Digital Uncovered

It takes a lot more than technology to succeed in the digital world

Credit Unions are being bombarded with headlines telling them that they need to become a digital business, reinvent themselves and transform digitally. Still, many companies are struggling with the meaning of these phrases. How do you transform physical assets into a digital business? How does an organization with assets, infrastructure, physical locations, etc. transform into a digital business?

The majority of business books surrounding this topic focus on a small, but well-known, number of start-ups that have successfully disrupted an industry. And so, the executives of traditional organizations are frequently told that, to digitally transform their businesses, they too need to embrace the cloud, be mobile first, use big data, invest in the Internet of Things and become a platform to avoid becoming the next victim of disruption. The implication of such advice is, therefore, that a digital transformation is a technology project; to transform into a digital business all you need to do is invest in these new technologies.

And some advice goes even further with the view that, to survive in the digital age, every business has to become a technology business. There are a number of variants to this theme such as “every business is a software business” and “every business is an API business” with the latter being a reference to an application programming interface, which is used to enable software applications to interact and share data.

But are these statements really true? Does every business need to become a technology, software or API business to survive in the digital age? It is certainly true to say that all three are becoming increasingly important to organizations of every size and across every industry. Digital business models, products and services are, after all, only possible because of technology.

Technology is changing the way we work, relax, shop, communicate, share and learn. It is changing what we do on a day-to-day basis, how we do it and even whom we do it with. And it is also changing how markets operate and creating a new style of doing business that requires new ways of working, new skills and new thinking in order to compete.

Yes, the well-known start-ups have used technology, software and APIs to enable new business models, products, services and experiences. But, just as importantly, they have also built a new type of business with skills and capabilities that enable them to succeed in the technology-enabled markets that are the real story of digital. Beyond the headlines, there is a lot more to digital than technology. And there is a lot more to learn from the well-known start-ups than just how they are using technology.

In his new book, [**Digital Uncovered**](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0992822424/), Ian Cox cuts through the hype and noise to explain what leaders of established businesses really need to know and do about digital. It is based on his experience working as an advisor to organizations that are transforming for digital, published data and studies, and his own research into digital markets and disruption, technology-based start-ups, and traditional organizations that are successfully embracing digital and building the capabilities required for the digital world.

By analyzing the characteristics of technology-enabled markets the author has identified seven capabilities that every organization will need in order to compete in digital markets in the long-term. Establishing these new capabilities and embedding them throughout the business is likely to require significant changes for most credit unions. This process of transforming for digital will take time – potentially years – to complete. But digital is happening now and disruption could happen at any time.

To address this dilemma Cox also recommends that organizations adopt a dual strategy that balances the short-term need to stay competitive and relevant in their markets with the long-term requirement of building an organization that is fit for digital. The [**book**](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0992822424/) provides clear and practical guidance for executing both strands of the dual approach and, through the use of case studies, demonstrates how small and large businesses from industries are already using this dual strategy to survive and thrive in the digital age.