation around that north star.

From mobile integration to workforce optimization, Contact Center Managed Services can help your business manage incidents and deliver a better customer service experience. When you're ready to take the next step, an intelligent chatbot such as Virtual Agent uses natural language processing to better address inquiries and enable consistent, personalized conversations between business and client.

Tools like Knowledge Assist further use AI to supply administrative staff with accurate, relevant information in real time, while Social Engagement allows your teams to analyze social traffic, participate in conversations and generate targeted content that drives quality interactions with valued audiences.

Ultimately, these and other CX solutions help you deliver an improved digital experience without sacrificing a critical human touch.
Ready to disrupt

The fifth and final state of digital transformation is being ready to disrupt. Businesses at this stage will begin to adopt the latest technologies to design truly revolutionary experiences. Feeling ready is a false summit. The goal is to both defend and disrupt.

As 5G paves the way for an all-new era of business, tools like augmented and virtual reality can become more accessible to businesses of all sizes, changing the way they approach everything from forecasting to inventory management. In retail settings, an employee could scan the stockroom without leaving the sales floor, or a customer could call up product information on the fly. Immersive experiences could help blur the lines of physical and digital retail by creating lifelike interactions for home shoppers, whether that’s a personal stylist surveying a closet to make recommendations, or a skilled expert assisting with the set-up of a smart appliance.

The innovations supercharged by 5G – from computer vision analytics to product forecasting – could help to level the playing field, putting small and medium businesses on the same operational footing as larger enterprises. 5G is anticipated to make AR and VR more affordable and accessible, and these technologies have the potential to revolutionize employee training, modernize record-keeping and supercharge robotics applications, from the manufacturing stage to shipping. Viewing your operations through an AR headset could fundamentally change the way you do business.

Customer service can reach new levels, from uniquely tailored promotions and recommendations to virtual assistants that can react to emotions and infer intent. And in a 5G-powered business environment, CX will provide unique client insight, free up employees to engage in higher-touch tasks and empower the organization to evolve and keep pace with the shifting needs of its customers.

Starting your journey

Digital transformation clearly doesn’t happen in a vacuum, and business owners who undertake it should not have to go it alone. The work demands the expertise and objectivity of a nimble partner – one who can make a quick, pragmatic assessment of the landscape, apply solutions and stay on board to see them through.

This work requires data-derived intelligence and deep knowledge of multiple business verticals. Powerful applications must simplify processes, not complicate them. Not only should the network be reliable and secure, but flexible. Threat intelligence and industry research should be gathered and presented in a way that puts leadership on proactive footing.

Ultimately, businesses need a partner that not only knows the network, but that is the network.
Why Verizon for digital transformation?

Verizon works relentlessly to understand customers’ needs. We reach across divisions and silos, helping businesses at every step to apply tomorrow’s technology solutions to today’s most pressing challenges.

We live for this—teaming with organizations of all types and sizes to deliver transformative change, and make innovation an integral part of doing business.

Working collaboratively with our clients and their teams across functions, we help to efficiently and securely integrate digital into our clients’ operations.

At Verizon, our goal is to deliver the promise of the digital world by enabling people, businesses and society to innovate and drive positive change. When our mission aligns with our client’s mission, amazing things happen.

Businesses choose to partner with Verizon because we possess the right technology and expertise to transform their practices, helping them move from a state of need to a state of readiness.

People think of us as a phone company. Our customers think of us as a technology partner. Let us show you why.

Let’s talk.

Mobile phones and plans
(1-500 employees)
1-800-526-3178
Contact a rep

Fios, networks and phone
(1-99 employees)
1-888-328-8033
Contact a rep

Fios, networks and phone
(100-500 employees)
1-800-274-8002
Contact a rep