



Publicis Sapient brings its SPEED philosophy to digital business transformation

Unlocking new sources of value through
digital innovation: Publicis Sapient's SPEED
vision under CEO Nigel Vaz's leadership

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Publicis Sapiient is the digital business transformation hub of the advertising giant Publicis Groupe

From its roots as a premier consulting firm founded in the 1990s, Publicis Sapiient has evolved into the digital business transformation hub of the advertising giant Publicis Groupe, bringing significant clout and mindshare as a digital business consulting partner for clients.

Central to Publicis Sapiient's recent success has been the visionary leadership of Nigel Vaz, appointed CEO in 2019. With his entrepreneurial background and experience as Publicis Sapiient's leader, Nigel has developed a unique perspective and approach to client relationships. He shared his lessons learned and vision in an [HFS videocast](#).

Under Nigel's leadership, Publicis Sapiient has been on a mission to partner with its clients to achieve and sustain competitive advantage by unlocking new sources of value through SPEED. SPEED is an acronym representing

Publicis Sapiient's digital business transformation philosophy:

- **Strategy:** Developing and testing your hypothesis on priority value pools;
- **Product:** Evolving at pace and speed;
- **Experience:** Enabling value for customers;
- **Engineering:** Delivering on your promise;
- **Data:** Validating your hypotheses and uncovering insights for constant iteration.

Under Nigel's leadership and vision, Publicis Sapiient has placed its bets on these fundamentals for partnering with clients on their digital business transformation journeys in the new hybrid economy with digital at the core.

"The idea that a group of people connected by a common purpose with shared values, focused on the difference that business could benefit from by leveraging technology and digital, was one of the greatest motivations to me. And this idea of digital business transformation in the way that we articulate it today has been at the core of what's driven the company."

- Nigel Vaz,
CEO, Publicis Sapiient

Unlocking limitless potential starts with integrating digital business capabilities

Enterprises have a critical need for robust digital capabilities in the face of disruption. But these capabilities cannot achieve true digital business transformation operating in silos. The fundamental philosophy of SPEED is that enterprises must build, operate, and develop mindsets around these five capabilities in tandem. Being great at one might provide

short-term success or improve certain solutions, but it will not help achieve transformation or long-term differentiation. Perhaps more importantly, not integrating the SPEED capabilities will inhibit an organization trying to flex and change at the pace required in today's business environment.

“The foundation of digital businesses is rooted in how these five SPEED capabilities come together to create new and ongoing sources of value: strategy, product, experience, engineering, and data. Our belief is if our clients can inject these into the core of how they operate, it creates real competitive advantage and unlocks limitless potential.”

– Nigel Vaz

Exhibit 1: Publicis Sapient's integrated SPEED capabilities are its vision for transformation

Our SPEED capabilities help us transform our clients' business



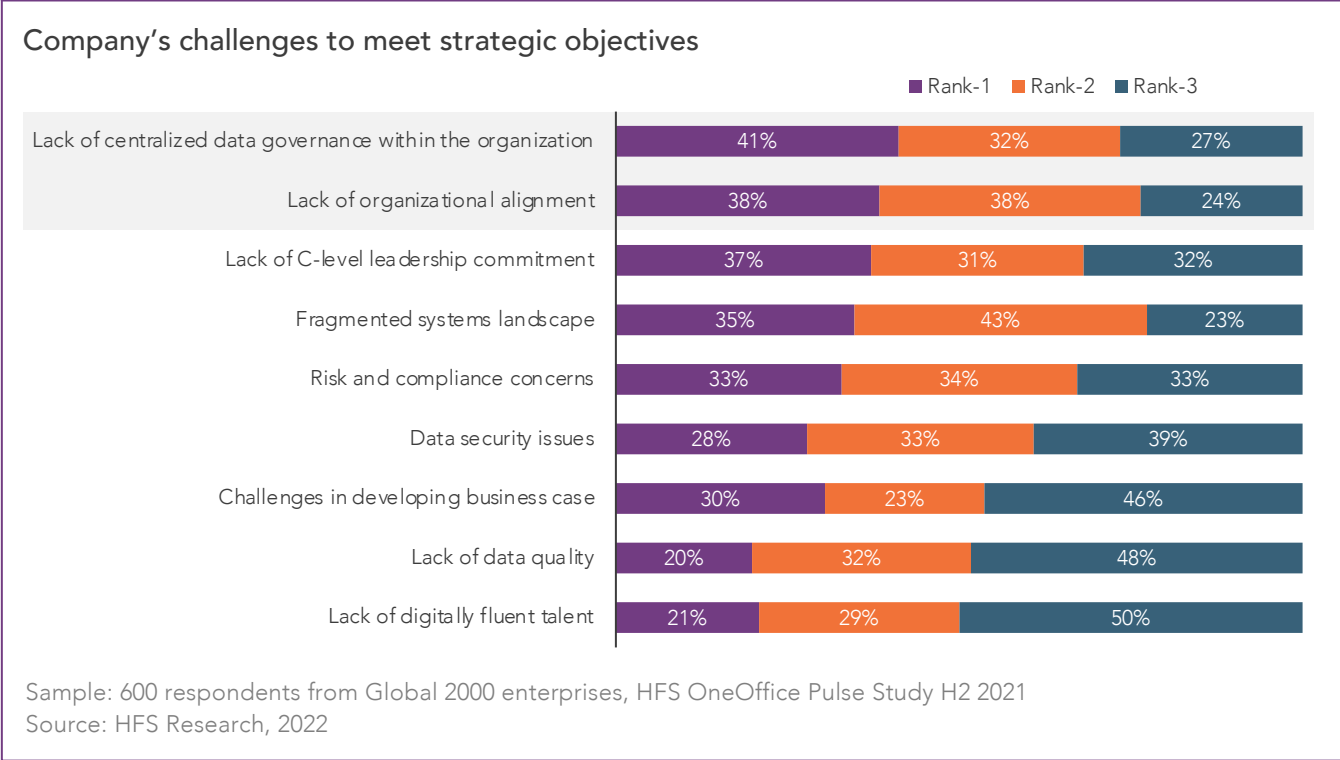
Source: Publicis Sapient

The death of business as usual: change is now a constant imperative

Today’s enterprises face the challenge and opportunity to continuously change at the pace of market shifts and evolving customer expectations. Business leaders are navigating multiple concurrent changes, all of which they must at least react to and adapt to. Optimally, leaders will predict and get ahead of changes. Yet most companies focus on their core business survival, keeping the lights on, and incremental improvements to the existing business. They face the existential risk of being unprepared to react and adapt when disruption or opportunities crop up. They lack the forward-looking capability to predict and create new sources of value.

Business leaders aspire to plan ahead more effectively, but internal silos, pressures, and dysfunctions hold organizations back. Companies (Exhibit 2) struggle the most with poor data governance, organizational alignment, fragmented systems, and a lack of C-suite commitment to meet their strategic objectives. Most companies lack the outcomes-focused mindset that enables alignment on these strategic objectives; they focus on outputs and processes rather than outcomes and results. Siloed and fragmented environments and data exacerbate the cultural issues beneath the surface. Every company needs to align on its big goals, then align the organization to those goals to enable constant change and evolution.

Exhibit 2: Lack of data governance and alignment within the organization are the Achilles’ heels of the modern enterprise



Every company needs to align on its big goals, then align the organization to those goals to enable constant change and evolution

Become a future-ready digital business by evolving the business model

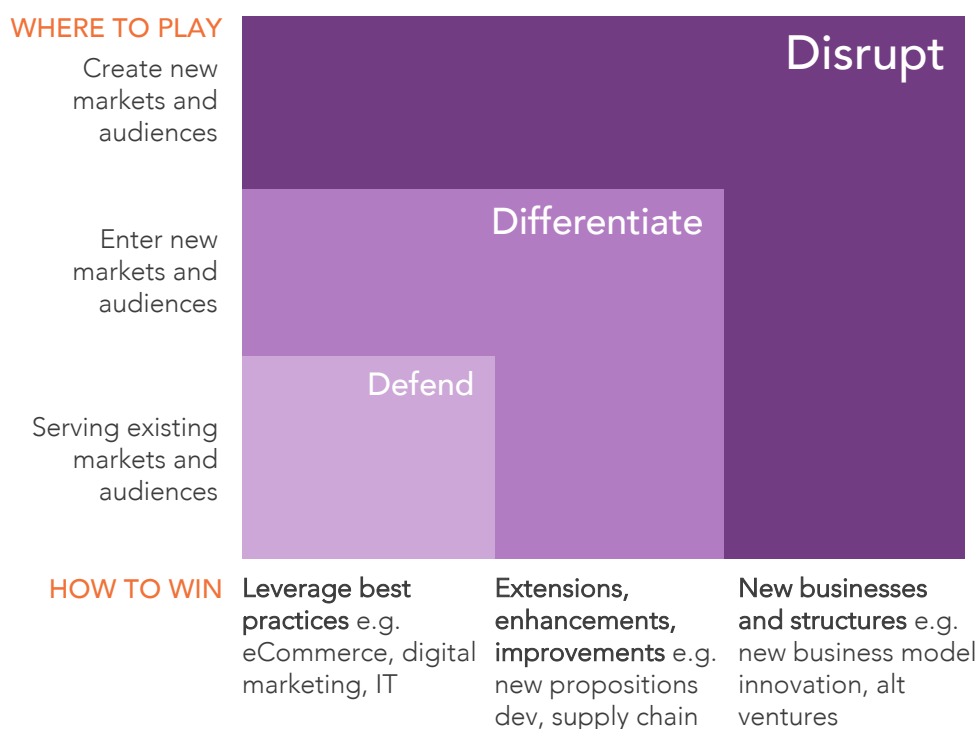
A few components are common among companies with successful digital business transformations. Publicis Sapient has found that its most successful clients understand the need to do two fundamental things well: choose **where to play** and know **how to win**.

Nigel describes that “in the context of digital business transformation, ‘where to play’ is not a question just of markets and customer segments, but is about making explicit choices that will determine the kind of value one would aim to produce through the digital capability. While established companies have been ‘doing digital transformation’ for a long time, there are three well-defined patterns, what I refer to in a D-3 model,” in Exhibit 3.

- The “defend” pattern is essentially business as usual, primarily focusing on serving existing markets and audiences while leveraging best practices.
- The “differentiate” pattern can be a rich opportunity space for many organizations. This path can take them from advancing the existing processes to blurring the line between digital and physical operations.
- Finally, the “disruption” pattern is where an organization would lean into the full scope of digital business transformation.

What sets the differentiation and disruption patterns apart is that when organizations choose to disrupt, they create new markets and audiences.

Exhibit 3: Successful enterprises will move beyond defense mode to differentiate and disrupt



Source: Publicis Sapient, 2022

Knowing where to play and how to win is a new ballgame with digital: accelerating digital business transformation through SPEED

The SPEED acronym represents the philosophy that Publicis Sapient uses to guide clients on their digital business transformation journeys. Starting with strategy (the S in SPEED), Publicis Sapient's role is to help clients choose how they want to evolve. This kind of deep partnership is required to help enterprises decide where they want to play and how to win on those playing fields. But the difference with digital is that "where to play" looks a lot different. In digital business, traditional markets, categories, and consumer groups can be blurred and redefined, and the primary source of strategic thinking must focus on the value creation for customers through digital capabilities. A good example here is Publicis Sapient's joint venture with Siam Commercial Bank (the oldest and one of the largest banks in Thailand with \$100 billion in assets and more than 17 million customers), which demonstrates a strong partnership to deliver entirely new sources of value to existing and new customers through digital by executing on a well-honed strategy, the first element in SPEED.

Case study

Publicis Sapient formed a joint venture partnership with Siam Commercial Bank (SCB) to create ASEAN's largest fintech, providing banking as a service to SCB and across the region, as well as non-banking services, including food delivery, health, and wellness. The partnership, SCB Tech X, saw the two companies rethink how banks can engage with customers, drive down costs, and reduce time to market, creating a new entity to address the growing opportunities in Southeast Asia and beyond.

Product (P) and experience (E) are the following elements of SPEED, driving growth with Publicis Sapient's clients' transformation journeys. The product mindset is about how companies think of themselves, like a software product, as constantly evolving rather than with a project mindset (the project ends, and it's complete). This brings in the core approaches of Agile, Lean, and DevOps to move faster toward execution and repeatedly drive value. Experience is all about designing experiences that put people at the center—employees, customers, and partners. (Check out HFS' interview with Publicis Sapient's Chief Experience Officer, Abby Godee, [here](#)). Next is engineering (E), which signals the need to shift IT from a cost center to a value driver. At its heart, this means investing in engineering talent and embracing technology as a differentiator. Lastly, data (and using it to enable the power of AI to drive your strategy) is the final pillar of SPEED. Creating a data strategy focused on learning and understanding customers will be the cornerstone of driving insights to improve experience and product continuously, as an agile business must do.

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Transformation is not something you can do to clients or for clients, but only with clients. We've seen a shift from clients wanting an integrator who could help them digitize a function or process to looking for a partner to help them on their journey to become a digital business. Clients increasingly turn to us for our focus to be a player-coach, helping them build both the capabilities and ways of working and continually identifying and realizing value at pace.

— Nigel Vaz

You can't do it alone: digital business transformation requires strategic partnerships

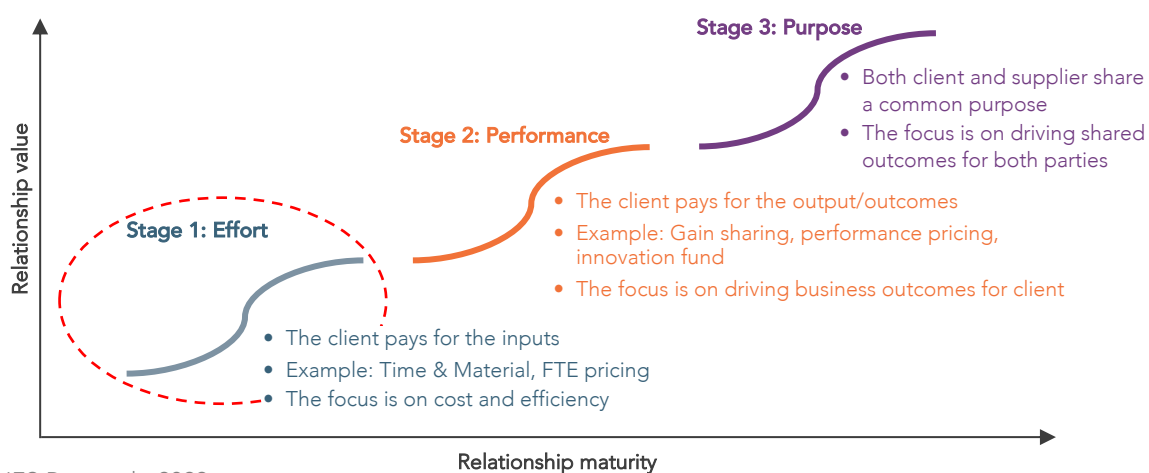
Providers and enterprises alike are rethinking and redefining services for digital business transformation and future readiness. Consulting, IT, and business services are converging to drive meaningful outcomes rather than focusing on output alone. This shift puts the focus on transformative initiatives, heightens impact, and deepens partnerships. In fact, many services buyers are looking to share risks and outcomes through growth-oriented models as in Stage 3 of Exhibit 4.

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The best clients are those who recognize the need for digital business transformation, embrace the idea that we're on a transformation journey together, and make the executional choices to make that journey and its intended outcomes visible and achievable.

– Nigel Vaz

Exhibit 4: Evolution of enterprise relationships with services providers, from effort-based to performance-based to, increasingly, purpose-based.



Source: HFS Research, 2022

Case study

One noteworthy example of transformative partnerships is the mature, value-driven relationship between Publicis Sapient and its long-standing client, Marriott. The pandemic has been particularly challenging for travel and hospitality brands. At the same time, it created some room to work on strategic initiatives that empower them to navigate and even embrace future changes, market dynamics, and threats. Marriott embarked upon an ambitious initiative to build a new vacation rental digital business, Home & Villas by Marriott Bonvoy (HVMB). HVMB is a marketplace platform with listings of over one hundred thousand luxury and premium homes worldwide providing its 150M+ Bonvoy members a long-term vacation rental product. Publicis Sapient and Marriott International entered an outcome-based partnership model for HVMB to build this next-generation platform business. Publicis Sapient financially invested in delivering HVMB for Marriott in return for a revenue-sharing agreement on properties booked through the new HVMB platform. Through this strategic partnership, Publicis Sapient helped Marriott not only develop a lucrative new platform business but also transformed the culture, operations, and technology processes that enable the company to compete effectively in a digitally led travel experience era.

Finding your “why”: becoming a purpose-driven enterprise

One of the most important shifts we see in the C-suite mentality is the idea of profit with a purpose. Companies that focus fundamentally on people at the heart of their purpose are addressing a key component of the continuous change required for competitive advantage.

Publicis Sapient is leading by example by leaning into its purpose, “Helping people thrive

in the brave pursuit of next,” and demonstrating work that embodies its purpose. Its recent launch of the [Impact Films initiative](#) brings to life the power of digital business transformation by showcasing the positive impact digital has on major societal issues, told through the lens of a person whose life was positively impacted by technology, thus humanizing digital business transformation.

“Our focus at Publicis Sapient is to use the transformative power of digital to help improve people’s lives. By leveraging digital as a force for good for consumers, citizens, diverse groups of people, and governments, companies that are on the path to make digital their core will benefit, too, from their transformation. Our goal is to leave mankind and our planet significantly better than we found it.”

– Nigel Vaz

The Bottom Line: Technology is an enabler; people and culture are foundations for a successful digital business transformation.

Given the seismic cultural shifts and the massively increasing focus on customer and employee experience, there is no transformation endgame. Creating an agile, future-ready organization means that continuous change is the enterprise mandate.

Building this type of company requires vision, organizational alignment, and strong partnerships. Most importantly, however, it requires an undeterred sense of purpose that speaks to company stakeholders and society at large.

As the trend continues with disruptions changing customer and employee behavior and market volatility, a digital consultancy like Publicis Sapient is in a strong position to partner with clients with its purpose-driven approach and SPEED capabilities to drive digital business transformation.

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Digital business transformation is a journey that trumps its destination: a journey that asks businesses to reimagine and rapidly realize new ways of working and satisfying consumer expectations. It is the process of helping your organization reinvent itself against the backdrop of unprecedented data, technology, and, ultimately, consumer-driven change, which is fueling unexpected competitive dynamics and diminishing traditional business models as industries shift and merge.

– Nigel Vaz

HFS Research authors



Melissa O'Brien

Executive Research Leader

Melissa O'Brien is an Executive Research Leader and Head of Research Operations at HFS Research. Melissa leads HFS' research initiatives for all things customer experience, including contact center, digital marketing and sales, CX design and conversational AI. Her industry research focuses on key services dynamics within retail, CPG, travel and hospitality firms. Melissa also looks after operations across all research coverage areas, helping HFS realize our own version of OneOffice.

Melissa brings both hands-on industry and analyst experience to her role at HFS.



Phil Fersht

CEO and Chief Analyst

Phil Fersht is a world-renowned analyst, writer and visionary in emerging technologies, automation, digital business models, and the alignment of enterprise operations to drive customer impact and competitive advantage.

Fersht coined the terms the "Digital OneOffice" and the "Hyperconnected Economy" which describe HFS Research's vision for future business operations amidst the impact of automation, AI and disruptive digital business models. In 2012, he authored the first analyst report on Robotic Process Automation (RPA), introducing this topic to the industry and is widely recognized as the pioneering analyst voice that has driven the evolution of the RPA industry.



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