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Organizational Transformation through Digital Strategies: A Qualitative Research

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Abstract

IT organizations that are not digitized are less profitable than their competitors in the industry. The use of manual business processes results in information technology leaders losing business opportunities because they lack digital strategies. This research, based on general system theory (GST), employed a qualitative approach to explore the digital strategies used by 12 IT leaders in the digitalization of processes within four organizations in Ireland. Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection. For the secondary data, past literature reviews were analyzed in consideration of the primary data findings. The thematic analysis produced the three themes, namely, a) Digital Leadership Skills, b) Core Requirements of Digital Alignment, and c) the Reason behind the Digital Transformation. The research findings suggested that IT leaders need to develop a strategic digital transformation plan that is proactive in providing technological solutions to digitize business processes. Moreover, the findings' implications suggest that to be more agile, innovative, and customer-centric in a competitive digital economy, organizations can enhance the success of digital transformation by improving the effectiveness of digital leadership, aligning business and digital strategies, and implementing fit-for-purpose technologies.

Keywords: Digitalization, General System Theory, Digital Leadership, Digital Maturity, Digital Culture, Digital Alignment.

Introduction

Digital solutions often fail to meet organizational digitization goals, primarily because some IT leaders focus on technology adoption rather than strategic business change (Heracleous & Gledhill, 2024). A large number of individuals remain technically inclined and fail to transition to a business-oriented mentality that can drive enterprise-wide change (Breitruck, 2025). The absence of properly developed digital strategies to direct the modernization of business operations is thus a recurring problem. Some IT leaders appear to adopt a tactical and ad hoc approach to technology rather than a strategic and integrated one, which hinders their ability to realize their digitization goals. At the same time, some IT leaders consider digitization goals as a technology evaluation exercise, where they attempt to find the best available technology, rather than trying to foresee the entire picture and develop a digital strategy to support the digitization objectives (Oludapo et al., 2024).

Absence of a digital strategy has significant financial and competitive implications. Organizations that cannot adequately adopt digital solutions, including cloud computing, analytics, mobile platforms, and digital services, are 26% less profitable than digitally mature organizations (Cui & Wang, 2023; Westerman et al., 2014). The lost opportunities would. These digitally mature organizations encompass improved customer personalization, process efficiency, innovation, data-driven decision-making, and the agile evolution of business models (Khoshroo & Talari, 2025).

Without strategic digitization, business processes are typically manual, siloed, and labor-intensive, resulting in subpar customer experiences and a lack of responsiveness. In an ever-competitive environment, IT leaders who fail to define and implement digital strategies are putting their organizations at a significant disadvantage, as digitally transformed businesses can be more responsive, faster, and value-creating (Limani et al., 2022). The absence of a digital strategy may negatively impact profitability, efficiency, and organizational competitiveness, which is why IT leaders should implement strategic and integrative business digitalization initiatives (Garafonova et al., 2025).

The success rate of digital solutions in supporting strategic business objectives and realizing digitization is approximately 29% (Garafonova et al., 2025; Renaud et al., 2016). The world's IT leaders had spent $ 3.8 trillion on digital solutions without a valid digital plan to achieve

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digitalization goals (Ali et al., 2015; Jain, 2023). The primary business problem of interest was that IT leaders fail to align their digital strategy with the digitalization of businesses. On the one hand, the desired business challenge was the absence of digital strategies among confident IT leaders to make business processes digital (Proksch et al., 2024).

The identified research gap is the empirical, unclear understanding of how IT leaders can develop and execute digital strategies to effectively digitize business processes. Although organizations have invested trillions of dollars in digital technologies, only 29 per cent of organizations that invest in digital work succeed (Renaud et al., 2016), and the majority of organizations lack a proven digital strategy to support their transformation activities. The literature reviews report fragmented processes, case-by-case adoption of technology, and low levels of strategic alignment, with limited data on the exact strategies employed by successful IT leaders who have achieved digitization (Malik et al., 2025; Soto Setzke et al., 2023; Tagscherer & Carbon, 2023). This disconnect is evident in the fact that most IT leaders struggle to define clear digital strategies, exhibit effective digital leadership, and align technology projects with business objectives. Hence, the research aim is to determine the digital strategies employed by successful IT leaders to transform business processes into digital ones.

The research is significant, as the need to create efficient digital strategies continues to increase, with organizations discussing automation and AI, as well as other emerging technologies, to streamline and improve fragmented and inefficient business processes. Digitization enhances the integration of processes, facilitates data-driven decision-making, and fosters a more customer-centric experience, all of which positively impact organizational performance (Peng & Tao, 2022; Pfister & Lehmann, 2023; Ribeiro-Navarrete et al., 2021). The research provides valuable insights that can be used by leaders in designing and executing efficient digitization programs by identifying the strategies effective IT leaders utilize to design and deploy digital programs.

The research is qualitative in format and is conducted using a series of case studies to examine the basic strategies employed by Information Technology leaders in four organizations in Ireland. Semi-structured interviews will be used to collect in-depth knowledge about the experiences of leaders, their strategic practices, and decision-making processes. The main objective of the research is the following:

- To determine digital strategies that IT leaders have successfully applied to digitalize business processes.

Literature Review

This qualitative, multi-case research analyzed the digital strategies that IT leaders successfully utilized to digitalize their business processes. The research was theoretically grounded in general systems theory (GST), which views organizations as systems comprising interdependent subsystems that work together to achieve organizational objectives. The theory was appropriate because digitization involves coordinated changes between individuals, processes, and technologies. The literature review is divided into two major parts: the theoretical framework used in the research, and existing research on digital strategies that promote organizational change.

Theoretical Framework

General System Theory

The GST was used as a theoretical framework of the present research (Laszlo, 2024; Von Bertalanffy, 1972). Von Bertalanffy has indicated that one of the critical aspects of this theory is systems technology, which reveals the problems that can occur due to the emergence of new technologies, such as digitization. This theory views an organization as a system of interdependent components that act as a unified whole, sharing a common purpose to be achieved (Laszlo, 2024). GST may guide researchers' analyses and help them comprehend how individuals, processes, and technologies work together and integrate in a unified manner to accomplish organizational objectives (Xu & Ouyang, 2022). This school of thought emphasizes that business processes do not exist in isolation but are themselves subsystems that are continually interacting. These subsystems are interdependent, and any changes in one of them may have a ripple effect on other organizational subsystems (Sepúlveda et al., 2023). The general systems theory is, therefore, used to understand complex organizational activities, relationships, and coordination required to attain effective decision-making and action.

According to Allen (2025), digital solutions cannot be effectively managed with manual processes and traditional technology applications; therefore, a structured digital strategy must be implemented to support strategic goals (Allen, 2025). This theory focuses on the interaction of people, social relations, and technologies within organizational systems, as outlined in past research, and

therefore highlights the harmonization of these elements in an attempt to accomplish organizational goals (Laszlo, 2024; Liu, 2025; Xu & Ouyang, 2022). In this regard, the general systems theory applied to this research was appropriate because it provided a holistic approach to the development of technologies and strategic procedures required to digitalize the way business is conducted.

Supporting Theories

There were a few other theories that could have been employed to understand the way managers apply digital strategies to digitalize business processes. Among them is Sociotechnical Systems Theory, which views organizations as a system comprising two interdependent subsystems: the technical system (encompassing technology, tools, and workflows) and the social system (comprising people, teams, and interactions). This theory can be applied by researchers investigating the impact of new technologies on human behavior and the organization of activities (Zhang et al., 2025). Within digitization, the technical component refers to the business process itself, whereas the social component encompasses the managerial strategies that facilitate adoption. This theory can be applied to the research on digital transformation, as both systems influence each other.

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) is another theory that supports the decision-making process of people in accepting and using new technology. It emphasizes four aspects: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions (Budhathoki et al., 2024). On the same note, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is also concerned with the adoption of technology among individuals, on the perception of usefulness and ease of use (Musa et al., 2024). However, these theories primarily analyze user behavior, rather than the strategic or organizational-level decisions made during the digitization of business operations.

Contrasting Theories

Specific theories could not be applied in this research as they do not align with the research's purpose. For instance, the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Theory of Reasoned Action are employed to explain human actions, focusing on attitudes, intentions, and the perception of control. They are applicable in the research on the behaviors of individual users, but the present research addresses strategic decisions by IT leaders, rather than end-user adoption (Laheri et al., 2024).

On the same note, the Diffusion of Innovation theory describes the process by which new technologies spread within an organization (Abdalla et al., 2024). In contrast, the Resource-Based View (RBV) focuses on achieving a competitive advantage. Both of these views are silent about the ways managers design and implement digital strategies to change business processes (Monson, 2024). Furthermore, the systemic nature of implementing digital strategy also contrasts with the Constructivist Theory, which is centered on the way individuals construct knowledge based on their own experiences (Nithideechaiwarachok & Chano, 2024).

Digital Strategies to Facilitate Organizational Change

Digitalization Overview

Digitization of business processes does not limit itself to the introduction of new technologies or the purchase of new systems. It entails IT executives leading their organizations to become more adaptable and innovative, thereby transforming them (Liang & Li, 2024). When implemented successfully, digitization can transform an organization's performance, enabling it to innovate, reinvent processes, create new business models, and add value to customers (Hoessler & Carbon, 2024). There are, however, IT leaders who cannot create digital strategies in their entirety, and the discrepancy between the strategic vision and the actualization of the strategy is the cause of the minor gains of the most recent technologies (Kwiotkowska, 2024)

Digitization necessitates leaders to develop new products, processes, and platforms, rather than merely updating existing technology (Seidel et al., 2025). Digitization strategies also lead to a superior competitive edge, as digital transformation helps organizations achieve efficiency, improve services, and modernize all business areas (Karppinen, 2024). Nevertheless, IT leaders lacking the necessary digital knowledge, planning models, and strategic frameworks tend to face challenges such as a lack of communication, a lack of digital culture, and unrealistic expectations. In turn, the development of a combined digital roadmap is regarded as the most crucial initial step in the process of digitizing business processes (Mick et al., 2024).

It is established that digitally transformed organizations outperform their competitors due to their increased profitability and greater effectiveness in utilizing available resources. Digital strategies facilitate innovation and building of capabilities through reassessing customer experience, internal functioning, and business models (Zhao et al., 2024). The emergence of new technologies

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(social, mobile, analytics, cloud, blockchain, and IoT) brings opportunities and threats to the organization, and the leaders need to build adaptive structures, collaborative cultures, and flexible IT systems (Hussain, 2024). To achieve this, IT leaders must develop corresponding digital solutions, establish an operational backbone that ensures process scalability, and leverage digital platforms to sustain innovations (George & Baskar, 2024).

Aligning digital strategies with the organization's overall goals and market dynamics is a crucial aspect of successful digitization. IT leaders must be prepared to adopt data-driven decision-making, agile implementations, and continuous experimentation to remain relevant in the dynamic digital market (May et al., 2025). With digital disruption, customer demands and business-to-business interaction models have undergone significant changes, and leaders must address emerging threats and opportunities. Organizations that fail to have a strategic plan are at risk of being left behind. Conversely, individuals who design and possess viable digital capabilities and leadership can leverage new technologies to transform their businesses, thereby gaining a long-term competitive advantage (Hussain, 2024).

Digital Leadership Digital leadership is where digitization of business processes comes into focus and begins at the strategic level of the organization. Not only does it revolve around managing the implementation of technology, but it also suggests reevaluating business strategies, models, culture, and operations to create new value (Lin, 2025). Digital leaders are effective because they integrate digital strategy, business model innovation, enterprise platforms, enterprise workforce skills, and workplace design to drive organizational change (Senadjki et al., 2024). Digital innovation management empowers leaders to leverage technological resources, enabling continuous experimentation, rapid prototyping, and the creation of new products, services, and business models. In this way, the faculty can recognize digital leadership to understand how digital solutions can change the organization and improve competitiveness (Khaw et al., 2022).

IT leaders should acquire digital leadership skills to guarantee that they can demolish siloes in organizations, formulate agile and efficient processes, and permit interdepartmental collaboration. Digital leaders utilize governance frameworks, strategic planning, and organizational change programs to support digitization initiatives (Tagscherer & Carbon, 2023). They also foster digital attitudes that encourage groups to work on meaningful projects, utilize appropriate tools, and assess the effectiveness of digital transformation. IT leaders can serve as digital accelerators, harmonizers, and marketers through these capabilities, which contribute to boosting innovation, customer engagement, and data-driven decision-making (Fitriana et al., 2024).

Complexities and interdependencies in digital transformation initiatives are another critical component of digital leadership. IT leaders must have processes, structures, skills, and technologies aligned in a way that they do not interfere with each other. Close relationships with customers and business partners will enable leaders to pinpoint user-centered innovation opportunities and recreate interactions across the value chain (Bellantuono et al., 2021). IT leaders must also develop digital intelligence, which involves having the capacity to understand the digital maturity of the industry, identifying value-added digital applications, and acquiring the necessary talent to keep changing (Schiuma et al., 2021).

Ultimately, digital leaders must overcome conservative approaches and adopt lean IT management, which can help distinguish between value-adding and wasteful operations. IT leaders can contribute to expediting the digitization process by ensuring that digital strategy aligns with business goals, rather than lagging, through the simplification of legacy systems and the improvement of communication and value-based discussions with business leaders (Liutkevičienė et al., 2022). Such a leadership style contributes to increased operational efficiency, a faster rate of innovation, an enhanced employee and customer experience, and the creation of a sustainable, nimble, and competitive digital organization.

Digital Alignment

Digital alignment refers to the correspondence between digital strategies and overall organizational strategies, which have been the primary goal of IT leaders. The lack of alignment between digital and business approaches is a challenge that IT leadership struggles to address, as business interests are not being adequately met. Meanwhile, business leaders are unwilling to take a chance on past failures or embrace digital innovation (Perifanis & Kitsios, 2023). For example, AI and IoT technologies can pose a security risk when organizations lack proper cybersecurity strategies and control mechanisms. Therefore, digital alignment plays a crucial role in reducing uncertainty and developing a unified understanding of how digital solutions contribute to business value (Barthwal et

al., 2025).

The concept of digital alignment has also evolved to encompass not only the alignment of IT and business strategies but also the integration of both systems, where the digital strategy cannot be separated from the business strategy (Canhoto et al., 2021). To achieve this, IT leaders must align the operational business processes and organizational-level strategies. The alignment systemization through digital governance systems and models of stakeholder responsibility supports the perception of roles. It ensures that the effects of digital transformation initiatives are aligned with the overall enterprise goals (Mechman et al., 2021). This alignment will ensure that digital solutions are introduced as value-creating tools, rather than being adopted solely based on novelty.

Agile and iterative change strategies should be implemented as a way of realizing and sustaining alignment by IT leaders. The frameworks, including the next-generation digital enterprise model, focus on ongoing alignment, where strategic objectives, business processes, digital architectures, and performance monitoring are developed simultaneously in response to different circumstances (VANITHA et al., 2024). Effective communication, stakeholder engagement, and a digital-first approach also enable IT leaders to coordinate internal and external activities, develop digital competencies, and deliver successful digitization projects. Lastly, by incorporating digital strategy in the manner business value is conceived, delivered, and maintained, organizations will become digitally aligned (Zangana et al., 2025).

Digital Culture

Developing a strong digital culture is one of the primary requirements of the IT leaders who wish to implement digital strategies and digitalize business processes. A digital culture provides direction, promotes advancements, and serves as a channel for ongoing improvement in digital undertakings (Pradana et al., 2022). The culture of risk-taking, collaboration, agility, and continuous learning should be part of IT leaders to be effective in supporting digital transformation. The same culture enables the organization to deliver cohesive digital services and develop specialized, customer-oriented relationships that competitors struggle to replicate. Digital culture is thereby chosen as a strategic resource that impacts the generation of business value (Hautala-Kankaanpää, 2022).

The development of a digital workplace that empowers employees to collaborate and use digital tools is one of the most crucial aspects of building this culture. As highlighted by Phakamach et al. (2023), to succeed in digitization, one must change one's operations to improve the experience of its employees and customers. This shift implies that IT leaders will have to strengthen two key facets: employee interconnectivity and proactive digital leadership (Phakamach et al., 2023). Digital workplaces enhance communication, facilitate knowledge exchange, and foster greater flexibility, enabling employees to work more efficiently in highly dynamic digital environments (Turyadi et al., 2023). In this way, IT leaders play a significant role in transforming the work environment to facilitate digitization.

To promote employee engagement and foster a digital culture, IT leaders should consider leveraging enterprise social media and other integrated digital communication systems. The systems underlie the concept of teamwork, facilitate omnichannel communication, and enable real-time and asynchronous brainstorming among geographically dispersed teams (Sun et al., 2022). Moreover, transparency, mutual education, and creativity are achieved by IT leaders who ensure that the enterprise social media becomes the center of intra-company communication. Lastly, a strong digital culture can help digitize business operations and position the organization to continue thriving in a digital world that is increasingly becoming digital (Pitafi et al., 2020).

Digital Maturity

Digital maturity is a term used to describe the extent to which organizations and IT leaders have embraced and adapted to the digital environment and the disruptive technological changes. It implies not only the digitization of business processes but also the ability to leverage new forms of business in the digital environment (Aslanova & Kulichkina, 2020). Among the most important aspects of digital maturity is a willingness to risk new digital solutions and an openness to new ones. Such philosophy enables regular and constant improvements and updates to business processes, thereby enhancing continuous improvement. This adaptability enables IT executives to develop and implement effective digital strategies (Duncan et al., 2022).

Skill development and leadership growth are close to digital maturity. As observed by Rocha et al. (2024), the perceived increase in digital skills correlates positively

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with the level of management, indicating that digital maturity is a skill that IT leaders need to develop (Rocha et al., 2024). DigiCoMM has provided maturity models to support this expansion, providing guided systems to assess and enhance the potential for collaboration in the digital sphere by organizations. These models will also enable IT leaders to standardize the process of acquiring digital skills and to enhance their strategic understanding of digital transformation (Ferreira et al., 2024).

Leso et al. (2024) also argue that digital maturity investment must be taken in combination with more general organizational variables, including transformation management, governance, vision, and employee engagement (Leso et al., 2024). Digital governance establishes clear sets of rules and coordination that help digital endeavors align with organizational goals. Moreover, IT leaders can better understand business problems with complex analytics and reporting systems that enable the collection, storage, and analysis of data. Strategic planning and decision-making are more informed and efficient with the assistance of these tools, which leads to digital maturity (Ferreira et al., 2024). Having a high level of digital maturity would enable IT leaders to offer more value through informed decisions, coordinate digital actions, and drive innovation. The right governance frameworks and analytical instruments enable IT leaders to take a holistic view of the business realms and ensure that digital projects effectively support the company's growing needs (Ostmeier & Strobel, 2022).

Methodology

Research Design

The qualitative multiple-case research design was employed in this research to explore the digital strategies that IT leaders have effectively utilized to digitize business processes. The qualitative approach was adopted because it enables the researcher to describe the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of participants regarding a business phenomenon through open-ended inquiry (Muzari et al., 2022). In contrast to quantitative approaches, which either test a hypothesis or attempt to quantify the relationship between variables, the given research aimed to understand the strategic practices and contextual factors that shape digitization endeavors; such statistical testing was both inappropriate and unsuitable.

Population and Sampling

The targeted group consisted of IT leaders from organizations that had already implemented their digital strategies to digitize their business processes in Dublin, Ireland. Participants were identified through purposive sampling based on the fields of concern of the research; hence, they had experience that could offer quality and detailed information. Qualitative case research employs purposeful sampling to select participants who have firsthand experience with the phenomenon being studied and are familiar with it (Stratton, 2024).

The criteria used were that the participants should have successfully implemented their digital strategies already, must have been in the digital field or other fields for at least five years, and must be working in an organization in Dublin. Following methodological suggestions of previous qualitative literature research articles and case research papers, 12 respondents were selected to obtain data saturation. The interviews with IT leaders in four organizations were conducted to maximize the credibility and diversity of the information, ensuring that the information gathered is thorough enough to reveal recurring themes.

Data Collection Instrument

The researcher was the primary source of data collection in a qualitative research practice. The primary data collection tool was the semi-structured interview, which was based on an interview protocol that included open-ended questions to ensure consistency and accuracy. The semi-structured interviews were suitable since they provided flexibility to ask probing questions, clarify answers, and pursue emergent ideas in relation to the research question (Adeoye-Olatunde). The interviews were then compared with the past literature and the GST theory. It enabled triangulation of the data and increased the validity of the findings. These were digital strategy reports, technology roadmaps, digitization plans, and other internally created resources on digital transformation.

Data Collection Technique

The methods of data collection included semi-structured interviews, document examination, and observation. The interviews were to be conducted either at a place of the participants' preference or through Zoom when they could not meet face-to-face. All interviews took between 45 and 60 minutes, were audio-taped, and the participants' conversations were based on a standardized interview protocol.

Additionally, the interview was supplemented with member

checking to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations and eliminate potential bias. Interpretations of the interviews were summarized and verified against the actual intent of the participants. This process was used to increase the reliability, credibility, and trustworthiness of the research.

Data Organization Technique

Data organization was performed by a simple thematic method. All the data were kept confidential, and unique alpha-numeric codes (e.g., P1O1) were applied to guarantee safe data tracking. Microsoft Word and Excel were used to record the interview logs, field notes, audit trail, and scheduling records. All data was stored in securely encrypted digital documents and cabinets. Additionally, documentation fragments, field notes, and transcripts of the interviews were critically analyzed to generate codes, identify patterns, and develop systematically themed themes.

Data Analysis and Reassembling

The data analysis was conducted according to the five steps of the Yin process: compilation, disassembly, reassembly, interpretation, and conclusion (Zhu et al., 2024). First, the collected data, including interview transcripts, documentation, and notes, were reviewed several times to become familiar with them. Secondly, the data were disaggregated through the manual application of open and axial coding, where segments were coded and classified in terms of concepts that were developed in the literature and the research question.

Also, during the reassembling, the coded data were organized into categories and broader themes, which reflected patterns across participants and organizations. Lastly, the themes were examined in light of the conceptual framework and literature, which helped us understand how IT leaders effectively implement digital strategies within organizational settings. Such a systematic approach ensured the accuracy, credibility, and compliance with the research's purpose.

Research Findings

This research was conducted to understand the digital strategies employed by IT leaders to transform business processes into digital ones. Twelve IT leaders from four companies in Ireland, who had applied digital strategies that led to successful process digitization, were surveyed. The analysis resulted in three major themes:

- Digital Leadership Skills
- Core Requirements of Digital Alignment
- The Reason behind the Digital Transformation.

Theme 1: Digital Leadership Skills

The findings indicated that business process digitalization requires particular digital leadership capabilities rather than traditional managerial positions. The participants noted that digital leadership entails the ability to drive digital innovation, adopt new technologies, and transition traditional systems to digital platforms. The identified three competencies, which were reflected in the answers of the respondents, include: (a) possessing a clear digital vision and roadmap, (b) establishing a governance system, and (c) ensuring regular engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Digital Leadership Sub-Themes

Digital Leadership Skills	Participants (n)	Percentage (%)
Articulate a digital vision and roadmap	12	100%
Develop a governance framework	8	66.7%
Brief engagement and collaboration	10	83.3%

All participants (100%) agreed to the articulation of a digital vision and roadmap as the first move towards a successful digitization. IT leaders were expected to articulate the purpose and expected outcomes of digitization and disseminate this information to the organization, aligning it with the strategic objectives. P1O3, for example, explained that the leadership team began creating business needs to articulate a digital vision and aligned this vision with all other top executives to create a digitization roadmap. Similarly, P2O4 believed that it was impossible to become competitive without the leadership of digitizing business processes. These results highlight the importance of a systemic organizational approach to digital direction.

The second competence was the transformation of a structured governance framework to orchestrate and control digital investments. Respondents reported that governance was used to reduce ambiguity, thereby ensuring alignment between initiatives and providing

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consistency in system implementations. P1O2 elucidated that their organization initially lacked the right governance structures, which included technological architecture and security controls. However, this has changed with the advent of new policies, where governance has become a key factor that enables a business to be digital and experience a successful business process. On the same note, P1O3 asserted that the governance of digitization was the core of their digital leadership, and P1O4 asserted that leadership governance over the operations of transformation was the main reason why a digital governance framework should be established. Additionally, P2O1 and P3O1 proposed a custom-designed system of governance, which they called SIAM (Simplify, Improve, Automate, and Measure), to streamline digitization efforts and their execution.

The third competency was good interaction and working with stakeholders. The participants emphasized that the support should be obtained through clear communication and continued engagement to reduce resistance and involve the owners of the digitization efforts. P2O1 stated that the key component in providing the appropriate digital strategies was effective communication with various stakeholders. In the same vein, P1O4 opined that the digital transformation initiative would not have succeeded without effective communication. Frequent interaction also enabled IT leaders to be more aware of the business's needs, focus on high-value processes, and co-design digital strategies. According to P3O2, it was the collaboration and partnership between business leaders to identify which processes add the most business value.

Furthermore, stakeholder participation helped eliminate operational and cultural obstacles. P3O3 observed that any barriers were eliminated with the assistance of stakeholder management, which also created a strategic direction that led directly to successful digitization. P2O3 and P2O4 reflected the same idea that executive participation was a pivotal factor in facilitating the implementation of digital processes.

Theme 2: Core Requirements of Digital Alignment

The findings stated that successful digitization requires an excellent level of consistency between digital strategies and a larger business vision. Participants underlined that digital alignment does not presuppose the introduction of technologies, but also that digital decisions should create measurable business value. They identified three requirements, namely, a) the need to build a strategic relationship between IT and business executives, b) the need to build digital culture and maturity, and c) the need to select fit-for-purpose digital technologies, as presented in Table 2. This congruence made the digitization initiatives meaningful, scalable, and tactical.

Table 2: Core Requirements of Digital Alignment

Core Requirements of Digital Alignment	Participants (n)	Percentage (%)
Strategic IT and business relationship	8	66.7%
Digital maturity and culture	7	58.3%
Fit for purpose digital technologies	10	83.3%

The participants reiterated that digitization efforts could only be practical when the IT and business executives were on a sound strategic foundation. This relationship enabled digital transformation initiatives to be aligned with business requirements and priorities. P1O2 pointed out that the relationship between IT and business leaders was a key factor in the successful digitalization of business processes. Similarly, P2O4 explained how service-thinking can help in transforming technology-based conversations into value-based ones by highlighting that a service-based approach can aid in developing value-based digital strategies, as opposed to technology-driven ones.

The other participants described the IT-business relationship as collaborative and constructive. P2O2 opined that the relationship allowed them to bargain and argue alternatives to digitizing the business process, making informed decisions rather than relying on top-down directives. P1O3 and P1O1 also emphasized that the most crucial aspect of digital success was forming a strategic alliance with business executives.

The participants also identified digital maturity and culture as key drivers of change. Digital maturity enables organizations to effectively adopt and implement digital solutions, whereas a strong digital culture facilitates acceptance and reduces resistance. P1O3 argues that IT leaders should be digital-first thinkers to leverage new technologies and drive innovation. Moreover, P3O1 noted that the development of digital culture helps the organization to adapt old technologies and turn business

processes into the digital world.

Additionally, the participants reported that agile work practices were adopted due to the creation of a digital culture that helped eliminate bureaucracy. According to P2O4, digital culture helped their organization evade bureaucratic culture and instead pursue agile and dynamic methodologies, with an emphasis on adopting the fail-fast approach to learning and improvement. P2O2 also commented that the digital culture and maturity are at the heart of digitization initiatives, and that without a culture preparedness, digital transformation would be complex to gain executive support.

The third requirement was the selection of fit-to-purpose digital technologies. Respondents reported that the decision on the choice of technologies was made with reference to their strategic importance rather than their originality. P1O1 states that IT leaders considered only the technologies that could digitize the business process. P2O1 also outlined technology adoption as being business-based, not trendy. It stated that they did not select a technology because it was current, but rather because it would help them achieve their business objectives.

However, some respondents reported experiencing challenges in identifying the appropriate technologies. P1O3 disclosed that the services of an external consultant were employed by the organization to develop a technology roadmap due to the lack of expertise in the workforce. P2O3 characterized the process of selection as a compass, where we determined what we need, and that digital decisions need to be informed by business value. In general, Theme 2 suggests that successful digitization necessitates a cohesive alignment of digital strategies and business objectives, which is facilitated by effective strategic leadership teams, achieved organizational digital maturity, and informed technology decisions. This alignment meant that digitization was employed as a facilitator of performance and transformation, rather than a technical one.

Theme 3: The Reason for the Digital Transformation

The findings indicated that the primary motive for digitizing business processes was to generate tangible business value, rather than adopting the technology as an end in itself. Respondents emphasized that the concept of digital transformation necessitates a rethink of how organizations operate, compete, and create value for their customers. According to Li (2021), the respondents also perceived digital transformation as the ability to redesign business operations, develop new business models, and improve organizational performance. In line with Li (2021), the respondents viewed digital transformation as the power to redesign business activities, create new business models, and enhance organizational performance (Li, 2021). Table 3 indicates that the respondents identified three major drivers of the initiatives of the digital transformation, namely: (a) to enhance customer experience, (b) to re-engineer and modernize their business processes, and (c) to ensure their operations are efficient and responsive.

Table 3: Reasons for Digital Transformation

Reasons for Digital Transformation	Participants (n)	Percentage (%)
Customer experience and engagement	9	75%
Process reengineering and modernization	11	91.6%
Operations optimization and efficiencies	10	83.3%

The digital transformation has been identified as having started with the improvement of customer experience. Respondents explained the introduction of digital customer-facing platforms, such as mobile applications, web platforms, and omnichannel solutions, to support smooth interactions. According to P2O2, omnichannel communication provides a seamless experience for customers on both mobile and desktop devices. Similarly, P1O1 opined that they began with the end in mind, which included figuring out what they wanted the customer experience to be and then investing in the necessary digital tools. P3O4 also claimed that the organization was customer-oriented, creating a digital experience based on what customers needed, rather than what was convenient for the internal organization. The participants also reported an increase in customer satisfaction and Net Promoter Scores, resulting in higher revenue and market share.

The second contributor to the digital transformation was the modernization and reengineering of processes. The respondents stated that manual, disconnected processes and legacy systems initially characterized their organizations. P1O2 implied that they have reviewed internal work processes, such as onboarding, service desk, and security

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clearance processes, to determine inefficiencies that existed prior to being digitized. P1O3 also emphasized the necessity of centralizing and standardizing business unit processes. Respondents noted that digitization enabled the integration of automated workflows, the robotization of processes, and the use of chatbots to eliminate manual, repetitive tasks. P2O1 articulated their organization model using the simplify, improve, automate, and measure framework, which enabled them to be agile when it comes to overcoming bureaucratic processes.

The third cause was the efficiency and agility in optimizing operations. The participants reported that digitization was intended to lower costs without affecting the quality of service delivery. P1O4 explained that the most crucial aspect of digitization was the efficient operation of the business, with reduced maintenance costs. P1O2 has also noted that cost optimization was not applied to internal processes alone, but also to communication with customers, whereby the organization worked to eliminate all processes that made accessing services difficult for its customers. The other enhancements that the participants cited included quicker order processing, faster agent response time, and increased reporting effectiveness. In one instance, P2O4 mentioned that it reduced the number of service requests by 20 percent following the implementation of digital technology. Conversely, its counterparts indicated that the time taken to prepare operational reports was reduced by several hours or, at most, a few minutes. In short, the participants' experiences indicate that a clear understanding of business value priorities fuels effective digital transformation.

Discussion

The current research findings indicate that effective business process digitization is driven by robust digital leadership, strategic alignment between IT and business departments, and a clear, vision-oriented transformation purpose. Coherence between digital strategies and business objectives ensured that the technology decisions were meaningful and maturity-forming. The alignment of digital strategies and the business objectives made technology decisions meaningful and maturity-creating. In general, digitization initiatives have proven to be most effective in enhancing customer experience, introducing more modern processes, and improving operational efficiency, rather than simply implementing new technologies (Hautala-Kankaanpää, 2022).

The GST was utilized in this research as the theoretical framework for understanding how IT leaders used digital strategies to digitize business processes. GST asserts that organizations are connected systems in which a change in one section of the system influences other parts of the system (Billi et al., 2024; Von Bertalanffy, 1950). Such a framework supports the analysis of digitization, as digital transformation involves simultaneous changes in technology, structure, culture, processes, and the role of stakeholders.

The findings of this research showed that digitization was not achieved successfully as a unilateral undertaking on organizational competencies, but rather as a concerted technology upgrade. The respondents have understood digitization as a company-wide concept that required the presence of digital leadership, digital governance, collaboration between stakeholders, and integration between business and IT operations. Such interdependencies align with the theoretical literature, which emphasizes the idea that digital transformation is a dynamic and holistic system of organization, rather than a technology-based initiative (Marques & Ferreira, 2020).

The participants also confirmed that failing to consider cross-functional dependencies may lead to bottlenecks and resistance. This aligns with current research papers that suggest digitization has impacted work processes, decision-making authority, forms of communication, and cultural activities within companies (Schumm & Hanelt, 2021). Therefore, digitization must be perceived as an organisational redesign, and not technological modernization. Overall, the research findings confirm the usefulness of GST in analyzing digitization, as the success of digitization depends on the interdependence of organizational designs, shared leadership, coordinated planning, and internal subsystems.

Furthermore, this research finding is also a valuable addition to the existing body of knowledge concerning digital transformation, as it depicts that successful digitization depends on digital leadership, strategic alignment, and business-driven transformation rationales. Recent research papers suggest that digital transformation is unlikely to occur without effective digital leadership that supports change management, shapes a culture of change, and influences overall strategic decision-making (Kuika Watat & Jonathan, 2025; Trabucchi et al., 2023; Veeraya et al., 2024). Respondents also recognized that articulating a digital vision, building governance frameworks, and enabling collaborative communication were some of the fundamental leadership functions.

The findings also align with the existing literature, which describes the importance of strategic alignment between digital initiatives and organizational goals. According to Susanti et al. (2025), a balanced approach to technology adoption strategy and business strategy enables organizations to achieve favorable performance results and successful transformations (Susanti et al., 2025). The respondents confirmed that digital transformation is best realized when digital strategies directly contribute to creating business value, and where a strategic partnership exists between IT and business leaders.

Furthermore, in line with the present research, the findings also indicate that digital culture and an organization's maturity can serve as a foundation for successful change. Previous findings suggest that digital culture promotes experimentation, agility, and learning, which may lead to a shift in employees' work practices (Bhatti et al., 2024; Kannen & Langille, 2023; Leal-Rodríguez et al., 2023). In line with this, according to the respondents, the creation of a digital culture allowed for the reduction of bureaucracy, which supports the organization's continuous improvement.

Finally, this research also suggests that customer experience modernization and business efficiency are two key drivers of digital transformation. Past research papers have shown that companies are adopting artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and cloud computing to enhance customer satisfaction through operational optimization and a scalable service model (Anbalagan, 2024; Jain, 2022; Tiwari et al., 2021). Similarly, the participants in this research identified customer engagement, process reengineering, and operational optimization as the most significant motivations driving their digitization endeavors.

Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of this research was the small sample size and focus on four organizations within a single geographical location, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. A more diverse and larger sample, by industry and region, can be utilized in future research to provide a more comprehensive understanding for comparison. Additionally, as this research was fully qualitative-based and only considered the views of IT leaders, further research may employ a quantitative or mixed-methodology approach, considering the views of business leaders and end-users. Further research can also be made regarding the impact of organisational size, sector type, and maturity of digital culture on the effectiveness of digital transformation strategies.

Future Implication

The findings offer IT leaders practical concepts for developing effective digital strategies that incorporate leadership skills, strategic orientation, and technological relevance. These lessons can help organizations become more digitally ready, interdepartmental, and customer-oriented. Policymakers and consultants can also utilize the findings to support the digital capacity-building initiative and workforce upskilling program. The research has also highlighted the need to establish robust digital governance structures that can ensure sustainable and scalable change. Overall, the implications will lead to the establishment of more competitive, innovative, and agile organizations in a digital economy.

Conclusion

This qualitative, multiple-case study identified the digital strategies adopted by IT leaders in Ireland to achieve success in digitizing business processes. The analysis showed that there were three broad themes, which included: a) Digital Leadership Skills, b) Core Requirements of Digital Alignment, and c) the Reason behind the Digital Transformation. The research has revealed that digitization requires the articulation of a digital roadmap, the establishment of governance, the creation of collaboration, a strategic IT-business partnership, the development of a digital culture, the selection of fit-for-purpose technologies, the enhancement of customer experience, the reengineering of processes, and the improvement of operational efficiency. The findings align with the literature and can be supported through the lens of general systems theory, which emphasizes the interrelatedness of organizational factors. The research contributes to professional practice by explaining the strategic choices involved in successfully digitizing business processes.

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