

# Think Digital

Developing agile, responsive organisations

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Think Digital is a description of capability required for organisations looking to move to a model of operating that is comfortable with change, able to act quickly and decisively, and technology-aware.

In other words, the most interesting and powerful thing about digital is not technology at all. It's mindset, attitude and culture.

# Think Digital

Think Digital has been put together by Dave Briggs, who runs the WorkSmart consultancy.

Dave has a long and varied experience in local and central government, where he has worked in roles specialising in communications, policy, learning and development and digital.

His passion is for making social change happen, particularly in a local context. As well as his consultancy work, Dave is chairman of his local parish council, and is on the board of his local Citizens Advice Bureau.

# Think Digital

Think Digital is made up of ten principles. Each is explained over the following pages.

Lots could be written about each one. Maybe there's a self-help management book in this!

I'm probably not the person to write that. Do see this as a start, though, and not a bunch of definitive conclusions.

Take these ideas and adapt them for your context - and then tell everyone about it.

# 1. You need strategy, leadership and capability

- To get your organisation thinking digitally, you need to have all three of these things in place.
- Strategy sets the direction that everyone buys into and works towards.
- Leadership provides the permission, the examples and the access that people need.
- Capability spreads the mindset and skills to everyone who needs them.

# 2. Death of one size fits all

- The days when a single solution works for everyone in every circumstance is over - if it ever existed.
- Increasingly we see technology companies “unbundling” their services - breaking up single applications that deliver everything into distinct tools that do one thing well.
- This is true for the services that all organisations offer. A single defined process or way of accessing a service cannot work for everyone and differentiation will be vital.
- It is also true of the tools that people will use to do their work. One project management tool cannot suit every task or every person. So it’s pointless to mandate use of a single tool.

# 3. User need

- Before any piece of work is started, ask the question of what the user need is. In who's interest is this project?
- Too often things are done because it suits the organisation and its needs, without thinking about who is really benefiting.
- If your users' needs are not being met by a piece of work, you'll probably be better off putting that effort into something else.

# 4. Should you be doing this?

- Before any piece of work is started, ask the question of whether this is your, or your organisation's, role to deliver this product or service.
- Is someone else already doing it, or better placed to deliver it?
- In an age of constraints, it's important not to be spread too thinly. Don't let pride get in the way of helping others to help you.



# 5. Start small

- Organisations are facing massive challenges. They are daunting in their scale and complexity.
- The answer is not to tackle them in their entirety, but to break them down to the minimum viable scale.
- This will enable you to work faster, cheaper and deliver quickly. It will also significantly reduce the levels of risk involved.
- Think what small actions you can take that could have a big impact.

# 6. Release early, release often

- As Steve Jobs said, “real artists ship”. An idea is worth nothing if it doesn’t become reality.
- By getting a product or service out quickly, you can learn from users whether you are doing the right thing, or where improvements can be made.
- Better to know about your mistakes earlier than later. Especially if it means you need to be doing something completely different.

# 7. Hire the right people

- Culture comes from the people in your organisation.
- No vision, or strategy, or staff engagement exercise will have the same impact on your culture as hiring the right people in the first place.
- Hire for attitude, not skills or experience. Both skills and experience can be learned. Not so with attitude.
- What are the attitudes we are looking for? Curiosity, willingness to learn, cooperation, openness.

# 8. Manage by outcome

- As well as hiring the right people, culture can be developed by the way those people are managed.
- Managing by outcome means you leave you people alone to deliver by the means they choose. After all, they were appointed to do this job, so should have a good idea how to do it.
- It means allowing people to work flexibly, from locations they choose, using tools that they choose.
- Most importantly it means that you and your staff know and understand what their target outcomes actually are.

# 9. Collaboration is key

- No organisation can do everything on its own. It needs to work with others, in a grown up way.
- This means being open about capability and capacity. What can you bring to the party? Do you have the resources and time to do it properly?
- Many partnerships involve organisations doing what they were doing anyway, separately, then meeting up to talk about it every so often.
- That's not collaborating.

# 10. Open wins

- Openness is key to working in a digital environment.
- Being honest and truthful with yourself, colleagues, customers and partners will save time, money and anguish in the long term.
- Be open about where you are, what you are doing, what problems you are facing. Allow others to get involved and help out where they can.
- The internet has a habit of routing around censorship. Don't try and fight it, think digital and be open.

# What next?

Thinking digitally is about technology, but it's also about the way we work, and our approach to the communities we serve.

It is important not to be too focused on tools, and instead consider the digital mindset.

With each, we must be user centred, responsive, flexible and agile. To make it happen, we need the tools and the skills and confidence to use them.

It's all there, waiting for us, we just need to have the courage to use it.

# Get in touch

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